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**INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS TOURISM: OVERVIEW IN THE WORLD AND TURKEY**

**ABSTRACT**

Throughout history, meetings have been conducted for different reasons. Advanced forms of these meetings have different names, and they are named as "congress" in the widest sense. Especially after World War 2, significant increase was observed in the number of congresses, and the concept of congress has been began to evaluate as a tourism activity. The position and importance of congress tourism within the activity of tourism is gradually increasing. International congresses have the highest portion of global congress tourism. Turkey has also great potential in this regard. However, in order to enable Turkey participating to this competition, it should be developed infrastructure and superstructure opportunities having effect in the development of congress tourism.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Congress, International Congress Tourism  
World, Turkey

**ULUSLARARASI KONGRE TURİZMİ: DÜNYADAKİ VE TÜRKİYE'DEKİ DURUMU**

**ÖZET**

Tarih boyunca çeşitli amaçlarla toplantılar yapılmıştır. Bu toplantıların günümüzdeki gelişmiş şekilleri çeşitli isimlerle adlandırılmakta ve en geniş anlamları ile "kongre" olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Özellikle İkinci Dünya Savaşı'ndan kongre olgusu bir turizm hareketliliği olarak değerlendirilmeye başlanmıştır. Kongre turizminin turizm hareketliliği içindeki yeri ve önemi giderek artmaktadır. Dünya kongre turizminde en büyük paya uluslararası kongreler sahiptir. Uluslararası kongreler son yıllarda turizmden yüksek gelirler elde eden ülkeler arasında büyük bir rekabete konu olmaktadır. Türkiye de bu açıdan önemli bir potansiyele sahiptir. Ancak Türkiye'nin bu yarışa katılabilmesi için, kongre turizminin gelişmesinde etkili olan altyapı ve üstyapı olanaklarının geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Turizm, Kongre, Uluslararası Kongre Turizmi,  
Dünya, Türkiye

## 1. INTRODUCTION: CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF CONGRESS (GİRİŞ: KONGRE KAVRAMI VE TANIMI)

Meetings have been made for the purpose of acquainting with different subjects, learning, discussing, criticizing, deciding, and staying informed during history. Actually, it is assumed that meetings are longstanding as long as the history of human. These meetings are named as conference, seminar, symposium, and panel having the same meaning with congress. Today, it can be observed as more comprehensive and well-organized as the medium of communication, information exchange, deciding, and briefing. However, irrespective of the name and medium, their common ground is becoming a branch of tourism as a reason of need of gathering and displacement of humans.

Significant increase has been observed in the number of meetings (especially in international meetings) which were rare previously, the size of such increase has resulted that congress organization has become a profession and the concept of congress is being assumed as a tourism activity. Congress tourism which is a significant part of tourism industry and known as *MICE* (*Meetings, Incentives, Congress/Conventions and Exhibitions/Events*) briefly is defined as "all of relationship of travel, accommodation, and (containing other activities such as sightseeing, entertainment, and resting) that is occurred as a result of gathering of individuals in places other their local places or place of work for the purpose of information exchange on scientific subjects requiring expertise or occupational areas.

Congress tourism doesn't cover only congresses; instead it is preferred to use this concept in the widest manner and meaning covering seminars, symposiums, conferences, and similar events. Congresses can be classified under different names according to the purpose, location of the event, number of participants, and frequency. With respect to the location of event, they are named as "national" and "international" congress. Additionally, the highest share of congress tourism in the world has international congresses. International congresses have a more complex structure with respect to national congresses and a fierce competition has been observed through being one of the primary targets of countries obtaining revenue from tourism in recent years. Within this scope, diversity of product-service created and meeting needs of participants in a multidimensional manner have increased the importance of international congress tourism within other tourism branches (Dallı, 1996; Oktay, 1997; Aymanıkuy, 2006).

## 2. RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

Aim of this study is to emphasize the development of congress tourism and its increasing importance. This type of tourism has become an important factor affecting both economical condition of countries and efficiency of companies having effect in tourism industry. Today, it has become a market which is rapidly growing, and become a tourism area coming into prominence in diversification of tourism activities and policies on distribution to seasons, and being a more stable tourism type. While international congresses has been made progress in developed regions and countries of the world, it is newly developed and being introduced in Turkey. In this study, the condition in the world and Turkey has been inspected in a quantitative and qualitative manner, and it is aimed to put forward various characteristics. In doing so, it is tried to determine opportunities and problems of international congress tourism of Turkey for the purpose of enlighten subsequent studies.

### 3. BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGRESS TOURISM AND RELATIONSHIPS (KONGRE TURİZMİNİN TEMEL ÖZELLİKLERİ VE İLİŞKİLERİ)

In general, different socio-economical factors such as increase in travel opportunities, increase in income, and abundant leisure times which enable development of tourism certainly have effect on the development of international congress tourism. On the other hand, it is required to indicate that there are some specific reasons which facilitate even stimulate development. On the one hand increasing expertise and rapid renewal of information in parallel to scientific and technological advancements, on the other hand national and international organizations emerged with developing economical, social, cultural, and technological businesses and relationships have made the requirement of congress and meeting organization of the first priority. The need of people to interact each other face to face and to make meeting in order to make information exchange in parallel to increase in scientific and technological improvements and expertise on the one end and increase in investments intended to spaces such as congress center or meeting hall meeting such needs and enhancement in services given here on the other hand have significant effect on the development of international congress tourism.

Economical factors have an important role on transformation of congress<sup>1</sup>. Congress can extend tourism season thanks to its character that can be organized all the year round without depending on any season. In this way, tourism investments can be utilized more efficiently, and considering interaction of congress tourism with other tourism sectors with respect to time-space, its supplementary character is emerged. Each congress creates an activity in tourism: participants of international congresses with high income and culture have tendency to learn about natural, historical, and cultural richness, and attend to entertainment and art centers, and restaurants as well apart from their studies. Limited number of statistical and economical data concerning this subject makes the measurement of these economical effects created difficult. There are two different expenditure in determining economical effects caused by international congresses: first, participation to congress and organization of the events; second, expenses made by participants during and after the congress. Congress tourists can make four-five times expenses with respect to other tourists. For that reason, contribution of international congress tourism to foreign exchange earnings cannot be underestimated. It is required to carry out different activities in order to meet needs of delegates coming for the congress during accommodation, catering, travel, shopping, entertainment, and meeting. This enables employment of many people, and brings direct revenue to the city of organization. Another important effect is to enable development of infrastructure and superstructure in the city or region. By reason of all these economical activities, international

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<sup>1</sup> Today, two congress types become prominent: (1) scientific congresses, and (2) meetings and congresses gathering subsidiaries of international companies in the world or representatives in different countries. In scientific congresses, medical congresses have the highest rate of 29.1% even though significant decrease in its number, energy (12.4%), industry (8%), and telecommunication industry have important affect on congress tourism. After those, congresses with agriculture, social sciences, education, and trade with rates around 3-5% can be observed.

