



Research Paper

The Role And Importance of Turkish Convention Bureaus

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ABSTRACT: Main purpose of this study is defining existing role, importance, activities and possibilities of Turkish convention bureaus in Meeting Tourism. Unsynchronised interview pattern was used. By using the internet, a total of 22 structured questions were asked to the responsible person in the sample. There is a high need for organizing current convention bureaus operating on a national level rather than city level. In addition to this, the budgets and international memberships of sampled convention bureaus are not enough. Sampled convention bureaus must be independent, in this regard, needed precautions must be taken by officials.

Keyword(s): Meetings, convention bureaus, meeting tourism, Turkey

I. DEVELOPMENT OF MEETING TOURISM IN THE WORLD

Meeting Tourism means travelling for the sharing of information outside or inside of a country within a scientific programme, individually or as a group. The term *Meeting Tourism* covers all kinds of activities like congresses, conferences, seminars, workshops, summits etc. Development of *Meeting Tourism* is very important for countries, especially the developing ones because of its economical, social and cultural contributions. Simply put, every meeting (whether big or small) hosting hotels and congress centers will be affected in a positive way, in terms of economic interaction, event suppliers, local governments and other stakeholders e.g. restaurants, shops, shopping centers will increase their occupancies and demands for goods and services. (Horvath, 2011: 75). Especially after the 1960's *Meeting Tourism* has developed very fast. At this point the natural equilibrium of demand and supply has played a critical role. As the demand number for meetings worldwide increased so did the supply of more meeting related investments in meeting hotels and congress centers (Kim *et al.*, 2010: 42). In the development of *Meeting Tourism* most of the investment is concentrated on the building of new hotel and congress centers. But equally important to these investment in facilities is the opening of convention bureaus.

There are lots of positive aspects of *Meeting Tourism* to the World economy according to the United Nations World Trade Organization (UNWTO, 2014:10);

- *Meetings are big business in their own right and play an important role in supporting other businesses.
- *Promote investment, trade, communications and technology.
- *Bring education and professional development to the local community, creating jobs and retaining work forces.
- *It is a "clean" industry and promotes a quality environment.
- *Meetings promote and support other business sectors.
- *Represent the "high end" of attendance and spending.
- *Attract global expertise.
- *Create and spread knowledge worldwide.
- *Build community profile and promote global understanding and cooperation.

Meeting Tourism with its activities and accompanying related travel and accommodation is an important tool in sharing knowledge, culture and experience (Davras, 2012: 85).

As in other alternative types of tourism, there is tough competition among countries which have *Meeting Tourism* potential in terms of infrastructure and superstructure. In selecting the right meeting location, meeting

planners (Professional congress organizers, governments, universities, firms etc.) have auditing processes starting from the macro down to the micro level. In other words, they follow a continent-country-region-city-establishment and hall order. Written literature accessibility, availability of the facility, quality of service, affordability, destination image, attractions/entertainment and safety/security details are all important selection criteria of meeting planners (Lee,Back, 2005: 412). Results of a research are given in Table 1 regarding top factors influencing meeting location.

Table. 1 Top Factors Influencing Meeting Location

	North America	Europe	Central/S.America	APAC	Global Hoteliers
Economic/political instability concerns	2 %	4 %	8 %	16 %	13 %
Currency/exchange rate	1 %	1 %	10 %	4 %	6 %
Online reviews	1 %	0 %	4 %	1 %	6 %
Safety concerns	2 %	3 %	4 %	14 %	13 %
Perceptions around “resort” destinations for meetings	5 %	4 %	8 %	4 %	0 %
Participation in company’s or organization’s preferred supplier program	5 %	8 %	0 %	9 %	6 %
Past experience of colleague	1 %	2 %	0 %	5 %	0 %
Your own past experience	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Ease of air lift/transportaion to location for attendees	18 %	14 %	20 %	7 %	6 %
Budget	28 %	24 %	32 %	23 %	38 %
Client directive based on past experience	10 %	10 %	6 %	7 %	0 %
Repeat destination for meeting	7 %	8 %	4 %	1 %	6 %
Specific location type needed-airport, near training facility, near customer location, etc.	19 %	22 %	4 %	9 %	6 %

Source: American Express 2016 Global Meetings and Events Forecast: 26, benefiting from North American, European, Asia Pasific, Central/South American and Key Suplier Surveys from American Express Meetings & Events, August 2015 Hosted meetings enable positive developments both at national and international levels. Meetings promote countries, increase networks, and strengthen images (Hanly, 2012: 1574). There are two main international bodies publishing world *Meeting Tourism* statistics; the **International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)** and **The Union of International Associations (UIA)**. Every year by using different criteria they publish their own statistics. ICCA publishes meeting tourism statistics mainly based on three strict criteria; 1) be attended by at least 50 participants, 2) be organised on a regular basis (one-time events are not included) and 3) move between at least three different countries (ICCA, 2015: 5). Latest ICCA statistics show that according to the number of meetings the top 5 countries in the World meeting industry are; USA (925 meetings), Germany (667 meetings), United Kingdom (582 meetings), Spain (572 meetings) and France (522 meetings) respectively. Top 20 countries are given in Table 2 (ICCA, 2015:6).

Table: 2 Top 20 Countries in World Meeting Industry (According to Number of Meetings)

Rank	Country	Meetings
1	U.S.A.	925
2	Germany	667
3	United Kingdom	582
4	Spain	572
5	France	522
6	Italy	504
7	Japan	355
8	China-P.R.	333
9	Netherlands	333
10	Canada	308
11	Brazil	292
12	Portugal	278
13	Republic of Korea	267
14	Austria	258
15	Australia	247
16	Belgium	216
17	Sweden	216
18	Turkey	211
19	Denmark	204
20	Switzerland	194

The 2015 figures indicate that Berlin is the leading city in terms of meeting numbers. Paris and Barcelona follow Berlin. Top 20 cities in the World given in Table 3 (ICCA, 2015:9).

Table: 3 Top 20 Cities in World Meeting Industry (According to Number of Meetings)

Rank	City	Meetings
1	Berlin	195
2	Paris	186
3	Barcelona	180
4	Vienna	178
5	London	171
6	Madrid	171
7	Singapore	156
8	Istanbul	148
9	Lisbon	145
10	Copenhagen	138
11	Prague	123
12	Amsterdam	120
13	Brussels	117
12	Seoul	117
15	Hong Kong	112
16	Bangkok	103
17	Rome	99
18	Dublin	97
19	Beijing	95
	Budapest	95

At the European level, the top 5 countries are; Germany (667 meetings), United Kindom (582 meetings), Spain (572 meetings), France (522 meetings) and Italy (504 meetings) respectively and Turkey ranks as 11th with 211 meetings. Top 20 countries were given in Table 4(ICCA, 2015:20).

Table: 4 Top 20 Countries (Europe Ranking)

Rank	Countries	Meetings
1	Germany	667
2	United Kingdom	582
3	Spain	572
4	France	522
5	Italy	504
6	Netherlands	333
7	Portugal	278
8	Austria	258
9	Belgium	216
10	Sweden	216
11	Turkey	211
12	Denmark	204
13	Switzerland	194
14	Poland	193
15	Czech Republic	154
16	Greece	152
17	Norway	144
18	Finland	141
19	Ireland	125
20	Hungary	112

Among European cities, Berlin is the leader, Paris, Barcelona, Vienna, London and Madrid followed Berlin respectively. From Turkey, İstanbul ranked as 7th with 148 meetings. Top 20 European cities are given in Table 5 (ICCA, 2015:22).

Table: 5 Top 20 European Cities

Rank	City	Meetings
1	Berlin	195
2	Paris	186
3	Barcelona	180
4	Vienna	178
5	London	171
6	Madrid	171
7	Istanbul	148
8	Lisbon	145
9	Copenhagen	138
10	Prague	123
11	Amsterdam	120
12	Brussels	117
13	Rome	99
14	Dublin	97
15	Budapest	95
16	Milan	93
17	Stockholm	89
18	Athens	87
19	Helsinki	71
20	Edinburgh	67

Among the possible reasons for differing country and city rankings are some countries like the USA benefit from their economic power, an extensive complex of existing infrastructure and superstructure for meetings. The USA possesses strong marketing power, in part due to its hosting almost every international bodies' headquarters e.g. the United Nations, NATO, Meeting Professionals International etc. Cities like Berlin, Paris, Barcelona can rely on their advantage of occupying strategic positions in Europe (They are at the center of economical, social and cultural relations and networks). In the meeting market, it will be useful to give short additional information about top cities like Berlin, Paris, Madrid, London and Vienna.

