

Slow Travel Via Railways: Case of Eastern (Doğu) Express

Asst. Prof. Dr. Omer Coban

School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Batman University

Bati Raman Campus 72100, Turkey

ocoban@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The concept of slow travel has emerged as a component of “slow philosophy” similar to slow food and slow city movements that both arised out of the Italy-born in the 1980’s and 1990’s to combat the growing popularity of fast food (Heitmann, Robinson, & Povey, 2011; Conway & Timms, 2012; Fullagar, Wilson & Markwell, 2012; Hall, 2012). Therefore, slow travel is closely related to the concepts of both slow food and slow cities. (Nilsson et al., 2007). Slow tourism can be reffered as a type of tourism that allows tourists to focus on their journeys, interact, connect new people, and see new places more intensely than the other forms of tourism (Gardner, 2009; Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Yurtseven, Kaya & Harman, 2010; Heitmann, Robinson & Povey, 2011). Slow travel can be defined as a conceptual framework that emerges as an alternative to air and car travel, where people travel to destinations more slowly (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Slow travel has also been considered as antithesis to fast travel in some studies (Andrews, 2006; Honore, 2004). Although slow tourism and slow travel terms are used interchangeably (Dickinson, Lumsdon & Robbins, 2011), it is possible to say that slow travel is one of the essential element of slow tourism. Slow travel characteristics can be listed as follows (Gardner, 2009):

- Slow travel is a state of mind.
- Tourists should travel slow and avoid aircraft.
- The journey is intrinsic to the tourism experience.
- Locality is important.
- Slowing down to enjoy the city or the landscape is a key element.
- Culture through language and engagement with local people makes for a better holiday.
- Tourists should make opportunities by seeking out the unexpected.
- Giving back to local communities is integral.

In the literature, it is emphasized that the transportation factor is an effective component in the development of tourism activities (Guirao & Campa, 2016). For this reason, the relationship between tourism demand and transport infrastructure has been widely discussed in the literature over the last decades (Chew, 1987; Martin & Witt, 1988; Abeyratne, 1993; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2007; Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008; Seetanah & Khadaroo, 2009). The general judgment in the tourism literature is that it is most advantageous for the tourist to reach the destination quickly and at low cost. So, modern tourists tend to prefer the transportation vehicles to reach the destination quickly (airways, high speed trains, highways etc.) rather than slow vehicles (Meng & Choi, 2016). On the other hand, slow travel is not

only about the experiences lived in the destination, but also it is about sum of experiences starting by during the travel to the destination (Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011). Lumsdon and McGrath (2011) also propose four key elements (dimensions) for slow travel, one of which is the “mode of transport and travel experience”.

As noted by Meng and Choi (2016) such as local trains (Roy & Hannam, 2013), local buses, ferries (Vanini, 2011), rickshaws (Wong, 2006) cycling (Spinney, 2009), and walking (Lorimer & Lund, 2003), also enhance slow experiences and slow tourists can be characterized by these modes of transportation (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010). Because, tourists who use these transportation vehicles interact with nature and other tourists and the residents during travel and are being more flexible about their travel schedule (Watts, 2008; Dickinson, Lumsdon & Robbins, 2011; Fallon, 2012). Slow travelers living in a fast-paced world want to control the rhythm of their lives thus to destroy the ruling cult of speed (Fullagar, Markwell & Wilson, 2012).

Larsen (2001) emphasizes that tourists used trains during their travels in the 19th century, however, because of the developments in automobile and aircraft technology and the time and experience advantages of these vehicles, cars and airplanes are becoming more and more popular on travel. Today, the use of railed systems in tourism has begun to increase again due to the widespread use of high speed trains. Especially in Europe and Japan, the use of high speed trains is increasing day by day due to the advantages of intercity routes (Dickinson, Lumsdon & Robbins, 2011; Conway & Timms, 2012). For these reasons, many studies also have been carried out in the literature related to the use of high speed trains in tourism in recent years (Pagliara et al., 2015; Albalade & Fageda, 2016; Guirao & Campa, 2016). Despite the increasing importance, travel by high-speed trains does not adapt to the spirit of slow travel (Ceron & Dubois, 2007). Because, the main goal of traveling by high-speed trains is to arrive at the destination fastly. However, slow travel means that living experiences during the journey and in the destination in a slow and intense way (Noor, Nair & Mura, 2014). So the concept of slow travel is more often associated with conventional trains that focus on experiment during the journey.

