

# A MODEL PROPOSAL ON THE USE OF CREATIVE TOURISM EXPERIENCES IN CONGRESS TOURISM AND THE CONGRESS MARKETING MIX

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## ABSTRACT

*Tourism concept is changing in the globalising world and countries resort to diversification of their tourism. For renovation and diversity now have an affirmative effect on demand. At present, themes of culture, history, health, yachting, congress and excitement come to the forefront in order to improve the touristic activities covering the whole year. In this context, Congress tourism which is one of the diversity of tourism has so great an importance in terms of the extension of tourism season, enhancement of employment opportunities and tourism revenues, promotion of the area and more productive and efficient use of the facilities in the area.*

*Another diversity of tourism is Creative Tourism which is started in 2003 in the Nelson region with the help of the Nelson Bays Arts Marketing. ([http://www.creativetourism.co.nz/about\\_ourstory.html](http://www.creativetourism.co.nz/about_ourstory.html)). When examining creative tourism; creative tourism in New Zealand (CTNZ) initiative has been attempting to develop creative tourism into a sustainable business. A more sustainable form of tourism that provides an authentic feel for a local culture through informal, hands-on workshop and creative experiences. (Raymond,2007, 145)*

*Ensuring the attendants of congress tourism to take part in creative tourism, these two varieties of tourism may be considered together. Creative tourism experiences are included in the marketing mix established for congress centres, thus achieving marketing activities.*

*Tourism marketing mix is totally known as 8Ps made up of the initial letters of the words programming, packaging, partnership, person as well as those of the letters product, price, promotion, place which are called 4Ps. In this study, 8Ps of the tourism marketing are adapted to congress tourism and a model which illustrates how to use the creative tourism experiences activities within the marketing mix is proposed.*

## KEYWORDS

*Creative Tourism; Congress Tourism; Tourism Marketing Mix*

## INTRODUCTION

As in any other service sectors, conventional tourism concept has started to change in tourism which is one of the largest service sectors of the world. Instead of sea, sand and sun –commonly known as classical 3Ss of tourism, such varieties of tourism as *yachting*, *cultural*, *health*, *congress*, *creative tourism* come to the forefront.

Besides its season-extending effect for businesses and destinations, the importance of congress tourism is gradually increasing in Turkey due to its affirmative effects in economic, cultural and social terms. As in congress tourism, creative tourism experiences lead to development in economic, social and cultural terms in the area where services are rendered.

To look into the definitions of creative tourism which is a new variety of tourism, Greg Richards and Crispin Raymond, defined ‘creative tourism’ as “learning a skill on holiday that is part of the culture of the country or community being visited. Creative tourists develop their creative potential, and get closer to local people, through informal participation in interactive workshops and learning experiences that draw on the culture of their holiday destinations". ([http://www.creativetourism.co.nz/aboutus\\_ourstory.html](http://www.creativetourism.co.nz/aboutus_ourstory.html)).

Another definition of creative tourism is; a more sustainable form of tourism that provides an authentic feel for local culture through informal, hands on workshops and creative experiences. Workshops take place in small groups at tutor’s home and places of work; they allow visitors to explore their creativity while getting closer to local people. (Raymond, 2007, 145). These workshops are about destinations values: Art, Culture, Taste and Nature. The workshops are fun, informal. The participants will enjoy spending time with the tutors while picking up a new skill and creating their product.

Create own bone carving, clay or woodturning souvenir; learn to make silver, a hand-forged knife, kiwiana paper art, felt from a selection of wool fleeces; meet the wine maker; make your own cheese, olive oil blend ( <http://www.creativetourism.co.nz/index.html>) these are the interactive workshops and creative experiences in creative tourism in New Zealand. But every country has different kinds of creative experiences. For example, perfume making in France, carving and photography in Canada, folk music in Mexico. (Richards and Wilson, 2006, 1219)

Creative Tourism offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences which are characteristic of the holiday destination where they are undertaken. The key point about creative tourism, therefore, is that the consumption involved is active rather than passive and is aimed at developing the potential of the individual. (Richards, 2001, 65)

