Opportunities of utilizing natural and cultural resources of Bornova (Izmir) through tourism

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Abstract

Bornova district in Izmir has undergone a continuous renewal with its urban functions and economic structure. Recently, the sectors of industry and services have left their marks on Bornova. On the other hand, although the nine villages affiliated to the district maintain their existence through agricultural sector, each has various problems (such as shrinkage of agricultural lands, reduction in diversity of products and productivity, migration to the city, and migration received from outside). According to the findings of the research, which is the subject of this paper, the rural areas of Bornova have not lost their natural resources (such as valleys, forests, scenic beauties and water sources) yet. With the addition of proximity and easy access to the city, it is not so difficult for these resources to transform into attractions for ecotourism. The cultural resources of Bornova might be divided into two as urban and rural. However, beyond all, the finds dating to some 8,500 years earlier with the excavation at Yeşilova Mound within the district borders also cast light on the history of settlement in Izmir. The urban cultural resources of Bornova include the cultural centers of the Ege University alongside the mosques, churches, tombs and Levantine mansions at the district center, whereas the rural cultural resources mostly include assets of the local culture in the villages and even though they are getting lost, at least their cultural landscapes are preserved. The aim of this paper is to put forward how the natural and cultural resources of Bornova might be utilized through ecotourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism provided that they are turned into touristic products. The research, which is the subject of the paper, has been prepared with the approach of tourism geography and completed after performing the stages of data collection, geographical observations, interviews with the authorities, mapping, analysis and synthesis. It can be concluded that Bornova offers supply potential where types of ecotourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism as well as innumerable activities based on them might be developed. It is possible to state that urban population and primarily the youth at university and the university staff are ready to demand this potential and, therefore, marketing cannot be difficult at all.

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1. Introduction

In its new conceptual structure, tourism has become far from being dependent on sand-sun-sea and holiday and it has become a phenomenon that integrates with requests such as entertainment, sport, excitement, discovery of culture, and gaining of health. So, demands for places with a wide variety of services and high quality have increased as much as those for conserved, extraordinary, interesting and isolated places. Places that create demands for tourism have acquired these features depending on the presence of some of their strengths. These sources of strength are also called attractions. Attractions constitute a significant portion of a touristic product and play a role in a tourist’s preference of his destination to another place. A touristic product is mostly offered as a compound product. A compound product in tourism consists of complementary products such as natural and cultural resources, transportation, accommodation, eating & drinking, and entertainment services.

Attractions are also directly correlated with the quality of the services that are provided, beyond natural, cultural and social attractions. The availability of establishments to meet all needs of tourists constitutes the facilities in an attraction. Moreover, the image of a destination in regional, national and international platforms has an impact on personal preferences, too. Each attraction has a specific image or images. The real aim of the marketing of an attraction should be to develop and alter images or to make images permanent so as to influence the expectations of potential tourists. The prices applied in an attraction are also a crucial factor that plays a role in the selection of a resort. In other words, they are the source of attractiveness and the competitive power.

Diversification of touristic products has recently been referred to as establishments’ and countries’ presentation of new products, which will create some direct strength of attraction, to the market in order to maintain or develop their market shares [1]. Diversification of touristic products primarily depends on the supply potential. Those countries which are willing to acquire more income from tourism and to take a good place within international tourism market have to extend tourism throughout the whole year. Therefore, it is required to diversify tourism. Concentration in specific places is also prevented with diversification of touristic products. So, it is possible to reduce spatial and temporal concentrations through diversification of touristic products.

When developing a new product in a touristic attraction, those products which will not inflict damage to the existing image of the attraction should be created. At the same time, it is necessary to offer those products, with which individuals to be the target mass of the new product will not feel ordinary but special and different. A new touristic product should mediate to realize the following [1,2].

- It should have the qualifications to answer the change in demand;
- It should provide an increase in employment;
- It should provide tourism with new regions;
- It should be able to solve the problems experienced in tourism;
- It should have competitive power.

Types of tourism such as youth tourism, third age tourism, plateau tourism, golf tourism, faith tourism, health tourism, thermal tourism, winter tourism, cave tourism, congress tourism, hunting tourism, rural tourism, white water tourism, cultural tourism, yacht tourism, botanic tourism, ecotourism and sports tourism might be utilized in diversification of touristic products.

Alternative tourism is one of the concepts that are mentioned in the context of diversification of touristic products. There are two basic approaches to alternative tourism: the first one is that it is dependent on and complementary to other types of tourism, whereas the second one is that it is stimulated with more special issues with features that are different from those of traditional tourism.

