A Qualitative Study on Situation Analysis of Faith Tourism: The Case of Tarsus

İhsan KURAR[a], Atilla AKBABA[b], M. Emin İNAL[a]

[a]*Akdeniz University, Alanya Faculty of Business, Antalya*

[b]*İzmir Katip Çelebi University, Faculty of Tourism, İzmir*

[a]*Akdeniz University, Alanya Faculty of Business, Antalya*

Abstract

TThis study aims to assess the Faith Tourism Potential of Tarsus in four questions: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The study is conducted by case approach which is one of the qualitative research patterns. The sample of the study consists of local administrators, tradesmen, archaeologists and religious representatives. The data obtained from face-to-face, semi structured interviews from shareholders was analysed by the "Content Analysis Method" through the Nvivo 8 qualitative data editing program. Four categories and 37 codes were used to examine the Faith Tourism Potential of Tarsus which was included in 1993 among the sacred sites of Christians as recommended by the Ministry of Tourism and Vatican.

Key Words: Tarsus, Christian, Faith Tourism, Religious.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tarsus is one of the important tourism centres of Turkey and it contains variety of attractions like widespread religious cult sites of the Christian and pre-Christian periods, house and church of St. Paul, antique values and cultural sites. The region is accepted as the capital of Cilicia and the excavation works shed light to a history of 10 thousand years. Faith tourism has a role of bringing the believers of the same faith living in different places of the world and different faith groups to common sacred regions. In addition, it provides an important contribution to the world peace by bringing together the visitors from different faith groups and local people. In this scope, it carries out an important function in social and cultural area by bringing together groups living in different regions and within the same integrity of faith. Here, faith tourism causes important values like tolerance and dialogue to develop. The mass worship at the Ganges for redemption in Hinduism, Christmas worship of 1 week from December the 24th leaded by the Pope in Vatican and pilgrimage of Muslims in Macca are universal religious movements.

Anatolia has always been a meeting point of different beliefs and civilizations. In this scope, faith tourism in Anatolia has seasonal characteristics. In this context, pilgrimage takes place in Anatolia in different time periods of the year as one of the most important objectives of people for joining in religious tourism activities. Countries are socially and economically affected by great movements of people to fulfil pilgrimage duties as per religious beliefs. However the fact that only six thousandths of the tourists visiting Turkey have cultural and religious purposes show that this source is sufficiently promoted. Considering that among 7 billion population of the world, 2,5 billion are Christians, 1,5 billion are Muslims and 14 million are Jewish and the Tarsus hosts several sites of every religion, we understand that the region is an important source of culture and faith tourism. Traces of uninterrupted life for eight thousand years are found in Tarsus, Although its history dates back 10000 years. Several civilizations lived in the region leaving behind lots of important historical and cultural values of their time.

The objective of this study is to provide various recommendations for developing the faith tourism potential of Tarsus within the scope of cultural tourism and ensuring sustainability of the region with respect to faith and culture tourism.

2. HOLY PLACES RELATED TO TOURISM AND MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS

Tourism is the travel and temporary accommodation of consumers other than the habitual residence (Aktaş, 2002: 1-2). According to Eralp (1983), tourism is defined as the whole of events and relations caused by the travel and/or accommodation of individuals provided that it doesn't turn to permanent stay and that the individual doesn't deal with a profit making activity. The term "tourism" means the travel of a person for culture and leisure and it is derived from the Latin word "tornus" (travel and return of a person from one place to another for satisfaction) (Collins-Kreiner, 2010: 260). Goeldner & Ritche (2009: 4) defines tourism as the activity of people for leisure, business and other purposes not lasting more than one year and not consecutive of each other in a place other than residence by leaving the habitual residence in order to join travel activities.

Tourism is a sector that creates broad employment possibilities on an international scale and providing employment to around 300 million people. In other words, almost one of every 16 employees in the world is in the tourism sector and around 7% of all international capital investments are on the field of tourism (Sevinç & Azgün, 2012: 17-18). The attention of the managers of the developed countries on the foreign currency earning feature of tourism shows that tourism activities are important values for regional development. In this context, it is aimed to develop tourism activities in economically underdeveloped regions and to contribute national economy. Public investments are made in the areas of regional incentive to encourage investments in these areas (Yeşiltaş & Öztürk, 2008: 2-3).

Foreign exchange earning and employment creation by tourism activities constitute the economic aspect of tourism. Socio-cultural aspect of tourism includes offering services to tourists, meeting their requirements of leisure, rest and other needs and bringing different cultures together. Tourism is an environmental activity with its resource use demands (Doğan & Üngüren, 2012: 104). In this context, rapid changes in tourism elements vary in classification during the course of time. When making groups, activities and relations during travel and accommodation are taken into consideration (Usta, 2009: 11). These criteria are determined according to place of departure of tourists, number of tourists, time selected for travel, purpose of tourism, duration of accommodation and sociologic qualities of tourism (Aktaş, 2002: 6). In this

sense, people join in faith tourism activities through psychological reasons, variety of religious supply sources, religious promulgation activities, religious days and festivals.

It is estimated that around 240 million people in the world belonging to Christianity, Islam and Hinduism travel based on their beliefs (Rojo, 2007: 7). Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela are three important pilgrimage destinations for Christianity. On the other hand, Lourdes in France is one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in Christianity. For Islam, Macca and Madina are destinations that Muslims are required to visit once in a lifetime. It is a pillar of Islam and voluntariness of Muslims is not sought. (Rojo, 2007: 10).

Pilgrimage and faith are the oldest aspect of the tourism sector. Santiago de Compostela is one of the three important pilgrimage centres of Christianity together with Rome and Jerusalem included in the World heritage list of UNESCO. The three biggest beliefs of the world are Christianity by 33%, Islam by 21% and Hinduism by 14%. It is tourism that reveals sites of these beliefs like Cathedral, Church, Temples and Relic sites. There are thousands of different sacred sites causing population mobility in the world. These sacred sites vary depending on different travel choices of each group. The choice of these sacred regions is based on faith, culture and mystic differences (Rojo, 2007: 1-2).

