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Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

An Investigation on Çanakkale as a Smart Tourism City within the Scope of City Marketing*

Şehir Pazarlaması Kapsamında Akıllı Turizm Şehri Olarak Çanakkale'nin İncelenmesi

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma, akıllı şehir kavramını şehir pazarlaması bağlamında ve turizm odağında incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu kapsamda ülkemizin önemli turizm ziyaretçi merkezlerinden biri olan Çanakkale'de turizmle ilişkili olduğu tespit edilen paydaşlarla 2019 yılında görüşülerek nitel bir araştırma yapılmıştır. Yapılan görüşmelerle paydaşların akıllı turizm şehri kapsamında Çanakkale ilindeki turizmin mevcut durumu hakkındaki görüşleri ve yine bu doğrultuda neler yapılabileceğini hakkındaki önerilerinin belirlenmesi öngörülmüştür. Araştırmada yapılandırılmış anket formuyla görüşme tekniği uygulanmıştır. Ayrıca içerik analiziyle de araştırma desteklenmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında merkezi yönetim, yerel yönetim, özel sektör, sivil toplum kuruluşları ve diğer kategorileri altında toplam dokuz paydaşla görüşülmüştür. Araştırma bulgularına göre genel görüş; Çanakkale'nin mevcut turistik gücünün şehrin akıllı bir turizm şehrine dönüşme potansiyelini desteklediğidir. Araştırma bulguları doğrultusunda Çanakkale'nin akıllı bir turizm şehrine dönüşmesinin kentin turistik rekabet edilebilirliğine olumlu katkılar sunacağı söylenebilir.

ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to examine the smart city concept in the context of city marketing with a focus on tourism. In this context, a qualitative research was conducted in Çanakkale, one of the important tourism visitor centers of our country, by interviewing stakeholders who were found to be related to tourism in 2019. Within the scope of the interviews conducted, it was foreseen to reveal the opinions of the stakeholders about the current situation of tourism in the city and their suggestions about what can be done for Çanakkale in the context of a smart tourism city. In the research, the interview technique was applied with a semi-structured questionnaire. Moreover, the research was supported by content analysis as well. A total of nine stakeholders were interviewed under the categories of the central government, local government, private sector, non-governmental organizations, and others within the framework of the research. According to the research findings, the general view is that the current tourism power of Çanakkale will support its potential to transform into a smart tourism city. In line with the research findings, it can be claimed that the transformation of Çanakkale into a smart tourism city will contribute positively to the tourism competitiveness of the city.

1. Introduction

Our planet suffers from human population increase each passing day and cities around the world account for the largest share of this increase. The United Nations Population

Division reports that in 2020, 56.2 percent of the world's population lives in cities. Although North America is the area experiencing the most intense urbanization, the percentage of people living in urban areas has increased in every continent (Buchholz, 2020). Cities around the world

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can create employment opportunities and offer better livelihoods. In addition, they are seen as the nests of creativity and innovative culture, with being places where new lifestyles and production systems are experimented (Concilio et al., 2019: 43). In other words, cities are both home to most of the world's population and also centres of economic growth and innovation. This situation gives rise to the predictions that, in the coming years, urbanization rates will increase all over the world as well as population growth in existing cities.

The marketing of cities as entertainment venues for both business and leisure visitors is a phenomenon that emerged especially in the post-second world war period (Spirou, 2011: 1). By the 1970s, urban tourism started to be mentioned in the literature as a concept that “refers to both travels to cities and the time spent, which is shorter than the time typically spent on vacation” (La Rocca, 2014: 271). Since the 1980s, especially European cities have become highly preferred in this field and these cities have become subject of marketing drives as important tourism destinations. In the mid-90s, on the other hand, governments and local governments in many countries started to make large investments in sports grounds, festival centres, recreation spaces, parks and congress centres within the context of city tourism (Uca, 2019). At present time, cities are considered as important tourism destinations with a range of factors such as tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, recreation spaces, gastronomic elements and hosting festivals and other special events. The amenities and services offered by hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars, night clubs, etc. available in a city destination play a key role in the attractiveness and economy of the city. In addition, tourism stands out as an element that contributes to the social development of many cities with the provided economic wealth, and city tourism becomes a principal element of cultural representation.

All these factors push both governments and local governments to look for various ways to attract more visitors to their cities. However, the growth of urban tourism also poses significant challenges in respect of the usage of natural resources, pressure on infrastructure, mobility and security, and relations with host communities. In this context, it is emphasized that the building of smart cities will have enormous potential to produce a positive impact on the lives of citizens and the experiences of visitors by making cities more liveable, manageable, sustainable, and accessible (World Tourism Organization, 2020). Based on this fact, it is understood that cities around the world are increasingly using the concept of smart tourism city and relevant strategies as a tool. On the other hand, the implementation of information technologies within the scope of promoting sustainability and improving tourism experiences can also play a key role in providing competitive advantage (Lee et al., 2020: 1). In the light of this information, it can be argued that the concept of smart tourism city holds strategic importance in the management and marketing of present and future city destinations.

In the research, the concept of smart tourism city was examined in the context of city marketing with a focus on Çanakkale, an important tourism destination of Turkey. In this direction, the basic characteristics that a smart tourism city should possess were determined after the literature conducting review on the subject. The interview form prepared in line with these characteristics was shared with the tourism stakeholders in Çanakkale and a content analysis was performed on the raw data obtained from the interviews.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Smart City and Its Characteristics

Today, it is observed that different cities in many parts of the world have adopted the concept of smart city as part of their development levels and moreover, they have labelled themselves as smart cities. Smart cities are now a global phenomenon as more than 250 smart city projects are being carried out in 178 cities around the world; and more than 26 global cities are anticipated to be smart cities by 2025. More than 50% of the smart cities in question are in Europe and North America (Yigitcanlar and Kamruzzaman, 2018: 50). The concept of being smart, which emerged in the 1990s, has gained the attention of people since then and has made the term "smart" very popular. The smart city has also become a concept that has entered people's lives in this direction, and the similarity of this concept with other attributes such as innovative, creative, intelligent, digital etc. previously given to cities is discussed as well (Hollands, 2008: 305). However, it is noted that the term of smart city is used dominantly by gaining acceptance on a global scale, especially at the level of city policy (Manville et al. 2014: 22).

