INCENTIVE TRAVEL PERCEPTIONS OF TURKISH TRAVEL AGENCIES BASED IN IZMIR

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ABSTRACT

This study examined perception and understanding level of Turkish travel agencies about a new segment of business travel, incentive travels. Some characteristics of incentive travels in Turkey are also clarified by questioning travel agencies. The main objective of the study is to explore and state the position of incentive travels in Turkey. A survey research with questionnaire technique is used to obtain the relevant data. The findings indicated that Turkish travel agencies perceive incentive travels in a vague way and they need training and education on the field. Meetings and incentive travels are generally misunderstood. The results provided important implications for Turkish travel agencies and policy makers, and international incentive travel users and organizers to understand better the state of incentive travel opportunities in Turkey.

Keywords: *incentive travel, travel agency, Turkish*

INTRODUCTION

International tourism market is generally shaped by several factors affecting demand and supply. Cost, attractiveness, quality, authenticity, availability of goods and services provided differ within the time. Income levels, tastes, preferences, needs, perceptions of travellers differ on the other hand. As a result of differences both at the supply and demand side there is a constant renewal process in tourism industry. Tourism industry itself is also affected by other industries, cultural, technological and social developments. Tourism industry players need innovation to develop new tourism products, and they need to modify their existing products in other cases. To realize a sound and sustainable development in tourism, product differentiation or new product development is inevitable. Business tourism and its several subcategories such as incentive travel resulted from this continous product differentiation and renewal process.

Tourism industry had witnessed structural changes along the history. After 2nd World War, sea-sand-sun oriented mass tourism dominated the industry. Main aim of mass tourism was to provide cheap, easy holidays to large numbers of people in the society. However, the importance of business tourism rose day by day against the leisure tourism. Thus, meetings, congresses, fairs, exhibitions, expositions created a greater number of people travelling each year for business purposes essentially. Incentive travel attracted many companies more and more at the axe of saturation period of leisure tourism and growth of business tourism. After the 2nd World War, mass tourism experiences resulted with a certain touristic infrastructure and suprastructure. Additionally, tourism became part of lives in many nations. People learned types and nature of tourism industry in years and sought for new types of products. On the other hand, emergence of new marketing and human resources management concepts, increasing level of competition in global business arena, enlargement of multinational corporations, increasing level of international business travels, the need for specifically designed high-quality tourism products all prepared the scene for incentive travels.

1. INCENTIVE TRAVEL

Incentives and rewarding people for their better performances have been in existence from the beginning of business. At initial stage, rewards were tied to compensation (as cash) to help employees or business partners meet their needed income for the basics of life (food, clothing, shelter etc). As the time passed agricultural living style ended and industrial life style started and incentives offered changed meanwhile. People consider cash rewards as part of their income after a while and incentives loose their impacts. Companies found that people attribute greater value to “things” and material objects because they had “psychic income value”. The concept of giving “the gold watch” at retirement is considered as one of the first true incentive programs. Businesses wanted employees stay loyal and provide recognition for years of service. Incentives are in a way, saying “thanks” to people for their efforts in a special way. Today’s large performance improvement houses (incentive houses) were founded during the Depression Era (1929) and after World War II in USA. Carlson, Business Incentives and Maritz are early examples of incentive houses (http://www.aeis.com).

Travel, was firstly used by Royal Mac Bee Company in 1933 as an incentive award. In 1935 General Electric Company rewarded its most successful trade representatives with a cruise to Bermuda. Incentive travels to Mexico started in 1936, but its after 1957 that incentive travels become popular among American companies and organizations. Incentive travels spread to Europe in 1960s. D. Mukhergi established first French incentive company in 1960. In 1960s Wagon Lits Company acquired Interstim Company to enlarge its incentive travel activities (Lanquar, Fighiera & Vertunic 1980). Incentive travel developed rapidly after 1970s as a specific travel industry.