Berlin: Capital city of Germany, having central position in terms of culture, politics, media and science. Additionally, Berlin has meeting facilities greater than expected, has a modern hotel landscape and an active convention bureau promoting every kind of pre, during and after meeting activities to meeting planners.

Paris: Paris has lots of World records in terms of meeting numbers and meeting planners' demand for many years. There are 1000 venues and 600 Paris convention bureau members. For most of the participants, Paris means a charismatic destination. In addition a wealth of infrastructure and superstructure, elegance, culture, history and modernity can easily be experienced in Paris.

Madrid: Madrid can be considered as one of the main meeting centers in the World. As the capital of Spain, Madrid benefits from its rich history, geographic location and European air hub for Latin America.

London: Beside hosting the Olympics, 2012 Summer Games, Paralympic Games, lots of accommodation, transportation and regenerated areas are the main advantages of London in receiving international and national demand in *Meeting Tourism*. The UK also offers the unique attraction of being the solo native English speaking country in Europe.

Vienna: As Austria's largest city, Vienna benefits from its musical prodigies such as Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms. Its ideal location in Europe, accessibility, providing all kinds of meeting package components are just some of the factors attracting meeting planners to Vienna (www.smartmeetings.com/meeting-planning/12794/global-top-15-international-meeting-cities).

As a general trend in *Meeting Tourism*, participants are looking for more economical, short term and new destinations before attending to the meetings. Among continents, as in general tourism development, *Meeting Tourism* in Europe has held the leadership position for many years. Mainly because of its traditional advantage, many European destinations possess state-of-the-art facilities and easy access from attendant sending countries (World Tourism Organization, 2006: 9).

II. ECONOMICAL IMPORTANCE OF MEETING TOURISM

In Meeting Tourism related literature, there are some studies mentioning the economic results of Meeting Tourism on economies. In terms of business perspective, economic results/impacts can be defined as net economic change in meeting host communities (Morgan, Condliffe, 2006: 82). Among many positive contributions, meeting participants spend, stay and travel more than the leisure tourists. In a way, Meeting Tourism can be evaluated as “high value-added” tourism type which has a strong multiplier effect on local and World economies (Lee et al., 2013:331). In Meeting Tourism, participants spend on travelling, accommodation, food & beverage, shopping etc. At the same time Meeting Tourism creates new jobs and increases inward investments and helps the inflow of foreign currencies (Especially by hosting international meetings)(Horvath, 2011: 77).

In many cases measurement of the total economic impact of meetings is very difficult. Among the main reasons for this are; providing only national or local totals, difficulty in tracking total spendings, difficulty in separating sale meeting expenses from trade shows, and the inclusion of incentive travel (Lee, Back, 2005: 410). Basically, there are two types of measures regarding the economic contribution of *Meeting Tourism*; the supply and demand side. Supply side measures variables as income (fees and commissions) and costs, value added and employment. At the same time secondary activities, e.g. agencies producing meeting services, hotels, etc. Demand side measures variables as expenditure by participants on specific services. Non-monetary variables including number of participants, duration of meetings, numbers of overnights, etc. (World Tourism Organization, 2006: X). As a result, most of the meeting potential countries carry potential meeting participants because of their large numbers, long and repeat stays, large amount of spendings, extra payments pre-during and after meetings and promoting Powers (Kim et al., 2003: 534).

According to 2015 figures, the increase for meeting budgets will continue in terms of sharing a greater amount to human resources, training and strategic planning processes. In addition to these, 38 per cent of **PCMA (Professional Convention Management Association)** members underlined continuous increase in terms of meeting participants. **AIPC (International Association of Convention Centers)** also confirms growth in the meeting industry as a 5.8 per cent revenue increase for Europe (Davidson, 2015: 6,11). Specifically, the upscale hotel segment market set new records. **STR** hospitality analytics mentioned that in first 10 months of 2015, average Daily rates rose about 4.3 per cent (www.skift.com/2016/01/18/meeting-planners-are-relying-more-on-tourism-bureaus-in-2016).