Upon examining the literature, the studies on smart city first appeared in the book “The Technopolis Phenomenon: Smart Cities, Fast Systems, Global Networks” published in 1992. In the book, named after a conference, held during this period, the smart city is expressed as “the technical-city where scientific knowledge and the art of science are the guiding power in economic activities” (Gibson et al., 1992: 3). After this primary study completed, studies on smart cities have grown rapidly by drawing the increasing attention of researchers from universities, governments/local governments and businesses, and smart cities have become the symbol of information and communication technologies-driven urban innovation and development under these studies (Mora et al., 2017: 4).

Smart systems, enabling the utilization and dissemination of information to meet the needs of users, is a concept used in the management of organizations and macro systems. The concept of “smart”, which basically capitalizes on integrated systems and processes with the aim of finding solutions, can be addressed in an extensible framework from a micro-level goods and services to a macro-level city and nation (Khan et al., 2017: 1). When considered from this point of view, a smart city can be explained as an ecosystem developed significantly through the effective implementation of

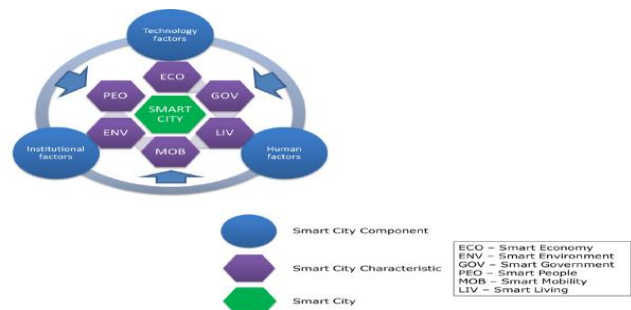
technology to improve the quality of life of citizens with the help of effectively integrated systems and services (Neirotti et al., 2014: 26). In a broader sense, the smart city is defined as “a community in which citizens, business firms, information institutions and municipal institutions collaborate with each other in order to achieve system integration and efficiency, citizen involvement and an ever-improving quality of life” (Snow et al., 2016: 92). Another important definition concerning the concept is included in the report titled “Mapping Smart Cities in the EU” prepared by the Directorate General for Internal Policies of the European Union. In this report, smart city is defined as “a city seeking to address public issues via ICT-based solutions on the basis of a multi-stakeholder, municipally based partnership” (Manville et al. 2014: 25).

In addition to these definitions, many new ones can be made because many academic studies have been conducted on the concept and scope of smart cities in the 30-year period from the first study on smart cities to the present day. However, it is also inferred that these definitions overlap with each other, making it difficult to achieve a mutual understanding and agreement on what the concept refers to. In this context, it also is necessary to evaluate the perspectives of other fields that work on the concept of smart cities. Köseoğlu & Demirci (2018: 43) argue that the administrative and financial aspects of smart cities are emphasized in the field of management, involving governments and local governments, which is another area on which smart cities are based, apart from the academic world. On the other hand, it is stated that IT companies that produce smart technologies such as Oracle, IBM, and CISCO gain more practical values to the concept. When the relevant definitions are examined, it is understood that IBM defines a smart city as “a city that makes the best use of all the interconnected information available today in order to better understand and control its operations and optimize the use of limited resources” (IBM, 2009) and that CISCO defines smart cities as “those who adopt scalable solutions leveraging information and communication technology with the aim of increasing efficiency, reducing costs and improving quality of life” (Falconer & Mitchell, 2012: 2). However, it is also important to thoroughly examine certain features that form the basis of smart cities so that one can understand the concept more clearly.

First, the basis of smart cities is formed by the integration of city resources with information and communication technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, internet of things and mobile communication (Jeong & Shin, 2020: 1465). However, it should not be overlooked that these technologies are utilized as a tool and that the ultimate goal is to build the cities of the future by taking account of all economic, social, cultural and political areas (Ferrer, 2017: 71). Such a holistic view is supported in the research report published by Giffinger et al., (2007). The concept of smart city is moved from an extreme technological perspective with this publication, and the subject is handled with a human-centred approach. At this point, Smart cities

are described not only as places where information and communication technologies are highly available, but also as urban areas that prospectively display performance well in six characteristics including smart governance, smart economy, smart people, smart mobility, smart environment, and smart living (Giffinger et al., 2007: 11). In the European Union report based upon the six characteristics of smart cities revealed by this study, the characteristics in question are associated with the components named as technology factors, institutional factors and human factors, respectively. In Figure 1, the relationship between components and characteristics of Smart Cities are given.

Figure 1. The relationship between components and characteristics of Smart Cities



The report also underlines that humanitarian or social factors such as education and social capital or institutional factors surrounding the role of stakeholders and funders should also be taken into account since smart city initiatives go beyond the development and implementation of technology to attract and influence participants (Manville et al. 2014: 29). Lastly, in a comprehensive study conducted by Gil-Garcia et al., (2015: 69) in which they examined both academic studies on smart cities after 2000 and research works of institutions and organizations providing services through applications regarding this matter, it was revealed that a smart city consists of 10 different components under four main dimensions: government, society, physical environment, technology, and data, respectively. From this point of view, it is understood that although technological applications are a basic element for smart cities, they alone remain incapable to understand the importance of the concept.

2.2. City Marketing, Competitive Advantage and Smart Tourism Cities

Smart tourism cities refer to destinations that are built on the concept of smart city but focus more on tourism development. The concept emphasizes better adoption of smart structure in cities where the tourism sector forms the economic driving force (Eberhardt, 2019). Cloud computing, big data, mobile applications, location-based services, geo-tagging services, beacon technology, virtual reality, augmented reality, and social networking services are the innovative examples of smart technologies enhancing tourism experiences and services (Wang et al., 2012: 374). However, due to the development of the understanding claiming that building smart cities is not just

a technological issue, smart city marketing has evolved from one and/or several dimensional activities to a multidimensional series of activities that serve for the purpose of promoting the technology solutions. (Macek et al., 2019: 114). In this connection, it is noted that smart tourism cities should be in a structure that increases both the quality of life of inhabitants of the city and the quality of the tourist experience in the destination, and smart tourism cities are defined as “an innovative space which facilitates visitor interaction and integration with the environment, guarantees sustainable regional development, is combined on a state-of-the-art infrastructure, is tourism-oriented and accessible to everyone” (López deÁvila et al., 2015:32).