Religious based travels are very important in history. Increase in the number of people joining in pilgrimage ritual with Islam caused many social activities among Europe, Anatolia and Middle East. The common feature of all religions is the visit of sacred sites as prescribed by their religious guides (Aksoy, 2002: 419-420). Faith tourism joins people having the same feeling of belief from different cultures. In this scope, it emphasizes on the concepts of peace and tolerance as well as creating an economic movement.

Pilgrimage is defined as visiting a place by external reasons and understanding the moral objective and essence. Pilgrimage is also a way of population mobility. Therefore, it may have political, economic, social and cultural effects on regions (Collins-Kreiner, 2010b: 153).

Faith tourism is a whole of events and relations arising from the temporary accommodations of people in places other than their habitual residence like faith attraction centres to which they travel in order to satisfy their religious beliefs and where they demand the goods and services of the tourism enterprises (Aksoy, 2002: 419). People join in faith tourism activities for psychological reasons, variety of religious supply resources, religious promulgation activities, religious days and festivals.

Italy, Israel, India and Spain are among the most important places of Christians throughout the world. Italy draws nearly 25 million visitors every year. In Italy, religious cult sites for Christians attract annually 25 million visitors. This figure is increasing rapidly and more than 3 million of this figure consists of the visitors from the same religion. Visits to Vatican and Rome vary between 6-8 million visitors a year (Angeles & Cruiel, 2008: 424). Therefore, mutual cooperations were developed between public and private sectors in Italy to represent a new role in the tourism system. This provides better functioning of society and church (Presti & Petrillo, 2010: 301). In Italy, faith tourism combines certain religious days, buildings and sacred sites within the framework of a tourist visit. The most important role of the Italian Catholic Church includes difference, spaciousness, popularity of artistic, historic and cultural cathedrals and churches (Presti & Petrillo, 2010: 302). According to Hanry, the pastor of Latin Catholic Church, the reason of low visit figures to the churches of Tarsus is the lack of unique architectural value of the churches in the region.

The structures in Italy that have architectural and religious value include particularly the Saint Paule Statute, Cappella Sistine, San Pietro in Vatican and Opera Di Santa Maria Del Fiore Cathedral.

In Israel, faith tourism includes the tourist movements to the sacred sites generally around Jerusalem, Nazereth, Sea of Galilee and Bethlehem (Tanrısevdi, 1999: 54). Jerusalem in general and particularly the East Wall is the official centre of Judaism with symbolic value for Jewishness. Therefore, Jewishness focuses on Jerusalem. The values of the region are considered sacred by three heavenly religions (Abrahamic Religions) (Judaism, Islam, and Christianity).

Rachel Tomb is located in a cave in the Hebron region respected by the members of three sacred religions. The Tomb can be grouped together with the West Wall and is also known as the Rabah mosque (Collins-Kreiner, 2010a: 261). In tours to these places, Catholic pilgrims visit institutional places recognized by church while Protestant pilgrims are interested in visiting sacred places, monuments, modern city tours and churches.

With respect to Faith Tourism in Anatolia, there are important places of visit belonging to Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The works to realize some activities in Turkey under Faith Tourism started in 1995. In joint works with the Ministry of Tourism in 1993, some locations in Turkey were determined as Christian pilgrimage site upon the recommendation of Vatican (http://www.ktbyatirimisletmeler.gov.tr). Faith tourism takes an important part in the 2023 tourism strategy of Turkey and it is intended to develop substantial culture-faith tourism with integration to other tourism types. In this context new investments in addition to allocation of lands and cultural structure are planned to increase the number of quality facilities and bed capacity (Türkiye Turizm Stratejisi [TTS], 2007: 48).

John XXIII ended the discussions on the House of the Virgin Mary, declared the site as pilgrimage shrine and recommended its visit (Emekli, 2003: 41). At this point, faith tourism has an important role in the development of intercultural communication. Faith tourism has the quality of a universal institution that contributes to the emergence of differences and varieties and to the approach to these differences by religious tolerance, respect, love and understanding (Koçoğlu, 2007: 144-145).

2.1. Tarsus's Holy Places, Historical and Cultural Sites

Anatolia is the meeting point of three great religions so that the seasonality of faith tourism would be spread throughout the year (Koçoğlu, 2007: 145). With respect

Table 1. The Tarsus Promotion Guide 2012

Tarsus Şelalesi –Tarsus Falls	Antik Yol – The Ancient Road
St. Paul Kuyusu- St. Paul Well	St. Paul Kilisesi- St. Paul Church
Osmanlı Evleri-Ottoman Houses	Tarsus Etnografya Müzesi-Tarsus Ethnographic Museum
Kırkkaşık Bedesteni-Kırkkaşık Market	Tarsus Ulu Camii-The Grand Mosque in Tarsus
Şahmaran Hamamı- Basilisk Bath	Tarsus Atatürk Gençlik Parkı-Tarsus Ataturk Youth Park
Roma Yolu-The Roman Road	Danyal 'ın Türbesi- Daniel 's Tomb
Kleopetra Kapısı-Kleopetr Gate	Bilal-i Habeşinin Makamı-Bilal al-Habashi of Spatial
Oyuncakistan Parkı-Toys Park	Kemeraltı-Archway
Varda Köprüsü- Varda Viaduct	Şahmeran Heykeli-Sahmeran Statue
Tarsus Barajı – Tarsus Dam	Tarsus Saat Kulesi-Tarsus Clock Tower
Eshabı Kehf Mağarası-Seven Sleepers	Tarsus Mesire Alanı-Tarsus Promenade Area
Aznakay Parkı-Aznakay Park	Tarsus Kilim Müzesi-Rugs of Tarsus Museum
Tarsus Eski Camii-Tarsus Old Mosque	Tarsus Şehitlik Anıtı-Tarsus Martyrs Monument
Bac Köprüsü-Bac Bridge	Tarsus Demokrasi Meydanı-Tarsus Democracy Square
Tarsus Yarenlik Alanı-Tarsus Gabfest Area	Tarsus Alman Mezarlığı-Tarsus German Cemetery
Roma Mezarları-Roman Tombs	Seyit Onbaşı Heykeli-Seyit Onbaşı Statue
Donuktaş-Donuktas	700. Yıl Osmanlı Parkı-700 Years of Ottoman Park
Çanakkale Parkı-Gallipoli Park	Nusret Mayın Gemisi - Ottoman Minelayer Nusrat
Berdan Viyadüğü-Berdan Viaduct	Atatürk Çarşısı (Kapalı Çarşı)- Covered Market
Tarsus Plajı Sahil-Tarsus Beach Coast	Tarsus Berdan Baraj Gölü-Tarsus Berdan lake
Taşkuyu mağarası-Taşkuyu Cave	Mehmet Bal Sanat Galerisi-Mehmet Bal Art Gallery
Osman Gazi Heykeli-Osman Gazi Statue	Açık Hava Gösteri Merkezi-Outdoor Performance Center
Adalet Heykeli-Statue of Justice	Tarsus Türk Büyükleri Parkı-Tarsus Turkish Great Men Park
Tarsus Hayvanat Bahçesi-Tarsus Zoo	Süleyman Şah Heykeli-Suleyman Shah Statue
Gözlükule- Gözlükule	Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Heykeli-Haci Bektas-i Veli Statue
Atatürk Treni-Atatürk's Train	Mencik Baba Türbesi-Mencik Baba Tomb
Tarsus Müzesi- Tarsus Museum	Lokman Hekim Heykeli-Lokman Physician Statue
Tarsus Üçgen Çarşı-Tarsus Triangle Bazaar	Barış Manço Oyuncak Parkı- Baris Manco Park Toys
Kuşlu Camii-Bird Mosque	Barış Vagonu Parkı-Peace Wagon Park
Çanakkale Anıtı- Gallipoli Monument	Tarsus Kültür Merkezi- Tarsus Cultural Center