The major difference between creative spaces, spectacles and creative tourism is that creative tourism depends far more on the active involvement of tourists. Creative tourism involves not just spectating, not just “being there”, but reflexive interaction on the part of tourists who are usually thought of as “non producers” in traditional analyses. (Richards and Wilson,2007,18)

In the light of the explanations given above, creative tourism may be considered together with congress tourism. Those attendants who come for a congress may attend creative tourism activities, thus learning the social and cultural structure of the destination better, increasing the number of the days of their stay or making contributions to the economy of the area by making extra expenditure. Those attendants who leave in satisfaction both come to the area again and act as a positive reference for a great many people. To achieve this, creative tourism experiences are also included into the marketing mix at the time of marketing the congresses, thus affirmatively affecting the marketing activities.

### **CONGRESS TOURISM MARKETING MIX AND CREATIVE TOURISM**

Marketing mix is the set of marketing tools the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market. (Kotler, 2003, 15).From the viewpoint of P. Kotler’s basic marketing concept, the starting point of the marketing concept is the chosen market and its focal point is the identification of the customer requirements and needs in such chosen market in tourism marketing.

When Kotler’s basic marketing concept is adapted to the congress tourism marketing, one finds out that the starting point of the marketing concept in question is the congress and meeting market and its focal point is those firms which shall organise such congress and meeting and to obtain customer satisfaction by using a correct marketing mix. Marketing activities have a great importance in congress tourism. Therefore, marketing activities start before sales and continue after sales as well. The basic factor affecting the saleability of the congress and meeting services

is to be able to establish an efficient and correct marketing mix. For marketing mix is a bridge of the relations between the business and its markets.

First of all, when one wants to establish a congress tourism marketing mix, congress centres and congress hotels which are the major components of congress tourism must be evaluated as a touristic product each.

A touristic product appears in two ways. First of such ways is the tourism product which the natural, historical and cultural resources a country or area possesses constitute. And the second one is all the services which allow consumers to move and have a holiday, that is to say, all of the touristic services which constitute a package tour. Those components constituting a touristic product may be collected under three headings as follows: natural, cultural, historical, artistic assets and values of a country or an area which attracts tourists as well as those businesses, hotels, motels, restaurants, entertainment and sports facilities, travel agencies serving tourists and transportation businesses which allow tourist to move from one place to another and to reach their destinations (Hacıoğlu 1991, 39).

Even if the principal objective of congress and meeting services is different from holiday tourism, congress tourism is a touristic product in that it is supplementary to holiday tourism. From the viewpoint of the phrase “those businesses serving tourists or people” as indicated in Hacıoğlu’s definition above, congress hotels and congress centres are a touristic product each.

Historical, cultural and artistic assets of our country or any area as indicated in the definition are used within creative tourism. Those activities which may used for creative tourism in our country such as carpet weaving, olive oil making, soap making, molasses making, pottery, weaving, local embroidery (filigreeing, canvas embroidery, etc.), point lace, fruit wine making, etc. are also a touristic product each.

When one studies the touristic product which is the first P of the marketing mix in terms of congress tourism and creative tourism, one may evaluate it as follows:

- Those services offered by congress centres and congress hotels are also intangible. While marketing congress, travel agencies, tour operators or congress planners do not have any chance of testing and assessing the quality of the service. However, they may only have a chance to have an inspection trip (to obtain preliminary information about the hotel) and to

obtain some preliminary impression together with the authorised person who will organise the congress prior to the congress other than the promotional CDs or booklets. Information may be provided about creative tourism experiences in such promotions and trips and model practices shown as well.

