

A Study on Environmental Sensitive Facility Symbol-Green Star in Tourism Establishment Certificated Accomodation Facilities which Operate in Konya¹

*Konya'da Faaliyet Gösteren Turizm İşletme Belgeli
Konaklama Tesislerinde Çevreye Duyarlı Tesis Simgesi-
Yeşil Yıldız Üzerine Bir Araştırma*

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ÖZ

Son yıllarda turistik destinasyonlar bulunduğu doğal çevrenin yapısını olumsuz bir şekilde etkilemeye başlamıştır. Destinasyonlardaki resmi kurumlar turizmin ortaya çıkardığı bu olumsuzluğun giderilmesi için bir takım tedbirler alma çabası içerisine girmişlerdir. Gelecek nesillere daha yaşanabilir bir dünya bırakma amacıyla turizme düşen görevlerden birisi de sürdürülebilir turizm anlayışının benimsenmesidir. Birçok ülkede resmi organlar sürdürülebilir turizm anlayışının gereği olarak bazen zorunlu bazen de tavsiye niteliğinde kararlar almaktadır. Dünya turizminde son dönemlerde önemli aktörlerinden olan Türkiye'de ise turizmle ilgili en üst düzeyde kuruluş olan Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı'nda sürdürülebilir turizm için çevrenin korunması, çevre bilincinin geliştirilmesi, turistik tesislerin çevreye olan olumsuz etkilerinin giderilmesi, olumlu katkılarının teşvik edilmesi ve özendirilmesi amacıyla, "Turizmde Çevreye Duyarlılık Kampanyası" başlatmış kampanya dâhilinde turizmin önemli unsurlarından olan konaklama işletmelerine yönelik "Yeşil Yıldız- Çevreye Duyarlı Tesis Simgesi" vermektedir. Çalışmada Türkiye'nin önemli turistik destinasyonlarından olan Konya'da faaliyet gösteren (n=18) konaklama işletmelerinin günümüzün en önemli sorunlarından birisi olan doğal çevrenin tahribi konusunda ne kadar farkındalık içerisinde olduğunun tespiti. Araştırma sonucunda, konaklama işletmelerinin "Yeşil Yıldız- Çevreye Duyarlı Tesis Simgesi" belgesinden haberdar olmakla beraber yasal bir zorunluluk içermemesi nedeniyle

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kriterlerin içeriği ile ilgili bilgi sahibi olmadıkları, sadece bir konaklama işletmesinin “Yeşil Yıldız- Çevreye Duyarlı Tesis Simgesi” sahibi olduğu, zincir ve kurumsal konaklama işletmelerinin dışında genel olarak çevre politikası ve eylem planının olmadığı, yenilenebilir enerji kaynaklarının kullanımının yeterli şekilde önemsenmediği, ancak hemen hemen bütün otellerde enerji verimliliği ve tasarrufuna yönelik önlem ve çalışmaların yapıldığı ayrıca su kullanımı ve atıklar içinde yine gerekli önlemlerin alındığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

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ANAHTAR KELİMELER

Sürdürülebilir Turizm, Çevre, Yeşil Yıldız, Konaklama İşletmeleri.

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, touristic destinations have started to put a negative effect on the natural environment in their surroundings. The government agencies around these destinations have started taking some precautions in order to avoid this problem, created by tourism. One of the duties of the tourism is to adopt sustainable tourism on the purpose of leaving a more liveable World to the posterity. In many countries official bodies take sometimes advisory or sometimes obligatory decisions by force of tourism understanding. The ministry of Culture and Tourism which is an authorized institution and which has an important role in world tourism has started a campaign in an attempt to protect the environment for sustainable tourism, to improve the environmental consciousness, to decrease the negative effects of tourism facilities on environment and to encourage the positive contributions. Within the framework of the campaign the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism grants "Green Star-A Symbol for Environment-Friendly Facilities" to the accommodation services, which are one of the most important elements of tourism initiated as "Campaign for Environmental Sensivity in Tourism" for sustainable tourism. In this study, the purpose is to determine the levels of awareness in terms of the destruction of natural environment, within the accommodation facilities in Konya province (n=18), which is an important touristic destination in Turkey. The results indicate that the accommodation facilities are aware of the certificate called "Green Star-A Symbol for Environment-Friendly Facilities", but they are not informed about the contents of its criteria, as it does not bear a legal obligation; that there is only one accommodation facility, which owns a "Green Star-A Symbol for Environment-Friendly Facilities"; that none of them has an environmental policy and an action plan in general other than chain and institutionalized accommodation facilities; that the renewable energy resources are not taken into consideration sufficiently; however, almost all hotels have precautions for energy efficiency and energy save, besides taking necessary measurements for water use and waste materials.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable Tourism, Environment, Green Star, Accommodation