Common feature of all religions is that they prescribe the visit of sacred sites. In this scope, the Pope Saint

to faith tourism in Anatolia, there are important places of visit belonging to Islam, Christianity and Judaism

(http://www.defteriniz.net/turkiyede-inanc-turizmi/). Venue dependence of worshipping directs people to that venue and creates a tourism attraction for sacred place. In this context, Tarsus possesses significant religions and cultural values with its history of thousand years. Tarsus is a meeting point of several civilizations with thousands of works from different eras. The excavation works and literature reviews reveal an uninterrupted life course of 8.000 years in the region. In this context, the historic, cultural, art and natural assets in the city shows that the city is an important centre with respect to culture and faith tourism potential. Vatican declared the house and well of Saint Paul in Tarsus, who was one of the 12 disciples of Prophet Jesus and born in Tarsus, as a "pilgrimage site" (Türkiye Seyahat Acentaları Birliği [TÜRSAB], 2006: 2). The Tarsus Promotion Guide 2012 listed the important sites of interests of faith tourism in the region as follows:

It can be seen that, in table 1, Tarsus has many historical and cultural areas. For example St. Paul's House and Well, St. Paul's Church, Donuktaş, Seven sleepers cave, Prophet Daniel's Grave, Masjeed of Bilal al-Habashi.

St. Paul's House and Well: Archaeological works in the region found some wall ruins strengthening the idea that St. Paul's house must be around. Christians believe that the water of the well in the yard is healing and drink it when they visit Tarsus in their way to Jerusalem for pilgrimage. The well has a diameter of 115 cm and a depth of 38 meter.

St. Paul's Church: It is the only church which is named after St. Paul. It is known to be built in AD 11th-12th centuries as one of the oldest churches of Christianity. The ceiling frescos of Jesus, Mark, John and Luke are important artistic assets. There are angel descriptions near to the circular illuminations. There are 3 platforms in the east of the church, a bell tower in the north east and 3 semi-circular domes in the east.

Donuktaş: It is one of the oldest historic structures of Tarsus. It is known as a Roman temple and as a palace on Gözlükule tower.

Seven Sleepers Cave: It is the most important centre in Anatolia of the belief of seven sleepers. It is an important value for Christianity and Islam. It is located on the slope of the Mount Enculus 12 km north of Tarsus. It is believed that seven young people, Meksemlina, Yemliha, Mislina, Mernus, Debernus, Sazenus and Kefestatayyus, continued their worshipping despite the long lasting pressure on faith in Tarsus. The event is described by the Surat Al

Kahf in Qur'an differently than the Christian version while it is important for faith tourism of the region as mentioned in two religions.

Prophet Daniel's Grave: Daniel was a prophet of Israelites and known to have lived between the 4th and 5th centuries AD. The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, by means of a dream, learnt that one of the sons of Israel would take his throne and ordered the killing of all boys from Israelites. When Prophet Daniel was born, his family left him in a cave and he was raised by one male lion and one female lion. He joined his tribe when he grew up. In 606 AD, he was exiled to Bail with his tribe and arrived to Tarsus in a time of famine. Tarsus became fertile and he died there.

Masjeed of Bilal al-Habashi: He was the muezzin of the Prophet Muhammad and he was known to recite the adhan and prayed during the conquest of Tarsus in the place where his masjeed is currently located. There are records of a foundation which was established in 1519 for the masjeed. The water of the well in the masjeed is considered sacred.

Ulu Mosque: It was built by İbrahim Bey, son of Piri Pasha from the Principality of Ramazanoğulları. It reflects the Turkish-Islamic art. It was built with ashlar stone used in the Turkish-Islamic art. The internal yard of the mosque is around 10 meters high and 7.20 meters wide. The pillars in the mosque are known as Persian arc. The Persian arc architecture is a semi pointed arc type. There are 16 domes and 5 gated yards in the narthex of the mosque. There are the graves of Sheikh Mohammad Hassan and the Caliph Al-Ma'mun, son of Harun al-Rashid the Abbasid Caliph. The gate of the mosque (Crown Gate) has a matchless rumi decoration.

Old Mosque: It was built as an Armenian Church by the King Oshin and repaired by the French Crusader Knights in 1102 AD. The Armenian Church was converted to a mosque in 1415. Its structure reminds of Roman architecture. The walls are thick and high with spacious interior in addition to deep windows and thick pillars. It is also known that crown ceremony of the Armenian King Leon the 1st was held here.