Before going into details of incentive travel, one should keep in mind that there is a greater area of incentives called “incentive industry”. In this industry there are numerous incentive programs designed including travels. Incentive industry is made up of several support businesses. This variety derives from a large base of possibilities offered as incentives. Some examples of rewards sold at incentive industry are; trophies/plaques, group/individual travel, logo items, honor & recognition, loyalty/consumer awards, gift certificates, merchandise, debit cards, dining, cash and so on. Incentive industry in USA alone sized $28 billion in volume in 1998 and continues to grow 5 % annually (http://www.aeis.com). The travel plays an important role as a distinguished award in the industry and creates $8.4 billion expenditure in USA alone (http://www.corporate-images.com).

Tepper (1991) defined incentive program as a vehicle to motivate people to improve their performance. Hoyle, Dorf & Thomas (1995) stated that this vehicle is mostly used to reward sales and management staff who achieved certain perfection. Jenkins (1993) define incentive program as any structured activity designed to motivate participants to attain a pre-established goal and argues that monetary incentives have lower motivational effects than non-monetary ones. According to Rullo (1998), incentive program is a strategical business plan in various forms such as travel, designed to attain a desirable goal. Incentive travel is one of the several forms of incentive program rewards such as merchandise, cash, retail gift certificates, open incentive cards, a special event etc…

Goldsmith & Waigand (1990) defined incentive travel as an all-expense paid vacation trip awarded to a salesperson for attaining a certain goal already determined. Nevertheless, this definition does not include one facet of incentive travel, that its target audience is no more limited with sales employees. Today, incentive participants vary from consumers of any products to all types of employees in companies or members in organizations. Montgomery & Strick (1995) evaluated incentive travel as a part of congress and seminar industry and created a similarity between incentive travels and frequent flier programs used by airlines. Incentive travel specifically belongs to MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Congresses and Exhibitions) industry when it’s analyzed from business travel perspective. Along the time, incentive travel decisions became crucial subjects for managers because of it’s role in corporate efficiency and productivity, and increasing share of incentive travel costs in corporate budgets. Poynter (1990) indicates that while the incentive travel decisions were left to marketing departments in the past, the growing trend is top level managerial participation to the decisions. Tepper (1991, p. 17) provides, SITE’s (Society of Incentive Travel Executives) definiton of incentive travel: “a modern management tool used to accomplish uncommon business goals by awarding participants an extraordinary travel experience upon their attainment of their share of the uncommon goals".

Philosophy and psychology of incentives go back to motivation theories in the literature. Early theories of motivation are Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Maslow’s), Theory X and Theory Y, Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Contemporary theories of motivation are; ERG theory, Three Needs Theory, Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Task Characteristics Theory, Goal Setting Theory, Reinforcement Theory, Equity Theory, Expectancy Theory (Robbins 1991). Considering socio-economic status of incentive candidates according to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, participant’s monetary and basic needs should be met first. Therefore, it’s unwise to offer an international travel as an incentive to an employee who still needs food, shelter, clothing, security and a reasonable salary. Cash, bonus cards, free shopping cards, dining, merchandise gifts might be better choices for people at athe early stages of Maslow’s Hierarchy.

Incentive travel fulfills psychic income needs of people such as social acceptance, personal esteem, and self-realization.

Incentive programs are categorized into four types according to four groups of users: consumers (customers), dealers (distributors), salesforce, and non-sales (employee) incentive programs (http://www.incentivemag.com). Accorrding to a research realized by Incentive Federation (USA) in 1997, small businesses use incentives less than larger ones. 26 % of small companies use incentives, 74 % don't. Of Fortune list, 1000 large companies surveyed, 77 % use incentives, 23 % don't (http://www.aeis.com).

Advantages of using incentives vary according to the program used. For example, when non-sales (employee) incentives are used the company can increase safety, decrease absenteeism, develop customer service excellence, reduce costs and employee turnover, provide training, strengthen team spirit, run quality initiatives, change management style etc. Salesforce incentives help increase sales volume and profitability, decrease sales costs etc. Dealer incentives allow companies to launch new products successfully, train dealers when needed, certify dealers, improve product knowledge, increase market share, move slow inventory items, unload old stock etc. Consumer incentives can help companies in such areas as, customer appreciation, product tests/trials, frequency, retention, survey participation, grand openings etc. Travel can be used at any of these incentive programs as a reward.

Incentive rewards are traditionally divided in two groups: cah and non-cash rewards. Travel belongs to non-cash side of this division. Incentive experts had a long debate about the negative and positive aspects of them. However, the benefits received from awards change situationally. Travel has clear advantages when compared with cash or other non-cash rewards. 1997 Incentive Federation State of the Industry Report indicates 69 % of incentive users strongly agree or agree, 17 % of them mildly agree that travel and merchandise are more memorable awards than cash. The same research also indicates, 65 % agreed or strongly agreed, 20 % mildly agreed that travel and merchandise could build more exciting and memorable programs than cash (http://www.incentivemag.com). A study called "Does Incentive Travel Improve Sales Productivity?" was conducted for SITE (Society of Incentive Travel Executives based in USA) at the University of Luton in United Kingdom, examined employee attitudes at a leading insurance company and found a direct link between the incentive travel program and improved performance. Incentive travel is different than that of traditional travel, because there is a great emphasis on creating an extraordinary experience for the participant (winner). Incentive travel builds morale, communicates the corporate message, and fosters improved communications between employees-company-customers (http://www.info-now.com).

Tepper (1991) distinguished differences of incentive travel from individual/collective business or vacation travels as follows:

- participants have to earn the award
- the trip is sponsored by company
- it should be a unique and memorable experience (one that can not be purchased)
- it's a totally orchestrated program with lots of activities
- all participants are treated as VIP's.
- there is full destination staffing
- it involves much more than a travel, participants feel excited at every phase.

The power of travel comes from its different nature. Travel is not a one-time gift that can be handed in a few minutes. Travel is an experience and during the travel you can also offer other incentives such as cash, merchandise etc. During the travel the company can also pursuit some managerial goals. It's easier to educate employees about new company policies, to build team spirit during the travel.

2. INCENTIVE TRAVEL ORGANIZERS

Incentive travel organizer is the person or the body (company, travel agency etc…) that holds the responsibility of incentive travel planning, design, and realization. Incentive travel organizer is also called incentive seller or supplier.

In tourism distribution channels there are many intermediairies who connect tourists and destinations/facilities. Tour operators, travel agencies, national or regional tourism information offices, consortiums, computerized global distribtion systems, internet, and even hotel doormen can act as intermediairies in the distribution channels. Incentive (motivation) companies are of the specialized agents of the distribution channel like tour brokers, and junket reps (Kotler, Bowen & Makens 1999).

Key incentive organizers vary greatly since the industry is vast. Incentive companies (full service incentive houses), incentive travel companies, travel fulfillment companies, corporate travel agencies, destination management companies (DMCs), hotels, cruise lines, airlines, tourist boards, independent planners, advertising agencies, premium representatives, ad specialty distributors, in-house company planners, and traditional travel agencies are most wellknown organizers (http://www.info-now.com 2002, Tepper 1991). Morrison (1996) considers incentive travel companies and full service incentive houses as a special type of tour operator. Their difference from ordinary tour operators is that; they work directly with sponsoring firms, not with the potential travellers. Incentive companies prepare a package including transportation, lodging, nutrition, special events, theme parties, tours and offer these packages to sponsoring firms. Among all these organizers, incentive travel companies, travel fulfillment companies, full service incentive houses (which offer rewards other than travel too) are the most close to fully understanding and operating incentive travels. The rest of organizers have link with some aspects of incentive travel programs but generally lack the ability to realize a total incentive travel package because of know-how, qualified staff, finance, expertise limits.

In USA, where incentive industry is higly developed, travel awards are purchased 39 % from corporate travel agencies, 31 % direct from tourism service providers (hotel, airline etc.), % 21 from retail travel agencies, % 21 from incentive companies/houses, and 11 % from promotion/advertising agencies (http://www.site-intl.org). Travel agencies are not using their great advantages in the industry as travel experts because of their poor information about incentive philosophy. Within this study, retail travel agencies in İzmir - Turkey are questioned regarding their perceptions of incentive travel. Travel agencies in İzmir are naturally expected to have wide experience in travel issues, but whether they understand incentive concept is to be questioned at the fourth section.