Eastern Express is a daily conventional train service on the Istanbul-Kars-Istanbul line. However, the services are organized between Ankara-Kars-Ankara due to the Ankara-Istanbul high-speed train line operations, starting from 1 February 2012 (Yılmaz, Gürbüz & Toy, 2013). Accordingly, the train that departs from Ankara passes through Kırıkkale, Kayseri, Sivas, Erzincan, Erzurum and reaches Kars. The State Railways of the Turkish Republic-operated (TCDD) train travels about 1933 kilometers in about 24 hours (TCDD, 2018a).

Eastern Express has been in great demand especially during the winter months by young travelers in recent years (NTV, 2018). Furthermore, over ten thousands of photos or videos have been shared on the social media platform instagram (HURRIYET, 2018) with the tags "doguekspresi" or "doğuekspresi", and dozens of blogs have been opened by experienced travelers to provide information about the line and natural beauties along the line (INSTAGRAM, 2018). The increase in demand during the winter months is closely related to

the heavy snowfall in Kars and Erzurum provinces and the Central Anatolia in these months. In January and February due to semester break and heavy snowfall, demand cannot be met and additional wagons are added to the train. At the same time, with the increasing demand, travel agencies began to organize and sell Eastern Express-focused package tours. (TCDD, 2018b).

Sharing photos and videos indicating touristic experiences (Harman & Tan, 2017) is also popular Eastern Express travelers. In this study, photos and videos have been shared on the social media platform instagram with the tags "doguekspresi" or "doğuekspresi" between 1st January 2018-1st February 2018 have been examined. The photos and videos were analyzed via content analysis. When content analysis is performed, semiology technique is utilized. The purpose of the study is to answer the question whether Eastern Express journeys can be evaluated within the scope of slow travel. As a result of the research, it is possible to evaluate Eastern Express services within the scope of slow travel. There are a number of reasons for doing this evaluation. First of all, Eastern Express is a conventional train line. The conventional train Eastern Express is the slowest vehicle to travel from Ankara to Kars. Secondly, it can be said that the main aim of the Eastern Express travelers is to feel train experience instead of reach the destination. Thirdly, from the shared photos and videos, it can be said that the travelers focus on nature (snow, trees, animals etc.), on the train tracks, intra-wagon experience. That situation is supported by travelers are able to observe people and the environment in depth by watching out the railway window during the journey (Prideaux, 1999). When the photos and videos shared by travelers in the wagon are examined; cooking, dining and drinking, reading books or magazine, listening to music, spending time with friends, etc. have been identified in the foreground. By traveling slowly in Eastern Express, authentic experiences usually results in memorable slow tourism experiences.

KEYWORDS: Slow Tourism, Slow Travel, Train Tourism, Railway Tourism, Eastern Express.

REFERENCES

- Abeyratne, R. I. (1993). Air transport tax and its consequences on tourisms. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20(3), 450-460.
- Albalade, D., & Fageda, X. (2016). High speed rail and tourism: Empirical evidence from Spain. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 85, 174-185.
- Andrews, C. (2006). *Slow is beautiful*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.
- Ceron, J. P., & Dubois, G. (2007). Limits to tourism? A backcasting scenario for sustainable tourism mobility in 2050. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 4(3), 191-209.
- Chew, J. (1987). Transport and tourism in the year 2000. *Tourism Management*, 8(2), 83-85.
- Conway, D., & Timms, B. F. (2012). Are slow travel and slow tourism misfits, compadres or different genres?. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 37(1), 71-76.

- Dickinson, J. E., Lumsdon, L. M., & Robbins, D. (2011). Slow travel: Issues for tourism and climate change. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(3), 281-300.
- Dickinson, J.E., & Lumsdon, L. M. (2010). *Slow travel and tourism*. London: Earthscan.
- Fallon, J. (2012). If you're making waves then you have to slow down: Slow tourism and canals. In S. Fullagar, K. Markwell, & E. Wilson (Eds.), *Slow tourism: Experiences and mobilities* (pp. 143-156). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Fullagar, S., Wilson, E. & Markwell, K. (2012). Starting Slow: Thinking Through Slow Mobilities and Experiences. In S. Fullagar, K. Markwell, & E. Wilson (Eds.), *Slow tourism: Experiences and mobilities* (pp. 1-8). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Gardner, N. (2009). A manifesto for slow travel. *Hidden Europe*, 25, 10-14.
- Guirao, B., & Campa, J. L. (2016). Cross effects between high speed rail lines and tourism: looking for empirical evidence using the Spanish case study. *Transportation Research Procedia*, 14, 392-401.
- Hall, M. C. (2012). The Contradictions and Paradoxes of Slow Food: Environmental Change, Sustainability and the Conservation of Taste. In S. Fullagar, K. Markwell, & E. Wilson (Eds.), *Slow tourism: Experiences and mobilities* (pp. 53-68). Bristol: Channel View Publications.
- Harman, S., & Tan, E. (2017). Turist Fotoğrafları ve Turizm Pazarlaması Açısından Önemi. Paper presented at the 18. Uusal Turizm Kongresi, Mardin, Türkiye.
- Heitmann, S., Robinson, P., & Povey, G. (2011). Slow food, slow cities and slow tourism. In P. Robinson, S. Heitmann, & P. Dieke (Eds.), *Research themes for tourism* (pp. 114-127). Wallingford: CABI.
- Honore, C. (2004). *In praise of slowness: How a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.
- HURRIYET (2018). <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/galeri-dogu-ekspresi-oldu-instagram-ekspresi-40723490> (Access Date: 01.02.2018).
- INSTAGRAM (2018). <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/do%C4%9Fuekspresi/?hl=tr> (Access Date: 01.02.2018).
- Khadaroo, J., & Seetanah, B. (2007). Transport infrastructure and tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(4), 1021-1032.
- Khadaroo, J., & Seetanah, B. (2008). The role of transport infrastructure in international tourism development: A gravity model approach. *Tourism Management*, 29(5), 831-840.
- Larsen, J. (2001). Tourism mobilities and the travel glance: experiences of being on the move. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 1(2), 80-98.