Congress tourism has come the most supported tourism type in many countries (Aymankuy, 2006).

Contribution of international congresses is not limited to economical data. As can be observed in other tourism types, the focus of international congress tourism is human. International congress tourism is a multi-dimensional tourism; especially it has a close relationship and interaction with culture tourism. Because, congress is a cultural activity in the first place. Participants are affected from locals, social and cultural structure in the region they go, and also they affect the country and region they go in a social and cultural manner. Even though meetings are the main purpose, a congress program isn't formed from meetings solely. Various activities are organized in times other than meetings; participants visit historical and cultural locations in order to be acquainted with country or city being visited, participate entertaining and sport activities, and make shopping. For such reasons, centers having affluent cultural heritage are places where international congresses can be developed well (Aymankuy, 2003).

Major congresses bring along big demonstration opportunities. They can bring up the city and country of event to the agenda of the world, its repercussion in press can be one of the most effective demonstration types. Certainly, this means more beyond the amount of expense made by participants or effect on the employment. International congresses are assumed as "an important advertising medium" for a country, and in this way it positively affects the whole tourism sector (Eralp, 1983; Usal, 1984; Dallı, 1996; Özgüç, 2011).

Congress centers where international congresses are organized intensified mostly in developed city centers or near areas. Some fixed investments such as congress centers or other meeting buildings/halls are expensive, and thus being realized by governmental and local administrations. All these spaces require a powerful infrastructure with respect to technical equipment and other factors. Also, it contains preparations requiring diversified and professional skills from hotel booking to different transfers, from organizing the center or building to simultaneous interpretation (Aydın, 1997). Most of congresses (43.5%) are organized in congress centers. On the other hand, it is observed that usage of hotel facilities are increased in recent years. For example, while 35.7% of congresses in 2005 are made in halls of hotels, this ratio has increased to 41.6% in 2009. Organizers of congresses prefer working with chain hotels rather than independent hotels due to reasons such as constant high service standards, trained personnel, flexible price negotiation opportunities, contribution of reputation of hotel to the attendance, available capacity in manner hosting large organizations, and revenue. Following that, meeting halls in universities follow (14.9%).

Participants of international congresses are continuously increasing: while this figure was 3.5 million in 2005, it has reached to 4.9 in 2008 and 5.2 million in 2009. On the contrary, number of participants per congress is continuously decreasing. Average of the last ten years (2000-2009) is 812 persons per congress. This figure was 602 in 2005, and the lowest figure of the last decade was observed with 593 participants in 2007. Number of participants in 27% of congresses organized in 2009 is around 50-149. In general, congress made in North America has the highest number of participants.

It is observed that international congresses are intensified around September (18.3%) and June (14.2%). After that, May (11.8%), October, and November (10.9%) comes respectively. In this case, the most popular period is between May and November with respect to international congresses. Especially, from the beginning of 2000s, it

is observed that congresses made in July and August gradually decrease, and on the contrary congresses made in March and November gradually increase. This shows that congress season period is being extended. Another tendency from the beginning of 2000s is gradually shortening period of congresses for the purpose of bringing down costs. The figures are 4.73 days in 1994, 4.45 days in 2000, 4.13 days in 2004, and 3.95 days in 2009. A change is observed in the frequency of organization due to similar reasons with similar manner: most of them are organized once in a year, congresses organized twice a year are gradually decreased (Weber, 2001; ICCA, 2010).

#### 4. DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS TOURISM IN THE WORLD (DÜNYADA ULUSLARARASI KONGRE TURİZMİNİN GELİŞMESİ VE DAĞILIŞI)

The first international meeting which can be assumed as congress tourism is a medical convention conducted in Rome in 1681. On the other hand, considering international congress literature, Vienna Congress made in 1815 is assumed as the first international congress due to its political importance. After that, it is assumed that maximum five international congresses were organized per year through a long time. The first congress and visitor office in the world was established in 1895 in Detroit, the US.

Table 1. International Congresses Organized in the World  
(Tablo 1. Dünyada Düzenlenen Uluslararası Kongreler)

Years	Number of Congress	Years	Number of Congress
2000	5.186	2005	7.634
2001	5.187	2006	8.094
2002	5.979	2007	8.586
2003	6.198	2008	8.715
2004	7.274	2009	8.294

Source/Kaynak:ICCA Statistics Reports, 2010.

Beginning from twentieth century, most of congresses were made in Europe, and Paris was placed on the top with high superiority. For example, of 232 international congresses organized in 1900, 202 of them made in Paris. Even though it is decreasing in rough years, it can be observed a tendency that numbers of congresses are slowly but continuously increasing. In spite of the existence global economical crisis, and various factors affecting improvement including pressure created by international organizations and institutions and companies on the budget of organization, number of international congress made after 1990s (especially around 1993-2000) was increased with rate of growth of 2.3% yearly. Today, size of congress tourism in the world has reached a significant point; its direct or indirect portion in the world economy is calculated around \$150-200 billion (Özşen, 1989; Arslan, 2009).

There are three important international organizations inspecting movements of international congress tourism movements in the world, testing the pulse of market, and making research: ICCA (*International Congress & Convention Association*), UIA (*Union of International Associations*) and EFCT (*European Federation of Conference Towns*). Each of these organizations are monitoring developments in the international congress tourism based on different criteria. However, scope and results provided by ICCA studies are the most significant. ICCA has been preparing a report each year in regard to international congress, evaluating the industry, and this report has been a

significant source with respect to statistics of world congress tourism. In this study, data provided by ICCAA in evaluations made in regard to international congresses is used. Number of international congresses conforming ICCA criteria<sup>2</sup> has been increased from 5,186 in 2000 to 8,294 in 2009; an increase of 59% in the last decade dramatically reflects the improvement in congress tourism.