Under the present competition conditions, it is necessary to renew the existing touristic products or to develop new ones. Those destinations which fail to accommodate to this change will be confronted with losing their market shares.

Bornova is one of the metropolitan districts of İzmir. It is located some 11 km east of the city center of İzmir and the Gulf of İzmir (Fig. 1).

According to the results of ABPRS (Address-based Population Registration System) of 2009, the
population of the district center is 402,453 people and the total population is 409,009 people in Bornova. In this case, 98% of the district population consists of the urban population. The rural population of the district (2%) has been concentrated in 12 villages (Çamiçi, Çiçekli, Beşyol, Eğirdere, Gökdere, Laka, Karaçam, Kavaklıdere, Kayabibi, Kurudere, Sarnıç and Yaka).

While Bornova used to be a small village in the past centuries, it became a “summer town” that was famous for its “Levantine mansions” in the 19th century. Bornova was a unique recreational area with its plain, on which any species of vegetable and fruit were cultivated, as well as with its innumerable drinking water springs, forests, and fresh air, and it preserved this attribute for years [2]. However, with industrialization, considerable migration, establishment of the Ege University and an increase in the number of soldiers after the 1960s, the district acquired an urban character and lost its earlier identity.

Tourism does not have any place in the economy and urban functions of Bornova. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the district lacks potential for tourism. There are many reasons why tourism has not developed in the district so far. They are itemized as follows:

- The Bornova Plain was opened to industrial facilities as of the 1960s.
- The Ege University was established on the Bornova Plain in 1955.
- Military units have extensive areas in various sections of Bornova.
- The natural and cultural resources of Bornova have never been regarded as “touristic products” (absence of awareness and consciousness).
- There has been no need for the development of tourism in Bornova.
- The districts on the coasts of İzmir have always created touristic demands, and the districts behind the coast have not been preferred.

Recently, and particularly for the last five to six years, tourism in Bornova has begun to give some signals of development. Although these developments are not fully referred to as tourism (because they are daily activities), they still occur as innovations in the district. Followings are the primary factors that play a role in the experiencing of such a transformation:

- There has been an increase in interest in different spaces and alternative types of tourism, except for coasts,
Mountaineering associations organize nature walks in the rural areas of Bornova,
Consciousness of the conservation of cultural heritage has recently increased; and the restoration of
old buildings and their use for cultural tourism have become widespread.
There has been an increase in the interest of urban people in organic agricultural products, village
restaurants and shopping in villages,
People have realized the presence of potential for nature- and culture-based types and activities of
tourism in Bornova,
There are university students, university staff and urban population in Bornova who are likely to
participate in tourism,
Urban people construct rural houses around the villages in the northeast of the district center of
Bornova,
The Bornova Municipality and the Ege University have joint activities and projects.
This paper aims to analyze these developments as regards tourism in Bornova and to underline the
things that might be performed from now on. In the study, first of all, the natural and cultural attractions
of Bornova that are suitable for tourism are briefly introduced and then the potential for development of
tourism in the district is addressed depending on types of tourism.

2. Natural geographical resources of Bornova and their value of attractiveness in terms of tourism

The district center of Bornova is located in the northeast of Izmir, on the southern slopes of Mt.
Yamanlar and at the margin of the Bornova Plain. Today almost all sides of the plain are open to
urbanization and industrialization, and agricultural fields have disappeared. The district land is
surrounded by Mt. Yamanlar, Mt. Spil and Mt. Nif, and the district border approaches the Gulf of Izmir
in the west (1 km). So, landforms of the district consist of a plain and its surrounding mountains. The
Belkahve Pass (260 m), which separates Mt. Spil from Mt. Nif, is located at the eastern margin of the
district [3]. The elevation of the district from sea level starts at 20 m in settlement areas and increases up
to 600 m in mountainous areas [4].
The streams of the district are characterized as brooks and tributaries, and some of them have been
included in canals, while most of them flow under contaminated condition. Some two small lakes, called
“Ikizgöl”, are located side by side in Bornova and are likely to be referred to as a landslide-dammed lake
depending on their formation. Maquis and calabrian cluster pine forests are the predominant formations
in the natural vegetation of Bornova. The climate of the district is classified as the Mediterranean
climate type.
Even though the mountains and forests of Bornova feature attractions for the development of
ecotourism and rural tourism, they are utilized only within the scope of daily recreational activities
today. The most performed activities include having breakfast and eating at rural restaurants, nature
walks, and picnicking. Within this framework, the nearby sites of Çiçekli, Yaka, Kayadibi, Çamiçi and
Kavaklıdere Villages; the forest recreational areas in Belkahve, Yaka and Çiçekli; and the Homeros
Valley are used most.
When this capacity of use of the natural resources of Bornova is considered, it might be stated that
their competitive power is weak, for they have not been turned into compound products yet.

3. Cultural resources of Bornova and their value of attractiveness in terms of tourism

The history of Izmir started in the Neolithic Age about 8,500 years ago. Ruins of the most ancient
settlement of Izmir were found in Yeşilova Mound on the Bornova Plain. Yeşilova was settled
throughout the Chalcolithic Age (some 6 thousand years ago) as well. The mound area was abandoned
in the Early Bronze Age (some 5 thousand years ago) and completely remained under the alluvial level.
The pottery sherds of the Late Roman-Early Byzantine period, the latest level of Yeşilova Mound, put
forward the presence of some scattered settlement. Terracotta seals; bowls, pots, and worshipping
objects; mussel, screw shell, and snail shells as regards nourishment; cutting, piercing, and scraping
tools; and weapons were found during excavations [5].

The most ancient form of use of the name “Bornova” was “Burunova”. Later on, the name “Birunabad” was also mentioned in records. When İzmir entered the Ottoman rule in 1426, the Turkish sovereignty initiated in Bornova. Depending on the revival of the economic life in İzmir as of the 17th century, Bornova was known as the town, where “European merchants” spent the summer months. The arrival of foreigners in Bornova further enhanced upon the extension of the railway line to the district in 1865. In 1891, the municipality was established in Bornova, and it became famous for its marketplace and eye-catching mansions. Some 2 mosques, a small mosque, one synagogue and 5 churches were mentioned. The central population of Bornova was 2,152 people during the same year [3].

As of the 17th century, Bornova became the focus of interest for many researchers and travelers (such as Evliya Çelebi, C. Texier, F. Hervé, M. Buch and Maximilian, the Archduke of Austria) and took place in travel books. In addition, Sultan Abdülaziz, an Ottoman Sultan, paid a visit to Bornova in 1893.

Apart from the Turkish population, Greek, Armenian and Jewish populations as well as the people (the French, the English and the Italian), who were called “the Levantine” and dealt with commerce in İzmir after having come from European states, lived in Bornova in the last era of the Ottoman State.

Bornova remained under occupation by the Greek for three years between May 16, 1919 and September 9, 1922. The greatest event that had an impact on the socioeconomic structure of Bornova in the 20th century was the “exchange of population”. Some Turkish population from many places of Greece (primarily such as the Crete Island, Florina, Resmo, Kavala and Salonika) arrived in Bornova between 1924 and 1930 [3].

Bornova, which has succeeded in surviving as a settlement for centuries, unfortunately cannot display any richness in historical works today. Only several mosques and turbes (tombs), a bath (Büyük Cami-1740, Küçük Cami, Alişir-Nezir-Beşir Türbesi, Dar-ul Kura-1577 and Bornova Bath) and several Levantine mansions (such as Charlton Whittall Mansion, Murat Mansion, Pandespanian Mansion, Matthey Mansion, Godfrey Giraud Mansion, Baltaci Mansion, Wilkinson Mansion, Paterson Mansion, Pagy Mansion, Bari Mansion and Varipati Mansion) have survived so far. Furthermore, a cemetery and 2 churches of the Levantine have survived up to the present.

In addition, there are some monuments from the early years of the Republic in the district of Bornova, i.e. Şehitler Anıtı (the Monument of Martyrs) (1928) and the Bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1926). Besides the Cultural Center, Culture & Art House, Natural History Museum and Botanic Garden of the Ege University, Bornova Cultural Center has cultural functions at the district center. The Spring Festivals of the Ege University, Bornova Independence Festivals and Pınarbaşı Traditional Camel Wrestles are held in the district every year.

There is no doubt that these cultural resources of Bornova all have a value of attractiveness in terms of tourism. However, it is observed that none of them has been turned into a touristic product nor has served tourism in real sense.