- Lorimer, H., & Lund, K. (2003). Performing facts: finding a way over Scotland's mountains. *The Sociological Review*, 51(2), 130-144.
- Lumsdon, L., & McGrath, P. (2011). Developing a conceptual framework for slow travel: A grounded theory approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(3), 265–297.
- Martin, C. A., & Witt, S. F. (1988). Substitute prices in models of tourism demand. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(2), 255-268.
- Meng, B., & Choi, K. (2016). The role of authenticity in forming slow tourists' intentions: Developing an extended model of goal-directed behavior. *Tourism Management*, 57, 397-410.
- Nilsson, J. H., Svärd, A. C., Widarsson, Å., & Wirell, T. (2007, September 27–29). "Slow" destination marketing in small Italian towns. Paper presented at the 16th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research, Helsingborg, Sweden.
- Noor, F. A. M., Nair, V., & Mura, P. (2014, December 9-11). Rail travel: Conceptualizing a study on slow tourism approaches in sustaining rural development. Paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Tourism Research, Sabah, Malaysian Borneo.
- NTV (2018). <https://www.ntv.com.tr/galeri/yasam/dogu-ekspresi-ile-24-saat-suren-unutulmaz-yolculuk,I8ASACfMrESHe3SvFDmZeA/n6X3Ea2XD0-LXhFWUx8iBw> (Access Date: 01.02.2018).
- Pagliara, F., La Pietra, A., Gomez, J., & Vassallo, J. M. (2015). High speed rail and the tourism market: Evidence from the Madrid case study. *Transport Policy*, 37, 187-194.
- Prideaux, B. (1999). Tracks to tourism: Queensland rail joins the tourist industry. *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, 1(2), 73-86.
- Roy, S., & Hannam, K. (2013). Embodying the mobilities of the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway. *Mobilities*, 8(4), 580-594.
- Seetanah, B., & Khadaroo, J. (2009). An analysis of the relationship between transport capital and tourism development in a dynamic framework. *Tourism Economics*, 15(4), 785-802.
- Spinney, J. (2009). Cycling the city: Movement, meaning and method. *Geography Compass*, 3(2), 817-835.
- TCDD (2018a). <http://www.tcddtasimacilik.gov.tr/trenler/Anahat%20Trenleri/2> (Access Date: 01.02.2018).
- TCDD (2018b). <http://www.tcddtasimacilik.gov.tr/haber/UDH%20BAKANLI%C4%9EIN%20DAN%20DO%C4%9EU%20EKSPRES%C4%B0%20HAKKINDA%20A%C3%87IKLAMA/147> (Access Date: 01.02.2018).
- Vannini, P. (2011). The techne of making a ferry: A non-representational approach to passengers' gathering taskscapes. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 19(5), 1031–1036.

- Watts, L. (2008). The art and craft of train travel. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(6), 711-726.
- Wong, Y. S. (2006). When there are no pagodas on Pagoda Street: Language, mapping and navigating ambiguities in colonial Singapore. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 38(2), 325-340.
- Yılmaz, F. Gürbüz, G., & Toy, S. (2013). *Erzurum Yüksek Hızlı Tren Raporu*, Kuzeydoğu Anadolu Kalkınma Ajansı. Retrieved from http://www.kudaka.org.tr/ekler/17968-erzurum_yuksek_hizli_tren_raporu.pdf (Access Date: 01.02.2018).
- Yurtseven, H. R., Kaya, O., & Harman, S. (2010). *Yavaş hareketi*. Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık.