




TURKEY’S TOURISM STRATEGIES: BUILDING SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES THROUGH ANCHORING

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ABSTRACT

This is a case study of the application of the “anchoring” phenomenon in the tourism of Turkey and its impact on the spiritual needs of tourists. Faith Popcorn defines anchoring as a shift towards revisiting the safe features of the past and returning to elements of belief. The research aims to assess the impact of anchoring on spiritual, wellness, eco-tourism and cultural tourism in Turkey. With the help of different cases it will be shown, how the anchoring effect satisfies the spiritual need of tourists and enhances brand devotion. The revelations inform us how heritage promotion and brand loyalty can be enhanced by leveraging via anchoring technique.

Keywords: anchoring, eco-tourism, spiritual tourism, wellness retreats




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TÖRÖKORSZÁG TURIZMUSSTRATÉGIÁI: SPIRITUÁLIS ÉS KULTURÁLIS TAPASZTALATÉPÍTÉS HORGONYHATÁS RÉVÉN

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ABSZTRAKT

Az alábbi esettanulmány a „lehorgonyzás” jelenségének a törökországi turizmusban való alkalmazásáról és a turisták lelki szükségleteire gyakorolt hatásáról szól. Faith Popcorn a lehorgonyzást úgy határozza meg, mint elmozdulást a múlt biztonságának újrafelfedezése és a hit elemeihez való visszatérés irányába. A kutatás célja, hogy felmérje a lehorgonyzás spirituális, wellness-, öko- és kulturális turizmusra gyakorolt hatását Törökországban. Különböző esetek ismertetése segítségével mutatjuk be, hogy a lehorgonyzó hatás miként elégíti ki a turisták lelki szükségleteit és fokozza a márka iránti elkötelezettséget. A feltárt eredményekből következtethetünk arra, hogy az örökség népszerűsítése és a márkahűség hogyan erősíthető a horgonyzási technika alkalmazásával.

Keywords: lehorgonyzás, ökoturizmus, spirituális turizmus, wellness pihenés

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1. Introduction

Current trends in the market are quite unforgiving and companies are under significant pressure to enhance the relationships they have with their customers and create loyalty out of these customers. Firms aware of the 'anchoring' effect and its relatedness to consumers as a behavior can apply strategies that enhance even the bond of divide intention of making their customers more loyal and confident in them and their products and services. Faith Popcorn, a futurist marketing consultant, describes anchoring as an investment in safe elements of the past so as to Relocate one's energy towards the future. Brain Reserve, Popcorn's consultancy, regards this as one of the 17 tendrils emerging from culture and society where the evolution of human experience and consumer behavior is examined (Popcorn, s.a.).

This research will focus on the use of the anchoring phenomenon in the tourism industry in Turkey and the role it plays in tourism strategies. The spiritual bridging supplied by Turkey's great historical and cultural background draws tourists. We will also examine the effects of anchoring on tourists in Turkey and the destinations where they would be travelling. Various types of tourism, such as Islamic faith tours, Christian heritage sites, wellness retreats, and eco-tourism, will be evaluated based on how they respond to tourists' deep desire for meaning and spiritual connection.

Focusing on the effective use of the anchoring effect in Turkey's tourism sector, this research aims to reveal how both domestic and international tourists' spiritual needs can be met and how the country's competitive advantage in tourism can be enhanced. This study can serve as an important guide for stakeholders looking to develop new strategies in the tourism sector and provide recommendations to further advance Turkey's tourism potential by increasing brand loyalty.

2. The Role of Anchoring in Consumer Behavior and the Tourism Sector

This phenomenon can also be explained as depriving of different foreign ideas to one's own surroundings (Moscovici, 2001; Narter, 2012).

In the late 1980s Popcorn observed the trend of individuals wanting to become part of or explore some form of spirituality. These were the days when people felt the urge to reach back to their spiritual origins and at the same time run away from what was causing them anxiety. This circumstance had a great influence in consumers' quest for meaning which was not out of place with the changing times, and which was seen in companies' attempts to ensure satisfaction with feelings of doing well and being good (Popcorn, s.a.).

The existing literature establishes that the anchoring effect does affect consumers and their characteristic decision-making process. This effect may have an impact on some dependent variables such as consumers' perceptions, their willingness to pay, and their regret after purchase (Simonson & Drolet, 2004). In addition, this better knowledge of this bias may be useful for marketing purposes as a means to direct consumers' choices in a desired way (Miao, 2023). In the current era of numerous competitors, the orientation of

the anchor process is delineated with brand credibility and loyalty, thus determining the response of the consumer (Keller, 2012).

Consumer behaviour takes into consideration actions and decision-making processes which individuals carry out when evaluating and making use of goods and services. The anchoring effect explains why consumers lean toward those who create great first impressions or provide helpful information: every market newcomer seeks that information, which is essential in building brand trust. It is possible for organizations to form durable and deep relationships with customers by relying on emotional relevance, openness, and personalized communication, thus taking advantage of the anchoring effect (Develi, 2024).

For Turkey, the anchoring phenomenon shapes tourists' spiritual quests and modern travel experiences, and it is crucial for businesses in the tourism sector to effectively utilize this process. By highlighting Turkey's rich cultural and spiritual heritage, tourism businesses can appeal to tourists' desire to return to their spiritual roots. This understanding can increase brand loyalty and, by personalizing tourists' experiences, reinforce brand trust.

3. The Role of Sustainable Lifestyles in Brand Loyalty

The uncertainties and anxieties brought by modern life significantly influence individuals' search for inner peace and meaning. Living in a constant rush and stress in today's world can negatively affect people's mental and spiritual well-being. This situation leads individuals to seek inner peace and meaning. Uncertainty is a condition that people face throughout many periods of their lives. However, events such as pandemics, economic crises, and natural disasters can exacerbate this feeling of uncertainty. Coping with uncertainty requires individuals to develop skills to handle stress. Acquiring accurate information plays an important role in dealing with uncertainty (Özmen, s.a.). The search for inner peace and meaning are methods individuals use to protect their mental and spiritual health. Practices such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness help people live in the moment and cope with stress. Being in touch with nature, doing regular exercise, and eating healthy foods also enhance inner peace (Cumhuriyet, 2024). In the face of the uncertainties brought by modern life, individuals tend to return to their spiritual roots. This can manifest in practices such as religious beliefs, meditation, and yoga. In this era of rapid societal and cultural change, people turn to the values and practices of the past to feel safe (Popcorn, s.a.).

Current trends also reflect such search for inner peace and meaning. Especially in the post-pandemic period, trends like a return to nature, minimalism, and sustainable living have come to the forefront (Endeksa, 2022). People are moving away from the chaos of big cities, turning towards quieter and more nature-connected living environments. This trend has led to an increase in land and farm sales (Bloomberg HT, 2023).

This trend is also reflected in cinema. Recently released films focusing on life intertwined with nature and the quest for inner peace have drawn attention. For instance,

films like *Nomadland* portray the return to nature and simple living in the face of modern life’s uncertainties (Sinemalar, 2024; IMDB, 2020).

This search for inner peace and meaning has a significant impact on brand loyalty as well. Brand loyalty refers to consumers’ commitment to a particular brand and their repeat purchasing behavior. Loyal customers trust the brand’s products or services, find satisfaction, and make repeat purchases (XSIGHTS, 2023). In the face of the uncertainties of modern life, consumers gravitate towards reliable and meaningful brands. These brands not only offer products or services but also respond to consumers’ quest for inner peace and meaning. For example, brands that adopt sustainability and eco-friendly practices are preferred by consumers aligned with trends like returning to nature and sustainable living. These brands offer consumers not just a product, but a lifestyle, which in turn enhances brand loyalty (Dođan, 2024). Furthermore, the trust and meaning that brands provide to consumers strengthen their commitment to the brand, fostering long-term loyalty (QuestionPro, s.a.).

This search for inner peace and meaning also significantly affects tourism in Turkey. With its rich natural beauty, historical and cultural heritage, Turkey presents an ideal destination for individuals seeking inner peace and meaning. Ecotourism routes in various regions of Turkey offer a vacation experience immersed in nature, catering to this search. For example, the unique natural formations of Cappadocia, the tranquil beaches along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, and the lush forests of the Black Sea region are perfect options for those seeking a peaceful holiday in nature.

Turkey’s tourism sector is investing in sustainable tourism and ecotourism, taking these trends into account. Besides supporting the local economy, these investments also provide tourists with meaningful and peaceful vacation experiences. Turkey’s goal of attracting 60 million tourists and generating 60 billion dollars in tourism revenue for 2024 is a reflection of these strategies (CNN Tũrk, 2024).

Today, the marketing of Turkey is increasingly being discussed on various platforms, and the country’s potential to attract foreign investment on both national and city levels is gaining prominence. Turkey’s cultural and historical riches are being increasingly discovered by marketing experts, and in this context, the importance of strategic marketing activities aimed at boosting foreign investment is growing (Tũmbek, 2012). This search is also shaping the profiles of tourists seeking spiritual and wellness tourism. In this regard, tourists aiming for spiritual and physical improvements through meditation, yoga, spa therapies, and nature walks take the density of Turkey’s natural beauty and ecotourism routes into consideration. In this respect, Turkey’s investments in sustainable tourism and ecotourism make such tourist profiles contributive to the local economy and grant significant, peaceful vacation times.

4. Profiles of Tourists Seeking Spiritual and Wellness Tourism

The demographic and psychographic nature of tourists visiting Turkey will be key in understanding the interest in spiritual and wellness tourism. The demographic and

psychographic characteristics of tourists visiting Turkey have varied in different studies. Akca et al. (2016) identified the soci-economic characteristics for the cave tourists in Turkey, including house hold income which had a positive but insignificant effect to visitor expenditure. Other factors that may determine expenditure include age, educational attainment, and gender. Situmorang & Suryana (2023) observe that ‘foreign visitors’ who frequent Lengkong Street Food are perceived as falling within the adolescent or adult years, more female, and from other cities. Their psychographic characteristics included interests and expectations, which preferred unique and budget culinary experiences. Petrović et al. (2020) highlighted how gender, age, and education affect tourists’ attitudes towards Vrnjačka Banja as the tourism product of Serbia but can also be extended to the case of Turkey. Meric & Hunt (1998) found that ecotourists are generally middle-aged, higher educated, and of higher income, whose preferred activities involve wildlife observation and visits to parks and historic sites.

Tassiopoulos et al. (2004) provide a profile of the wine tourists in South Africa that may have some similarities in Turkey. It has been indicated that demographic variables of age, income, marital status, and education level influence visitation rates. Psychographics include accommodation preferences and sources of information. Although some findings, such as those of Akca et al. (2016), indicate that factors of income are not critical and determinant factors of tourist expenditure. In addition, the fact that demographic features have a suggestive influence on manifestations of tourist attitudes and preferences cuts across both cave and wine tourism, as found respectively by Petrović et al. (2020) and Tassiopoulos et al. (2004). Demographic characteristics like age, gender, income, and education level define tourists visiting Turkey and determine the expenditure profile and attitudes that these exhibit toward tourism products.

Other psychographic characteristics, such as interests, expectations, and preferences for activities, also mold the tourist experience. These findings suggest that demographic and psychographic profiles are important factors in framing specific offerings in tourism for the tourists’ needs and preferences (Akca et al., 2016; Meric & Hunt, 1998; Petrović et al., 2020; Situmorang & Suryana, 2023; Tassiopoulos et al., 2004).

4.1. Psychological Motivations

Spiritual tourists have psychological motivations, which are associated with searching for personal fulfillment and spiritual welfare. Spiritual fulfillment has been demonstrated in various studies to be the main driving force among tourists visiting these countries. These motives have been related to intrinsic ones in seeking peace, harmony, and a better understanding of one’s faith or spirituality. Surprise, although secular motives may be considered as less important, is never absent in the decision-making process of the tourists as spiritual tourists. In fact, the analysis of tourists’ motivations often shows contradictions in different contexts.

For example, in India, urban millennials are driven by mental stress and corporate pressures. That means spiritual tourism can be used to create an opportunity to break away

from the pressures of daily life (Kainthola et al., 2021). There is also a chance that, unlike foreign tourists, domestic tourists have different motivations due to cultural proximity and familiarity with the destination, which may affect the psychological motivation to visit a particular site, as stated by Meng & Tung (2016). Tourists on spiritual journeys are multilayered in their psychological motivations. Spiritual fulfillment is considered one of the major motivating factors. Still, these practices might differ according to individual circumstances and cultural contexts. Such motivations are crucial to understand for the tourism stakeholders to meet the needs of spiritual tourists, thus enriching their experiences.

4.2. International Benchmarking and Comparisons

The provided context does not contain specific information regarding Turkey's current position in spiritual and wellness tourism or its comparison with similar tourism destinations worldwide. Therefore, a direct comparison or analysis based on the given papers is not feasible. However, it is worth noting that the cultural and spiritual traditions of a country, such as those discussed in Hüseyinov (2002), can significantly influence its appeal as a spiritual tourism destination. The historical suppression and artificial introduction of traditions in Azerbaijan during the Soviet era, as examined in Hüseyinov (2002), highlight the complex interplay between politics and cultural identity, which can also be relevant to Turkey's spiritual tourism landscape. While the papers provided do not offer direct insights into Turkey's spiritual and wellness tourism sector, the cultural and historical context of a region, as explored in Hüseyinov (2002), is an important factor that can affect its position and competitiveness in the global tourism market. To conduct a thorough comparison, additional research focusing specifically on Turkey's spiritual and wellness tourism offerings and how they stack up against global counterparts would be required (Hüseyinov, 2002).

5. Origins and Landscape of Tourism in Turkey

The word *tourism* originates from the Latin term 'tornus' (meaning to turn or return), which evolved into the English and French word 'tour' (meaning journey). Tourism refers to the temporary travels of individuals who leave their daily living environments for recreational purposes (Erdoğan, 1996; Toskay, 1989). The connection between the industrial revolution and the development of modern tourism is well-documented. The industrial revolution significantly increased production efficiency, leading to more leisure time and disposable income for many people. This, in turn, spurred the growth of recreational and relaxation activities, laying the foundation for modern tourism (Şengel, 2021).

Today, individuals participate in tourism activities for various reasons. Tourism in Turkey varies based on the participants' purposes. According to research by the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, types of tourism include sea-sun-sand,

meetings, thermal resources, yachting, cave tourism, mountain and winter sports, hunting, golf, faith, highlands, and river tourism, among others.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in land sales outside Istanbul. Especially during the pandemic, those seeking to escape the stress and crowded environments of city life have turned towards quieter and more nature-oriented living spaces. This trend has led to a rise in land and farmland sales. The widespread adoption of remote work during the pandemic has further encouraged people to move away from big cities to more tranquil, natural areas. Additionally, land and farmland are seen as long-term investment tools, making them appealing to investors. Rising housing prices in major cities have prompted people to seek more affordable land and farmland. Throughout Turkey, sales of land, farmland, and commercial real estate reached a record in the first 10 months of 2023, totalling 1,426,146 sales. This increase indicates a growing interest in non-residential real estate (Endeksa, 2022; Bloomberg HT, 2023; Akşam, 2023).

Second homes are properties typically used for recreational purposes during specific times of the year and are generally used for short-term stays. Manisa & Görgülü (2008) define second homes as fixed properties used for recreational purposes during certain periods, integrated with the tourism sector. In Turkey, second homes are predominantly concentrated in coastal areas and are associated with sun, sea, and sand tourism. These homes play a significant role in shaping local economies and influencing settlement patterns in tourist regions. There are approximately 480,000 second homes in Turkey, used for an average of 1.5 months per year (Manisa & Görgülü, 2008; Birol-Özerk, 2012).

This situation reflects Turkey's tourism sector's focus on coastal tourism and short-term vacation accommodations. The integration of second homes into the tourism sector contributes to the development of infrastructure and services in tourist areas. With the rise of eco-tourism, second homes are increasingly found in natural and eco-tourism areas, offering a chance for tourists to experience nature while enjoying modern comforts. This shift supports sustainable tourism by providing eco-friendly accommodations in areas like mountains, lakes, and forests, which helps reduce urban pressure and supports local economies.

Turkey's tourism sector reflects the effects of the anchoring phenomenon in various ways. In the following sections, examples will be discussed in detail, showcasing how this phenomenon is applied and how it meets the spiritual quest for returning to one's roots. Strategies that aim to personalize tourists' experiences and increase brand loyalty by leveraging Turkey's cultural and spiritual heritage will also be evaluated in this context.

5.1. *Spiritual Tourism and Faith Tours in Turkey*

Turkey, located at the intersection of the three major religions, offers an attractive destination for spiritual tourism. In the context of the anchoring phenomenon, Turkey's spiritual and faith tourism experiences stand out.

Among Turkey's important religious centers, Urfa and Trabzon are prominent. Urfa, known as the 'City of Prophets' by locals, is believed to be the birthplace of Prophet

Abraham, making it a significant pilgrimage site for both Muslims and people of other faiths. The sacred sites in Urfa hold great importance not only for religious tourism but also for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Trabzon's Sumela Monastery holds great religious significance, especially for Orthodox Greeks. The historical monastery is known as a pilgrimage center for Christian Greeks, attracting many tourists to the region. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it is considered a shrine by the local Greek community (Okuyucu & Somuncu, 2013). Both Urfa and Sumela reflect Turkey's multi-religious and multicultural structure, contributing to the enrichment of faith tourism.

In the scope of Islamic faith tours, spiritual centers such as Hagia Sophia Mosque and Eyüp Sultan Mosque in Istanbul, as well as the Mevlâna Tomb in Konya, provide important pilgrimage sites for Muslim tourists, strengthening their religious and spiritual bonds. Konya, in particular, draws many tourists in December due to the Shab-i Arus ceremonies. In 2023, approximately 294,381 people attended the Shab-i Arus ceremonies (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, s.a.). This event significantly increases the number of tourists visiting Konya in December. The Mevlâna Museum, which had 2.9 million visitors in the first 11 months of 2022 (İletişim Başkanlığı, 2023), sees a substantial increase in December with visitors coming for the ceremonies. Similarly, significant Christian pilgrimage sites in Turkey, such as the House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus and the Church of St. Peter in Antakya, cater to Christian tourists' spiritual quest, highlighting Turkey's multicultural heritage. These locations allow tourists to form meaningful connections with the past and increase Turkey's potential for spiritual tourism (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, s.a.).

While Turkey has significant religious attractions for Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, the proportion of religious and pilgrimage tourists has remained at 0.7% over the past fifteen years. This indicates that Turkey has not fully capitalized on its faith-based attractions in tourism. The regions where faith tourism has developed are often mass tourism destinations such as Izmir and Antalya. Other important faith tourism centers, such as Istanbul, Nevşehir, Hatay, and Isparta, have not fully realized their potential. Additionally, terrorism, lack of infrastructure, and economic underdevelopment in Turkey's eastern and southeastern regions hinder the growth of faith tourism. Careful planning in these areas could support faith tourism, contributing to economic development and poverty reduction. In this context, relevant ministries and organizations should make sensitive and comprehensive efforts to protect and develop local values and faith tourism attractions (Okuyucu & Somuncu, 2013).

The increasing interest in faith tourism has attracted the attention of many tour operators since the 1990s. Anatolia is home to many faith centers that can offer high economic returns. The effective utilization of these centers is crucial for the growth of faith tourism and the diversification of tourism. An inventory of religious sites should be made, and the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism should provide promotional campaigns and online information access. Professional guide training should be provided, tourism offices should be established, accommodation capacity should be increased, and

modern businesses should be developed. New tour programs should be created for both international and domestic tourists (Güzel, 2010). Proper evaluation of Turkey's faith tourism potential can meet individuals' desires to return to their roots, in line with Faith Popcorn's anchoring trend. This trend emphasizes tourists' search for strengthening their religious and spiritual bonds, and Turkey's historical and religious sites hold the potential to build brand loyalty. Especially through the deep spiritual experiences offered by faith tourism, people can establish meaningful connections with Turkey, encouraging them to choose this destination for future visits.

5.2. Wellness and Spiritual Tourism: Utilizing Turkey's Natural and Historical Riches

Another important dimension of the anchoring phenomenon is the pursuit of spiritual balance and inner peacefulness. In this respect, Turkey offers a variety of wellness and spiritual tourism possibilities in all its natural and historic beauty.

Thermal springs are famous in Turkey, particularly around regions such as Afyon, Yalova, and Pamukkale. The relaxation associated with these hot springs is not just physical but rather a way of spiritual purification for tourists who would want to get away from the hustle and bustle of modern life in order to get their inner balance. In addition, yoga and meditation retreats, especially in Fethiye, Antalya, and Cappadocia, provide the opportunity for foreign and domestic tourists to spend their days by joining in spiritual renewal with the natural environment. These programs provide an effective solution for individuals seeking inner peace.

Such natural and historical resources put Turkey in a leading position in terms of wellness and spiritual tourism. Mixing the country's rich cultural heritage with fully advanced medical infrastructure offers health tourists a different experience in the combination of treatment and cultural enrichment. The rich natural and historical resources make Turkey appealing for wellness tourism. Further, the integration of traditional and complementary medicine with other treatment options, such as herbal treatments, adds to the considerable investments made in this area and is increasingly a point of interest. The government has realized the economic potential in health tourism and today promotes this area with strategic initiatives through effective branding in order to attract international visitors.

Historical places of Turkey provide spiritual ground for wellness tourism in the form of ancient ruins and religious structures. This linkage between cultural patrimony and tourism becomes essential in appealing to visitors with interests in holistic experiences. Furthermore, health tourism is among the priorities for development of the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, hence it is underlined that due care in making effective use of natural and historic resources located in Turkey requires coordination. While there is a promising potential in the health and spiritual tourism sector of Turkey, the challenge of equal access to healthcare with high standards has yet to be addressed for its local residents. Balancing these challenges is essential for sustainable growth in this emerging industry.

5.3. The Meeting Point of Tradition and Modernity: Eco-Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Turkey's natural and cultural heritage is a significant area of tourism that responds to the anchoring trend. Blending natural beauty with traditional lifestyles, eco-tourism allows people to connect with nature and experience local cultures. The desire to live in nature is often associated with the wish to escape the stress and chaos of modern life. The peace, silence, and natural beauty offered by nature provide an attractive lifestyle for many people. This lifestyle can positively affect not only physical health but also mental well-being (Gökalp, 2023).

People who choose to live in nature generally do so for the following reasons:

- **Natural beauty:** Natural areas such as forests, rivers, and mountains provide inspiration and tranquillity.
- **Clean air and water:** It is possible to lead a healthier life away from the polluted air and water sources of cities.
- **Simple and minimalist living:** Fewer possessions and less clutter offer a more organized and stress-free life.
- **Environmentally friendly living:** Living in nature encourages adopting a more environmentally conscious and sustainable lifestyle.

For those who wish to adopt this lifestyle, portable and eco-friendly homes like Tiny Houses have become popular. These homes offer a minimal and sustainable way of living within nature (Karar, 2022).

In various regions of Turkey, particularly in Kaz Dağları, Fırtına Vadisi, and Şirince, eco-villages offer accommodation and organic farming. These experiences help tourists develop awareness of a simpler and more natural lifestyle outside of modern life. Additionally, Cappadocia's natural beauty and historical richness offer tourists a unique spiritual experience. The underground cities, rock churches, and monasteries in Cappadocia allow visitors to establish a deep connection with the past (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, s.a.).

Turkey's eco-tourism potential includes destinations shaped by sustainable tourism practices that conserve natural resources. Eco-tourism is characterized by being environmentally sensitive, supporting the socio-economic development of local communities, and ensuring the sustainability of natural life. In this context, the General Directorate of Forestry has planned 19 eco-tourism routes, aiming to increase their number to 110 by the end of 2024. It would be an important route in revealing the natural wonders that have not been previously known by people and raising the living standards of local people (Tutcu, 2021; Maltepe, 2021).

Starting with the geographical indication eco-tourism routes, the list includes Kartepe to Termal, Oylat to Aladağ, Yenice to Ulukaya, Süzek to Derbent, Köyceğiz to Çandır, Kemalpaşa Nazarköy to Başkonuş Plateau, Büyükada to Eskişehir Center, Sapadere to Domaniç, Şehzadeler Road to Çoruh, and Seben Plateau. These destinations are embracing various eco-tourism attractions such as forest walks, hot springs, rafting, and camping (Duygu Kılıç et al., 2019; Orman Genel Müdürlüğü, s.a.).

These routes represent the best model for integrating tourism into local economies while ensuring the protection of natural beauty, raising environmental awareness, and preserving ecological diversity. This point, at which ecotourism meets cultural heritage in Turkey, enables a unique opportunity to combine traditional approaches with contemporary methods of managing tourism. Such synthesis not only enhances the tourism experience but promotes sustainable development and cultural preservation as well (Tutcu, 2021; Maltepe, 2021).

Although eco-tourism and cultural heritage may seem promising in their integration into Turkey, the latter poses a challenge in terms of balancing modern-day tourism demands with the need to preserve traditional ways of life. Solutions must therefore be found through a collective approach by key stakeholders in sustainable development.

According to Akyol (2022), Tiny House units offer an important alternative accommodation solution within the framework of eco-tourism. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, the search for a peaceful life in less crowded, nature-connected areas has increased the popularity of Tiny Houses as structures compatible with eco-tourism. In rural areas like İbradı, while traditional buildings are being restored, sustainable and temporary accommodation solutions are necessary to preserve the region's natural texture. Tiny Houses, with their portability, minimalist design, and eco-friendly features, meet the requirements of eco-tourism and contribute to the preservation of natural areas. These units provide environmentally friendly accommodation options, enhancing the region's alternative tourism potential and supporting local development.

The ever-increasing popularity of Tiny Houses, at an unprecedented rate especially during the pandemic, was due to high housing prices, interest in eco-friendly living space, and the adoption of minimalist lifestyles as a second home. This trend is very fast outgrowing itself in Turkey. Tiny Houses are therefore considered to be among the most appropriate alternatives for those who live according to a minimalist approach to life and who want to get away from the crowded atmosphere of the metropolis and popular vacation centers.

The aspects that make Tiny Houses popular include the following reasons for their popularity:

- Eco-friendly: They use less energy, and they are generally made from sustainable materials.
- Economic: Compared to big houses they are cheaper and less costly to maintain.
- Flexibility: They are portable, making it easier to change locations.
- Minimalist living: Fewer belongings and less space give a more organized and stressless life (Hürriyet, 2024).

In Turkey, several firms are into the production and sales of Tiny Houses, such as Mobile House with wheels (which can be legally placed in any kind of land) and Hibrit House, while having different models and price categories (Karar, 2022).

Although the integration of eco-tourism and cultural heritage into Turkey looks promising, balancing modern tourism demands with the preservation of traditional

practices is challenging. Such challenges must therefore be addressed in a collaborative approach by stakeholders to ensure sustainable development.

6. The Role of Anchoring Trends in Turkey's Tourism

Faith Popcorn has referred to this as an anchoring trend, a movement where people find their comfort in tradition and values as the world around them rapidly changes. Indeed, this is one of the more powerful current societal trends having an impact on the tourism industry, particularly for countries like Turkey, which has this cultural and religious heritage. As stated by Popcorn (1991), stability desire and attachment to their roots are what most modern consumers, such as tourists, sought in experiences that help to reinforce their cultural identity and spirituality. A similar trend was also visible in Turkey's tourism sector with an increasing interest in spiritual and religious tourism where travellers were drawn to places for reasons of faith and heritage.

Indeed, with potential places steeped in both history and religion, Turkey is the best example of how anchoring may contribute to the tourism attractions of a nation. The country has significant Islamic sites such as Ayasofya Camii in Istanbul and Mevlâna Tü̇rbesi in Konya, along with the Christian-related House of Virgin Mary in Ephesus and St. Pierre Church in Antakya. These sites appeal to religious pilgrims, and also echo the overall anchoring trend by allowing visitors to connect meaningfully with their spiritual past. At such sites, tourists take part in a reflective experience that is more than merely a visit; the experience is one that also meets their deeper needs for cultural and spiritual fulfillment.

Yet, despite such significant potential for religious tourism in Turkey, the sector remains underdeveloped, considering the country's enormous tourism industry. Religious tourism brings considerable income into the treasury by increasing government revenues, encouraging cultural heritage, and fostering international relations. Indeed, the sector has experienced exceptional growth, with its historic and religious attractions receiving millions of pilgrims and tourists each year. For instance, due to the integrated development plans which improved religious tourism to places such as Antalya, in 1987 tourist receipts reached a record of 33.3 billion USD. The compound annual growth rate in the global religious tourism market records good demand for religious travels and puts Turkey in the spotlight with a growth rate of around 8% annually.

The Turkish government has taken a variety of projects on board, including promoting religious sites and developing infrastructure and visitor experiences. Farooq & Altintas (2022) and Kulak Torun & İsmailođlu (2022) observe that historical structures such as the Double Minaret Medrese and the Ulu Mosque symbolically and culturally represent religious heritage in a way that will trigger the interest of tourists. Such structures bear symbolic and cultural values that contribute to developing further tourism potentiality in Turkey.

Religious tourism also increases revenues that come directly from places of accommodation and transportation, through ancillary services that pour into local economies. The recent growth of the sector fits well within Islamic principles encouraging

travel, therefore deeply integrating Turkey into the global tourism market. However, besides the many economic advantages of religious tourism, potential negative consequences with regard to environmental degradation and cultural commodification have to be addressed with great care for sustainable growth.

Tourism in Turkey will need to take up a more holistic approach to anchoring if the full power of this trend is to be tapped in the integration of cultural and religious tourism into its broader marketing strategies. These include initiating special tour packages, enhancing infrastructure at important religious sites, and investing in international marketing campaigns that can project Turkey as a special location where major world religions meet. In this process, as the report suggests, Turkey would be able not only to enhance its religious tourist attractions but also to contribute to the general objective of preserving and promoting its diversified cultural heritage.

7. Conclusion

Utilizing the phenomena of anchoring properly might provide Turkey's tourist industry with a considerable competitive edge in light of the fast shifting market conditions and rising spiritual quests. Defined by Faith Popcorn, anchoring refers to returning to spiritual roots by incorporating elements of the past that offer security, and it is a crucial phenomenon with significant implications for modern consumer behavior (Popcorn, s.a.). Turkey's rich cultural and spiritual heritage plays a key role in integrating this phenomenon into tourism strategies. The country's historical and religious sites offer tourists the opportunity to establish meaningful connections with the past and meet their spiritual satisfaction.

In this context, Turkey's spiritual and faith tourism holds considerable potential. Islamic centers like the Hagia Sophia Mosque in Istanbul and the Mevlana Mausoleum in Konya, as well as Christian sites like the House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus and the Church of St. Peter in Antakya, provide examples of the anchoring phenomenon, offering tourists profound spiritual experiences (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, s.a.). However, it is observed that the full potential of faith tourism is not fully realized, and some areas are not adequately developed (Okuyucu & Somuncu, 2013). Comprehensive efforts are needed to preserve and enhance local values (Güzel, 2010).

Living in nature and spirituality are intertwined phenomena for many people. The tranquility and serenity offered by nature provide an ideal environment for those seeking a spiritual experience. Turkey, with its rich natural beauty and diverse ecosystems, is highly suitable for this lifestyle. Opportunities in wellness and spiritual tourism in Turkey can also be evaluated in alignment with the anchoring phenomenon. Thermal springs in Afyon, Yalova, and Pamukkale, along with wellness activities such as yoga and meditation, cater to tourists' quest for spiritual and physical relaxation. These experiences play a crucial role in providing inner balance for individuals seeking to escape the stress of modern life (Popcorn, s.a.).

Eco-tourism and cultural heritage are other important areas in Turkey that respond to the anchoring trend. Eco-tourism experiences in regions like Kaz Mountains, Firtina Valley, and Őirince create a bridge between nature and culture, allowing tourists to escape from modern life. Additionally, the unique natural and historical wealth of Cappadocia offers visitors the opportunity to forge a deep connection with the past (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, s.a.).

Brand loyalty is directly related to the anchoring phenomenon. Consumers gravitate towards brands where they feel secure and find spiritual fulfillment. The tourism sector in Turkey can enhance brand loyalty by adopting this understanding. Recommendations for the business world should include the conscious use of the anchoring effect and the implementation of strategies that strengthen tourists' spiritual connections. In this context, special tour packages and experience-focused marketing strategies should be developed.

This study has examined the phenomenon of anchoring in Turkey's tourist industry and its implications for tourists' spiritual searches. The abundant historical and cultural heritage of Turkey thus acts as a strong tourist attraction to those seeking spiritual fulfillment. In this sense, the reflections of Faith Popcorn's anchoring phenomenon on tourist experiences and destinations in Turkey are to be focused on in the current research. The results of the research indicated that Turkey had an important potential for spiritual and wellness tourism. Faith tourism destinations, on the other hand, which are holy for both Islam and Christianity, include the Hagia Sophia Mosque in Istanbul, Mevlana Mausoleum in Konya, the House of the Virgin Mary in Ephesus, and the Church of St. Peter in Antakya. Attention is also drawn to the fact that faith tourism is not used to the full and some of these regions are underdeveloped. All kinds of comprehensive efforts are needed to preserve and enhance local values.

In many people's lives, living in nature and spirituality go hand in hand. With its natural beauty and differing ecosystems, Turkey is really apt for such a life. The opportunities in wellness and spiritual tourism in Turkey can be evaluated as aligned with the anchoring phenomenon. They include Afyon, Yalova, and Pamukkale thermal springs, while wellness activities involve yoga and meditation retreats, allowing for spiritual and physical relaxation for tourists. They constitute some of the important ways of providing inner balance to the individual who wants to get away from a stressful life.

Other significant sectors which are a reflection of the anchoring trend in Turkey are eco-tourism and cultural heritage. The eco-tourism experiences, such as Kaz Mountains, Firtina Valley, and Őirince, link nature and culture, enabling tourists to get away with the hustle and bustle of modern life. Besides that, Cappadocia, with its specific natural and historic riches, has enabled the visitors to establish close contact with the past.

It is also related to the anchoring phenomenon since consumers show a liking for brands at which they feel safe and find spiritual self-fulfillment. Such an approach would make the tourism industry in Turkey win brand loyalty. Recommendations for the business world should then involve deliberate exploitation of the anchoring effect as well as

strategies that enhance tourists' spiritual bonding. In this respect, special tour packages and experience-based marketing strategies need to be developed.

In other words, some strategies taken regarding the development and improvement of marketing related to cultural heritage and spiritual experience will better develop the tourism potential of Turkey. These strategies will contribute more to the local economy and provide tourists with more meaningful and peaceful holiday experiences.

Further studies on the impacts of the anchoring phenomenon on consumer behavior might be conducted more profoundly in an academic approach. The research about the impact spiritual and cultural contexts have on consumer preferences might reveal new ways for this industry. Besides, in order to make Turkey further increase its tourist potential, support shall be given to academic studies in a way to help marketing of cultural heritage and spiritual experiences more successfully. The study will enrich not only academia but also offer useful insights for the business world. The anchoring effect should be supported in order to raise brand loyalty in business, with strategies that will bring transparency, personalized communication, and emotional branding together. The cultural and spiritual wealth of Turkey should be underlined by sensitive marketing campaigns which will allow tourists to live unforgettable experiences. In addition, messages indicating cultural heritage in international marketing strategies may ensure a better position for Turkey in the global tourism market. Sustainable tourism approaches, along with cooperation with local people, will contribute to increasing not only economic but also cultural benefits.

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