- Congress attendants, congress planners or congress organisers must go the place where the service shall be rendered so that such service may be rendered, i.e. realised. Thus, the visiting attendants are interested in the cultural activities of that area and join in creative tourism activities. For instance, in an excursion to Şirince village organised for those attendants who come to the province of İzmir for a congress, the attendants accomplish creative tourism activities by learning how to make wine and by making wine themselves.
- As stated earlier, the features of the congress centres and congress hotels as well as the quality of service, physical objects, decoration, efficiency of meeting halls, uniforms of the staff members therein as well as natural, cultural and social structure of those destinations where such centres are located are all very important. For a touristic product is a complex product. All services are considered and marketed in the form of a package. Creative tourism activities may be included into such packages as well.
- Services of congress centres and congress hotels may not be stockpiled. Further, the fact that congress centres and congress hotels have different areas of use also enhances diversity in marketing terms. As we may use a congress centre or meeting halls for congress and meeting purposes in winter, such halls may also be used for various banqueting activities in summer. However, each term in which there are vacancies is a loss for the business. Therefore, pricing policies of congress centres must be a little bit different. Creative tourism activities are included in the pricing policy, thus affirmatively affecting the marketing activities in the off season as well.
- Leisure and personal income factors are a little bit different in the marketing of congress centres and congress hotels. It is because the congress attendants attend congress tourism due to their business trips and this is not included in their holiday periods. Further, as their travel expenses are usually covered by their respective companies, their personal incomes are not affected and this partly reduces the effect of the price factor from the standpoint of the attendants. Therefore, those congress attendants who participate in creative tourism activities included into the programme of a congress are willing to participate in such activities and enjoy the activities as they do not pay for such activities themselves. Such activities further enhance the motivation of the attendants.

- Requirements of the local people, cultural compatibility and touristic standards are extremely important in touristic product. Development of a tourist destination in a manner by which it shall be compatible with international tourism depends on the sincere desire and will of the local governments and communities to make their respective localities into a developed tourism station each and their adoption of the differentiation which tourism entails and brings about (Olalı and Timur 1988, 423). As Olalı and Timur support, any international and national congresses organised at congress centres and congress hotels enhance the quality of the destination as the educational and cultural level of the visiting attendants are high and this affects the living standard of the inhabitants of those places as well. In this way, creative tourism's objective of sharing some things with the local people has also been achieved.

Upon the study of congress centres and congress hotels as a product, price factor may be used together with creative tourism in congress tourism. Price has both an economic and a psychological role in the service sector. Psychological role of the price has been a little bit exaggerated in services for the consumer only relies upon price as an indicator of quality if the other service quality indicators are not available. In terms of its economic role, price determines the income of the business and affects the profits. Intangibility of a service naturally makes it difficult to fix a price for such service (İçöz 2005, 57). One of the factors which makes price important in terms of marketing is the fact that the effect of the price on sales may be monitored more easily than any other marketing components (*reported from İslamoğlu 2002, 226 by Özer 2004, 63*).

Requirement of intensive capital investments especially for congress hotels and congress centres and differentiation of customer characteristics affect the pricing issue. Particularly, high income and educational level of congress attendants and their sensitive behaviour towards the service rendered makes reasonable price more important. For price must both satisfy the consumers and bring profits to the business. Therefore, while fixing the prices, management must make correct decisions. Costs of creative tourism activities must also be included in the pricing. Those activities which are individually priced may not be taken into consideration by the attendants. Due to the fact that competition is an important external factor in the pricing strategies, the intensity of the competition affects the pricing policy to be pursued to a great extent. And the creative tourism activities as included in the price provide some difference from the competitors and enhance preferability.

Place/distribution channel which is the third P of the marketing mix is also evaluated from the viewpoint of congress tourism and creative tourism. As congress hotels and congress centres are service businesses, they make use of various distribution channels. However, first of all, one must identify the customer requirements and needs as well as distribution options, establish the most appropriate distribution system, evaluate the practicable options, design and apply distribution Networks and monitor the performance of the distribution channels (İçöz 2005, 265).

Stages in the formation of an efficient distribution system which İçöz has created may also be evaluated for congress centres and congress hotels. For the distribution system in congress tourism must also start with the identification of the customer requirements and needs, then the most appropriate distribution option must be established upon the identification of customer requirements and needs and the most appropriate distribution system must be applied.