As a general evaluation, between 30-40 per cent of world tourism movements belongs to Meeting Tourism and total input (direct, indirect and induced) of Meeting Tourism to GDP reached to \$393billion only in USA (www.mpiweb.org/docs/default-source/move-forward/moveforward_industryfacts-2015.pdf). AIPC gives 10 reasons regarding importance of Meeting Tourism to cities/countries (www.aipc.org);

- *Participants spend more,
- *Participants more likely to use host accommodations,
- *Participants' benefits are wide spread,
- *Participants bring new knowledge, experiences and expertise,
- *Participants are more consistent with the concerns of locals,
- *Participants enhance city exposure and image,
- *Participants help spread the hospitality season,
- *Participants generate future tourism,
- *Participants can be used to support economic policy and
- *Participants are valuable source of new talent.

III. THE ROLES AND IMPORTANCE OF CONVENTION BUREAUS

In *Meeting Tourism* there is a wide range of important players like hotels, convention bureaus, **PCO's (Professional Congress Organizers)**, convention centers, equipment providers, universities, translators, officials etc. (www.mpiweb.org/docs/default-source/move-forward/moveforward-industryfacts-2015.pdf). Among these players, convention bureaus can be evaluated as one move ahead because of their primary target “developing a positive image that will position the destination (country/city) as demanded by meeting participants” (Weber, Roehl, 2001: 3). This primary target together with giving objective and compact information free of charge strengthens the strategic position of convention bureaus.

The first convention bureau was opened in 1896 in Detroit, Michigan (Gartrell, 1991: 158) and since that day convention bureaus are the main hub points for most of the *pcos* or meeting planners. The biggest international body of convention bureaus is named “**DMAI**”. Today there are over 600 official **DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International)** members in the world. These members operate in 15 different countries and work with the other players of meeting industry (www.destinationmarketing.org/membership-benefits). Generally convention bureaus are charged with;

*Assisting room blocks from meeting hotels,

*Giving all kinds of meeting related information unique to the city or country,

*Coordination of meeting industry players,

*Organization of trainings needed in meeting industry,

*Helping meeting industry players to apply and host big meetings and

*Carrying out researches and attending to important meeting related fairs in order to promote the destination (Weber, Roehl, 2001: 3).

Because of strategical (linking) position of convention bureaus, the organizational structure and recruitment of the responsible people are very important issues. Professionals having years of experience in the meeting industry must be recruited, well-paid and close to the action. Otherwise it will be very difficult to coordinate players in the meeting industry, to follow the latest trends in world meeting market and orient other professionals. Despite the linking position of convention bureaus, there are examples showing that some players don't benefit much from convention bureaus in the meeting industry. Among possible reasons, are misconception or lack of information about convention bureaus (Lee, Back, 2005: 414). In reality, convention bureaus have much more importance than attracting meeting participants and retaining them as returning tourists for their next visit (Lee et al., 2010: 267). In convincing the meeting planners about hosting meetings, convention bureaus have to employ different marketing tools like direct and indirect marketing, publications, road trips, site visits (Davidson, Keup, 2014: 237). Interestingly changing promotional material according to different countries' tastes. In most cases convention bureaus are dealing with these tasks with extremely insufficient budgets. Today, most of the convention bureaus in the world require multiple sources of fundings e.g. taxes, government supports, trainings, membership and entrance fees etc. According to latest trends and economic developments, especially meeting planners are looking for more direct financial help and sponsorship supports due to increases in hotel prices and costs (www.skift.com/2016/01/18/meeting-planners-are-relying-more-on-tourism-bureaus-in-2016). It can be thought that the importance and level of cooperation possibilities will increase between meeting planners and convention bureaus in order to connect planners with appropriate and suitable partners.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF MEETING INDUSTRY IN TURKEY

In terms of general tourism movements, the direct contribution of travel & tourism to GDP was TRY 98.5 bn (5 per cent of total GDP) in 2015, and expected to rise by 0.2 per cent in 2016 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2016: 1). As an alternative tourism type, *Meeting Tourism*, ranked Turkey as 18th in the world (with 211 meetings in 2015) and 11th in Europe according to the number of hosted meetings. The 2013 figures in terms of number of participants to meetings and fairs exceeded 2.4 million people and revenue exceeded \$ 2.5 billion (www.kdk.gov.tr/en/haber/congress-tourism-in-turkey-has-grown-254-in-10-years/508). According to ICCA reports 4 big cities from Turkey have the leadership position among Turkish cities; İstanbul, Antalya, İzmir and Ankara (Capital city of Turkey). In terms of total number of hosted meetings İstanbul is the leading meeting city whereas Antalya is the leader in terms of meeting seat capacity in Turkey. At the worldwide level, according to meeting numbers; İstanbul ranks as 8th (148 meetings), Antalya ranks as 100th (27 meetings), İzmir ranks as 191st (13 meetings) and Ankara ranks as 254th (9 meetings) from Turkey (ICCA, 2015:9-15).