Apart from increase in the number of international congresses, larger congress centers are being established in many locations in the world, and number of participants is also increasing. Although it is assumed that an average of 500 individuals participate to an international congress, today, congresses with 5,000-10,000 even 20,000 members have been conducted.

#### 4.1. Distribution of International Congresses Based on Regions and Countries (Uluslararası Kongrelerin Bölgelere ve Ülkelere Göre Dağılımı)

When examining regional distribution of international congresses, it can be seen that the region where highest number of congresses organized is **Europe**. Europe has always been the center of congresses. Depending on the increase in importance and competitive power of East Asia and Pacific countries, even though a slight decrease in market share is observed in recent years, Europe still preserves its attraction and it is observed that highest number of congress is made in this region (around 55%) consistently. Factors providing this can be listed as follows: Infrastructure and superstructure required for congress tourism have necessary qualifications and at sufficient level; head offices of many political and social organizations are located in Europe (WTO-Madrid, NATO, Brussels, FAO-Rome); structure of European countries aiming to establish an economical and political union has resulted in to organize frequent meeting and congresses; head office of most multinational companies in Europe, and these companies wish to make their meetings in locations near their head offices; it is suitable with respect to accessibility. It is possible to reach many central locations with land or rail transportation (even within a day) (Baytok, 1998).

European countries (after the US on the top) are placed near the top among countries having organized congresses in the world. Thus, 13 of the first 20 countries, 4 of first 5 countries where highest number of meetings is held are located in here. The same situation is valid for large cities of Europe; Vienna, Barcelona, Paris, and Berlin take place near the top in the rank of cities where highest number of congresses held. The regional countries have a position of "key countries affecting congress market in the international congress market": Economical size and significance of *Germany* are two important reason for becoming one of the countries being highly demanded in international congress and meeting market and preserving this position for long years. Especially beginning from 1995, *Spain* has empowered infrastructure opportunities and has become an important congress center depending on the principle of "providing diversity in tourism". Favorable climate conditions, cultural attraction centers owned, and much number of congress centers of *Italy* has contributed it to be remained as preferred country. *England* is one of the most consistent

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<sup>2</sup> According to ICCA criteria, a congress should have the following features in order to have an "international" character: (1)it should be organized regularly, (2)it should have participants from at least three countries, (3)it should be conducted with at least fifty participants.

countries in this regard. On one side London is one of the favorite congress cities, on the other side cities such as Glasgow and other cities establish a market presence with new marketing methods and strategies (Baylar, 1995). France has the rank six after England among countries where highest number of congress organizations. One of the leading destinations being demanded for international congresses and meetings in this country are Paris, Rhone-Alpes region around Lyon, and Provence-Alpes-Coted'Azur region covering French Riviera and Marseilles. This region is also the location where 40% of the whole congress center infrastructure of the country intensified. Other European countries such as Austria, The Netherland, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, and Belgium are among twenty top countries where highest numbers of congresses are organized. Also, Hungary, Romania, and Greece are other important rivals. On the other hand, it is still not possible to say that Eastern Europe countries have a developed congress infrastructure (Davidson, 2003; Arslan, 2009).

Table 2. Regional Distribution of International Congresses (%)  
(Tablo 2. Uluslararası Kongrelerin Bölgesel Dağılımı (%))

Regions	2003	2005	2009
Europe	60.0	59.0	54.4
Asia/Pasific	15.1	18.1	23.1
North America	13.0	10.6	10.6
Latin America	6.1	6.4	7.1
Avustralia	3.4	3.5	2.4
Africa	2.5	2.4	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source/Kaynak: ICCA Statistics Reports, 2010.

**Asia/Pacific** region has an important location in the distribution of international congresses in the world, and its importance is continuously increasing. There are different reasons for making progress of the region in congress tourism as in the general activities of tourism activities: One of the new trends in global congress tourism is the desire of participants to see different, unknown, and wondered places, and accordingly more congresses have been organized in the region; economical advancement experienced in the region after 1980s has attracted attention of world to this region; countries of the region have developed infrastructure and superstructure investments aimed for tourism in parallel to economical improvements in the region; Investments of multi-national companies have increased; Large chain-hotels in the world have established new facilities in the region, and enable accommodation supply in a qualified manner; The region has rich historical and natural resources considering tourism, moreover cost of transportation has been considerably decreased.

*Japan* and *China* located in this region are among top ten countries in the world. Especially China has rapidly increased its rank in international congress tourism thanks to its natural richness and cultural heritage, safe tourism environment, nearly half million branches of foreign companies, and construction of very large congress centers. Definitely, "2008 Beijing Olympic Games" and "Shanghai World Fair" have played a role for China to be a target country in congress tourism. Moreover, it is expected that this serious lead will continue and the country will be one of the important countries of the world in congress tourism.



Figure 1. Main Countries Where International Congresses are organized in the World, 2009  
(Şekil 1. Uluslararası Kongrelerin Düzenlendiği Başlıca Ülkeler, 2009)

Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Australia, and Malaysia have made important investments in recent years. Especially *Singapore* and *Malaysia* have better positions in international congress market. Tourism Committee of Singapore has started a campaign named as "Make It Singapore" in order to promote congress tourism and provide marketing support. Within this scope, support has been provided to congress tourism by governmental and private sector; support includes free accommodation, discount up to 30% in organization and other services, and special airline transportation tariffs. In this way, although its position was declined after Asian economic crisis in 1997, position of Singapore in congress tourism regain its importance (Voohar, 2004). Market position of *Malaysia* is rapidly improving; in recent years, various incentive precautions have been applied intended to congress tourism, and the industry is being supported by government-supported new investments (e.g. "Kuala Lumpur International Congress Center"). As a whole, lack of powerful associations and institutions is the issue in the region; however it is expected that this deficiency will be rapidly removed and its potential power will be emerged (Baytok, 1998; Davidson, 2003; ICCA, 2010).

The country where highest number of congresses is organized is **the United States of America** even though dominant precedence of Europe and rapid development in Asia/Pacific Region in the regional distribution of international congresses. Political and economical importance of country and location of institutions such as United Nations, World Bank and IMF are considerably important factors for congress market. The US takes place on the top in congress tourism market. Market share has a tendency to decline due to most of head offices and decision-makers of nearly 8,000 international associations are located in Europe and tendency of gradually increase in this superiority; It is estimated that this share has declined around 30% between 1992-2005. On the other hand, the most preferred country with respect to international congress is still the US. One of then

international association make its annual meeting in one of the US cities including Washington, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, San Diego, Atlanta, and Orlando.