3. INCENTIVE TRAVEL IN TURKEY

In Turkey, full service incentive houses, incentive travel companies, and other incentive travel specialists does not exist for the moment. Some countrywide travel agencies recently started to establish specific divisions for business travel, and incentive travel programs are considered within the responsiblities of these divisions. These agencies have their head quarters mostly in Istanbul and they organize special events, meetings, seminars, conresses, motivational programs and incentive packages for their clientele, generally international.

Turkish travel agencies recognized the importance of incentive travels and its high profitability in 1990s and participated to Geneva EIBTM (European Incentive and Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition) in 1995 with The Turkish Ministry of Tourism. During this exposition 16 Turkish travel agencies spent 160.000 USD and met with more than 1000 participants from 86 countries (TÜRSAB 1995).

TÜRSAB (Turkish Association of Travel Agencies) then organized two international congresses and incentive travel workshops, first in İzmir in 1997, latter in Antalya in 1998. 80 buyers from 20 countries, 15 speakers from 10 international institutions and 65 Turkish tourism establishments including travel agencies, hotels and airlines participated to Antalya Workshop (TÜRSAB 1998a). On the other hand, SITE realized one of its traditional annual meetings in İstanbul, in 1998 (TÜRSAB 1998b).

Incentive industry is on progress in Turkey, but cash and merchandise awards are more popular than travels. The reasons behind this fact might be, the countrywide poor economic conditions, outdated management styles which is not compatible with current competitive markets, absence of financially strong large companies. However, multinational corporations those have operations in Turkey seem to bring new managerial techniques and the incentive travel concept familiar to Turkish companies.

Turkey has distinctive advantages in the incentive travel market as a destination some of which are; new acommodation units, geographical situation, tourism attractions, price attractiveness, and being a new destination (Gülcan 1999).

4. TURKISH TRAVEL AGENCIES' PERCEPTIONS OF INCENTIVE TRAVEL

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify and explore incentive travel perceptions of Turkish travel agencies based in İzmir-Turkey. Within this context the research aims also to clarify some aspects of incentive travel in Turkey for the first time. For example, incentive destination choices regarding Turkey's inbound and outbound incentive travels, seasonality of incentive travels in Turkey, average duration of incentive travels, average participant number, major incentive travel buyers, accommodation preferences of Turkey related incentive programs, average cost of an incentive package are questioned. A four-page questionnaire was designed to obtain the relevant data. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions to gather basic introductory information on the field. The research is a descriptive one about Turkish travel agencies' incentive travel use and understanding level. Because of its descriptive nature close-ended questions were preferred to obtain clear, precise, basic, general information on the field.

SAMPLING

While sampling whole list of all travel agencies based in İzmir city center was obtained from TÜRSAB (The Association of Turkish Travel Agencies) İzmir representatives. But, because of time, distance and cost limits a multi-stage clustered sampling strategy is used to exclude some of agencies from the list. Travel agencies belonging "Group A" category were preferred for questionnaire distribution. Groups of AG, B and C categories were excluded from the list, as they were less in number and their operational expertise were also limited by laws, lower budgets and limited staff. The final sample was all "Group A" category travel agencies based in İzmir city center. At the time of research 132 "Group A" travel agencies were actively functioning in sample area. The respondents were distributed questionnaires personally after 1st October 2000 and final responses were received at January 11th in 2001. 100 respondents over 132, (76 % return) a number enough to represent the sample (Sekeran 1992), responded to the questionnaire by face-to-face dialogues. Respondents were warned to answer the questions for not expressing their personal opinions, but answering them on behalf of the travel agency they are working. The data obtained from questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS Statistical Software Programme.