INTRODUCTION

In our century, there is a term in what we speak of, write down and what we try to apply as the shareholders of our social life: Sustainability. The United Nations Commission of Environment and Development has attracted attention over the term 'sustainability' in its manifest in 1987, stating "Human population is able to maintain their daily needs by making sustainable development available without jeopardizing their ability to provide the needs of upcoming generations". In our present day, the term of sustainability involves many focus areas such as sustainable environment, sustainable energy, sustainable development, sustainable health, sustainable architecture, sustainable life, sustainable cities and of course sustainable tourism as we speak of herein.

There are two factors, which reinforce the attention almost all countries pay in terms of sustainability. The first is that natural environment is losing its balance very quickly. Especially the global climate change and global warming result in radical changes in all activity areas of countries. G-20 countries define this change in their protocol published in a summit organized in 2009 as 'a transition to the low-carbon technologies and infrastructures, in which clean and innovative resources are utilized'. The second factor is the economic crises. The crisis has intensified and speeded up this discussion. Besides, it also forms a global consensus to perceive sustainability not only as an ecological, but also an economic and social problem. In our present commercial life, one of the most important areas is tourism. One of the key sectors in economic development, there is an outstanding increase in the number of persons, participating the tourism actions in recent years. According to the estimations of World Tourism Organization, the number of tourists all around the world will be 1.5 billion in 2020 and the total tourism income will be 2 trillion dollars (<http://mkt.unwto.org/en/barometer>, 2013). The estimations made so far also indicate that tourists do not destroy the natural resources, that there are environment-friendly facilities and that there will be an increasing demand for the areas in which historical and cultural features are preserved. Also, many tourism managements have spent a great effort to provide touristic products more intensively in order to provide the increasing tourism demand and this started putting a negative effect on the natural environment around which touristic destinations are located.

In recent years, governmental organizations in developed and developing countries have spent an effort to take some precautions also in tourism sector as in many other sectors, in order to adopt an understanding of sustainable tourism and to avoid this problem created by tourism. In many countries, governmental organizations make decisions either compulsorily or as a suggestion for a better understanding of sustainable tourism. The top-level

institution in Turkey in terms of tourism in world tourism as an important actor in recent years, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism grants “Green Star-A Symbol for Environment-Friendly Facilities” to the accommodation services, which are one of the most important elements of tourism within a campaign, initiated as “Campaign for Environmental Sensivity in Tourism” in order to protect the environment, to improve the environmental conscious, to decrease the negative effects of touristic facilities to their surroundings, to encourage positive contributions and to support them. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism closely observes the internationally accepted criteria and other developments to avoid the problems experienced related to the natural environment and prepared a form including the basic criteria (energy, water, consumption of dangerous materials to the environment, reduction of waste materials, increase of energy efficiency, encouraging the use of renewable energy resources, planning and realization of accommodation facilities by taking environment into consideration starting from investment stage, coherence of the facility with the environment, environmental landscape organization and activities, ecological architecture, consciousness raising in terms of environmental sensitivity, trainings and cooperation with related institutions and organizations) for accommodation facilities which are located at the main center of touristic activities in order to encourage the positive contributions of environmentally sensitive buildings, management characteristics and other features; and grants the managements a “Green Star-A Symbol for Environmental Friendly Facilities” by scoring each accommodation facility in accordance with their type and class. In the first part, the terms of sustainability and sustainable tourism are discussed in a conceptual framework and the methodology is described in the second part.

1. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND GREEN-STAR A SYMBOL FOR ENVIRONMENTAL-FRIENDLY FACILITIES

Although sustainability and sustainable development is quite fashionable in many platforms today, its actual meaning is open to discussion; however, the definition of ‘Sustainable development’ by Brundtland Commission is the most popular one and has been a minimalist definition along with many up-to-date sustainability discussions. In recent years, Simon Guy et.al., Simon Marvin and Graham Farmer developed such terms as ‘sustainable architecture’, ‘sustainable cities’ and ‘sustainable development’, which are quite open to discussion, taking many sustainability descriptions into consideration. Applying social constructivist analysis approach into sustainability, Guy et.al. claims that the separate but individually logical frameworks creating this sustainability environment involve a part of these individuals and limit the search of viewpoint including more than one society at the same time (Levine at al., 2006). No matter what is described herein, what we actually need to

understand is that all shareholders within a society should act in a certain balance and perspective with an environmental and social sensitivity besides maintaining economic expectations. On a conceptual level, sustainability is related to the maintenance and improvisation of combined natural systems in our world and the focus point is especially the humans, who are greatly affecting the environment and their actions (Egger, 2006).

Such effects as stress, fatigue, less social connections, etc. caused by business life and urbanization have led people to search for different needs to diminish such negative effects and directed them especially into tourism, one of the best solutions among this search. Being one of the keys in regional and local development, tourism has been discussed in terms of 'sustainability' in recent years and people start thinking that tourism is a part of human life as in almost all areas. However, the main problem here is how tourism will be more sustainable in the future and what action plans are required for this (www.spo.org.tr, 2011). Sustainable tourism is an understanding of protecting the environment without any modification or destruction, also with cultural integrity, ecological processes, biological variety and provision of life systems at the same time for all resources in order to provide the needs of both local population and the tourists, besides providing the needs of upcoming generations.

Tourism actually depends on the components of natural environment and the tourism areas, which give importance to green components by relating the touristic products with the environmental components, will make a great profit from tourism in subsequent periods (Özbey, 2011).

Today, the tourism concept must be made sustainable other than attaining short-term profits in relation to these discussions. The protection of natural, historical and cultural values in a destination depends upon an understanding of tourism only with right plans and policies (Sezgin and Ünüvar, 2011). Sustainable tourism requires the sustainable use of environment and resources by distributing the income to be obtained into the economy and society. Sustainable tourism emerged as a response to the negative effects created in a destination because of its random, unplanned, unscheduled and inappropriate development and is believed to sustain cultural integrity, ecological processes, biological diversity and human life systems by protecting the environment in human interaction areas, and at the same time, to maintain all economic, social and aesthetical needs of both local population and tourists and to improve the system in which the same needs are also provided for future generations (Sarkım, 2008).

The top-level institution in Turkey, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, one of the most important actors in world tourism in recent years, has initiated many projects to protect the environment for sustainable tourism, to improve the environmental conscious, to diminish the negative effects of

tourism facilities into the environment, to encourage positive contributions and to support them. Some of these projects are as follows (Hacıoğlu and Avcıkurt, 2008;128):

-*Blue Flag Project*: This is the international environment award for beaches and marinas.

-*ATAK Project*: This is designed to correct infrastructure issues and to define new shoreline management methods.

-*Belek Management Plan*: The purpose is to protect and improve the natural and cultural environment in partnership with World Organization of Protect the Nature and World Bank.

-*Upland Tourism Project*: This project is related to evaluation of natural beauties, ethnological and other attractive features of uplands in terms of eco-tourism in a protection-use balance of such values with touristic purposes.

-*Trekking Project*: This project aims to benefit from a planned approach of mountain-nature potential with touristic purposes.

-*River Tourism (Cano-Rafting) Project*: This project aims to benefit from rivers for touristic purposes.

-*Development Project for Cycling Tour Paths*: This project can be developed as an alternative tourism.

-*Horse Riding-Nature Walk Project*: This project is developed to attract the attention of investors and businessmen as an important eco-tourism activity.