4. Opportunities Of Developing Tourism On The Basis Of Natural And Cultural Resources

The failure of all nature- and culture-based types of tourism in Bornova to show development at the present does not mean that there is no potential. The natural and cultural resources of the district, which have been briefly mentioned above, provide an opportunity for the development of some types of tourism:

4.1. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism refers to the integration of tourism with culture. Cultural tourism contributes to the conservation of cultural assets. Not only cultural tourism itself is a means of advertisement and propaganda, but also each cultural attraction individually is wealth, and none of them is superior to the other. Cultural tourism might take place alone or within other types of tourism and integrate with them.
From these perspectives, cultural tourism has a privileged position [6].

“Yeşilova Mound” ranks the first among the attractions that will provide an opportunity for the commencement of cultural tourism in Bornova. Mound’s story of thousands of years is a unique opportunity for cultural tourism. In line with this view, the initiation of “Time Travel Project” is a pleasing initiative. This project, which attracts students, emphasizes the educational dimension of cultural tourism and, therefore, accommodates to new tourism trends in the world. Establishment of an “ecomuseum” along with the project will make interest in the field permanent.

“The Levantine mansions and the Levantine culture” are some other riches for cultural tourism. The transformation of some mansions into museums might be considered within this framework. What is more important is that the opening of a museum that will display the social life of Bornova in the past centuries and exhibition of the Turkish culture (culture of Yuruks and exchangees) and the Levantine culture in Bornova side by side in this museum will add a new image to the city, thereby pioneering the development of cultural tourism. The most important institution to support cultural tourism in the district is the Ege University. Although the majority of the events held by the Ege University within its own institution have a cultural content, “tourism” dimension of these events has never been considered, which does not pave the way for cultural tourism. The Ege University should have joint activities with various institutions and organizations in the district and be the locomotive of this type of tourism.

4.2. Youth Tourism

Youth tourism embraces the trips and stays performed individually or in groups by young people, aged between 15 and 25 years, with the purposes of culture, sports, entertainment and recreation. Participants of youth tourism consist of students, backpackers, voluntary holiday makers or holiday makers by working, travelers for language learning, participants in cultural exchange program and etc.
Youth camps, scout camps, hostels and dormitories are used for accommodation in youth tourism. Bornova is an ideal venue for youth tourism. First and foremost, the campus opportunities at the Ege University (such as education, library, accommodation, eating & drinking, sports, art, entertainment, museum, observatory and botanic garden) are vital opportunities for this type of tourism. In addition, by opening hostels with an economical budget that will meet students from the world and the youth in the district, Bornova might transform into a “headquarters”, for the geographical location of Bornova enables easy access to many touristic places in the close vicinity, to the city center of İzmir and to natural and cultural riches. Moreover, the surroundings of Bornova might be accommodated to the use of the youth for outdoor sports.

4.3. Health Tourism

Health tourism is a type of tourism which tourists perform by going to a touristic region or to a treatment center in order to gain health or stay healthy. Today “medical tourism” and “thermal tourism” are demanded most in the concept of health tourism. When Bornova is evaluated from this perspective, the Ege University Hospital is a crucial source of strength. The hospital, which offers the most modern treatment alternatives by means of its many clinics, is nationally and internationally famous for the successful performance of various operations. Health services at the Ege University Hospital might be extended to include the tourism dimension, and it might have an economic contribution to the district in this sense, too.

4.4. Ecotourism and Rural Tourism

Ecotourism is an understanding of tourism that supports the protection of the nature and the cultural resources by understanding them, that envisages small groups during visits, that provides local socioeconomic development and that instills responsibility and protectionism.

Rural tourism is identical with ecotourism in terms of approach. Rural tourism is the touristic utilization of natural resources, agricultural fields, cultural heritage, rural houses, traditions and the products that have become a “brand” to reflect regional identity in order to provide local sustainable development and to create social solidarity between rural areas and cities. Rural tourism is a type of tourism, in which people go to a rural settlement in order to rest in natural media and to be together with various cultures, stay there and watch or participate in the unique events in that locality. Rural tourism, the events of which are enriched every year with the support of various local, national and international organizations, can draw people to rural areas for holiday in many countries of the world, thanks to its structure of protecting the nature and culture and of encouraging return to the past and to resources.