In the literature, it is indicated that smart cities offer new service and business opportunities within the scope of tourism, while they also lead to new challenges (Buhalis and Amaranggana, 2013: 553) and the fact that the concept of city branding has importance in the marketing of smart cities is underlined (Aragonez et al., 2017). The concept of city branding, one of the notions that has gained importance in recent years about how tourists will perceive the cities they are visiting, has become one of the prerequisites for a successful city marketing process today (Uca Özer, 2015:119). In the context of city branding, cities that market themselves as a tourism city around the world highlight their cultural and historical aspects, sports activities or festivals, natural attractions such as sea, forest, mountain, or original works handcrafted by people as tourist attractions (Giritlioğlu and Avcıkurt, 2010: 77). In other saying, cities are branding within the framework of different themes. In this sense, the concept of smart city can also be applied as a city branding theme. To put it other way, smart tourism cities can be a new strategic tool in the marketing of cities by being involved in the dimensions of city tourism such as culture, shopping, and events.

Smartness and innovation can encompass a wide variety of selective attractions, products, and services in the tourism industry; thus, it will open up opportunities allowing cities to be more competitive (Chan et al., 2019: 622). Destinations such as China, Spain and South Korea are known to invest heavily in smart tourism-related projects in order to take advantage of this competitive advantage (Gretzel et al. 2015: 41) and smart tourism initiatives are currently being supported in many cities around the world. The prediction that these cities will gain a competitive advantage in the context of tourism with the adoption of the smart city concept and the materialization of applications in cities within this framework has led the issue to be handled by international tourism organizations as well. In 2017, the World Tourism Organization published research named “City Tourism Performance Report” and determined a performance criterion titled technology and new business models. The report, in which the concept of smart city is evaluated within the scope of aforementioned criterion, includes smart tourism applications of 15 cities from different continents (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Similarly, the World Tourism Cities Federation conducted

research titled “Global Report on Smart Tourism in Cities” in 2019 and evaluated 36 cities that are members of the federation from different continents based on a broad perspective ranging from free Wi-Fi amenity to waste management. The report clearly demonstrates that by adopting the principles of smart tourism, the cities can achieve their goals of improving tourism experiences for visitors, increasing the efficiency of resource management, maximizing tourism competitiveness, and ensuring benefits for society (World Tourism Cities Federation, 2019).

Accordingly, the number of research studies on the use of smart cities within the scope of city branding and marketing and the comparison of the competitive powers of smart tourism cities has increased in the tourism literature. When analyzing these studies at the intersection of competitive power and smart tourism cities, it was observed that the study conducted by Koo et al. (2016) appeared in the literature as the first study to conceptualize smart tourism destination competitiveness with a model, and that the authors based their study on the model of Crouch and Ritchie (1999). Another conceptual study in this context is the study conducted by Cimbaljević et al. (2019) in which six characteristics of smart cities and six attributes (6As) that should be offered by a successful destination are combined in the same model. Chung et al. (2021), on the other hand, attempted to develop a competitiveness index of smart tourism cities by using the evaluation criteria of accessibility, sustainability, digitalization and cultural heritage and creativity included in the report titled “Compendium of Best Practices 2019 European Capital of Smart Tourism Competition”.

Boes et al. (2016) defined smart tourism cities as the ecosystems for destination competitiveness in tourism. Based on the report of “Mapping Smart Cities in the EU”, the authors ranked Barcelona, Amsterdam, and Helsinki as the three cities that generate the most innovative smart solutions around Europe. In the study, three cities in question were evaluated under the themes of innovation, social capital, human capital, and leadership, respectively. In another study, 5 Spanish destinations with different characteristics and smartness levels were evaluated within the scope of six attributes (attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services) defined as (6As) by Buhalis (2000) that should be offered by a successful destination. The results of the study indicated that the six A framework was useful for analyzing certain aspects of smartness and establishing a ranking concept between destinations (Huertas et al. 2019). Ivars-Baidal et al. (2021) discussed the Valencia region of Spain in their research aimed at developing and implementing indicators to measure the progress of smart destinations. The authors found that while the region’s indicators for connectivity and online marketing performed remarkably, more effort was needed in the initiatives of accessibility and sustainability.

The study conducted by Basbeth et al. (2018), in which they

argue that the existing brand equity models in the tourism literature are insufficient in terms of analyzing the city branding strategies of smart tourism destinations, are among the research studies analyzing smart tourism cities within the scope of city branding. Kolotouchkina and Seisdedos (2018) compared the location branding strategies of each smart cities they selected in the Russian Federation, South Korea, and Abu Dhabi countries. In the study, the authors focused on creating an exclusive and technology-led business innovation ecosystem for highly qualified residents through the common features of these strategies. In another study comparing smart cities, the examples of Milan (Italy) and Tomsk (Russia) were discussed. In this study, the authors investigated the relationship between creativity, innovation, and technology as the determinants of the concept of smartness applied in city branding and marketing. As a result of the study, it declared stated that smart cities can lay the foundation for innovative brand strategies in line with the intertwined connection between creative initiatives and innovation. (Trinchini et al. 2019).

Moreover, in the study conducted by Molinillo et al. (2019) examining the official Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram social media accounts of 10 Spanish smart cities, it was revealed that the posts made displayed weaknesses both in emphasizing the smart features of cities and in terms of image and branding. As part of a similar study, Huertas et al. (2021) evaluated the information shared on the official tourism twitter accounts of 21 European cities in the context of six characteristics of smart cities (economy, mobility, environment, people, living and governance). The authors concluded in the research that smart cities have been unable to communicate their smart potential through their Twitter accounts yet and have not included their smart aspects in their branding strategies. Grebosz-Krawczyk (2021), firstly, used the data gathered from the official websites of 90 smart cities as a secondary source and then obtained data from the people in the institutions and organizations in charge of city marketing in these cities through a questionnaire. The study concluded that smart city brand management should be built on creating and developing a city brand based on sound distinctive features through the implementation of long-term initiatives with residents and other stakeholders.

When evaluating the findings of the research studies in the tourism literature and the information obtained from the reports published by international institutions and organizations, it is clearly observed that smart tourism plays a prominent role in the branding and marketing activities of its cities and that smart tourism also make positive contributions to destination competitiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Area

The city of Çanakkale was chosen as the study area in this research, which investigates smart cities in the context of city marketing. Choosing Çanakkale as the location of this study was primarily based on two reasons. First of all,

although, smart city practices are concepts that have been introduced very recently in Turkey, Çanakkale is an important city in terms of smart city practices. Çanakkale is the first medium-sized city to implement a systematic smart city transformation process in Turkey. In this transformation, the “Çanakkale On My Mind” project, which has been run since February 2017 with the collaboration of Smart City Institute of Novusens, Kale Group (one of Turkey’s leading industrial establishments founded in Çanakkale) and the Turkish Informatics Foundation (TBV), contributed greatly. The project aims to increase the liveability, sustainability, and competitiveness of Çanakkale through the transformation of smart city. The project is designing a roadmap for Çanakkale’s smart city transformation with the engagement of relevant stakeholders (Benli et al.,2020). Secondly, Çanakkale is known as an important destination for Turkish tourism. Trojan Wars, World War I that had changed the history of our world and notable events that had affected the results of these wars had taken place within the borders of Çanakkale. Moreover, Çanakkale possesses an especially important and exclusive value with its cultural accumulation enriched by the civilizations that ruled in the region (Çakıcı et al., 2007: 114). In addition to its rich cultural heritage, Çanakkale also hosts a wide range of touristic activities from diving tourism to health tourism thanks to its various features such as natural beauties, blue flag beaches and a total of seven tourism centre regions including three thermal areas, three coastal areas and one nature themed area (Invest in Çanakkale, 2021). Given all these features, Çanakkale is an important destination for domestic and foreign visitors, where they can enjoy tourism activities throughout the year.

3.2 Research design and methods

Qualitative research methodology was implemented as data collection method in the research. The interview method, which is one of the most important qualitative research methods, was applied as the research technique. It was aimed to determine the stakeholder views profoundly through the instrument of a semi-structured questionnaire. In addition to the interview method, which constitutes the main methodology, document analysis is another method applied in the research. Within the scope of the research, a review was also made for existing practices apart from the literature review on the concept of smart tourism cities. At this point, a commission report prepared by the European Union was taken as the basis. The report titled “Compendium of Best Practices 2019 European Capital of Smart Tourism Competition” is an initiative funded by the European Parliament. The objective of the initiative is to strengthen tourism-driven innovative development, economic growth and employment generation in European Union member cities and their surroundings. In this context, smart tourism practices in thirty-eight different cities from nineteen countries affiliated to the Union were examined. The best practice examples selected as a result of the reviewing the examples are presented in this report, respectively, under the titles of accessibility, sustainability,

digitalization; and cultural heritage and creativity (Compendium, 2019).

Table 1. Research Themes and Interview Questions

Themes	Questions	
ACCESSIBILITY	Accessibility is not only a barrier-free destination, but also covers multilingual and digitally available services for all passengers or visitors, regardless of age, cultural background, or physical disability.	What physical and psychological resources should be available in Çanakkale for passengers with special access needs, regardless of their age, social or economic status, and whether they are disabled? What is the accessibility level of Çanakkale by car, train, plane, and bicycle? What are your suggestions in this sense?
	Being sustainable means not only managing and protecting your natural resources as a whole city, but it also reduces seasonality and involves the local community.	What opportunities does Çanakkale have to protect and improve the natural environment and resources while maintaining a balanced economic and socio-cultural development? How are natural resources managed in the destination of Çanakkale? Are there innovative environmentally friendly measures available? What kind of activities are carried out within the scope of actions to combat or adapt to climate change and/or energy efficiency? What are your suggestions in this sense? What kind of activities are carried out/what can be done to reduce tourism seasonality and involve the local community? As a tourism destination, how can Çanakkale contribute to local employment and diversification of local economies?
DIGITALIZATION	Digital tourism refers to offering innovative tourism and hospitality information, products, services, spaces, and experiences according to the needs of consumers through information and communication technologies-based solutions and digital tools.	How would it be possible to make public transportation, tourist attractions and accommodation facilities digitally accessible in addition to providing digital information about touristic places for Çanakkale?
CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CREATIVITY	Focusing on cultural heritage and creativity means preserving and capitalizing on cultural and creative assets for the benefit of the destination, industry, and tourists.	Is Çanakkale making skillful use of its cultural heritage for a rich tourism experience? What are your suggestions in this sense? What actions are implemented in the promotion of Çanakkale so that the art, history, tangible, and intangible cultural heritage elements of the city could be included in the advanced tourism offer? What are your suggestions in this sense?

Table 1 includes the extents of the four categories defined by the European Commission and the interview questions prepared in line with this content. The interview form applied in the research consists of nine questions containing aforementioned four main themes.

In the second phase of the research, a content analysis was conducted on the document set obtained for the analysis of the data. A deductive approach was adopted for the content analysis. The purpose of the deductive content analysis approach is to test a previous theory in a different situation or to compare categories in different time periods. According to this approach, first, the classification matrix is developed, and the data are coded based on categories (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008: 107). Since there is sufficient preliminary research to clearly select and define the categories in the deductive approach, the uncertainty associated with category selection is reduced thus allowing stronger validity and reliability (Goel, Ganesh, & Kaur, 2019: 147).

The research population consists of legal and real persons in Çanakkale. The sample, on the other hand, is formed by stakeholders who are interested in tourism in Çanakkale. In the study, an effort was made to interview the highest-level representatives of the institutions whose names are listed below. Ultimate care was taken to select the institutions included in the sample from actors who are believed to be able to play an active role in guiding tourism in Çanakkale. Face-to-face and online interviews were conducted with the highest-level managers or authorized representatives of the institutions mentioned below. A total of nine stakeholders were interviewed between September-December 2019.

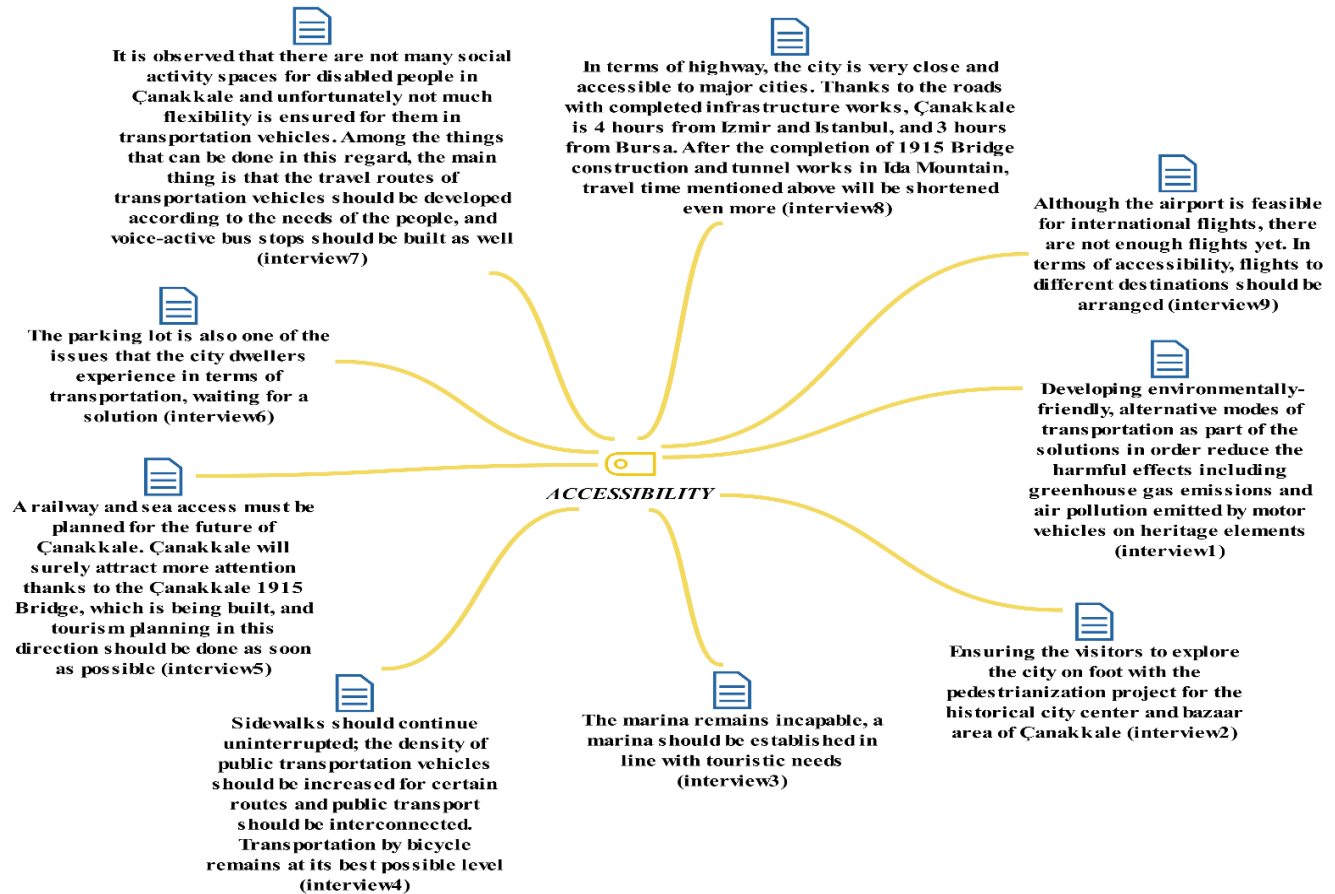
- Central Government: Çanakkale Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, Department of Çanakkale Battles Gallipoli Historical Site
- Local Government: Çanakkale Municipality
- Non-Governmental Organizations: Çanakkale Touristic Hoteliers, Operators, and Investors Association, Çanakkale Professional Guides Association
- Private Sector: Travel Businesses (1), Hospitality Establishments (2)
- Other: Tourism Research and Application Centre of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University

3.3. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data obtained from the interview questions posed in the research, content analysis was conducted through the MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020 software, which is a computer-aided qualitative and mixed data analysis program. With the implementation of the software, the analysis process was enabled to become more open and systematic, and also it was possible to ensure confirmability by preserving all kinds of material and digital materials related to the data, and to make models and visualizations in accordance with the nature of qualitative

analysis (Köse & Ayhün, 2020: 84). In this context, first, code schemes displaying the categories of accessibility, sustainability, digitalization, cultural heritage, and creativity were designed. To hypostatize the content of the code schemes and make them more understandable, the code distribution model, involving one-to-one data citations, was built.

Figure 2. MAXMaps graph for accessibility theme



Accessibility: As a result of the interviews conducted, it is observed that the stakeholders deal with the issue from two perspectives under the theme of accessibility. Stakeholders first declared the accessibility problems and suggestions related to the city centre. At this point, the opinions claim that the current situation of the city centre is unfavourable especially for disabled visitors. It is recommended that the historical city centre should be pedestrianized by being freed from vehicle traffic and public transportation should be modernized by prioritizing the disabled visitors. ÇABİS (Çanakkale Municipality Smart Bike Rental System) application and bicycle paths in the city were jointly emphasized by all stakeholders and shown as an example of good practice for a smart tourism city. Secondly, the stakeholders expressed their opinions within the scope of passengers and visitors coming to Çanakkale. The fact that air transport has not been made operational on a regular basis is an issue that is particularly emphasized by the stakeholders. Apart from air transport, one of the most

4. FINDINGS

In Figure 2, statements standing out within the scope of accessibility theme are given. The figure includes data excerpts from the answers given by the stakeholders within the theme of accessibility. Other findings obtained from the interviews are summarized under the title of accessibility.

discussed issues regarding transportation is the marina. Stakeholders mentioned the importance of the marina so that more visitors could be gained to the city by sea. Finally, the stakeholders are of the opinion that the Çanakkale 1915 Bridge will provide advantage to the city in terms of transportation and will positively affect the tourist flow.

In Figure 3, statements standing out within the scope of the sustainability theme are given. The figure includes data excerpts from the answers given by the stakeholders within the theme of sustainability. Other findings obtained from the interviews are summarized under the title of sustainability.



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Figure 3. MAXMaps graph for sustainability theme

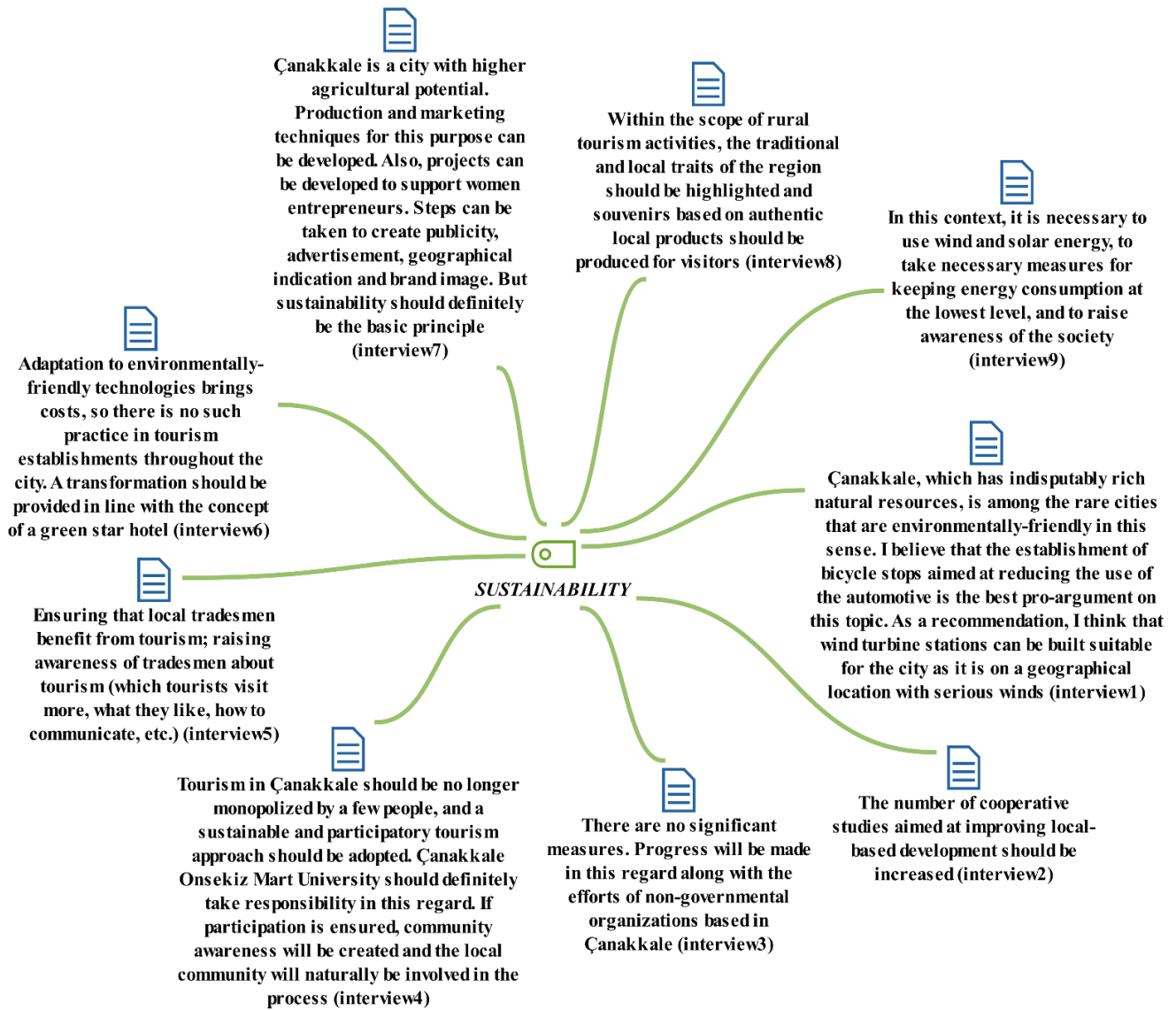
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Sustainability: In the interview questions posed, the theme of sustainability includes the main lines of both ecological and economic sustainability. The concept of combating climate change is included in the scope of ecological sustainability. In this connection, the general opinion of the stakeholders is that there is no complete combating activity. However, it was also noted that the municipality's biological waste treatment facility and windmill power plants around the city are among the preliminary actions taken in this regard. The fact that environmentally friendly technologies will be costly in terms of tourism establishments and the necessity of increasing social awareness in general have also been mentioned under this title.

The important contribution of the tourism sector to youth employment and local employment was underlined within the scope of economic sustainability. It was expressed that

supporting local cooperatives and women entrepreneurs would be beneficial. One of prominent views include that Çanakkale is an agricultural city and that rural tourism elements should be evaluated economically in this direction. Finally, it was emphasized that raising awareness of local tradesmen in terms of tourism could increase overall tourist satisfaction.

In Figure 4, expressions standing out within the scope of the digitalisation theme are given. The figure includes data excerpts from the answers given by the stakeholders within the theme of digitalisation. Other findings obtained from the interviews are summarized under the title of digitalisation.