Table 3. Main Countries and Cities Where International Congresses are Organized in the World, 2009

(Tablo 3. Dünyada Uluslararası Kongre Düzenlenen Başlıca Ülkeler ve Şehirler, 2009)

Rank	Country	Number of Meeting	Rank	City	Number of Meetingi
1.	USA	595	1.	Viana	160
2.	Germany	458	2.	Barcelona	135
3.	Spain	360	3.	Paris	131
4.	Italy	350	4.	Berlin	129
5.	UnitedKing.	345	5.	Singapore	119
6.	France	341	6.	Kopenhag	103
7.	Brazil	293	7.	Stockholm	102
8.	Japan	257	8.	Amsterdam	98
9.	China	245	9.	Lisbon	98
10.	Austria	236	10.	Beijing	96
11.	Holland	236	11.	Buenos Aires	90
12.	Switzerland	214	12.	Seoul	90
13.	Canada	213	13.	Budapest	87
14.	Sweden	184	14.	Madrid	87
15.	Korea Rep.	176	15.	Prag	86
16.	Avustralia	169	16.	Londra	83
17.	Portugal	168	17.	İstanbul	80
18.	Denmark	151	18.	Sao Paulo	79
19.	Argentina	145	19.	Bangkok	76
20.	Belgium	130	20.	Athens	75

Source/Kaynak: ICCA Statistics Reports, 2010.

In **America** as a region, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Chile come after the US. Canada and Argentina take place in the first twenty countries (13th and 19th respectively) in the rank of countries organizing international conferences in the world. Although indisputable superiority of the US as a country, considering the first twenty cities organizing international conferences, there is no other city rather than Buenos Aires of Argentina and Sao Paulo of Brazil. Actually, in recent years, it is observed that Latin America countries have developed their congress tourism infrastructure and they established new congress, congress centers and convention hotels. However, it is required to indicate that most of these investments will probably serve regional and local market (Mutschlechner, 2006; UIA, 2010).

Countries taking place on the top with respect to international congresses in the world preserve their locations generally. For example, beginning from 2000s, the US has been on the top, and Germany, Spain, Italy, and England still remain as powerful countries through replacing among them in some years (without seeing any fluctuations in market share). The interesting point in here is the rapid improvement shown by the counties that are not within the first then countries. A challenging rival is observed among these countries which have become bigger and increased their market share by organizing more events. The most rapid developing countries can be listed as People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Portugal, Poland, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey, and Argentina. Similarly, Malaysia, Thailand, South Africa, Hungary, and also Belize and Panama

in Central America are new countries showing improvement with respect to congress organizations and having potential (ICCA, 2010).

#### **4.2. Urban Distribution of International Congresses (Uluslararası Kongrelerin Şehirsel Dağılımı)**

Location factors in international congress tourism is the same as other human made recreation facilities, and while it has a tendency to gather in central cities in national and regional scale, it is conglomerated at certain locations. One of the points inclined by cities today is conferences and meetings. For these reasons, spending time by participants more than a regular tourist and spending more money and creating different job opportunities have motivated cities to show more effort in this respect. To give example, cities in the US such as New York, Dallas, Chicago, and Orlando have obtained around 2 delegates and revenue over \$1 billion for each city in a year.

Actually, there is a competition among large cities of the world in this respect. Growing in the volume of business and meeting travels has directed many cities to be organized in this respect. Most of them wish to construct a congress center. For example, in the US, there are 380 congress centers which is nearly two times of the number in 1980s, most of them are being renovated or expanded. On the other hand, hotel chains go to a harsh war regarding meetings. In most of large hotel chains, half of turnover consists of meetings and congresses (Özgüç, 2011).

International congresses have been organized in capital cities or central large cities which can be easily accessed by countries assumed as the core of the economy of the world. Vienna continues its attack began in 2004 and takes the first place among the cities where congresses are organized. While some European countries such as Vienna, Barcelona, Paris, and Berlin are the most congress organized cities, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Amsterdam, and Lisbon follow them. Singapore and Beijing are two important congress centers other than Europe. Especially, Beijing has showed rapid development beginning from 2007, and succeeded to be placed in the first ten countries. In recent years, Rome and Florence in Italy, and Istanbul become prominent. On the other side, some political based settlements such as Davos in Europe can be assumed as a congress center as well due to the same characteristics (ICCA, 2010).

#### **5. INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS TOURISM IN TURKEY (TÜRKİYE'DE ULUSLARARASI KONGRE TURİZMİ)**

Turkey has a significant potential with respect to international congress tourism with its demand to sun-beach-sea, and even concentrated on certain locations, its geographical position, rich historical and cultural values, natural beauties, climate conditions, qualified accommodation facilities, gradually increasing number of congress centers and meeting halls, and accommodation facilities. It is evident that this country will be visited with interest, curiosity, excitement for potential persons or groups participating these congresses. In addition to these, cost-effectiveness advantage will be added when comparing with developed countries or alternative destinations.

Making acquaintance of Turkey with international congresses has been started with two congresses made in Istanbul in 1969. These are "International World Red Cross Congress" and "International Congress of World Chambers of Commerce". Congress and meeting activities are continued to be organized with longer time intervals and limited participation according to today in subsequent years with respect to time and participation. On the other hand, it is assumed that becoming

prominent of international congress tourism as an important field of activity and gaining more importance can be achieved with the organization named as "HABITAT II" made in Istanbul in 1996. Actually, Turkey has made its huge step regarding international congresses by hosting "United Nations Human Settlement Conference, HABITAT II" which is known as the largest organization of the last two decades and organized between June 1st-15th, 1996. 25,000 persons have participated to this organization including official delegations of United Nations member states, and also UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIDO, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, private sector, and representatives of unions, and academicians. In this way, significant distances have been elapsed with motivation provided by gaining come from this huge organization, and international congresses have gained a seat in Turkish tourism industry as an area of specialization. On the other hand, it has changed the view of Turkish tourism agencies and triggered to bring new approaches to the industry. One of the most important improvements for Turkey is the opening of "Lütfü Kırdar Congress Center" in the very same year which is the largest congress, conference, and exhibition hall (for that period). After that, it is initiated to host congresses with participation of scientists from different countries of the world in which most of them are organized in Istanbul. Examples can be listed as "International Chemotherapy Congress" organized in Istanbul in 2003 with participation of 6,000 persons, "World Hemophilia Congress" and "Osteoporosis Congress" both having 5,000 participants, and Governors Meetings of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Depending on these developments, the rank of Turkey in the leading countries on congress tourism in Turkey has been increased: It is ranked as 53rd in 2003, 33rd in 2004, 28th in 2005, 25th in 2009. Even though in the last decade, there is no any significant change in the number of persons came for "meeting, conference, course, seminar" to Turkey among total visitors, the number has continuously increased, and increased from 278,855 in 2001 to 847,963 in 2009.

Table 4. Visitors Coming to Turkey for Congress Tourism to Turkey (2009)

(Tablo 4. Türkiye'ye Kongre Turizmi Amacıyla Gelen Ziyaretçiler (2009))

Years	Total Visitors	Visitors Coming for Meeting/Conference/Course/Seminar	Share (%)
2001	11.618.969	278.855	2.40
2002	13.256.028	279.702	2.11
2003	14.029.558	347.933	2.48
2004	17.516.908	392.378	2.24
2005	21.124.886	506.997	2.40
2006	19.819.833	535.135	2.70
2007	23.340.911	793.590	3.40
2008	26.336.677	756.236	2.90
2009	27.077.114	847.963	3.13

Source/Kaynak: Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The most essential and fundamental factor in congress tourism is the facilities where organizations are held. These facilities include congress centers, hotels, holiday camps, and other facilities named under "other" including universities, non-defined, and facilities having special certificates. In Turkey, total capacity of congress and meeting centers is 570,000 in 5-, 4-, 3-star hotels, 1st and 2nd class

holiday villages, facilities with special certificate, and universities. Number of congress centers is 8 just now, and they are located only in two cities (Istanbul, and Antalya). However, it is required to emphasize to points regarding congress centers: *First*, current congress centers especially ones open in recent years are designed in a manner enabling serving for all international congresses, meeting and similar activities and spaces providing service up to 10,000 people with different size meeting halls having 50-75,000 m<sup>2</sup> closed area. *Second*, new congress centers are being constructed in the direction of targets in regard to congress tourism: These are Kuşadası Congress Center (10,000) under the leadership of Association of Turkish Travel Agencies (TURSAB) in Aydın, Congress Center of Ankara Chamber of Commerce (5,000) and Congress Center of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality (3,200) in Ankara, and Edirne Congress Center (2,500) in Edirne.

Table 5. Congress Capacity of Turkey (2010)  
 (Tablo 5. Türkiye'nin Kongre Kapasitesi (2010))

Facility	Capacity	Antalya	İstanbul	İzmir	Ankara	Other	Total
5-Star Hotel	Num.of Halls	427	331	127	58	235	1.178
	Cap.(person)	94.401	63.293	151.455	13.823	44.474	367.719
4-Star Hotel	Num.of Halls	93	163	35	37	190	518
	Cap.(person)	16.311	15.218	5.267	7.629	28.193	72.618
3-Star Hotel	Num.of Halls	32	17	20	12	117	198
	Cap.(person)	9.637	1.265	2.260	940	16.010	30.112
Cong. Center	Num.of Halls	2	6	-	-	-	8
	Cap.(person)	4.475	18.047	-	-	-	21.317
Other	Num.of Halls	75	45	9	10	69	208
	Cap.(person)	10.430	5.785	1.558	19.900	11.701	49.374
Total	Num.of Halls	629	562	191	117	611	2.110
	Cap.(person)	134.049	103.608	160.540	42.292	100.651	571.140

Source/Kaynak: Arslan 2009, TURSAB and Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Apart from congress centers, meeting and conference halls or centers are developed for providing opportunities required for a congress atmosphere. Conference centers are areas furnished with sufficient and necessary equipments in a manner to be suitable for meetings which have been designed only for meeting purposes generally within a hotel. Conference centers in Turkey are mostly located within hotels in Istanbul, Antalya, Izmir, Ankara, and Mugla. Of course hotels have great importance with their accommodation opportunities and capacities with respect to congress tourism. Such that, it is a precondition for a city or region chosen as the location of congress to have sufficient number and capacity accommodation facilities and congress hotels. Moreover, it is required for congress city to have not only luxury and 4-, 5-star hotels, but also medium class hotels enabling participation of people having different levels of income and social groups. In Turkey, there are 10,402 active accommodation facilities including facilities with certificates of investment (772), business, and municipality (7,064). Considering their regional and urban distribution of them, even though there is a progress across the country (especially in metropolitans), it is observed that these centers gather in Mediterranean, Aegean, and Marmara region, in other words in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and certain tourism centers such as Antalya. Even accommodation facilities are generally used for holiday and rest purposes, they can respond different organizations such as congresses (Doldur, 2005; Türsab, 2010).

Table 6. Distribution of Accommodation Facilities in Turkey (2010)  
(Tablo 6. Türkiye’de Konaklama Tesislerinin Dağılımı (2010))

	Number of Facilities	Number of Bed
İstanbul	1.085	122.177
Antalya	1.784	432.666
Muğla	1.379	187.203
İzmir	617	60.476
Aydın	580	61.119
Other	4.957	359.483
TOTAL	10.402	1.223.441

Source/ Kaynak: TURSAB and Republic of Turkey  
Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Following congress tourism facilities, the second important factor is the institutions providing professional planning service regarding organization. In reality, it is not sufficient to have solely numerous and high quality congress centers and meeting halls for the development of congress tourism. In the same time, it is required to own institutions and organizations appointed by professionals at central and national level in a manner promoting and marketing to congress market. These are congress and visitor offices<sup>3</sup> and travel agencies. In Turkey, now there are congress and visitor agencies in Istanbul, Antalya, and Izmir. Antalya Congress Bureau (ACB) was established in 1996, Istanbul Congress & Visitors Bureau (ICVB) in 1997, and Izmir CVB in 2007. It is planned to enable necessary organizations in Ankara, Bursa, Konya, Mersin, and Cappadocia which have been chosen as primary provinces in order to develop congress tourism. Also, for the purpose of reviving international congress tourism, it is planned to establish "Turkish Congress and Visitors Bureau" which will have a legal entity and

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Today, congress and visitor bureaus have become a requirement; and their numbers are more than 5,000. These offices make promotion and marketing of their countries or cities to international congress market, and also they try to direct distribution of meetings to be made with respect to time and location. For this purpose, travel agencies show activities in cooperation with different institutions such as tour operators, organizers, congress centers, airline companies, and accommodation facilities. For the purpose of fulfill these basic services, they try to take part in the international congress market by being a member to organizations such as ICCA (International Congress and Convention Association), ACE-int (International Association of Conferences Executives), AIPC (Association International de Palais de Congress), APACB (Asia Pacific of Professional Congress Organizers), IACVB (International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau), PCO (Professional Conference Organizers), INCOM (International Congress Union GMBH).

Firstly, congress and visitor bureaus emerged as organizations financed by the government in the first place and therefore dominated by the government. In the studies made, it has been shown that the role of public sector on the activities of destination management marketing activities still continues. Because, government is determinant in the allocation of financing resources required by congress and visitor bureaus, and for that reason shares allocated from public revenues are very important. However, different alternatives can also be applied: *Public sector dominated organization model* This is preferred by Germany, Italy, Portugal, some African and South American countries and New York. In this model, the government develops and markets the brand image of the country or city, improves the infrastructure, enables protection of the rights of the participants, makes price adjustments, prepares the regulations for travel agencies and tour operators, and enables the development of labor force skills. *Organization model where public and private sector act collectively*, this is applied mostly in developed countries. Private sector covers both small-scale and large-scale organizations. This widely-accepted opinion is to establish a public-private partnership or cooperation for managing and promoting destinations in the best way. Many European country (England, France, Denmark), Australia and Canada prefer this model. *In organization model where private sector dominates*, there are entrepreneurs under the leadership of private sector; government has coordination function for determining and execution of strategies (Aslant, 2009).

independent budget having head office in Istanbul. Distributions of travel agencies have great similarities with congress and visitor bureaus: most of them have activities in congress cities such as Istanbul, Antalya, Ankara, and Izmir. As of 2010, their number reached to 5,987 (5,571 being Group A). Together with progress in travel agency, congress organizations have become easy, and this have positive effects on congress tourism (Hacıoğlu, 2000; Ersun and Aslan, 2009; Türsab, 2003 and 2010).

### 5.1. Leading Congress Cities (Başlıca Kongre Şehirleri)

When examining distribution of foreign visitors coming to Turkey according to main centers, it can be seen that 30.5% of them preferred Antalya, and 27,7% of them preferred Istanbul. The priorities of these two cities in general tourism movement is also valid for congress tourism. In reality, in the significant movement observed in international congress tourism in recent years in Turkey, it can be observed that Istanbul and Antalya become prominent.

**Istanbul** has become a leading city hosting congresses, symposiums, and exhibitions having international character up to the recent years. Istanbul has many advantages with respect to congress tourism; geographical position, natural, historical, and cultural richness, dynamic social and commercial life, two airports having international character, 2-3 hours access time from many European countries and cities which is the largest market of congress tourism, and over 75,000 bed capacity provide a high potential with congress centers. Moreover, it has taken considerable steps for increasing gravity force with successful arrangements and restorations made in recent years.

Table 7. International Congresses Organized in Turkey and Istanbul  
(Tablo 7. Türkiye ve İstanbul'da Yapılan Uluslararası Kongreler)

Years	Turkey	İstanbul	%
2000	37	29	78.4
2001	52	35	67.3
2002	53	35	66.1
2003	64	47	73.4
2004	81	52	64.2
2005	97	59	60.8
2006	104	76	73.1
2007	120	79	65.8
2008	114	82	71.9
2009	118	80	67.8

Source/Kaynak: ICCA Statistics Reports, 2010.

The name of Istanbul which can host congresses with only 400-500 participants and organized in ball rooms of 5-star hotels until late 1980s, and moreover listed as 49th in the rank of biggest international congress organizer cities in 1998, can be heard in international large congress. It is assumed that year 2004 is as a milestone for international congress market for Istanbul. In the same year, successful completion of large international congresses such as NATO, Islamic Conference Organization, World's Journalist Association, World Architect Congress has increased the trust to Istanbul and opened the organization of large congresses. Even though terrorist attacks in 2003 were sensed in 2006 and 2007, a bright result has been obtained in 2008 and 2009, and Istanbul Congress and Visitor Office initiated a campaign named as "Be A Congress Representative of Istanbul", and after choosing Istanbul as "2010 European Culture

Capital" it has started to host important international meeting and organizations. All these developments have contributed to the progress of Istanbul as being one of the leading international congress centers. Even the share taken from world's international congress tourism is not high; Istanbul attracts attention with large congresses realized in recent years.

Today, Istanbul is the most congress organized city of Turkey with congress centers, hotels, and infrastructure with rapidly correcting deficiencies, and it is the only city being ranked from our country in research reports of ICCA (17th in 2009). Nearly 70% of congress, and 80% of international congresses made in Turkey are made in Istanbul. For congresses to be made until 2017 in the world, it is expected to be come after European cities such as Vienna, Copenhagen, Paris, and Barcelona (ICCA, 2010). Significant contribution can be observed by congresses centers and large hotels constructed one-by-one. The oldest congress center is -as mentioned before- (ICEC) *Lütfi Kırdar International Congress and Exhibition Center*. This center has 26 halls with capacities between 10-2000 hosted 30 congresses both in 2008 and 2009. *Sütlüce Congress and Culture Center* located in Haliç was opened in 2009 instead of old slaughter house, and hosted the Fifth World Water Forum which is one of the biggest international congresses organized (20,000 persons participated from 80 countries). Apart from congress halls, it establishes a large cultural complex with different exhibition, meeting, theater, and cinema halls; this huge center covering 75.000 m<sup>2</sup> area is one of the largest congress and culture center of Turkey.