Development of ecotourism or rural tourism in Bornova is much easier than that of other types of tourism, for there are many spaces and routes in Bornova where ecotourism and rural tourism might be implemented. The villages, mountainous and forest areas, special agricultural products (such as cherry, grapes and olive) of the district and the rural culture might be used for these types of tourism. There are seven ecotourism route samples for Bornova in the work that was published in 2009 and entitled “İzmir Ekoturizm Güzergahları” (Ecotourism Routes in İzmir) [7]. One of them is introduced below:

Within the framework of the Tusenet Project, the Bornova Municipality has been conducting “the Sustainable Rural Tourism Activities” since 2007 [8]. Within the scope of the activities, the Geography Department of the Ege University has determined the rural tourism potential of the district and surveyed the local people. In line with the obtained results, the Bornova Municipality has carried out activities to design recreational areas in the villages of the district that have high potential for rural tourism. For instance, wooden sales stands, where local products can be sold, a playground for children and a breakfast garden have been built in the Çamiçi Village. In addition, a picnic area and sales stands have been opened for service in the Kayadibi Village.
Figure 2: Ecotourism Route of Çamiçi-Karagöl

**LENGTH OF ROUTE:** 7.8 km, asphalt, path and dirt road  
**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY OF ROUTE:** Moderate  
**DURATION OF TOUR:** 5 to 6 hours on foot  
**RECOMMENDED PERIOD:** March-June  
**MODE AND DURATION OF TRANSPORTATION TO THE ROUTE:** Transportation to Çamiçi Village by private vehicles (7 km, 15 min)  
**OPPORTUNITIES:** Coffeehouse of Çamiçi Village, shopping, village breakfast, Karagöl picnic area, parking lot, tap water, buffets, rural coffeehouses, convenient areas for strolling around the lake, collection of natural medicinal plants and watching the scenery  
**NATURAL BEAUTIES:** Karagöl, calabrian cluster pine and black pine forests, scenic beauties  
**CULTURAL FEATURES:** Culture of rural life in Çamiçi Village  
**PLACES TO SEE IN THE CLOSE VICINITY:** Bornova (7 km), Forum Bornova (11 km) and Yeşilova Mound (13 km) from Çamiçi

In conclusion, it might be stated that ecotourism and rural tourism will enter a development process soon provided that the endeavors for both types of tourism in Bornova are sustained, for the district has potential of urban population and students that might demand both types.

4.5. Sports Tourism

Sports tourism refers to people’s going to a place for sports, entertainment and recreation and carrying out or watching sports activities. Today sport is regarded as an integral part of a healthy life.
Thus, sports tourism might develop depending on only one or several types of sport. In addition, touristic accommodation establishments attach great importance to sports activities such as tennis, table tennis, golf, sailing, swimming and volleyball. Particularly the sports facilities and students of the Ege University in Bornova and the other educational institutions of the district provide significant potential of supply and demand for sports tourism. On the other hand, besides current sports such as atv and paintball that have recently been observed, there are convenient places for trekking, climbing, riding a bicycle and a horse, and paragliding in the rural areas of Bornova. Sports tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and youth tourism have the opportunity of being easily applied in Bornova thanks to their features that complement each other. So, provided that those types of tourism which individually have weak competitive power integrate, they will turn into compound products and begin to attract demands.

5. Conclusion

With its urban population (98%) and urban functions, Bornova is one of the metropolitan districts of İzmir. Furthermore, it has 12 villages, and of them, Çamiçi, Çiçekli, Beşyol, Kayadibi and Yaka Villages still preserve their rural characters. Industrial and services sectors predominate in the district economy.

Although tourism is undeveloped in Bornova, daily recreational activities are carried out. These activities are represented with nature walking, picnicking, eating & drinking and shopping. It is not difficult to terminate the daily character of these activities and to perform them by staying. With this new structuring, which we may call rural tourism or ecotourism, pension operating might be initiated and boutique hotels might be opened in villages. The opportunities of sports tourism and youth tourism that might complement both types of tourism and the presence of a mass of university students to demand them are the factors that will facilitate the initiation of tourism in the district.

On the other hand, cultural tourism and health tourism may also be developed in the district. Both have privileges that are capable of turning Bornova into a “brand”. Bornova is a special district with the most ancient settlement area where settled life started in İzmir some 8,500 years ago. In addition, the Levantine mansions still reflect the past centuries of Bornova. As a health institution, the Ege University Hospital has the capacity to serve health tourism.

While the rich agricultural character of the Bornova Plain has been destroyed with industrialization for the last four decades, at least mountains, forests and several villages should be preserved, for they are also threatened by collective housing, fire, receiving of migration and etc. At this point, Bornova should absolutely meet tourism and refer to tourism to carry its natural and cultural assets to the future.

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