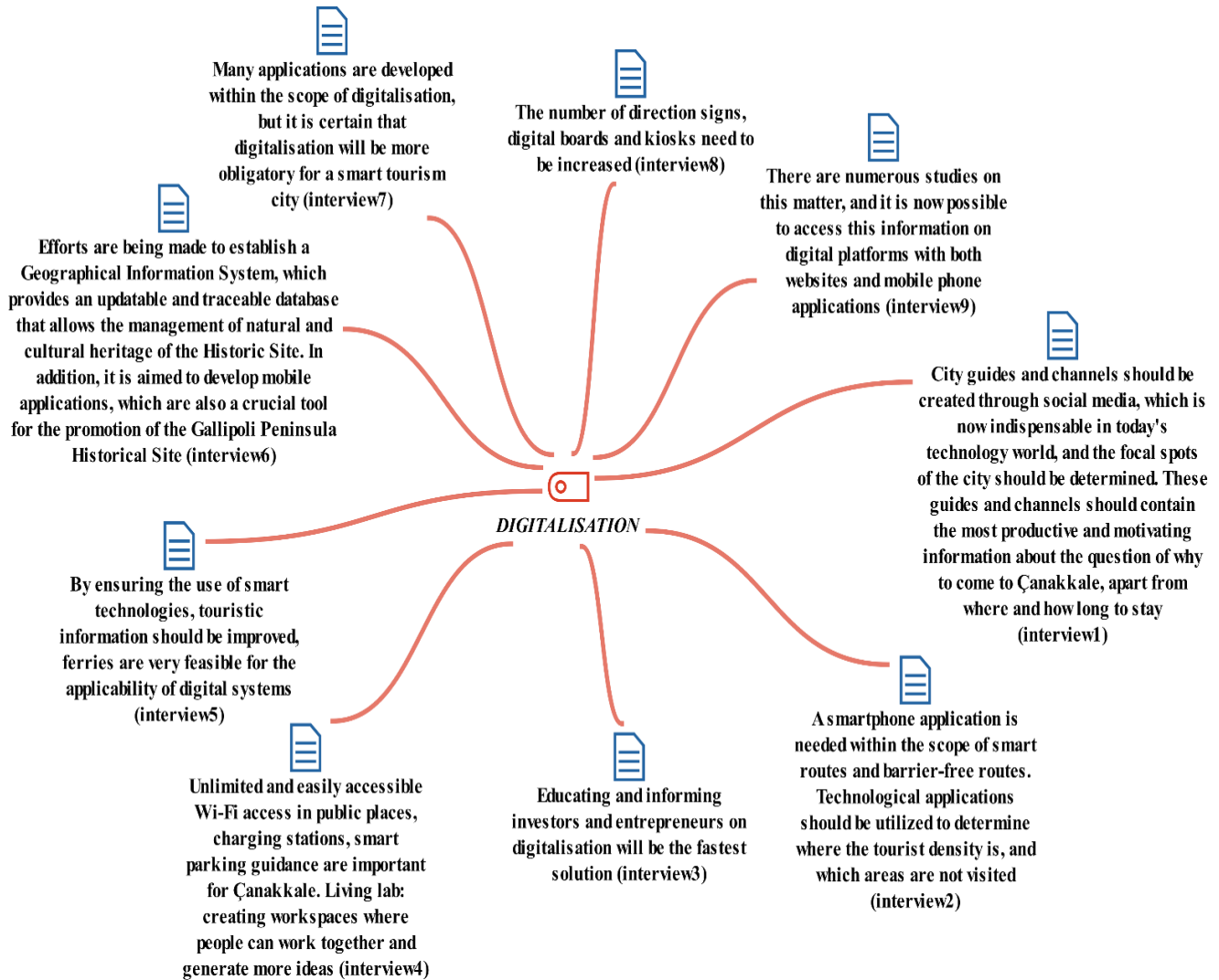


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Figure 4. MAXMaps graph for digitalisation theme



* This study was presented at the Glostour 2019 event held on 13-15 November 2019 in Çanakkale, Turkey.

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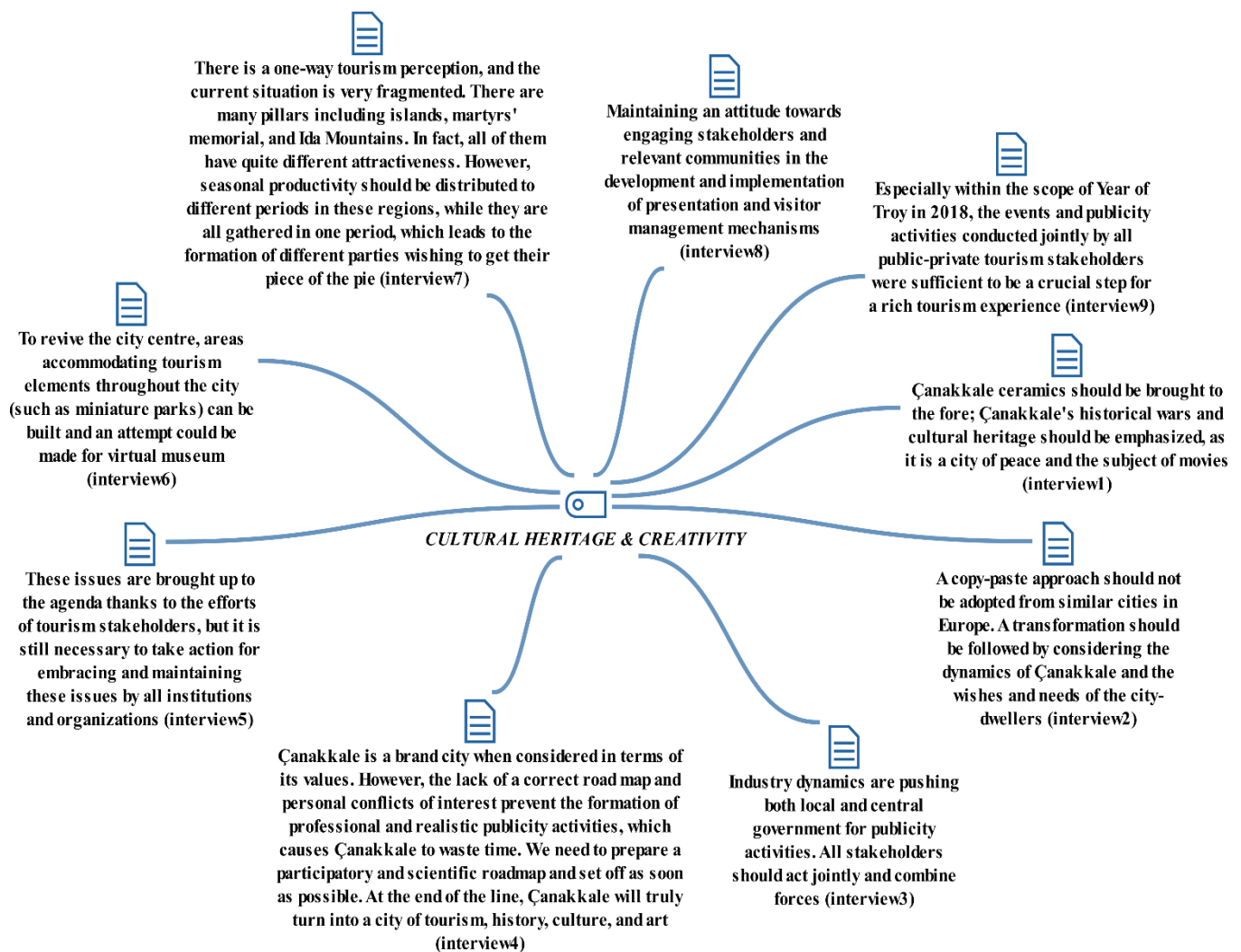
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Digitalisation: Most of the stakeholders highlights that digitalisation is an indispensable issue for smart tourism cities in today's world. They argued that the tourism-oriented use of information and communication technologies, especially social media applications, will primarily play a facilitating role in informing tourists. Accordingly, suggestions such as providing free Wi-Fi service in the touristic centres of the city and placing digital signposts were made. On the other hand, it was stated that digital applications would be a useful tool in terms of city marketing.