Over the years, beside its location in Europe, Turkey has the increasing potential of meeting participants benefiting from its historical enrichments, nature, climate and natural resources. *Meeting Tourism* potential can be confirmed by Turkey having hosted international meetings the likes of: NATO Summit, HABITAT II Summit, European Security and Cooperation Summit, World Architects Meeting, OECD Meeting, World Journalists Association Meeting, UNWTO City Tourism Forum, ICCA Annual Meeting, G 20, and EXPO 2016. Because of the worldwide well-known economic, social and cultural advantages of *Meeting Tourism* the Turkish Government gave special emphasis to the investment in both infrastructure and superstructure in Turkey. At this juncture, totally 7 cities were selected as pilot cities for developing *Meeting Tourism* in Turkey namely; **İstanbul, Antalya, İzmir, Ankara, Bursa, Konya** and **Mersin**. As previously mentioned, of these 7 cities İstanbul, Antalya, İzmir and Ankara had the good fortune of ranking in ICCA reports so far. Bursa, Konya and Mersin need time to develop themselves in *Meeting Tourism*. Among these 7 cities, a detailed comparison can be made according to infrastructure and superstructure, references and performances of convention bureaus is as follows;

İstanbul:

- *Already completed needed congress infrastructure and superstructure,
- *Having strategic position in terms of geography, natural beauty and historical antiquities,
- *Convention bureau is active,
- *World leader position for meetings in the maximum 500 participants category,
- *Holds leader position (in terms of hosted meeting numbers) among Turkish cities in ICCA Reports,
- *Attracting international meeting demand at an increasing rate (Example İstanbul Lütfi Kırdar Congress and Convention Center (ICEC) is receiving reservations 2 years in advance),
- *Main flight hub for Turkey, currently 2 international airports, third one is still under construction,
- *Having lots of 5-Star Hotels (Leader in Turkey in terms of international chain hotels,
- *International references like Habitat II, World Chamber of Commerces Congress, NATO Summit, Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (AGİT) Summit, UNWTO City Tourism Forum , 9th World Forestry Congress,
- *Having congress valley consisting of 5 star hotels, convention centers, concert halls etc. and
- *Ability to provide all goods and services in a congress package.

Antalya:

- *Already completed needed congress infrastructure and superstructure,
- *Having strategical position in terms of natural beauty and historical riches
- *Convention bureau is active,
- *Having second position among Turkish cities in ICCA Reports,
- *Leader position in Turkey in terms of congress seating capacity,
- *Leader position in terms of hosting international tourists,
- *Taking international meeting demand at an increasing rate,
- *Having lots of 5-Star Hotels and 1 international Airport,
- *International references like 9th World Forestry Congress, ICCA Annual Meeting, G 20 Summit, EXPO 2016, Airroute Meeting,
- *Having congress valley consisting of 5 star hotels, convention centers etc.
- *Enabling all goods and services in a congress package.

İzmir:

- *Additional congress infrastructure and superstructure, investments needed,
- *Having strategical position in terms of natural beauty and historical riches,
- *Convention bureau is active,
- *Ranks third among Turkish cities in ICCA Reports,
- *Having 5-Star Hotels and 1 international Airport
- *Provides all goods and services in a congress package.

Ankara:

- *Capital city of Turkey (Most of embassies and consulates are there, having big potential,
- *Still congress infrastructure and superstructure investments needed,
- *Having position in terms of historical enrichments,
- *Convention bureau is active,
- *Having fourth position among Turkish cities in ICCA Reports,
- *Having 5-Star Hotels and 1 international Airport,
- *Provides all goods and services in a congress package and
- *Preferred mostly for national meetings and political parties.

Mersin:

- *Congress infrastructure and superstructure investments needed,
- *Having position in terms of natural beauty and historical antiquities,
- *Convention bureau is inactive,
- *Has few 5-Star hotels
- *Needs time for providing all goods and services in a congress package.

