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### **AN UNAUGMENTED PRODUCT IN TURKEY'S RELIGIOUS TOURISM: SEVEN CHURCHES**

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#### **EXTENSIVE SUMMARY**

Today, tourism is considered to be one of the world's largest economies. Leisure is considered as a time measure, the activities carried out during this period are expressed as recreation. If business travel is left aside, tourism is a different form of recreational activities. This difference emerges with tourism takes place in regional, national and international scale (Boniface and Cooper, 2009:5-7).

In regional, national and international scale; religious buildings, rituals, festivals and ceremonial events are important tourist attractions for those with a casual interest as well as more devout followers of the particular systems of belief represented. So, tourism is traditionally closely linked to religion which has acted as a powerful motive for travel from the time of early pilgrimages to contemporary journeys to sacred places. (Henderson, 2003). For example, the Hagia Sophia (Istanbul), the Sultan Ahmet Mosque (Istanbul) and the Ephesus (İzmir) are a few of the most visited places of Turkey in religious tourism. One of the places where Turkey has an important potential for religious tourism is the Seven Churches, located in the Aegean Region and having an important place in Christian theology, too.

Seven Churches ruins, which are currently subject to a certain visitor demand, are an unaugment product despite the high tourism potential. The aim of this study is to reveal the tourism potential of the Seven Churches ruins, to make product analysis and to make proposals for product augment. The research was carried out by content analysis method based on literature review. A three-step route was followed in this study. In the first stage, the Seven Churches were assessed in terms of potential theology of Christianity and Turkey's religious tourism. In the second stage, internal and external environment analysis was carried out within the scope of the elements constituting the touristic product (attractiveness, accessibility, tourism establishments, activities and image). In the third stage, product augment proposals were offered for the Seven Churches.

According to the results obtained, it is seen that Denizli, İzmir and Manisa where Seven Churches located, have positive features in terms of attractiveness, activities, accessibility, tourism establishment and image elements.

In terms of attractiveness, the Seven Churches have cultural, historical, heritage and religious attractions.

In terms of accessibility, the Seven Churches have air, land, railway connection, made signboards and lighting works of the ruins by local municipalities.

In terms of tourism establishments, there are many travel agencies, souvenir shops, food and beverages establishments and hotels in the ruins.

In terms of activity, were made organized biblical tours, rituals and remembrance days in the ruins. When it is evaluated in terms of image element, it is determined that it is the image of culture and faith tourism, but it is thought that this is not sufficient. In this study, were proposed to emblems and slogans design, simulation demonstrations fiction and cross-border cooperation in destination marketing within augmented product for Seven Churches.