Questionnaire contained 5 sections. At the first section general profile of travel agencies was identified. At the second section travel agencies who know the incentive travel concept are given a few more questions. At the third section travel agencies organizing incentive travels are questioned in-depth. The fourth section contained questions for travel agencies those knew incentive travel concept but did not practice it. The fifth section of the questionnaire contained questions for travel agencies those have neither information, nor experience on incentive travels.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section One:

Profiles of respondents of the questionnaires indicated that 45 % of them were females, 55 % males. Professional status of respondents were 50 % middle and top level managers, 25 % lower level agency employees, 14 % owners and 11 % owner-managers. By ensuring high level professionals' participation to the questionnaire it's hoped to increase reliability of responses. 69 % of travel agencies owned corporate e-mail adresses, 31 % did not. At the end of year 2000, the rate of e-mail adress ownership seemed low, however it would be better to compare this rate with other nations. 43 % of travel agencies have been in operation for over 10 years, 24 % for 4-6 years, 18 % for 1-3 years and 15 % for 7-9 years. A great majority (62 %) of travel agencies questioned had single offices. 14 % had 2 offices, 10 % had 3 offices and 14 % had more than 4 offices or branches including the main branch. Ownership status of travel agencies indicated that 80 % of them were independently owned and 20 % belonged to larger corporations or groups of companies. Those independently owned were mostly family entreprenerships. Half of travel agencies employed 5 or less persons, while 23 % employed 6-10 employees, 19 % employed over 16 employees and only 8 % employed 11-15 employees. Among employees with tourism education background 46 % were graduated from travel certification programmes, 21 % had BA in tourism, 15 % were graduated from vocational schools (2 year education after highschool), 4 % from tourism oriented high schools, only 1 % received post-graduate degrees in tourism. Education level of employees in travel agencies is low and might be a good reason for many weaknesses observed about travel agencies. 13 % of employees had no tourism-related education. Primary revenue resources of travel agencies were: 29 % ticketing, 28 % incoming operations, 21 % outgoing operations, 10 % car rental services, 7 % ingoing tours, 2 % daily exursions and 3 % other.

Section Two:

Of 100 travel agencies questioned 62 % had information about incentive travels, 38 % did not have. Those who said that they knew the incentive travel concept generally did not have clear ideas on the subject. These agencies mostly confused incentives, motivations, promotions, meetings, business travel, and incentive travel. 60 % of incentive aware travel agencies believed that they had high level of information on the subject, 26 % said they had medium level of information and 14 % said they had poor level of information. Incentive aware agencies were asked from which resources they first heard about incentive travels, 40 % announced that they learned incentive travel concept from tourism companies for the first time, 26 % from professional magazines, 16 % from academic area, 3 % from media and 15 percent from other sources. Agencies belonging to last category revealed that first source of learning incentive travel were sponsoring firms for them. This indicates a serious problem for travel agencies, that an important part of travel agents are not aware of the latest developments in the industry timely. A quarter of them learns the novelties of the industry from peers, and reading industrial publications is not well practiced. Non-touristic firms seem to have better self-updating capabilities. 61 % of incentive travel aware travel agencies have participated to fairs or exhibitons related with incentive travel.

Section Three:

When questioned in-depth, of all incentive travel aware agencies 65 % declared that they have been organizing incentive travels, 35 % had information about this travel type but did not use it. From a global point of view, 40 out of 100 agencies (total sample was 100) said they were organizing incentive travels. When the complex and specific nature of incentive travel is considered this number does not seem relevant.

Perception of incentive travel among Turkish travel agencies is highly questionable at this point. Travel agencies those organize corporate meetings, reserve hotel rooms for a group of businessmen, issue tickets to companies, offer transport services to already arranged business travels consider themselves as organizing incentive travels which creates a fallacy. 32,5 % of incentive organizing travel agencies said they had been organizing such travels for over 7 years, 30 % for less than 2 years, 22,5 % for 5-6 years and 15 % for 3-4 years. Interestingly, 13 % of the total sample declared that they had been organizing incentive travels for more than 7 years. When the short history of incentive travel in Turkey is remembered, this number seems high for İzmir alone. These agencies were mostly branches of İstanbul and Antalya based large travel agencies and tour operators and most of the times they were completing a part of incentive travel planned by head branches. 47,5 % of incentive organizing travel agencies said that they had a specific department for incentives. A percentage indicating irrealistic perception of incentive travel among agencies. A great majority of these agencies in fact had a desk and a clerk for business travel purposes, only a few (5-7 agencies utmost) of them had specific offices for business travel. Those having clerks for business travel assumed that they might be also representatives for incentive travel. Incentive travel perception is confused with other parts of business travel.