In addition, the quality is destination is increased by the Legend of Basilisk, the Kubad Pasha Madrasah, the Kırkaşık Covered Bazaar, the Mencik Baba Tomb, the Justiniaus Bridge, the Berdan Dam Lake, New Bath and Tarsus Fall. In reviewing the literature on religious tourism it is seen that it is seen that many studies have been conducted on this subject. Some of these studies are listed below.

Presti & Petrillo (2010) Co-management of Religious Heritage: An Italian Case-Study. Gülbahar (2010) 1990'lardan Günümüze Türkiye'de Kitle Turizminin Gelişim ve Alternatif Yönelimler (Emerging of Mass Tourism From 1990's until today and alternative tendencies in Turkey). Bingöl (2004) Akdeniz Bölgesinin Kültür ve İnanç Turizmi Potansiyeli Açısından Değerlendirilmesi (Mediterranean Region of Culture and in terms of Faith Tourism Potential Evaluation). Yıldız & Kalağan (2008) Alternatif Turizm Kavramı ve **Çevresel Etkileri** (Alternative Tourism Concept and Environmental impacts). Emekli (2005) Avrupa Birliği'nde Turizm Politikaları ve Türkiye'de Kültürel Turizm (The Policies of the Tourism in European Union and Cultural Tourism in Turkey). Emekli (2006) Coğrafya, Kültür ve Turizm: Kültürel Turizm (Geography, Culture and Tourism: Cultural Tourism). **Öztürk** & Yazıcıoğlu (2002) Gelişmekte Olan Ülkeler İçin Alternatif Turizm Faaliyetleri Üzerine Teorik Bir Çalışma (A Theoretical Study on Alternative Tourism Activities For Developing Countries). Usta (2012) **İnanç Turizminden Kültür Turizmine: Midilli Adası'nın Agiasos Dağ Köyü Örneği** (Cultural Tourism Through Religious Tourism: The Case of Agiasos Mountain Village of Midilli Island). Yörük (2010) İnanç Turizmi Potansiyeli Açısından Demre'nin Değerlendirilmesi (Evaluation of Faith Tourism Potential in term of Demre**). Şahiner (2012) İnanç Turizmi Potansiyeli ve Halkın İnanç Tur**izmine Bakışı Açısından Karaman (Faith Tourism Potential and Public Perspective on Faith Tourism in term of Karaman). Arpacı ve ark. (2012) Karamanın Mağara Turizmi Potansiyeli ve Turizm Açısından Kullanılabilirliği (Karaman Cave Tourism Potential and Tourism in terms of availability). Soykan (2003) Kırsal Turizm ve Türkiye Turizmi İçin Önemi (Rural Tourism and its Importance for Turkish Tourism). **Ünüvar (2012)** Kişilerarası İletişimin Konaklama İşletmelerindeki Önemi ve Beş Yıldızlı Otellerde Bir Uygulama (Importance of Interpersonal Communication in Hospitality Industry: The case of Five Star Hotels). Tapur (2009) Konya İlinde Kültür ve İnanç Turizmi. (Culture and Faith Tourism in Konya). Kızılırmak & Kurtuldu (2005) Kültürel Turizmin Önemi ve Tüketici Tercihlerinin Belirlenmesine Yönelik Bir Çalışma (The Cultural and Belief Tourism in Vicinity Of Konya**).** Doğan & **Üngüren** (2012) Yerel Halkın Isparta'da Turizmi Geliştirmesine Yönelik Bir Çalışma (A Research Study For Perceptions of Isparta Community about Tourism in Isparta). Eykay ve ark. (2015) İnanç Turizmi Potansiyeli Açısından Antakya'nın Değerlendirilmesi (The Evaluation of Religious Tourism Potential in Antakya).

Semenderoğlu & Çakıcıoğlu (2007) Şirince'de Kültürel Turizmin Gelişimi (Culturel Tourism: A Case Study From Şirince Village, Western Anatolia). Met (2012) Turizm İle Yöresel Gelişme: Sinop İçin Bir Turizm Gelişim Stratejisi Önerisi (Local Development with Tourism: Proposal for a Tourism Development Strategy for Sinop). Saeed & Azmi (2014) Religion and Brand Switching Behavior of Muslim Consumers. Park (2004) Relıgion and Geography.

3. THE METHOD OF THE STUDY

In qualitative studies, it is not always possible to determine a sample to represent the relevant population. The sample studied by qualitative researchers is smaller compared to quantitative research sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 27) and therefore it is harder to generalize findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006: 432; Yin, 2011: 66). Therefore, in qualitative researches, the relevance of the sample with the research subject is searched rather than the representative strength of the sample and quantitative representation in the sample selection. In other words, the objective is not for the selected sample to represent a wider sample, but to collect more information on the subject in the selected sample (İslamoğlu & Alnıaçık, 2013: 208). Therefore the samples selected by the field specialists (intentional) are preferred (Frankel & Wallen, 2006: 431).

The objective of this study is to reveal the by a sociological research. The population of the study consists of the local administrators of Tarsus and people of Tarsus. In this context, the sample of the study has been determined as local managers, businessmen, archaeologists and religious representatives. The faith tourism potential of Tarsus is revealed based on a case study which is one of the qualitative research patterns. Literature review is based on case study which is defined as a research examining the current incidents in real life and dealing with cases or developments that are not particularly clear (Bilim, 2007: 193; Kohlbacher, 2006: 5). The most important reason for employing the case study approach was that we want to have deep and detailed information from the study. In addition, the data obtained through semi-structured face to face interview have been analysed with the Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis program with the "Content Analysis Method". Four main category and 37 code were used to examine the Faith Tourism Potential of Tarsus which was included in 1993 among the sacred sites of Christians as recommended by the Ministry of Tourism and Vatican.

According to Briggs (1986: 1-2), interview form is the most common data collection means used in

the studies carried out in social sciences. Interview forms reveal which opinions of the participants were emphasized in qualitative researchers (Roberts & Priest, 2006: 43). Therefore, the semi-structured interview form questions have been created by literature review (Hyde, 2010; Koçoğlu, 2007; Presti and Petrillo, 2010; Rojo, 2007; Tapur, 2009; Tanrısevdi, 1999; Günal et al., 2005; Doğan et al., 2012; Dikici & Sağır, 2012) and controlled by two field specialists. Within the framework of this general objective, the following questions were asked to the shareholders:

Q.1- Strengths of Tarsus with respect to faith tourism,

Q.2- Weaknesses of Tarsus with respect to faith tourism,

Q.3- Faith tourism opportunities of Tarsus,

Q.4- What are the elements that may pose threats to Tarsus with respect to faith tourism?

is ensured within the framework of four criteria: credibility, transferability, durability and verifiability (Frankel & Wallen, 2006: 162). Data were coded twice by the first researcher. Data obtained as a result of the research was collected in four main categories and 37 code. There is a period of around 12 months between two coding and the reliability coefficient was determined to be 0.89 with the formula of "Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement)". According to Miles & Huberman (1994: 64), reliability of codes is high.

4. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The qualitative data analysis consists of three basic stages: organization of data, summary of data and interpretation of data. In this sense, the objective of data organization is to discover the templates, opinions, remarks and meanings (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011: 262-263).

Table 2. Properties of the Study Group

Participant/Qualities	Participant Code	Sex	Age	Occupation
1: Cases\Participant 1	K1	Male	32	Academician
2: Cases\Participant 2	K2	Male	35	Archaeologist
3: Cases\Participant 3	K3	Male	44	Museum Director
4: Cases\Participant 4	K4	Male	55	Grocer (tradesman)
5: Cases\Participant 5	K5	Female	28	Souvenirs Seller (tradesman)
6: Cases\Participant 6	K6	Male	52	Taxi driver (tradesman)
7: Cases\Participant 7	K7	Male	44	Priest (Catholic)
8: Cases\Participant 8	K8	Female	24	NGO Representative
9: Cases\Participant 9	K9	Female	49	Imam

The interview was first transferred to digital media and then to Nvivo 8 computer aided qualitative analysis program as a document after obtaining permission from the participants to prevent data loss. According to Kuş (2009: 14) and Roberts & Priest (2006: 43), the reliability of the research can be increased by using computerized data analysis programs like Nvivo. Therefore, the analysis of the obtained data was done by using the Nvivo 8 qualitative data analysis program. Before transferring Word documents to Nvivo program, member checking was done which is the most effective method to increase reliability (Büyüköztürk et al., 2011: 265-271; Yeşilyurt & Semerci; 2011: 6). In other words, participant was asked to confirm the trustworthiness of the records transferred from digital environment to word file.

The term "trustworthy" is used for the validity and reliability of qualitative researchers. Trustworthiness

In Table 2, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the region with respect to the Faith Tourism Potential of Tarsus were directed to one academician, one archaeologist, one museum director, three tradesmen, two clergymen and one NGO representative. "Sex", "age" and "occupation" variables of the participants were included. It was attempted to ensure that the managerial positions of the participants are relevant before determining their views on the Faith Tourism Potential of Tarsus.

It can be seen that, in table 3 "modern residential areas" (n = 6) and "a classic tourist route" (n = 6) are expressed by six different participants. "Unplanned urbanization" or "the modern residential areas" can be seen as a major weakness for the region. It is obvious that the destruction of historic and cultural fields in a destination is likely to reduce the attractiveness of the destination. The region is not included in tour

Table 3. Level of Participation to the Sample Group Codes (Matrix Coding)

Codes	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5	K6	K7	K8	K9	Total
Modern Settlement Areas	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	6
Out of Conventional Tourism Route	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Coastal Band Project	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	5
Religion based Historical and Culturel Values	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
Uniting Different Faith Groups	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	5
Saint Paul	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	4
Visit of Statesmen	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	4
Lack of sufficient accommodation facilities	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	4
Alternative Tourism Option	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
Unplanned Urbanization	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Economic Weakness	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
It is a district.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
No excavation	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
Archeological Values	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Settlement of eight thousand years	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Destruction of Historical Culturel Areas	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Suburbs	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Architectural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Building of Three Sacred Religion	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Daniel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Seth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Urban Transformation	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Accessibility	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Centre of Stoicism	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Citf of first	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Seven Sleepers Cave	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
The capital of Cilicia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Tolerance and Pluralism	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
University Centre	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Visit of Cleopetra and Great Alexander	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Economic Opportunities	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Out Tourism Route	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lack of Promotion	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lack of sufficient refreshment facilities	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lack of Unique Architecture	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Not included in tour programs	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Source problems	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

itineraries. This fact causes significant decline in the number of visitors. With regard to coding, "The region's historical and cultural fields" (n = 5), and "It brings together different faith groups" (n = 5) were detected strengths of Tarsus. Most of the encodings regarding to the strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats of the destination are performed by only one person.

4.1 Strengths of Tarsus

Tourism is a sector with a potential of rapid development when planned and controlled well with respect to tourism, country and region. The raw material of the sector is the natural, cultural, historical and geographical varieties and beauties (Avcıkurt, 2003: 33). Strengths refer to positive values in revealing a strong side. These present a value adding competitive

advantage. In this sense, the views of the participants related to the strengths of the faith tourism potential:

"… The fact that Tarsus was the centre of 44 universities between Mersin and Mardin during the Abbasid period shows that it was an important education centre" (K1).

"Seven Sleepers cave is important in both Christianity and Islam which increases the number of visitors" (K4)

"… It shows that tolerance and pluralism prevail in the region" (K6). "The city gets value by the fact that it was the centre of stoicism and the capital of Cilicia" (K7).