Intermediary institutions in the system, i.e. hotel sales representatives, travel agencies, tour operators, meeting organisers, meeting offices, internet, incentive planners, destination management businesses, must be included in congress tourism so that the distribution system may be formed. Intermediary institutions are provided with information about creative tourism and activities are illustrated through model practices. Intermediary institutions tell their customers of such activities and promote the same at the time of marketing. Thus, intermediary institutions act as a bridge so that the creative tourism concept may be well understood.

When we study the intermediary institutions a little, we see that Hotel Sales Representatives work on various marketing actions containing such components as advertising, direct mail, public relations and personal sales, etc. (İçöz 2001, 362). As Tour Operators and Travel Agencies, however, purchase services and travel products in the tourism sector at large volumes and prepare a holiday package and sell the same to consumers either directly or through travel agencies (İçöz 2003, 197), they promote the hotel to those customers who demand a congress, create options in pricing, receive reductions due to their good and continuous relations with hotels and congress centres and provide them with information and advice in congress tourism. And Internet is a distribution service medium which is quite intensively used in communicating the advertising and promotional activities to the target group by congress centres and congress hotels. Incentive Travel Planners are such organisations which organise trips in order to motivate particularly their employees, dealers or customers. The objective here is both business and holiday. They usually organise package tours to a luxury hotel in an attractive resort, thus ensuring motivation. And

finally, Destination Management Corporations (DMC) are interested in meeting organisations in the cities where they are located. They provide such services as accommodation, booking, restaurant reservations, airport services, entertainment, technical services and special programmes. They are preferred as they have ample information about the area (Tavmergen 2004, 76). At the same time, they work with congress organisers (Şen 2003, 9). All intermediary institutions also work on the identification, investigation and, if necessary, learning by regions of creative tourism activities.

Entertainment, shopping, excursion, recreation and professional opportunities as included in the “extra conference opportunities” which are among the factors affecting the area choice of congress and meeting organisations through distribution channels (Crouch and Louviere 2004, 120) show that creative tourism is in fact included in the marketing of congress centres. In particular, participation in activities as spectator or attendant within recreation is included in the definition of the creative tourism.

Congress hotels and congress centres provide consumers with information about their own respective services and use the communication channels, intending to promote their sales. Being components of the marketing mix, such promotional instruments as advertising, sales promotion, personal sales, public relations, direct marketing, sponsorship and written communication (Cooper 2005, 642) become more of an issue especially in those periods when demand is lower.

Promotional activities make the intangible character of congress tourism tangible. In addition, such activities are used together with creative tourism activities, thus ensuring them to stick in the minds of consumers more easily. For instance, a congress organiser’s watching, practising, recording and then presenting to his/her customers the wine-making process during the promotional trip taken at the marketing stage of a congress enhances his/her preferability.

Demand for tourist destinations may display some instability due to some political, climatic or economic reasons. If this situation continuously persists, then the destination marketing managers make some arrangements in order to be able to make demand compatible with supply. Application of different prices is a programming method which is used in shifting the intensive demand which takes place in certain periods for a destination to the off-season (İçöz 2001, 46). This constitutes the fifth P of the tourism marketing.

Detailed and continuous new packages must be created so that congress hotels and congress

centres may be sold. And to do this, consumer requirements and needs must be continuously monitored and programmes compatible with such requirements and needs made. Here, it is intended to ensure the hotel or congress centre to be able to work for 12 months. It is to keep the occupancy rates at a certain level. It is to ensure that the occupancy rates in those months of *September, October, and November*, which we call low season, shall approximate those in those months we call high season. Particularly in low seasons, creative tourism activities may be an opportunity to create demand. At this point, success of programming is directly proportional with timing in congress tourism.

Package tours are a product combination which is constituted by those tour operators, producing businesses in certain holiday resorts or centres or those businesses which provide communication with such resorts or centres by combining holiday products (accommodation, transportation, catering, animation, etc.) and selling it as a single product for a single price (İçöz 2003, 222). In congress centres and congress hotels, a package tour means presenting services in the form of a package. Transportation, HB or FB accommodation, some rebates to be provided within hotel premises and coffee breaks are usually included into such services. Their being economical is pre-eminent among the reasons why such services are preferred in the form of a package. And creative tourism activities are also included in such package tours. Thus, both their promotion and their practicability enhance.