Another feature of Istanbul with respect to congress tourism is a region named as *Congress Valley* surrounded by *Lütfi Kırdar Congress Center* and *Rumeli Hall* from north in *Harbiye*, *Hilton Convention Center* from south, *Harbiye Officer's Club* and *Military Museum* from west, *Harbiye Open Air Theater* and *Taşkışla Street* from east, and covering luxury hotels with international character. *Istanbul Congress Center* which is one of newly opened congress centers of the city (within the same complex with *Muhsin Ertuğrul Theater*) is located in this area. *Istanbul Congress Center* firstly hosted 2009 *Governors Meetings of World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF)* with participation of 20,000 persons and made in Istanbul in 2009. This center consists of 12 floors including 7 of them below the ground and 5 of them above the ground, and has numerous multi-purpose meeting halls which can serve all international congresses, summits, different activities and organizations (its auditorium with 3,500 capacity is one of the largest meeting halls in Istanbul. Another significant character which cannot be seen in other congress centers are taking traffic underground for easy access, and connecting *Taşkışla Street* with the center with a tunnel in order to enable integration with *Congress Valley*.

*CNR EXPO International Fair and Convention Center* in *Yeşilköy*, *Istanbul* and *TÜYAP Convention and Fair Center* in *Büyüçekmece* host international congress from time to time. On the other hand, capacities and numbers of hotels having congress halls is increasing in recent years: *Grand Cevahir Hotel and Convention Center* in *Şişli*, *The Green Park Pendik Hotel&Convention Center* in *Pendik*, and *WOW Hotels&Convention Center* in *Yeşilköy* can be given as large ones. *WOW Hotels&Convention Center* is located with a region which has become a rival to *Congress Valley* in the city. This region covering *İkitelli*, *Güneşli*, *Yenibosna* and *Yeşilköy Atatürk Airport* is named as the *Second Congress Hall* of Istanbul due to addition of new rapidly increasing hotel constructions and newly opened hotels (*Novotel* and *Ibis Hotel*) to the current ones (*Radisson SAS*, *Polat Renaissance*, *Crown Plaza*,

Çınar Hotel and Holiday Inn). Bed capacity in this region has reached 5,000 now, and the number of international congresses realized each year is expressed as dozens.

**Antalya** is ranked as second right after Istanbul with current infrastructure and meeting/congress halls. Antalya has an important position and role in tourism of our country: it has a share of 30% in accommodation capacity (total bed capacity has reached to 550,000 in which 430,000 of them with certificate), 33% in the number of inbound tourists, and 60% in tourism revenues. Also, it is an important center which can meet needs and requests with respect to international congress tourism. It has a great advantage and competitive force with respect to congress tourism with its favorable climate conditions considering other important congress centers in Europe, natural tourism attractions, historical and archeological attraction centers in near surroundings, facilities regarding infrastructures, transportation means, wide range of entertainment opportunities, range of activities before and after congress. Large hotels in Antalya host around 8-13 international congresses per year. Especially hotels and holiday villages in Belek have a significant capacity regarding congress tourism; in this area there are 60.000 m<sup>2</sup> congress and meeting area.

The first congress center was open in Antalya in 1997; *Cam Piramit Sabancı Fair and Convention Center* was opened on September 1st, 1997 during the organization of "Altın Portakal (Golden Orange) Film Festival" and right after that it hosted "XIth World Forestry Congress". *Divan Talya Convention and Conference Center* located in the city center hosts different congresses in each year with halls having capacity of total 3,500. Remarkable developments were observed in Antalya region in recent years with respect to the development of congress tourism, accommodation facilities have been revised and necessary infrastructure and superstructure investments required for congress tourism have been completed to a great extent. Congresses stuck into ball rooms in large hotels have been transferred into these newly opened congress centers and renovated halls of hotels. In newly constructed hotels, congress centers are planned at the beginning. In the direction of all these developments, an increase of 10% can be observed in the number of congresses organized in Antalya. Antalya Congress Office indicates that total 86 congresses have been organized in 2010 in the city, and 40 of them are international congresses (however, it is not clear how many of them is conformable with ICCA criteria). On the other than, it is required to indicate that Antalya having around 120,000 seat capacity cannot get its share from the congress tourism and current facilities have potential to host more and larger congresses.

Even though international congresses centered mostly in Istanbul and Antalya, it is observed that investments in other regions or cities are accelerated. For the purpose of improving congress tourism in Turkey and widespread congress tourism to the provinces having potential, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has determined Ankara, Izmir, Bursa, Konya, and Mersin and primary provinces apart from "Istanbul and Antalya" (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2006). On the other hand, notable studies have been carried out for opening new congress centers in different regions and cities such as Cappadocia and Kuşadası particularly and Denizli, Trabzon, Kayseri, Gaziantep, and Manisa.

**Izmir** provides a suitable environment with its historical background, cultural heritage, natural beauties, climate conditions, antique cities (Bergama and Ephesus) in the near surroundings. In this respect, İzmir could be a new congress city. However, currently there

is no any congress center, and number of congress hotels for hosting international congresses and having sufficient bed capacity and equipment is limited. For that reason, it hosts mostly national and regional meetings (Kırat, 2006). Also, lack of direct flights from the US and most of European cities **and limited** number of locations in the city center for meeting needs of participants of congress tourism adversely affect the development of congress tourism. One of the most important facilities having halls with sufficient equipment for congresses in İzmir is the *Sheraton Çeşme Hotel and Convention Center* which can serve 2,000 persons. For that reason, construction of new accommodation facilities having convention halls and sufficient equipment will make İzmir more attractive with respect to congress tourism.

One of the cities trying to become dominant in congress tourism is **Ankara**. In reality, in order to make Ankara as a tourism destination, the main point is international congress tourism among important entrepreneurs required to be undertaken. In this regard, although limited number of basic resources and attraction points, it is an important city for its historical artifacts, and location around Ankara can be visited with tours prior and after congresses (e.g. Hattuşaş, Gordiyon). However, a more significant advantage is to be the capital of Turkey, and thus contains political institutions such as embassies and consulates. Taking into account capitals of most developed countries are also a congress city, it is tried to develop international congress tourism in Ankara. In Ankara, capacities of near 23,000 in near 100 halls are found in 3-, 4-, and 5-star hotels. Apart from hotels, universities (e.g. ODTU, Ankara, and Hacettepe Universities), and some public institutions (e.g. DSI, MTA) have also meeting and convention halls. Ankara, with its identity of capital city, is the city where many meetings and congresses are made regarding public institutions and scientific institutions. However lack of large congress halls and centers with capacity of 5,000 and more, and insufficient congress infrastructure have caused translocation of international congresses to Istanbul or Antalya. Significant improvements have been obtained for bringing in large and new congress centers to the city.