Konya:

- *Still congress infrastructure and superstructure investments needed,
- *Having position in terms of cultural and historical antiquities,
- *Convention bureau is inactive,
- *Has few 5-Star Hotels and 1 airport and
- *Needs time to provide all goods and services in a congress package.

Bursa:

- *Congress infrastructure and superstructure investments needed,
- *Favorable position in terms of cultural and historical antiquities,
- *Convention bureau is inactive,
- *Has 1 airport but few 5-Star Hotels
- *Needs time to develop a full goods and services congress package.

It is clear that the three cities of Mersin, Konya and Bursa still have no convention bureau. In terms of organizational structure, all convention bureaus operate on city city basis in Turkey. There is no form of structure on country basis. In other words, there isn't enough synergy among Turkish convention bureaus and every bureau is trying (to do its best) to promote its own city in meeting tourism.

V. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Main purpose of this study is defining the existing role, importance and current possibilities of Turkish convention bureaus. In this regard, among qualitative research patterns, an unsynchronised interview pattern was used. According to Christensen et al., (2014) interviews in electronic environments there are 2 types; synchronised (real time interactions) and unsynchronised (interactions extend over time). In order to receive detailed information about subjective viewpoints, attitudes and decision ways of people in the sample totally 22 structured questions were asked to the responsible persons in the sample. First 10 questions were taken from the study belonging to Baytok et al., 2010: The remaining 14 questions were formed by the authors. In order to keep the names secret, different codes were used for each of the sampled convention bureaus. In Turkey currently there are 4 active convention bureaus, İstanbul, Antalya, İzmir and Ankara. Three out of the four convention bureaus agreed to be in the sample. In collecting the data suitable to qualitative research, structured questions were formed and sent to responsible people in the three participating convention bureaus through the internet.

Findings and Discussion

Founding years, purposes and organizational structures, total budgets, possible funds, cooperation possibilities with associations/foundations, marketing and advertising activities, problems, decisions regarding national convention bureau structure, number of European Union/local agency funded projects and trainings regarding meeting tourism of sampled convention bureaus are given as follows:

Table: 6 Founding Years of Sampled Convention Bureaus

Code	Founding Years
A	2014
B	1997
C	1996

According to Table 6, the oldest convention bureau was founded in 1996. This result shows that meeting tourism is still a new market for Turkey. The oldest convention bureau has only 20 years of experience and the newest one has only 2 years of experience. Gaining experience and having networks are very important in coping with rivals e.g. France and Germany who have a great many of years of experience.

Founding purposes and organizational structures of sampled convention bureaus are given in Table 7.

Table: 7 Founding Purposes and Organizational Structures

Code	Founding Purpose Structure
A	To enable tailor made goods and services to participants operates under the chamber of commerce and industry
B	To give support marketing of the city and increase demand operates under foundation
C	To develop meeting tourism potential, promote and attract participants operates under foundation

Total budgets of the sampled convention bureaus are given in Table 8.

Table: 8 Total Budgets of Sampled Convention Bureaus

Code	Total Budget
A	All expenses financed by the chamber of commerce and industry
B	\$ 334.000
C	\$ 167.000

As it can be seen from Table 8, total budgets of sampled convention bureaus were too low if expected activities and roles of the convention bureaus were to be realized. The current budgets of meeting tourism are inadequate for international competition, especially with the European cities. Possible source of funds for sampled convention bureaus are given in Table 9.

Table: 9 Possible Funds of Sampled Convention Bureaus

Code	Funds
A	Payments from chamber of commerce and industry
B	Membership fees, shares coming from international fairs and advertisements
C	Membership fees

Table 9 shows that funding of sampled convention bureaus differ somewhat from each other. Effective long term development of meeting tourism, requires constant and strong funding sources e.g. membership fees, tax sharing of revenues from fairs, advertisements, municipalities etc. International and national cooperation possibilities of sampled convention bureaus with associations/foundations are given in Table 10.

Table: 10 Cooperation Possibilities With Associations/Foundation

Code	International and National Cooperations
A	ICCA membership, cooperation with other national convention bureaus
B	ICCA, ECM and MPI memberships
C	ICCA and MPI memberships, cooperation with other convention bureaus and tourism related associations

As it can be seen from Table 10, sampled convention bureaus have limited cooperation possibilities especially on international basis. Current international relations with ICCA and MPI can be evaluated as useful, but beside these international bodies much more cooperation possibilities with UIA (Union of International Associations), DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International), IAPCO (International Association of Professional Congress Organizers) etc. seems vital.

Marketing and advertising activities of sampled convention bureaus are given in Table 11.

Table: 11 Marketing and Advertising Activities of Sampled Convention Bureaus

Code	Activities
A	Attending to national and international fairs and publishing materials
B	Attending to national and international fairs, workshops, sales marketing activities, roadshows
C	Marketing and advertising in mice sector

According to Table 11, activities of sampled convention bureau (Code B) seems satisfactory, but the same activities must be realized by other 2 convention bureaus.

Problems facing by sampled convention bureaus are given in Table 12.

Table: 12 Problems Facing the Sampled Convention Bureaus

Code	Problems
A	Lack of training and cooperation possibilities
B	Limited funds, unclear job functions and authority of responsible personnel, inadequate branding and city slogans
C	Inadequate cooperation between government and universities

As it can be seen from Table 12, needed corrections must be exercised in terms of funds, job descriptions, authority and orientation.

Decisions of sampled convention bureaus regarding national convention bureau structure are given in Table 13.

Table: 13 Decisions Regarding National Convention Bureau Structure

Code	Decision
A	Positive support
B	Positive support
C	Positive support

According to Table 13, all of the sampled convention bureaus support a national convention bureau structure in Turkey.

Number of European Union/local agency funded projects realized by the sampled convention bureaus are given in Table 14.

Table: 14 Number of European Union/local Agency Funded Projects

Code	Number of Projects
A	-
B	1
C	2

As it can be seen from Table 14, sampled convention bureaus carried out limited European Union/local agency funded projects. This situation may be because of inadequate information about the funds or lack of legal status of some convention bureaus in Turkey.

Number of given trainings regarding meeting tourism are given in Table 15.

Table: 15 Number of Given Trainings Regarding Meeting Tourism by the sampled Convention Bureaus

Code	Number of Training
A	-
B	Courses at universities,speeches during congresses
C	2

Table 15 again shows too limited number of trainings, courses and speeches regarding meeting tourism.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Meeting tourism is one of the potential new markets for Turkey. Despite the strategic and interconnectedness of convention bureaus in a nation's tourist marketplace, Turkey's oldest convention bureau has only 20 years of experience. In addition to this, only four out of the seven premier meeting cities in Turkey have convention bureaus. In order to convince meeting planners and attract them to Turkey, new convention bureaus must be open as soon as possible. The meeting tourism industry, rather than operating on city by city basis, should be governed by the Turkish National Convention Bureau to present a more unified marketing approach. Otherwise individual convention bureaus will continue to promote, with inadequate budgets, their particular city.

All convention bureaus in the sample operate under foundations, a chamber of commerce and related industries. In other words, they are not fully independent in their activities. At least in terms of use of funds, attending international and national meeting tourism related fairs and recruitment of personnel. Decision making self-government authorization must be given to the convention bureaus. Current budgets of sampled convention bureaus are inadequate in competing with the rivals, realizing direct and indirect marketing, site visits, recruiting the highly qualified and experienced personnel. At this juncture, new funds like sharing of different taxes or other monetary support should be provided by the officials. In the absence of a national convention bureau in Turkey, the possibility of receiving equal funds for every convention bureau seems impossible. In the meantime a standardized budgeting process should be implemented for all current and active convention bureaus.

Turkish convention bureaus, like most of the meeting tourism industry players, have very limited international body membership participation. The convention bureaus just pay for their members to attend their annual meetings, rather than engage in more pro-active events. Turkish convention bureaus must be more actively involved in the leadership of these international bodies to better steer meeting tourism Turkey's way. Lack of having a national convention bureau prevents having the same steps/activities of the individual convention bureaus. One sampled bureau may realize all the needed activities of marketing and advertising, while the rest may have limited or inadequate activities. Regarding increasing the level of meeting tourism knowledge, a greater attempt should be made by the convention bureaus, universities, municipalities and other officials.

LIMITATIONS

This study has two main limitations. First, the sample of convention bureaus include only three bureaus, but currently there are totally four active bureaus in Turkey. Second, all results were based on replies from responsible persons in the sampled convention bureaus, with no other verification.

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