Another component of the tourism marketing mix, partnership has so important a place in terms of congress tourism and creative tourism. For tourism is an integrated industry. Without roads, there is no point in having a self-contained accommodation facility. Purpose of the most excellent airports is lost without accommodation facilities. Partnership is quite an important factor for congress centres and congress hotels as well. All corporations as included in the field of partnership with congress centres are each potential customers for creative tourism. While those attendants coming for a congress are directly included in the creative tourism activities, their environs constitute a potential customer as well.

In accordance with the requirements of companies, associations and public organisations, communicative systems through distribution channels, and depending on the size of the congress, hotels or congress centres choose a congress centre or hotel by considering the characteristics of destination and realise national or international congresses. And this shows the importance solidarity in congress tourism.

As for the last component of the tourism marketing mix, i.e. person, one must mention two major groups of people in service marketing. First of these groups is the employees of the businesses and the second one the consumers. For marketing to exist, there must be consumers available; consumers must be guided to services and made permanent customers; consumers must be satisfied by making or offering new and different proposals; and most important of all, there must be some interdepartmental cooperation within the business for the satisfaction of consumers. It is the employees who shall ensure such cooperation. Person factor is so important particularly in creative tourism. For it is a person who shall teach and implement the activities.

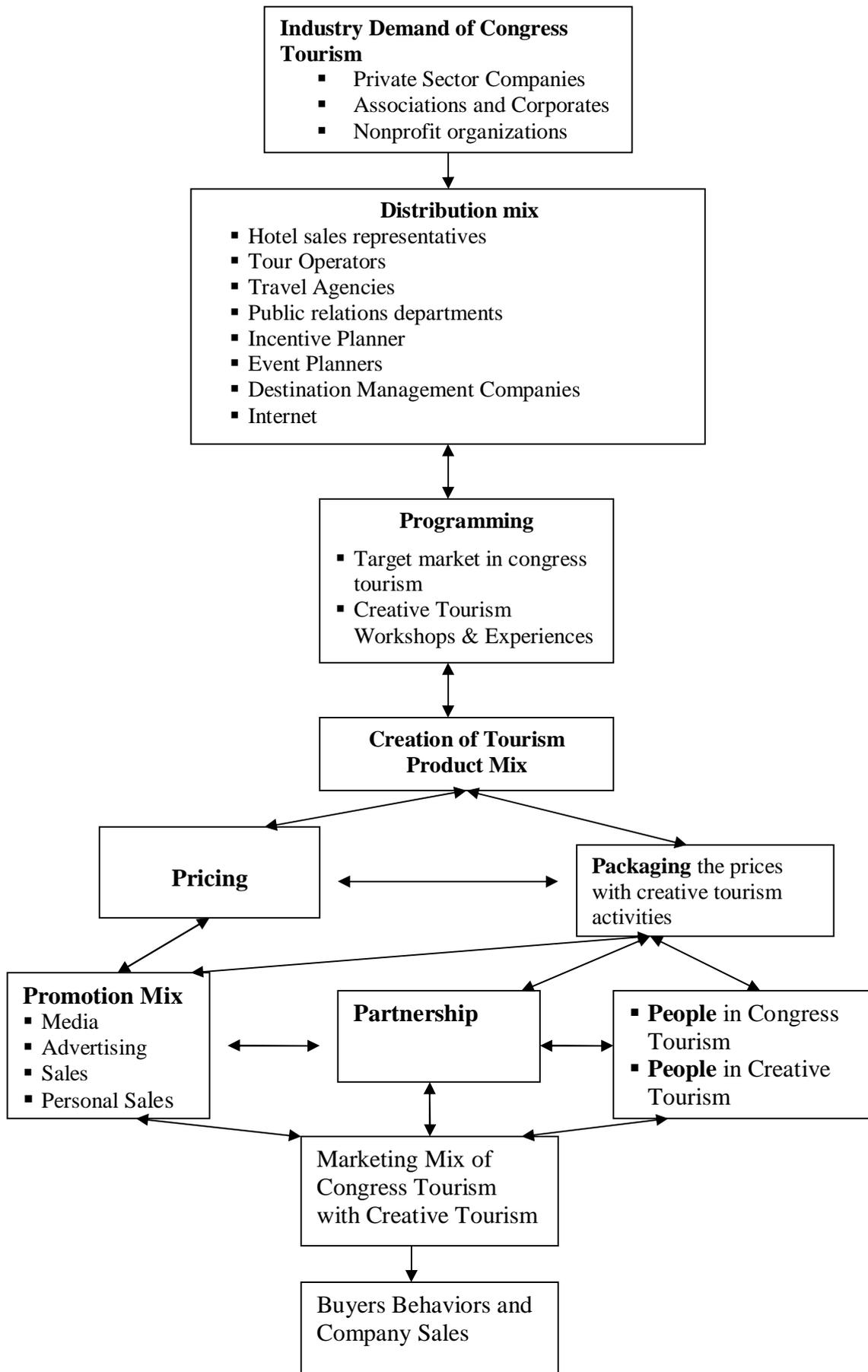
And one must look into the value factor which shall be presented to customers besides the person factor (İçöz 2005, 161):