figure includes data excerpts from the answers given by the stakeholders within the theme of cultural heritage and creativity. Other findings obtained from the interviews are summarized under the title of cultural heritage and creativity.

Lastly in Figure 5, statements standing out within the context of cultural heritage and creativity are given. The

Figure 5. MAXMaps graph for cultural heritage & creativity theme





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Cultural heritage and creativity: During the interviews, it was verbalized that Çanakkale is an important brand city with its deep-rooted cultural heritage. In this context, the importance of the ancient city of Troy, which is on the UNESCO's world cultural heritage list, in differentiating the city from its competitors is elaborated. It was claimed said that the declaration of 2018 as the year of Troy and the organization of various national and international events in this direction set an example for the promotion of the city and the adoption of cultural heritage as an effective marketing strategy. Another issue that is underlined by the stakeholders under this theme is that both the central government and the local government should act in cooperation in line with city marketing activities. In other words, it was emphasized that tourism stakeholders should combine forces and act jointly.

5. Conclusion

Developments including globalization, increasing competition between cities, public and private sector collaborations related to the growth of cities have made cities first a marketing object and then a branding object (Uca, 2019: 89). The merging point for the concepts of city branding and smart tourism cities is that they both aim to create shared value for visitors. Cities can increase their competitiveness by applying the concept of smart activities to meet the needs of travellers before, during and after their trip. Based on this idea, this study aimed to reveal the views of stakeholders in order to determine the current situation of Çanakkale in line with the concept of smart tourism city and to get an insight about the steps that can be taken. A total of nine stakeholders were interviewed between September-December 2019.

The fact that technology is gradually becoming more important in all areas of life also applies to the tourism sector. For this reason, many cities in various parts of the

world have started to implement smart city solutions. Enabling connection between the development of technology and the human element is especially important in city marketing and branding based on the smart city concept. Technology should be designed to solve problems more efficiently, manage different aspects of the city, either positive or negative, more effectively and facilitate communication with residents and tourists. It can be argued that cities located in the European continent are one step ahead of their competitors both in city marketing and building brand cities and in transforming smart urbanization practices into tourism-oriented strategies. Accordingly, in the research, it was considered that it would be beneficial to take these European cities as a guide in the transformation of Çanakkale into a smart tourism city. From this point of view, the report titled "Compendium of Best Practices 2019 European Capital of Smart Tourism Competition" was used for determining the questions to be directed to the stakeholders. In the report prepared by the Initiative, which aims to encourage the development of smart tourism in European Union cities and to enable cities to learn from the experiences of each other, cities are evaluated in four main themes including accessibility, sustainability, digitalization, and cultural heritage and creativity respectively. The interview questions prepared within the scope of these themes were answered by the leading tourism stakeholders of the city, especially the representatives of central government and local government.

In order to transform Çanakkale into a smart tourism city, the suggestions that can be offered, taking into account the views of the stakeholders, are as follows:

- All kinds of transportation, especially air and sea transportation, should be enhanced. For this purpose, Çanakkale Airport should be made more functional in respect of both national and international flights. A new marina project, where cruise ships and yachts can dock, should be implemented.

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- The works on pedestrianization of the historical city centre should accelerate and solutions should be developed especially for disabled tourists.
- Under the leadership of the central government, policies for combating and adapting to climate change should be developed and also steps should be taken towards energy management practices.
- In order to ensure economic sustainability, events that will take place outside the peak season should be organized. The seasonality problem should be reduced by focusing on alternative tourism types such as congress tourism.
- Çanakkale's promotional activities should be strengthened with the help of digital technologies. These technologies should also be utilized to create authentic and unique tourist experiences.
- A broad-based destination management organization should be established instead of institutions that act independent of each other, especially in the management of cultural heritage, and holistic planning and policies should be determined through this organization. Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University should take an active role in this organization as well.

Based on the importance of contribution made by smart tourism to the marketing and competitiveness of its cities, Çanakkale was examined as a smart tourism city as part of this research. Interviews carried out with the leading tourism stakeholders of Çanakkale showed the current tourism power of Çanakkale as well as revealing the deficiencies present in the city. In this direction, the elimination of these identified deficiencies by supplementing them with smart tourism practices will enable the city to become more livable, sustainable, and competitive for both visitors and citizens. Stakeholder opinions reveal that both the local and the central government should support the transformation of Çanakkale in the path of smart tourism city with the investments to be made within the scope of information technologies and infrastructure.

This research was conducted only with one sample, in which the relevant institutions and persons present in the city centre were predominant. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the outcomes of the research encompass the whole Çanakkale province. The researchers are recommended to conduct research studies to cover the whole province, and to include tourism-related stakeholders throughout the province, especially municipalities and district governorships in the islands and other districts.

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