Green Star-A Symbol for Environment-Friendly Facilities

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism also has a Green-Star Project other than the ones stated above, which is widely accepted among accommodation facilities in recent years. Green Star Project is a project, which grants a 'Green Star-A Symbol for Environment Friendly Facilities' to the facilities obtaining a minimum score in accordance with their number of stars, holiday and city management by evaluating them over 122 criteria with different points under 10 headlines. The hotels or holiday villages are painted green inside the stars in their boards after they are granted with a green star certificate and the board indicates a sign with 'Environment Friendly Facility'. Green Star Project was initiated in 1993 within 'Environmental Sensitivity Campaign in Tourism'. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism closely observes the internationally accepted criteria and other developments to avoid the problems experienced related to the natural environment and prepared a form including the basic criteria (energy, water, consumption of dangerous materials to the environment, reduction of waste materials, increase of energy efficiency, encouraging the use of renewable energy resources, planning and realization of accommodation facilities by taking environment into consideration starting from investment stage, coherence of the facility with the environment, environmental landscape organization and activities, ecological architecture,

consciousness raising in terms of environmental sensitivity, trainings and cooperation with related institutions and organizations) for accommodation facilities which are located at the main center of touristic activities in order to encourage the positive contributions of environmentally sensitive buildings, management characteristics and other features; and grants the managements a “Green Star-A Symbol for Environmental Friendly Facilities” by scoring each accommodation facility in accordance with their type and class.

The purpose of this study is to determine the criteria required in current accommodation facilities to obtain a ‘Green Star-A Symbol for Environment Friendly Facility’ by the Ministry of Culture and Education, to investigate the differences in terms of type and class of accommodation managements and to see the extent to which accommodation managements are aware of this situation in terms of the destruction of natural environment, which is one of the most important problems of our time.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1.SAMPLING

In this study, the hotel managements only in Konya province are included via using convenience-sampling method. According to the data by Konya Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism (Konya Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2013), there are 19 hotel managements with a tourism certificate in Konya centrum in September 2013 (3 of which have 5-star, 6 of which have 4-star, 8 of them with 3-star and one with a private certificate). The study is conducted with 18 hotel managements, excluding the one with a private certificate.

2.2.DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The scale, developed in 1993 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, is used to determine if the hotel managements located in Konya province have the criteria determined in terms of obtaining a Green Star-A Symbol for Environment Friendly Facility as defined by the Ministry (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2013). This scale involves 11 headlines and 122 items in total, each of which with a different score (total score is 678). For example, A) General Management aspect-13 items (ex: Having an environmental policy and action plan, 5 points); B) Education aspect-6 items, 15 points (ex: Management gives periodical trainings to the personnel to increase the environmental awareness and to assure the application of environmental precautions and actions plans, 5 points); C) Arrangements in rooms of a facility-23 items, 75 points (ex: Notification to the guests about environment friendly actions in written, visual/auditory materials in their rooms (newspapers, magazines, leaflets, closed circuit channels, etc.), 2 points; D) Coherence of the facility,

landscape organization and activities-6 items, 39 points (ex: Activities contributing the protection of historical, natural and cultural components of a facility); E) Ecological Architecture-8 items, 44 points (ex: The facility should be in accordance with the climate conditions in terms of its heat insulation and its cooling or heating sufficiently with minimum energy, 5 points); F1) Energy-1 (Precautions and actions for energy efficiency and energy save in a facility)-17 items, 101 points (ex: The facility uses motion or light-sensitive systems (in corridors, gardens, technical units, personnel areas, etc.) 4 points); F2) Energy-2 (The facility uses such renewable energy resources as sun, wind, geothermal, hydro, wave energy, biogas, etc.) -5 items, 149 points (ex: Use of such energy resources as coal or heavy petroleum products with many greenhouse gases into the air (with a sulphur rate of more than 0,2%, 5 points); G) Water-16 items, 57 points (ex: Time-set systems enabling automatic turning off for garden irrigation and kitchen, 2 points); H) Detergents, disinfectants and chemical substances-6 items, 16 points (ex: Use of disinfectants when hygiene is required, 2 points); I) Waste-12 items, 53 points (ex: Use of glass bottles, postmix, premix, etc. products instead of single use cans); J) Other services-10 items, 51 points (ex: Use of such systems as electronic correspondence, checks, invoices, etc. to minimize the paper consumption in administrative operations, 3 points). The managements are required to reach a minimum score or above as determined in accordance to their regions and facility type in their location in order to obtain a Green Star-A Symbol for Environment Friendly Facility from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. When the minimum points are examined in city hotels, it is seen that the minimum score is 250 for 5-star managements, 200 for 4-star managements, 170 for 3-star managements and 140 for 1 or 2-star and other management types (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Cultural and Tourism, 2013).

2.3.DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected via questionnaire are transferred into computer system via Statistical Packet Program (SPSS). The points given to the different parts in the questionnaire are calculated for each management. The points calculated are presented in a single table separately.

3.FINDINGS

3.1.CHARACTERISTICS OF HOTELS

The study involves 18 hotel managements in Konya province. The characteristics of these hotels are as follows: 47,1% of these hotels have three stars, 76,5% of them operating between 8-15 years, 41,2% of them with a number of rooms between 10-79, 64,7% of them on an independent property, 52,9% of them with a number of personnel between 50-249. The characteristics

of managers filling these questionnaires are as follows: 100% of them are male, 76,5% of them have a professional title of front office manager, 82,4% of them with a working period in the same hotel between 1-5 years, 70,6% of them with a total working experience in hotel management sector between 6-10 years, 88,2% of them at the age of 31-35, 94,1% of them with an undergraduate degree and 100% of them with an education in tourism-related areas.

3.2.RESULTS OF HOTELS' SCORES

In accordance with the research results made in Konya province hotels, the number of managements exceeding their minimum point in its own group (management type) is three (2 managements with 5-star and one with 4-star). It is seen that other managements are unable to reach the minimum score as defined for their own group. The results are presented in Table 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1: The Scores of Five Star Hotels

Criteria**	X*	Y*	Z*
A- General Management (GM)	60	28	50
B- Education (ED)	11	6	8
C- Arrangements in Rooms of a Facility (ARF)	54	39	50
D- Coherence of the Facility, Landscape Organization and Activities (CFLOA)	27	17	27
E- Ecological Architecture (EA)	40	33	35
F- Energy (EN)	107	40	103
F-1 Energy-1	67	20	65
F-2 Energy-2	40	20	38
G- Water (WAT)	41	15	40
H- Detergents, Disinfectants and Chemical Substances (DDCS)	14	10	16
I- Wastes (WAS)	22	10	24
İ- Other Services (OS)	32	21	30
Total Score	408	219	383
Mean	336		

*Five Star Hotels, ** Specified in Scales

When the results in Table 1, 2, and 3 are examined, it is seen that the average scores for management groups in terms of their types are 108 for three-star managements, 222 for four-star managements and 336 for five-star managements. Therefore, it is understood that the more stars the managements acquire, the more sensitive they are to the environment.

When the criteria defined by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism are examined in the table, the hotel managements with 5 and 4-star obtain higher scores in terms of energy and the ones with 3-star obtain it in terms of arrangements in rooms.

Table 2: The Scores of Four Star Hotels

Criteria**	U*	V*	W*	X*	Y*	Z*
A- General Management	78	35	39	16	44	28
B- Education	15	6	6	6	6	6
C- Arrangements in Rooms of a Facility	59	42	11	31	11	29
D- Coherence of the Facility, Landscape Organization and Activities	39	14	10	5	10	5
E- Ecological Architecture	42	10	14	13	15	14
F- Energy	186	29	16	46	31	36
F1- Energy-1	101	9	8	16	11	16
F2- Energy-2	85	20	8	30	20	20
G- Water	43	14	8	13	14	10
H- Detergents, Disinfectants and Chemical Substances	16	4	2	2	2	6
I- Wastes	53	8	8	8	8	8
İ- Other Services	47	10	10	22	8	10
Total Score	578	172	124	162	149	152
Mean	222					

*Four Star Hotels, ** Specified in Scales

The results also indicate that 5-star hotel managements have energy efficiency and energy save precautions in the facility and 4-star hotel managements have arrangements to use such renewable energy resources as sun, wind, geothermal, wave energy, biogas, etc. Hence, it is possible to claim that different sensivity occurs among management types. It is seen that 5 and 4-star hotels focus on energy and 3-star hotels focus on room arrangements.

Table 3: The Scores of Three Star Hotels and Private Certificate Hotel

Criteria***	S*	T*	U*	V*	W*	X*	Y*	Z*	L**
A- GM	16	14	22	16	16	16	16	18	16
B- ED	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
C- ARF	26	27	28	35	25	30	26	24	26
D- CFLOA	0	5	0	0	10	5	0	0	0
E- EA	9	4	4	2	18	15	5	5	8
F- EN	21	18	14	18	20	18	18	21	15
F1- EN1	15	12	8	12	14	12	12	15	11
F2- EN2	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	4
G- WAT	11	10	8	11	16	10	10	10	8
H- DDCS	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
I- WAS	6	8	8	4	8	4	4	8	6
İ- OS	11	10	10	10	13	8	10	10	10
Total Score	108	104	102	104	134	114	97	104	97
Mean	108								97

*Three Star Hotels, ** Private Certificate Hotels, *** Specified in Scales

On the other hand, there are some criteria in which managements give less importance than others in terms of environmental sensitivity. For example, it is seen that 5-star hotels give less importance to education, 4-star hotels to the detergents, disinfectants and chemicals and 3-star hotels to the environmental coherence of the facility, landscape arrangement and activities. Therefore, it is necessary for these managements to focus more on such areas.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, the agenda is busy with such issues as environment, green marketing, green cities and green hotels. Actually, all of these concepts have one result at the end, which is 'sustainability'. Besides academicians, city planners, landscape engineers, architects, historians, environment or ecology authorities, governmental organizations, local administrations, tourism managements, non-governmental organizations and local population are also involved in this sustainability, because this issue is required for handing down a viable environment for next generations. One of the leading names in tourism and the primary institution on an international level, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) plays a central and determinant role in developing a sustainable and universally reachable tourism, with economic welfare, peace, prosperity, human rights and respecting to basic rights and freedoms with responsibility. Besides taking economic, social and cultural effects of tourism on a positive level to an utmost level, WTO, on the other hand, struggles to decrease the negative social and environmental effects to a minimum level. In the same way, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the top-level authority in Turkey, also aims to evaluate the positive contributions for the country economy with its best touristic opportunities and to have a sustainable tourism.

Accommodation facilities are also required to accomplish this mission as expected from them, which is one of the most important preferences when selecting a destination among all static components. As a result of the study, it is seen that accommodation facilities are not informed about the contents of these criteria described in the certificate of 'Green Star-A Symbol for Environment Friendly Facilities' as it requires no legal obligation. Most efforts are spent by 4 and 5-star managements in terms of sustainability. The reason is that these managements are required to make their arrangements on a maximum level due to their concept and their quality and institutionalization must come to the forefront. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the environmental sensitivity increases as the institutionalization and quality increase and hotel concept gets wider. In the study, it is seen that only one accommodation management has a 'Green Star-A Symbol for Environment Friendly Facilities'; they, in general, do not possess an environmental plan and an action plan; they do not sufficiently pay attention to the use of renewable energy resources; however, almost in all hotels, there are precautions and actions in terms of energy efficiency and

energy save, besides taking necessary measurements for water use and waste materials. The limitations of the study are as follows: the study is conducted on a limited region and in a city located in this region; it involves limited number of managements and limited number of samples. Thereby, no generalization is made about the main population, as the extent to which this sample represents the main population is not known. To reach more general results, this study should be conducted in all regions around Turkey, hence enlarging the sampling volume and selecting random sampling methods. However, this study primarily aims to raise consciousness among accommodation managers, which are located in the center of all tourism activities, and secondly to fill the gap in the literature. The future studies will give more general and certain results on the operations, current situation and presuppositions of tourism sector in Turkey in terms of its environment as the quantity and quality of them increase.

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