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Product} + \text{Service} + \text{Position} + \text{Environment} + \text{Image}}{\text{Price}}$$

Considering the value and its components given in the foregoing equation in terms of congress tourism and creative tourism, our product is those businesses rendering the service required to be able to hold a meeting. Positions of such businesses may be so prestigious or so distinguished; they may have a proper image; the environment, i.e. the atmosphere of the business may be extremely comfortable and modern, but if there is any problem with the quality of the service rendered, the value to be presented to the customer shall not have any significance. Then the customer shall not be satisfied with the service rendered and direct his/her choice to other businesses. In this formula, the environment and image components contain the creative tourism activities. Creative tourism activities make some difference in the environment and this affirmatively affects the image.

## **A MODEL PROPOSAL ON CONGRESS MARKETING MIX**

Product, price, promotion, place, programming, packaging, partnership, person factors which are components of the tourism marketing mix have been adapted to congress tourism. Moreover, the mix has been enriched by including the creative tourism activities into this mix. A model is proposed for the congress tourism marketing mix which is described above as follows.



**Figure 1: Marketing Mix of Congress Tourism and Creative Tourism**

When one studies the foregoing example, one may see that there is first a demand for a congress and meeting from private companies, associations, unions and non-profit organisations. Hotel sales departments, tour operators, travel agencies, DMCs, event planners which are included in distribution channels both carry out target market surveys for congress tourism and evaluate the incoming demand. They schedule such demand according to the condition of the season and make a proposal for dates if necessary. Moreover, depending on the condition of the season, creative tourism activities are also studied and decisions are made as to what workshops and experiences shall be employed. Then a product which is suitable for the target market is identified and pricing stage commences. At this stage, the product may be priced both as a package and on individual basis. While making a package tour pricing, the rental for the place where the creative tourism experiences shall take place, instructors who shall organise the workshops, catering services as well as the costs of congress tourism activities are included into the price of the package tour. Once the price of the product so fixed, promotional works are started by cooperating with transport companies and catering companies and by considering the attractive aspects of the chosen destination. Sales promotion works are especially important for the promotion of the creative tourism experiences. And personal sales and advertising activities are employed in the marketing of congress tourism as well. In the latest periods, congress centres are very frequently promoted in the media. Finally, the mix is completed with the person factor. For the creator and instructor of the creative tourism experiences is a person. At the same time, realisation and success of the congress activities also depend on the person factor. Due to the fact that tourism is a labour-intensive sector, the importance of the person factor is not even disputed. The mix is formed after all these stages and sales are planned to be realised, considering the consumer behaviours.

### **Model Practice**

An interview was held with an organisation company operating in İzmir concerning the practicability of this model in June 2009. Practicability of this model for the marketing mix of an international congress which the said company shall organise in October 2009 was evaluated together with the director general of the company.