Figure 1. Model Tarsus' Strengths
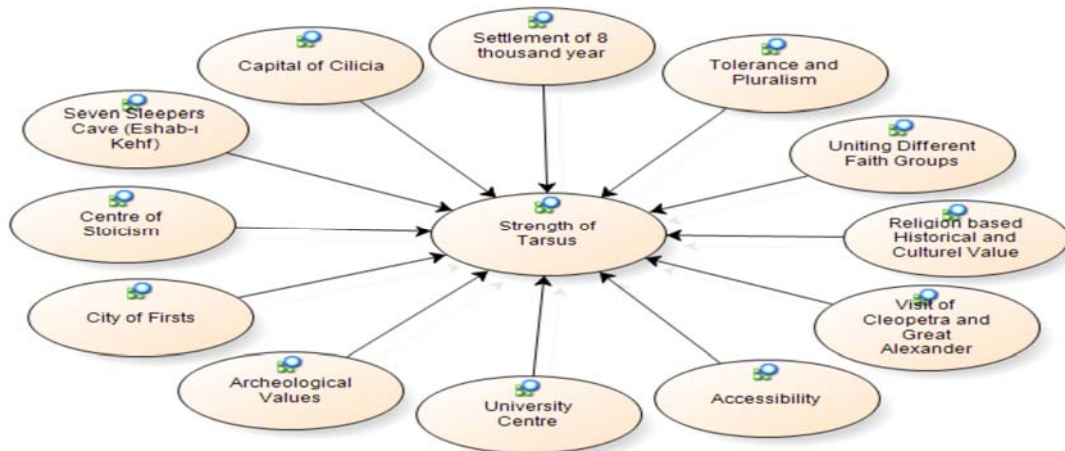
"…It is a region with intense historical and cultural values with religious focus (K2, K5, K6). This brought tolerance and pluralism"(K4).

"…The region which is the pilgrimage centre of Christians, unprecedented Donuktaş temple and Grave of Prophet Daniel provide a distinct strength to the city" (K8).

"... One of the basic points of Faith Tourism shows that tolerance and pluralism prevail in the region by bringing together members of different beliefs in different times (K2, K5, K6).

"…St. Paul monument museum and Seven Sleepers cave unite members of different beliefs around the same value. Therefore, people from different cultures live together (K4). The geographical position, climate, transportation (land, sea and air) and faith tourism potential unite different cultures" (K8).

"… Tarsus has an accessible position, and this feature made the region popular in all periods of history" (K3).

"… The excavation works show an uninterrupted life course of 8 thousand years (K3). Tarsus' biggest strength is that it was always a popular region throughout the history." (K8).

"… This feature of the region also shows that it has a rich archaeological texture (K3). Gözlükule mound, provides huge information on the cultures living in Tarsus" (K9).

"Being a capital of Cilicia provides a separate importance to the region" (K7).

"…Visits of Cleopatra and Alexander the Great to the region increase the strengths of the region" (K7).

"… Tarsus is a city of firsts. The first weaving loom was brought by Rasim Dokur. In addition, the first dam and power plant in the region were built here. This always brought vitality to the region. Faith and education in the region grew in parallel. Students which cannot cover education expenses are assisted by the House of Wisdoms which is an important activity" (K9). Figure 1 includes the Nvivo 8 analyses of the views of the participants.

As seen in Figure 1, Tarsus gains a strategic superiority by the fact that it is the capital of Cilicia region, centre of stoicism and centre of 44 universities between Tarsus and Şırnak. In addition, the Seven Sleepers cave in the region, archaeological values and eight thousand years of history show that tolerance and pluralism were always enjoyed in the region. The ability of the city to bring different beliefs together raises religion to an important position with respect to religion based historic and cultural values. In addition, as a city of firsts, visits of Cleopatra and Great Alexander to Tarsus show that the city was an important centre of settlement with respect to accessibility in every period of history.

4.2 Weaknesses of Tarsus

All destinations don't have the same qualities. Some destinations are rich with respect to natural resources while others have limited natural resources, insufficient infrastructure and inadequate support for tourism development therefore it is disadvantageous (Hsu et al., 2004: 121-126). The weakness of the destination is the qualities that damage the product and service offered by the region. Therefore, the weaknesses make the destination disadvantageous before its rivals. In this context, the views of the participants regarding the weaknesses of faith tourism in Tarsus are as follows:

"… The economically weak regions have higher expectation from tourism" (K1).

"… Closure of five factories in Tarsus caused unemployment of 15 thousand people and moved them towards tourism revenues. Tradesmen with low revenues believe that the faith tourism potential of Tarsus doesn't bring any value to Tarsus" (K8, K1).

"…moreover, no economic contribution is provided to local tradesmen by the tourists who don't stay in Tarsus" (K4).

"…people come here based on their faith but leave the region without buying even a bottle of water". (K5).

"The excavation works increase the number of historical and cultural assets in the region that can be visited" (K3).

"…Tarsus doesn't offer anything to visitors as it is not an excavation site" (K7, K1).

"Although Tarsus is the oldest town of the region, it is still a district which leaves it in the shadow of Adana and Mersin" (K4).

"… In addition, a weakness of the city is that there is no sufficient resource for the projects and applications related to landscape planning for revealing historical and cultural assets and ensuring a status of archaeological site organized for tourism" (K3).

"Lack of sufficient number of accommodation facilities in the region causes visitors to go the city centres of Adana and Mersin" (K4).

"The faith of Christianity is intertwined with art. Low number of visitors in the destination is due to the fact that the churches in the region don't have a unique architectural value" (K7).

"Lack of sufficient promotion of Tarsus is the weakest aspect. In addition, Ministry of Tourism doesn't show the necessary interest in the archaeological sites in Tarsus which weakens the tourism power of Tarsus. Another deficiency is that there is no college level education institution in Tarsus which was centre of universities in the past" (K6).

"Local administrators also avoid from conducting St. Paul based promotion due to fear of missionary activities" (K7).

"German President and Czech President visited the region but this didn't take much coverage in the media. More coverage of such visits will provide an important opportunity to contribute to the promotion of Tarsus" (K9).

"National and international travel businesses don't include Tarsus in their tour programs and this causes speedy visits by the tourists" (K4).