Table 1: Average Number of Incentive Travels Organized Per-year

	n	*%*
1-3	13	32,50
10+	12	30,00
4-6	10	25,00
7-9	5	12,50
Total	*40*	*100,00*

As seen on Table 1 above, 32,5 % of agencies organized 1 to 3 incentive travels per year, 30 % organized over 10 travels, 25 % organized 4 to 6 travels, and 12,5 % organized 7 to 9 travels annually. According to "Travel Facts Report" of year 2000 released by Incentive Magazine, annually in USA, 48 % of incentive travel users organize 2 to 5 travels, 30 % more than 10, 11 % only one, 11 % 6 to 10 (http://www.incentivesatwork.com). Therefore, both in USA and in Turkey the number of incentive travel programs run annually is consistent, especially when the numbers over ten and minus ten are considered.

55 % of incentive travels were organized in autumn, 17,5 % in spring, 17,5 % in summer and 10 % in winter. The seasons preferred for incentive travels give very meaningful clues to tourism policy makers who try to extend the high season (summer mostly) to other times in order to distribute tourism activities to the whole year. Incentive travel can greatly help Meditrerranean countries to overcome seasonal density. 90 % of incentive travels organized were collectively and only 10 % individiually.

Table 2: Origin of Companies Using Incentive Travel Services

	n	*%*
National	20	50,00
Both (National + Foreign)	18	45,00
Foreign	2	5,00
Total	*40*	*100,00*

Table 2 shows that, 50 % of travel agencies organize incentive travels only for domestic firms, 5 % only for foreign firms and 45 % for both. Half of travel agencies have links with international companies. These relationships may help travel agencies develop faster in incentive field.

Table 3: Turkish Destination Choices of Foreign Companies

	n	*%*
İstanbul – Marmara Region	11	55,00
Antalya – Mediterranean Region	4	20,00
Other	3	15,00
Cappadocia – Central Anatolia	2	10,00
Total	*20*	*100,00*

According to Table 3, top incentive destinations in Turkey for foreign firms are, 55 % İstanbul, 20 % Antalya, 10 % Cappadocia - Central Anatolia and 15 % other. Turkish travel agencies’ attitudes towards incentive travel are generally not distinct from other types of travels. They have a tendency of using their already established industry links for incentive travels too. Incentive travels, by their very nature, are to be organized at new or undiscovered, strange, different destinations.

Table 4: Incentive User Turkish Companies According to Business Groups

	n	*%*
Dealership-distribution	17	45,00

Pharmacy – medicine	8	21,00
Consumer supplies	5	13,00
Auto aftermarket	3	8,00
Finance – insurance	2	5,00
Other	2	5,00
Office supplies	1	3,00
Total	*38*	*100,00*

Table 4 indicates that, 45 % of incentive using Turkish companies are distributors or dealers, 21 % pharmaceuticals & medicine, 13 % consumer supplies, 8 % auto aftermarket, 5 % inance & insurance, 3 % office equipment, 5 % other. The incentive travel users in Turkish economy are consistent with historical/traditional incentive users globally.

Table 5: Average Incentive Travel Length of Turkish Companies

	n	*%*
1-2 days	4	11,00
3-4 days	24	63,00
5-6 days	8	22,00
7+ days	2	4,00
Total	*38*	*100,00*

Average trip length for domestic companies are 63 % 3-4 days, 22 % 5-6 days, 11 % 1-2 days, and 4 % over a week. The lengths given here are for domestic travels, and they are consistent with travel lengths abroad such as in USA where it is 4 nights for domestic travels, 6 nights for international travels on average (http://www.corporate-images.com).

Table 6: Average Incentive Participant Number for Turkish Companies

	n	*%*
100+ persons	14	37,00
34-66 persons	10	27,00
01-33 persons	7	18,00
67-99 persons	7	18,00
Total	*38*	*100,00*

Average group size for domestic companies are over 100 persons (37 %), 34-66 persons (27 %), 01-33 persons (18 %), and 67-99 persons (18 %). Average group size per trip in USA in 1995 was 70 according to Corporate Meetings and Incentive Magazine (http://www.corporate-images.com).

Table 7: Use of Meetings by Turkish Companies During Incentive Travels

	n	*%*
Yes (using)	34	89,00
No (not using)	4	11,00
Total	*38*	*100,00*

89 % of domestic firms schedule meetings during the travel. In USA, 51% of companies schedule meetings during the incentive trips (http://www.corporate-images.com). The high percentage of meetings in Turkish incentive trips explain why it's not true to call all of them as incentive travels, because a great amount of so-called incentive travels in Turkey are generally meetings organized for dealers somewhere distant from city centers.

Table 8: Average Age Distribution of Turkish Incentive Travellers

	n	*%*
40-49 years	26	68,00
30-39 years	11	29,00
50+ years	1	3,00
Total	*38*	*100,00*

Average domestic participant age distribution; 40-49 years (68 %), 30-39 years (29 %), 50+ years (3 %). During interviews, it's also realized that majority Turkish incentive participants are male, and spouses are seldom invited to the trips.

Table 9: Overall Incentive Destination Choices of Turkish Companies

	n	*%*
Domestic & International	28	73,00
Domestic	9	24,00
International	1	3,00
Total	*38*	*100,00*

73 % of domestic firms prefer both national and international destinations for incentive programs while 24 % prefers only national destinations and 3 % prefers only international destinations.

Table 10: Top International Destinations of Turkish Travellers

	n	*%*
Europe	14	48,00
Pacific Rim	9	32,00
Middle East	3	11,00

North America	1	3,00
South America	1	3,00
Other	1	3,00
Total	*29*	*100,00*

Of those Turkish incentive users favoring international destinations 48 % prefer Europe as top international incentive destination, 32 % prefer Pacific Rim, 11 % prefer Middle East, 3 % prefer North America, 3 % prefer South America and 3 % prefer other international destinations. Turkish incentive travellers tend to travel to Europe, especially Eastern Europe with short distances but exotic far east countries such as Thailand, Hong-Kong, Singapore, China also attracts them.

Table 11: International Travel Use of Turkish Companies by Incentive Program

	n	*%*
Dealer	22	76,00
Consumer	3	10,00
Salesforce	2	7,00
Non-sales employee	2	7,00
Total	*29*	*100,00*

Of those travel agencies who said they served to Turkish companies in international destinations; 76 % said companies used international travel in dealer programs, 10 % in consumer, 7 % in salesforce, and 7 % in non-sales incentive programs.

Table 12: Domestic Incentive Destination Choices of Turkish Travellers

	n	*%*
Antalya - Mediterranean	27	73,00
Others	6	16,00
Cappadocia – Central Anatolia	2	5,00
Eastern Black Sea	1	3,00
Muğla – Southwest Anatolia	1	3,00
Total	*37*	*100,00*

National incentive destination choices of domestic firms are as follows; Antalya (73 %), Cappadocia (5 %), Muğla (3 %), Eastern Blacksea Region (3 %), and others 16 %. Domestic destinations for Turkish incentive travellers are two: Antalya and the rest of Turkey. Antalya has the biggest attraction for Turkish citizens whereas foreigners preferred İstanbul as top Turkish destination.

Table 13: Domestic Travel Use of Turkish Companies by Incentive Programs

	n	*%*
Dealer	25	68,00
Consumer	5	13,00
Salesforce	4	11,00
Non-sales employee	3	8,00
Total	*37*	*100,00*

Of those travel agencies who said they served to Turkish companies in domestic destinations; 68 % said companies used domestic travel in dealer, 13 % in consumer, 11 % in salesforce, and 8 % in non-sales incentive programs. As seen at Table 11 and 13 above, Turkish companies use incentive travel (domestic nad international) mostly for their dealers.

Table 14: Accommodation Preferences of Domestic Incentive Travel Programs

	n	*%*
Hotel	30	81,00
Holiday Village	7	19,00
Other	0	0,00
Total	*37*	*100,00*

Accommodation types preferred for domestic incentive programs are as follows; 81 % hotels, 19 % holiday villages. The hotel choices depend mostly to the meetings facilities offered.

Table 15: Average Domestic Incentive Travel Cost (USD, per-person)

	n	%
$ 0 - 249	25	67,00
$ 250 - 499	8	22,00
$ 500 - 749	4	11,00
$ 750 - 999	0	0,00
$ 1000+	0	0,00
Total	37	100,00

Typical per-person costs of domestic incentive travel packages average, $ 0-249 (67 %), $ 250-499 (22 %), $ 500-749 (11 %). In USA, average cost of an incentive travel rises up to $1.642 in 1997 (http://www.incentivemag.com). Moreover, amount spent on trip per participant under $1000 is only valid for 17 % of trips in USA in 2000. In 2000, 10 % of American incentive travellers cost more than $4000 to their companies and average pro person cost exceeded $2000 (http://www.incentivesatwork.com). There may be several reasons for this considerable difference between Turkey and USA. For one, travel in Turkey costs less than most of Western countries as travel inputs are not expensive. Another important reason might be the complexity and rich content of American incentive travels versus simplicity of incentive travels in Turkey.

Section Four:

22 respondents who are aware of incentive travels but do not organize them were questioned to learn the reason behind this attitude. 55 % complained from unsatisfactory level of demand in the market, 14 % accepted the lack of adequate information on this travel type, 4 % complained from heavy costs which is reasonable, 4 % complained from lack of personnel specialized in incentives which is also reasonable. 23 % of them had other reasons for not organizing incentive travels, mostly telling that they do not want to start a business other than their traditional businesses. 36 % of these agencies declared that they would organize incentive travels in a short span.

Section Five:

Travel agencies that did not have information about incentive travel (38 %) were questioned furtherly to learn if they wish to get informed about incentive travels in the future. Surprisingly, 45 % of agencies had no desire to learn about this travel type in future. This result indicates the existence of poor management styles in Turkish travel agencies, which is mainly the result of family-ran business tradition and low level of education among all agency staff.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to explore and explain briefly certain aspects of incentive travel in Turkey and how Turkish travel agencies perceived, understood and used them. Because of limitative external factors, a sampling is made to reduce the number of travel agencies to be questioned. The study provided general profile of travel agencies in İzmir. Travel agencies in İzmir are generally small, independently owned, family-type businesses. Half of them employ less than 5 employees. A considerable amount of travel agencies needed education and training to catch up with latest technological or industrial developments. Employees in travel agencies needed to improve their knowledge and skills about travel industry. 13 % of employees did not have tourism-related information, but were employed by travel agencies. Ticketing was the biggest revenue source for a great amount of travel agencies. Tour organizations did not seem as lucrative as ticketing for many travel agencies.

Around 60 % of travel agencies were aware of incentive travel during the research time. Travel agencies those were unaware of incentive travel did not read industrial and academic publications regularly. 60 % incentive aware travel agencies believed that they had high or medium level information on the field, an exaggerated rate, perhaps to hide their ignorance at the interviewer’s presence.

Of all the samples, 40 % said they had been organizing incentive travels. Two third of incentive aware travel agencies claimed to organize this travel type. During the interviews it was found that a great amount of (approximately 75 or 80 %) so-called incentive travel organizing travel agencies were in fact organizing meetings or reserving hotellery and transportation services for corporate groups. Thus, they misunderstood incentive travel concept. The study showed that incentive travels are mostly (73 %) organized during off-season for Turkish travellers, which is a good point for overcoming seasonality problems. İstanbul and Antalya are top incentive destinations of Turkey and Turkish travellers Europe and Pacific Rim for incentive programs. Dealer-distributor incentive programs are the most common packages in Turkey. It’s hard to think meetings separate from Turkish incentive travels organized by travel agencies because 89 % of programs include meeting schedules. Hotels are preferred as accommodation units for Turkish companies for they provide meeting facilities. Average per-person incentive trip costs very low in Turkey compared to American prices. Incentive travels supplied to Turkish companies cost less than $750 per-person, whereas in USA average cost is over $2000 per-person.

Agencies who are aware of incentive travels but not organizing them complained from low demand and lack of adequate information on incentives. Still, one third of them were hoping to start incentive travel services in a short span.

Agencies unaware of incentive travels seemed to have poor management styles and half of them were not interested with this new travel product after completion of the study.

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