An association organising an International Women's Congress with the theme "changing and strengthening" presents a proposal to the members of the association, using the organisation company.

The company first plans which season of the İzmir region is suitable for this congress. The month of October when hotel occupancy rates and prices are lower is deemed to be proper for the

Congress. A creative tourism activity which is suitable for characteristics of the region is also considered within the congress.

An offer suitable for the details of the congress and creative tourism workshops is prepared for the congress whose details have been programmed. The offering stage progresses along with the pricing stage. At the pricing stage, such components as accommodation, transfers, operational services, guiding, rental of the place chosen for workshops, instructors, etc. are included into the price.

Due to the fact that the topic of the congress is related with women, an activity concerning the learning how to use the olive oil which is the women's secret of beauty is organised within the social activities of the congress. The participants are wanted to participate in the production of soap and shower gel and product such products at an olive oil company operating in the İzmir region. It is also planned that such shower gels and soaps so produced shall be offered for sale at the stands to be erected at the foyer of the congress and that the profit made shall be credited to the association.

The company first organises such promotional activities as preparing an e-bulletin in order to announce the congress to the members of the association, distributing posters to the members of the association, causing the sales representatives of the company to pay visits to the members of the association and distributing promotional booklets, interviewing with the person who shall be the workshop instructor and the head of the association about the importance of the congress. Moreover, an academician who shall emphasise the importance of the use of olive oil for beauty and health and an international lecturer concerning "changing and strengthening" which is the main theme of the congress are invited as well.

However, dressmaking and cake-making workshops which shall improve the manipulative skills of the women and ensure their consolidation are also organised for social activities of the congress within the hotel. In order to do this, the hotel's chef and the kitchen area of the hotel are used as a workshop. One of the halls of the hotel is prepared as a sewing area and training is provided under the supervision of the X sewing machine company which is a sponsor.

The company expects that the participation in the organisation shall be much higher with the inclusion of such activities. It is stated that these types of activities have an affirmative effect on people and motivate them for participation.

## CONCLUSION and SUGGESTIONS

Changes that have occurred in the world tourism and especially the changing consumer profile bring about radical changes in each and every field of the tourism sector. Due to the changes in the customer profile, changes are occurring in terms of both supply and demand, and therefore the 3Ss of tourism which we call seas, sand and sun start to leave their place to such different tourism products as *hunting, winter, faith, health, silk road, golf, youth, speleology, high mountain plateau, botany, congress, yachting, etc.*

Importance of tourism is increasing in our country with every passing day and such increasing importance brings about competition. Tourism is diversified in order to be able to stand against such competition and to maintain the market share possessed.

As it is usually preferable to organise congress and similar meetings in the off-season periods, such factors as its tourism season-extending effect and expenditure of meeting participants higher than that of regular tourists have caused the dimensions of this type of tourism to expand and organisations guiding the congress tourism movement to develop. Congress tourism is evaluated as one of the most profitable tourism activities in the world. In terms of a country, it provides a country with prestige as well as earning in foreign currency and contributes to the promotion of the country (İçöz 2003, 264).

At present, the fact that organisations or companies have become aware of importance of congress and meeting events and place importance on training, that mass transportation has become easier and faster with the development of air transportation, that audio-visual technology has been developed and the developments in the field of electronics all provide the meeting technology with resilience and creativity.

Although the basic objective of congress tourism is constituted by meeting organisations, a congress programme is not only consisted of meetings. At leisure other than in the times of meeting or after the meeting, various animation or cultural events, shopping, trips, excursions, etc. are organised. Therefore, congress activities must be compatible with other types of tourism in terms of time and space. In this context, combination of creative tourism and congress tourism may occur. Creative tourism experiences are included in the marketing mix of congress tourism, thus making congress tourism more efficient.

And in the proposed model, tourism marketing mix has been adapted to congress tourism and it is suggested that such creative tourism experiences as tile-making, pottery, carpet weaving, soap making, olive oil making, etc. should be included into the marketing mix, thus applying the marketing activities of congress tourism.

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