Figure 2. Model of Weaknesses of Tarsus
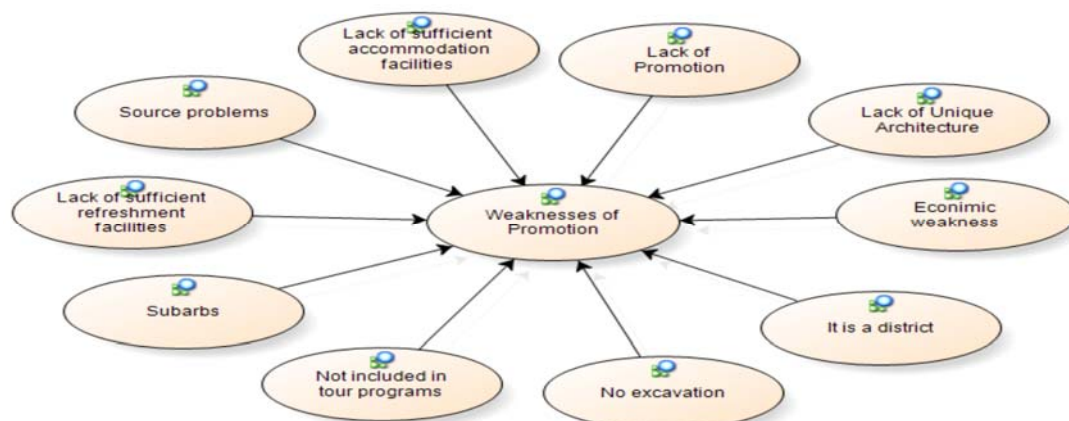
"It is a great deficiency that historical, religious, cultural values of the region are not explained by tourism guides and no comfort is offered to the national tourists to the region" (K6).

"As Tarsus is a region with external migration, there are quarters called as suburbs. This causes construction of shanty houses on the religiously and culturally important supply sources in the destination causing damages to historical sites" (K2).

"Lack of sufficient tourism based accommodation and refreshment facilities causes the tourists to have daytrips" (K3). Figure 2 includes Nvivo 8 analysis of the participant views.

Figure 2 shows that the most important weakness of the city is that the region is economically weak. Other weak aspects include insufficient city promotions, exclusion from tour programs and lack of excavations. The fact that there are no sufficient number of accommodation and refreshment facilities causes travel agencies to choose daytrips. This is because of the fact that the city was always a district between Adana and Mersin throughout the history. Another weakness of the city is that the historic buildings in the region don't have unique architecture. The city always receives migration and insufficient awareness of historical and cultural values causes easy destruction of these values.

4.3 Opportunities of Tarsus Faith Tourism

It is natural that destination would have variety according to the areas of interest and centres of attraction. The basic element creating this variety is culture (Özdemir, 2014: 14). In other words, the opportunities of destination refer to qualities that are

remarkable in the product and service presented by the region. In this sense, the participant views regarding the opportunities of Tarsus in faith tourism are as follows:

"It is an important opportunity to develop faith tourism that the city has regions to realize sea and tableland tourism in addition to faith tourism" (K3).

"…It is also important that the region has undestroyed natural structures with respect to tourism. It is important to evaluate the tourism potential of Çamlılayla which is around 100 minutes away to Tarsus." (K6).

"It is a region of interest by many national and foreign tourists as it has high tourism potential" (K8).

"It can be said that the visits of statesmen to the region are important opportunity for the promotion of the city" (K1, K4, K5, K9).

*"Airport and coast project is a good opportunity of the promotion of Tarsus" (K6).*

"Realizing the Mersin Tarsus Coastal Line project will solve the great part of the tourism infrastructure problem which is important for Tarsus" (K1, K2, K4, K5).

"As the place where Saint Paul was born, Tarsus is an important faith centre of Christianity" (K7).

Declaration of the Year of Saint Paul, the fact that Saint Paul lived in this region and Tarsus is referred in Bible are important opportunities for the promotion of Tarsus" (K1, K4, K5, K7).

"…. Religious saints like David, Seth and Luqman lived long periods in the region show that the city

Figure 3. Tarsus Faith Tourism Opportunities
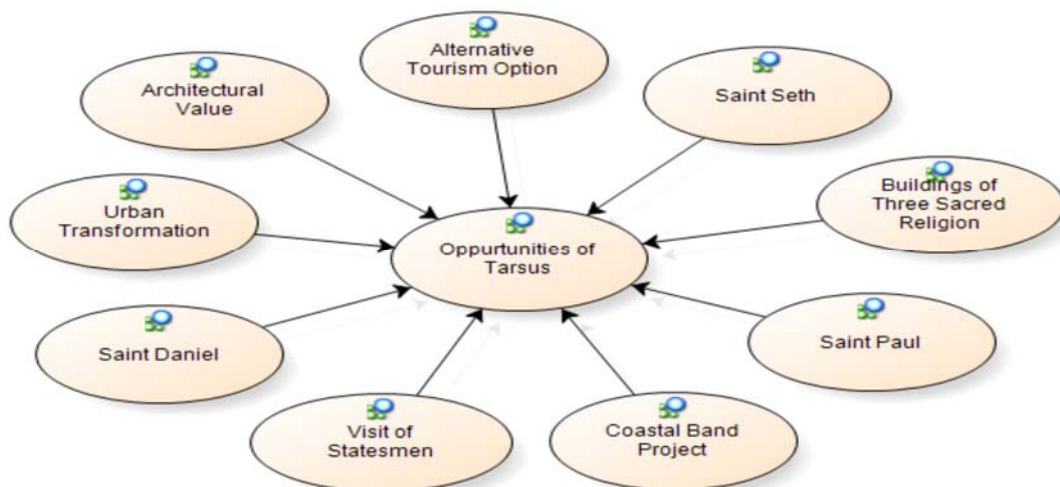
hosted members of different faiths. Ulu Mosque, Old Mosque and Daniel's Grave in the region are important opportunities for the region" (K9).

"Crown Gate in the entrance of the Ulu Mosque is an unprecedented example of Turkish Islamic art" (K9).

"Tarsus is a city hosting monuments from three sacred religions" (K9). Figure 3 includes the Nvivo 8 Analysis of the views of participants.

As seen in Figure 3, there are faith tourism based historic and cultural values in the city. Accordingly, Daniel's Grave is one of the first places of visit of people coming to the city. In addition, there are important places of visit like the place of Luqman, chief of doctors, grave of Seth, grave of Caliph Memnun son of Abbasid Caliph Harun Rashid and Tarsus Ulu Mosque. In addition, Tarsus is also an important centre of attraction with the house and well of St. Paul, which is described as the second destination of pilgrimage for Christianity. There are many buildings of three sacred religions which attract visits of statesmen. Finally, urban transformation to take place by realizing architectural qualities of the region is an important opportunity for increasing the number of visitors.