New development areas determined for international congress tourism are faced with important problems. To give an example, Konya have a high potential for religious tourism particularly and natural and cultural tourism. However, in order to make this city congress city, it is required to cure transportation (especially airline transportation) and accommodation problems; as well as it has no congress center with international scale, congress opportunities of accommodation facilities are insufficient with respect to number and capacity. There are problems in airline transportation in the region Cappadocia covering Aksaray, Kayseri, Kırşehir and Nevşehir provinces and become prominent in culture tourism. Considering accommodation, reaching to significant bed capacity with new facilities and increasing number of congress hotels are other important improvements.

Also, other cities of Anatolia even though they have no priority with respect to international congress tourism host international congresses from time to time. These congresses are organized by universities located in that city (e.g. "International Anatolia Economics Conference" organized by Eskişehir Anadolu University in Eskişehir on June 17th-19th, 2009, and "International Earthquake Symposium" organized by Kocaeli University in Kocaeli on the same days) due to manufacturing methods being a symbol (e.g., "International Zonguldak 2nd Congress and Exhibition of Mining Machinery") or characteristics given by their location (e.g.,

"International Respiration Summit" on August 5th-9th, 2009 in Rize/Çamlıhemşin, Ayder Plateau).

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS (SONUÇ VE ÖNERİLER)

As can be observed in each industry of economy, new tendencies are observed in congress tourism with new this new age. Acceleration in passage from industry society to information society, rapid changes in technology, communication, and transportation have brought forward new tendencies in profile and wishes of tourists, and selection of places to go. When considering that these tendencies continue with current state, it is estimated that some significant changes will be seen in the structure of world's congress tourism First of all, size of international congress tourism will be expanded. Time intervals of congresses are gradually decreasing and it is tried to complete with limited time in order to lower costs; definitely developments in transportation industry (especially in airlines) will increase short-time travels and facilitate that. Participants of congresses request more technology; for that reason electronic technology will become the most important factor in selection of congress place. Due to increasing number of problems of large cities, congresses are transferred from big cities or capital cities to smaller ones. These smaller cities which are cheaper, less tiring, and have more service quality have become more preferred cities by congresses participants. A more important change instead of those, it is evident that structure of demand has changed in world tourism. It is expected instead of traditional "3S" (Sea-Sand-Sun) to dominate "3E" (Exciting-Entertainment-Education) concept. This changing demand structure brings in the international congress tourism in a more advantageous position (Bahar and Kozak, 2005).

All these improvements and expectations observed in the world will have effect on international congress tourism of Turkey. Actually, the importance of international congresses among tourism activities has been understood, and significant speed is obtained in recent years. On the other hand, even though richness of natural and cultural attractions owned, Turkey couldn't take sufficient share in congress tourism. Only 1.5-2% of international congresses organized in the world are held in Turkey, and its share in tourism revenue is around 2%.

One of the main physical infrastructure factors required to be established in international congress tourism is congress centers where congresses are held. While different size of congress centers are located in most cities apart from big cities (especially capital cities) in the US and in nearly almost all European countries, Turkey still tries to compete with limited number of congress centers located only in Istanbul and Antalya. Even in these cities, different important problems such as accommodation and meeting security requirements still cannot be solved completely. Most of congress halls in big hotels were planned as ball room or restaurant not for congress purposes. For that reason, the ones having technical equipments enabling arrangement of international congress is limited. On the other hand, there are problems in the number and capacities of travel agencies having experience in this regard, and congress and visitor bureaus. The history of congress and visitor bureaus is around 45 years in leading cities in international congress tourism, even Istanbul assumed to be as "showcase with respect to international congress tourism" of Turkey can have this formation only 15 years ago. In Turkey, there are nearly 6,000 travel agencies within different groups; however 500 of them indicate that they have experience on congress and meeting organization. Even though this number shows a

positive indicator regarding a certain service capacity, it is argued whether sufficient experience in congress and meeting organization requiring high expertise existed or not.

International congress market in Turkey consists of several pieces and seems disorganized. One of the main reasons is lack of resources or experience required for institutions to make necessary strategic investments in the industry. Also, disapproval of most of organizations to give up these approaches supporting this traditional structure, and lack of interest by organizations outside of industry and their unwillingness to create resources is other reasons. Similarly, professional organizations affiliated by these institutions are disorganized. This condition that creates lack of cooperation and coordination causes confusion of authority and duty (Taşbaşı, 2006). Another important problem is observed between professional organizations and congress and visitor bureaus. It is seen that at least some of professional organizations act against these bureaus merely as a rival and don't provide support. Additionally, considering limited budget of congress and visitor offices, physical working environments, insufficient personnel and organizational structures, efficiency and effectiveness of congress and visitor bureaus will be decreased.

A great competition is going among countries and cities for the organization of international congresses. In order for Turkey to participate this competition and to achieve desired targets, it is required to execute different precautions and proposals without losing any time. For that reason, first of all, it is required new congress centers, technical and financial support with respect to promotion and marketing, and a good planning for international congress tourism. It is evident the requirement to develop a sustainable congress tourism policy and an activity distributed to the country and the whole year. In this point, it is required to diversify tourism and extend congress tourism. Big cities in the world works like a congress center, and it is assumed that number of organized international congress is an important criteria for determining image of a city. Efficient studies should be carried out by Turkey in this regard.

The characteristic of non-automatically emerging possibility is one of the most important characters of congress tourism. For that reason, development depends on congress facilities and congress infrastructure. From now on, in order to organize congresses with high number (some of them exceed 10,000), it is required to construct congress centers with international standards and high capacity, and to increase bed capacities of hotels. Firstly, current facilities should be amended, and the ones being project phase should be rapidly completed, and in the same time all relevant infrastructure investment should be completed.

For the purpose of developing international congress tourism of Turkey in a planned way, and increasing market share in the world, governmental support is required. Governmental incentives should be provided in a powerful and efficient way due to considerably long period of return on investment time, and high cost of intense marketing activities in the operation stage in addition to the requirement of high amount of investment to be made in this sector. International congress tourism starts to take an important place in the world economy. Turkey should evaluate advantages and necessary infrastructures owned, and increase its competitive force by properly analyzing all relevant changes and renewals.

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