4.4. Elements That Threaten Faith Tourism of Tarsus

Threats are a factor of external environment. In other words, it is an environmental development that may cause the loss of market place (Cebecioğlu, 2006: 92). In this context, participant views on the elements that threaten faith tourism of Tarsus:

"Modern urbanization damages historical and cultural texture and harms faith based buildings" (K1, K3, K4, K5, K6, K8). ".. It is a threat for the region" (K9).

"In addition, unplanned urbanization in the region should be solved before it becomes the texture of the city" (K2).

"… I think it is a deficiency that the region is out of the conventional tourist route" (K4, K5, K6).

"It is an important opportunity for the region that it is near to Cappadocia and Antakya although it is regarded as an element of threat for visits while it is out of tourist routes" (K7, K8, K9).

"… Destruction or smuggling of historical and cultural areas as there is no sufficient cultural awareness" (K3).

"… It is an important element of threat that buildings are damaged due to unawareness of the local people about the buildings in the region" (K7).

"…The region is out the conventional tourist route" (K1). Figure 4 includes the NVivo 8 Analysis of the views of participants.

As seen in Figure 4, unplanned urbanization in the region and unplanned construction of modern settlement areas cause rapid loss of Historic and Cultural areas of Tarsus. In addition, the region is out of conventional tourism route and lack sufficient economic possibilities and therefore people of the region are interested in revenues from tourism.

Figure 4. Model of Elements Threatening Faith Tourism in Tarsus
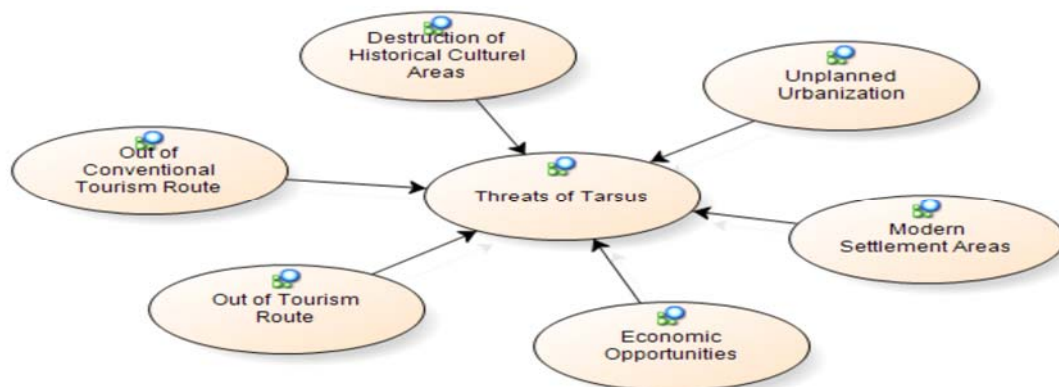
5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Turkey has rich tourism resources where every kind of tourism activities takes place in addition to geographical position and matchless natural beauties (Kuter, 2007: 76). With natural, historical and cultural values, Tarsus is one of the cities with significant tourism potential. Findings obtained from the study covering tour operators of Germany, Netherlands, England and USA show that the culture tourism tours in Turkey are directed to certain regions and ruins. Such tours in Turkey usually cover the regions of Mediterranean, Aegean and Marmara (Günal et al., 2009: 293). In this scope, it can be said that Tarsus has an important potential with respect to faith and culture tourism of Tarsus. Tarsus has an important cultural value with its history of thousands of years. Thousands of pieces of different ages show that Tarsus was a meeting point of several civilizations.

Excavation works in Tarsus and literature reviews show an interrupted life course of 8.000 years. Several civilizations ruled in this region like Persian Empire, Great Alexander Administration, Roman State, Byzantium, Arabs and Ottoman State. Significant amount of historical constructions and monuments left in this region by these civilizations increased this potential. Mounds, ruins, churches, mosques, masjeeds, madrasahs, tombs, inns, baths and necropolis, covered bazaars and charities of these periods provide a distinct viability to the region. However, this potential is not sufficiently used. The reason is the fact that the promotion and tourism infrastructure is not adequate. The deficiencies and recommendations found are as follows:

- Underdevelopment of tourism in the region is hugely due to lack of promotion.

- Local administrators and tourism investors need to work on this matter for national and international promotion.

- Increasing cultural activities like symposium, congress, conference to be organized in the region would contribute to the promotion and image creation of touristic attraction.

- Lack of coordination between institutions on culture and tourism can be overcome through joint works to be carried out with the Mersin University in particular.

- Written and visual material like books and brochures should be published regarding the city and attractions.

- Tourism areas of Tarsus should be determined again within a plan and its tourism infrastructure should be prepared according to this plan.

- Awareness of people of region need to be increased.

- In order to improve faith and culture tourism, regional tourism values like Saint Paul, Gözlükule Mound and Seven Sleepers Cave with high potential of international popularity need to be advertised with "package promotion" projects. Attention should be drawn to tourism potential through activities like international panels, symposiums and congresses should be organized in Tarsus.

- Number of 5-star hotels, touristic restaurants and leisure centres with good tourism services should be increased. This will increase leisure areas for the tourist to spend time at nights.

- Excavation and landscape works of cultural assets should be completed and infrastructure like transportation and facilities should be constructed.

- There should be sufficient number of guides to promote historical places.

- Gözlükule Mound and historical ruins which are important cultural and historical tourism values of Tarsus should not be taken out of the region. These values should be exhibited in the Archaeology museum.

- Cultural and natural assets should be adequately protected, restored and offered to the use of tourists.

- The house, church and well of Saint Paul in Tarsus are important values of Christianity. There is a statute of Saint Paul before the St. Peter's Basilica, one of the four big churches in Italy. In addition, the post of Bilal al-Habashi is in Tarsus. Bilal bin Rabah Mosque and Rachel Tomb in Israel are common values of Christianity. Promotion of Tarsus should be around the axis of these common values. Regions with common values should be determined as stakeholder.

- The quotation of St. Paul in the Bible which reads "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city" (Bible Acts 21:39) fully reflects the potential of culture and faith tourism of Tarsus.

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