

# Eskişehir, Turkey as a crossroads for leisure, travel and entertainment



Mehpare Tokay Argan

Bilecik Seyh Edebali University, College of Applied Sciences, Bozuyuk Bilecik, Turkey

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 29 June 2015

Received in revised form 23 February 2016

Accepted 8 March 2016

Available online 25 March 2016

### Keywords:

Turkey  
Eskişehir  
Leisure  
Leisure city

## ABSTRACT

Eskişehir is located in the Central Anatolian Region, on a junction linking Anatolia with the west. Its unique nature and features that make it different from other cities endow Eskişehir with a distinct character. These differences stem from the city's natural landscape, as well as, its manmade recreational areas that were later created, which reinforced the city's image and identity. In its October 2014 issue, the *Worldwide Traveler* advertised Eskişehir – which it described as virtually being a European city in the middle of Anatolia with its excellent architecture, bridges, and canals – as a city that will leave a memorable impression in the minds and hearts of its visitors with its unique characteristics. Eskişehir, with its historical buildings, green parks, charming and always lively hangouts, convenient local transportation, and its status as being a youth and cultural center, has the potential to attract both domestic and foreign travelers.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

As cities change dramatically, leisure is the key to actualizing lifestyles for both residents and visitors. Leisure time usually involves an individual leaving aside routine activities like work and instead spending time on more enjoyable activities (Argan, 2013). Urban planning has played an important role in leisure, life quality, wellbeing and sustainability issues, and requires a comprehensive analysis of its impact on many physical, psychological and socio-cultural environments and urban life. In this respect, Eskişehir has, in recent years, been one of most prominent cities in Turkey.

Eskişehir is an attractive commercial, industrial and educational destination in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey. It has become one of the most popular cities in Turkey, setting an example for other municipalities (Samkar & Alpu, 2013). The role of the local administration is one of the most important indicators in terms of shaping city image; at the same time, from the point of view of local administrations, the city oriented towards cultural and touristic attractions can bring about a special relationship between the city and the residents or visitors. For this reason, Eskişehir is noteworthy.

Although the central Anatolian cities are characterized by conservatism and are ruled by Islamist local administrations, Eskişehir is from this perspective quite different. The lifestyle of both residents and city's local administrations is based on a Western-oriented philosophy. As the management style of local governments in Turkey has an effect on the image of the city, it can be stated that many medium-sized cities in Turkey are displaying increased conservatism. However, a Modernist and European-oriented administration in Eskişehir has implemented a

series of action plans in order to attract both domestic and foreign tourists.

With the features and conditions of the geography in which it is located, its lifestyle and a quality of life that is close to European standards, Eskişehir stands in contrast to many conservative cities in Turkey. The main reason for these differences lies in the socio-cultural, economic, and political fabric of the city. In addition, the vision held by its mayor, and the projects he has initiated during four terms, have made the city a trademark city and thus Eskişehir has taken its place among the cities sought out by visitors. Additionally, the fact that the city is a university town leads to a proliferation of leisure alternatives, which in turn gives visitors a sense of freedom and escape. This study summarizes the leisure activities that domestic and foreign tourists who want to make use of their leisure time can experience in Eskişehir, or to put it more clearly, it is an overview of Eskişehir as a recreational city.

### 1.1. Eskişehir's early history

Based on the archaeological studies conducted in the province of Eskişehir, it was concluded that the first settlement was established in Şarhöyük and its surroundings around 3500 BC. Various claims have been made based on the findings at Demircihöyük that the prehistoric settlement in Eskişehir and its surroundings date back to 5500 BC. The foundations of Eskişehir, one of Turkey's oldest cities, were laid in the ancient city of Doryleum, founded in the antique age. Although the city was destroyed several times by enemy forces throughout ancient history, it was later rebuilt. In order to be able to resist invasions, the city was relocated at least three times. Because the city, first founded around the Porsuk stream, that is to say on the plain, posed as a vulnerable state against outside invasions, the second city was styled as a

E-mail address: [mtokayargan@gmail.com](mailto:mtokayargan@gmail.com).



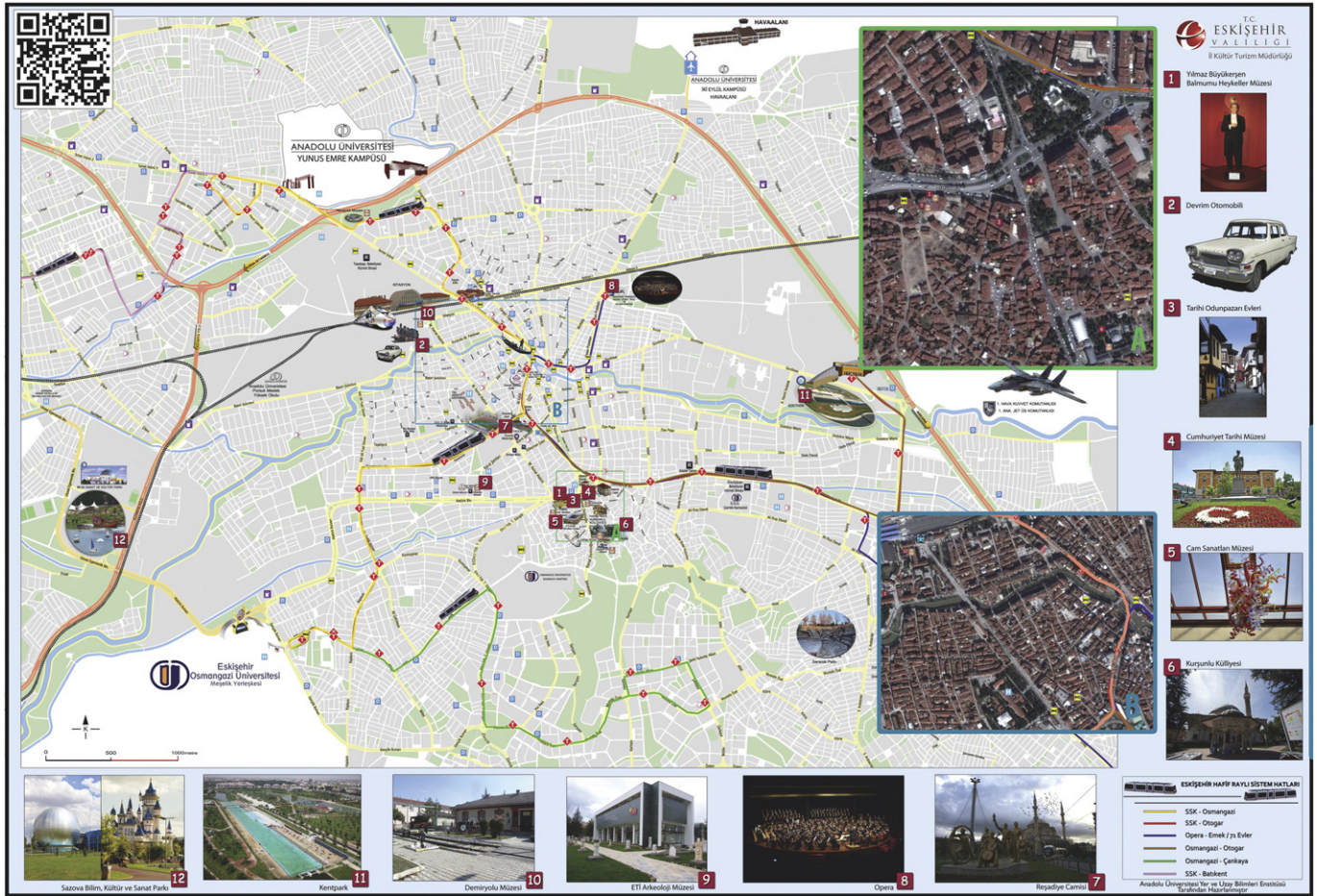


Fig. 2. Map of Eskişehir Districts and historical places.

Source: Uğur Avdan and Serhan Saner (2015), Anadolu University, Research Institute of Earth and Space Sciences.



Fig. 3. A view of the Eskişehir.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.

most of the mid-sized cities in Turkey. Owing to commercial and industrial developments, social and economic life is developing at a rapid pace. Eskişehir (Fig. 3) was identified as the sixth most competitive among the 81 cities based on the results of a study of “Index of Competitiveness between Cities.” According to the Human Capital and Quality of Life Index, it ranks third in Turkey. Eskişehir’s urbanization rate is 88%, and its GDP per capita is 14,000 dollars (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development, 2013).

Eskişehir is gradually achieving its goals of becoming a city of art and culture in Anatolia, and has increased its brand value in terms of public opinion (Samkar & Alpu, 2013). Some socio-cultural indicators concerning the people of Eskişehir can be summarized as follows. According to data from 2013, a total of 36,616 people visited museums and ruins (6833 of whom were paying visitors) and a revenue of \$10,156 were collected from the 84 museum cards sold and from visitors (Turkey Statistical Institute, 2014a). In the same year, the number of people benefiting from the eleven public libraries was 301,554 and the number of borrowed materials was 186,231 items. There were seven movie theaters with 3331 seats in Eskişehir, which showed 624 films to 879,966 people. The same year, 500 shows were held in 12 theaters in Eskişehir and 128,166 people attended (Turkey Statistical Institute, 2014b).

There have been many social changes in the way leisure time is spent. The tourism sector has experienced changes due to developments in the transport sector and communication technologies, increasing disposable income and changes in tourist preferences. Tourists who want to spend their leisure time in a fruitful way are propelled to seek new destinations. In addition, tourists who have sufficient income to be able to have such a trip have easy access to the destinations they desire to visit and are able to stay informed about different countries, and different cities within these countries and their culture. In this manner, Eskişehir, which continues its ongoing development in an economic and social sense, stands in contrast to other cities. An increase in the number of tourists has been observed in recent years in the city which, with its lifestyle, holds a contemporary outlook and is dominated by a climate of tolerance. Publicity, the High Speed Train (HST), the municipalities including the Eskişehir Governorship, and universities, institutions, and organizations have played a large part in the development of

tourism activity (Odunpazarı Municipality, 2015). According to data obtained from the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, the number of tourists coming to Eskişehir was 500,000 in 2014, 60,000 of whom were foreign nationals who stayed for recreational purposes. Eskişehir was most preferred in the month of May and 40,000 tourists stayed during that month, while 25,000 made daily visits. The places most visited by tourists were the City Park, Sazova Science and Art Park (Figs. 4 and 5), Odunpazarı Houses (Fig. 6), and the Waxwork Museum (Tourism Newspaper, 2015).

## 2. Turkish World Culture Capital 2013

The Capital of Culture is a title given in accordance with certain criteria to cities with a certain level of cultural heritage or having an important history, and which display examples of traditional and contemporary art. The Capital of Culture expresses the introduction of a culture built by a society and passed from generation to generation through learning to the visitors through a variety of activities (Timur, Çevik, & Kicir, 2014).

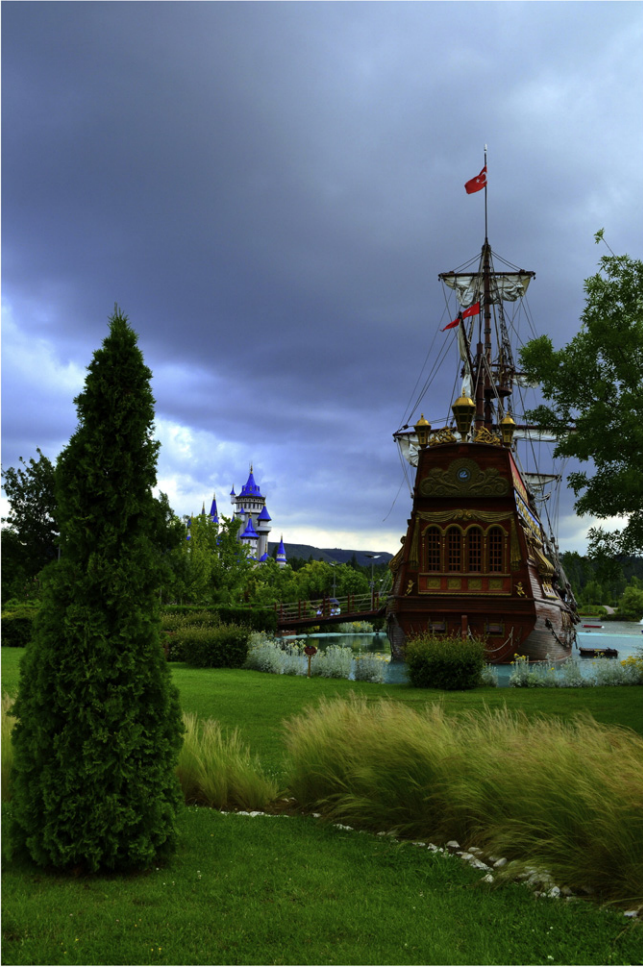
The practice of the Culture Capital of the Turkish World was unanimously adopted at the Tenth Summit of Heads of State of Turkish Speaking Countries, held in Istanbul in 2010. After Astana, which became the Culture Capital of the Turkish World in 2012, Eskişehir became the host in 2013 (Biçer, 2014). As a result, the city has succeeded in raising awareness through the title of Eskişehir 2013 Turkish World Capital of Culture (Timur et al., 2014).

### 2.1. Eskişehir's image

Half the world’s population lives in cities and employment opportunities are crucial for sustainable development. Cities contain the combined driving forces of commerce and industry in a global age, although each city has its own particular economic significance. The positive image of cities and their identities are the determining factors in several contexts, such as investments to be made in the city, whether to live there, to build a business there, and whether to visit that place as a visitor. In order to have an advantage over the competition, cities must establish regional and global awareness, recognition, and an urban



Fig. 4. Sazova Park.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.



**Fig. 5.** Sazova Park and the pirate ship.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.

identity (Gilboa, Jaffe, Vianelli, Pastore, & Herstein, 2015). In this respect, the concept of public image comes to the fore. An image can be defined as being the sum of information, impressions, prejudices, and opinions held by persons or groups about a place or a product. In other words, the idea of image refers to individual judgments in the form of a mental depiction of the information, beliefs, sentiments, and general impressions of an individual regarding an object or a destination (Gelibolu, Kanibir, Saydan, Tutar, & Yavuz, 2014).

City image is the picture of the knowledge, impressions, and prejudices about a place evoked in people's mind when the name of that place comes to mind. When seen in this way, another matter of increasing importance in terms of making use of leisure time is the prominence of the city's image. Cities have a growing importance with respect to tourism and some cities play an important role in increasing the number of tourists in the countries where they are located (Tek, 2009). This importance is also officially recognized, and the projects for the 2023 goals to turn cities into trademarks and to increase the number of tourists are being placed into action.

In addition to the natural resources and historic buildings found in a city, characteristics that are deliberately cultivated also play a role in the formation of a city image: Anholt (2006) identified six related factors, which include: the international standing of the city (presence), the perception of the city by its physical dimensions (place), the potential availability of economic and educational opportunities, rhythm and urban life, relationships with the people and the attitude of the inhabitants of the host city towards foreigners, and perception of the basic quality of the city and its prerequisites. Odunpazarı Houses, for example, add character to Eskişehir with their unique architecture, uniting Eskişehir with history. These homes were built towards the late period of the Ottoman Empire by families with high incomes. The Odunpazarı Houses, whose life was extended through restoration, have become a tourist site. The villas, shopping places, tea gardens, coffee houses, narghile (hookah) houses, meatball restaurants, boutique hotels, markets, museums, inns, bazaars, fountains, and mosques found in the Odunpazarı Houses also stand out as venues important in constantly maintaining Odunpazarı in a living state (Okumuş, 2013).

In addition, the city image, when being determining and created, is separated into two as the basic and specific images. The basic image



**Fig. 6.** Odunpazarı Houses in old city.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.

itself is also separated into two. The first is the visiting places, recreational venues, transportation network, infrastructure, and tourism network of the city. The second aspect of the basic image is the historic cultural, political, social, financial, climatic, and natural attractions found in the city. A destination providing these factors is deemed worthy of closer inspection by potential customers and possibly marked as a destination to be visited. The specific image of a destination is defined as a function of basic and specific image factors conceived by a certain group among potential customers. Specific factors vary from one customer group to another. There is a relative image for each specific image of a destination (Özdemir & Karaca, 2009).

When considering the image of Eskişehir, there are factors that emerge in several studies. The first is the “Yılmaz Büyükerşen image” – he was a former university chancellor and has been the metropolitan municipality mayor for three terms. He has implemented several contemporary practices in positioning Eskişehir as a European city. He is the person who carried out projects like the tramway, opera and theater halls, large parks, bike paths, statues at many points in the city, and boats and gondolas over the Porsuk Creek (Hakala & Öztürk, 2013). Furthermore, Büyükerşen is one of the few mayors in Turkey famous for his city. Research on the satisfaction of municipality services by Samkar and Alpu (2013) indicated that Eskişehir, known as a city of art and culture in Anatolia, has increased the value of the city in the eyes of the public, and has become one of the most popular cities of Turkey in recent years (Samkar & Alpu, 2013).

On the other hand, the brand image of a city can also be assessed along with the availability of national and international brands that have emerged or are located in that region. In this context, it is possible to say that some of the most acknowledged brands of Turkey (such as Arçelik (electronics and white appliances) and Sarar (textiles and garment industry)) make a contribution to the recognition of the city. For instance, the reputation of Arçelik as a brand brings further investments to this brand and hence to the city.

Another matter affecting the image of Eskişehir is advanced urbanism. This demonstrates that local authorities in Eskişehir place importance on public relations activities. The large number of students present in the city has caused the city to be recognized as a student town. Eskişehir, with its historical and cultural fabric, economy, entertainment and nightlife, infrastructure (roads, communications, transport, etc.), shopping centers, recreational activities, housing, security, sports facilities, parks, services, traffic, medical facilities, restaurants, and green spaces, has the specialty of offering big city comforts in a small town. In a 2014 study conducted with domestic travelers, the destination of Eskişehir was described as a “student-university and cultural city” (Üsküdar et al., 2014).

In another study on the motivating factors in visiting Eskişehir (Oyman, Yılmaz, & Kutlu, 2010), being suitable for visitors regarding matters like ease of transportation, economic comfort, geographical proximity, being in possession of cultural values with its historical places, different museums and parks and other attraction centers, having a social attitude defined by a colorful nightlife, shopping and being together with friends, presenting an opportunity for rest and recreation, escaping stress and pressure, getting away from the monotony of daily routines as a relaxation factor, and natural factors such as walks and strolls in the parks, Şelale (Waterfall) Park (Fig. 7), boat trips on the Porsuk Creek (Fig. 8), and natural beauty have all been demonstrated to be effective. According to Sarıçam and Coşkun Hepcan's (2015) study, Porsuk Creek makes a significant contribution to place identity.

Rivers are now valued as an important environmental and urban resource (Şimşek, 2014), although they can have negative as well as positive impacts on urbanization. Since urbanization takes place mainly around rivers, it brings problems such as overpopulation, odor, mosquitos, and damage to aquatic life. Many industrial and municipal pollutant sources localized around the Porsuk River (Ozdetik, Cicek, & Arslan, 2012) have a negative effect on health and environmental lives. In fact, the wastes of the calico (fabric) factory were dumped in the Porsuk



Fig. 7. Şelale (waterfall) Park.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.



**Fig. 8.** Porsuk Creek in the middle of city.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.

Creek until 10–15 years ago to such an extent that one could guess the color of the fabric manufactured that day simply by looking at the color of the creek. Later on the creek was rehabilitated within the scope of a European Union project, and today even boat trips are organized on the river, although water in Eskişehir is not potable because of the chemical wastes around the city. Furthermore, the odor emitted occasionally by the sugar mill in the city center, the air pollution caused by brickyards and cement plants, and the traffic due to the railroad station located within the city center are among other issues which should be addressed for Eskişehir. Despite the contributions of industrialization to the city, air, water (Oztetik et al., 2012) and noise pollution can be referred as its negative outcomes.

## 2.2. Eskişehir as a leisure city

A great majority of urban economists have recognized the role of cities as centers of leisure and consumption. City beautification and providing leisure time opportunities as local public policy are not a new idea (Carlino & Saiz, 2008). Eskişehir was viewed as an old industrial town until a short while ago, but with the urban renewal work it underwent in recent times, it has begun to be transformed into a much preferred tourist destination, especially for domestic tourists. The city has made many arrangements during this dynamic process for the beautification of the city. It has become a city to travel to and spend leisure time in, with several new attractions, from new shopping centers to parks and green areas, and colorful night life and thematic festivals (Oyman et al., 2010).

One of the key elements in coming to a condition suitable for travel is the availability of public transportation in accessing leisure facilities (Evans & Shaw, 2001). When considering Eskişehir, the fact that the city is an intersection point for many regions or its position as a crossroads in reaching major metropolitan cities is an advantage. Similarly, being accessible by rail, air and highway, and in terms of distance — 1.5 h from Ankara, 2 h 15 min from İstanbul, 2 h from Konya by train, 2 h from Bursa and 4.5 h from İzmir by land) makes it easy for it to be a leisure town. In this respect, the image of the city, when combined with these facilitating factors, provides an identity as a town visited for leisure purposes.

## 2.3. Urban parks

In addition to cultural, historical, and natural wealth and resources, parks also take their places alongside the most important tourist attractions maintained for the purpose of entertaining, pleasing, and educating tourists. Tanrıverdi (1987, p. 125) describes parks as “social green areas forming moderate, balanced, and beautiful compositions, built in and around various districts of the urban dweller with the purpose of providing an environment of active and passive recreation and leisure.” In another definition, it is described as one of the basic elements of urban open space planning due to accommodating playfields, and athletic fields, taking up wider space in the city and supporting ecological diversity with its artificial and/or natural vegetation (Emür & Onsekiz, 2007).

Today, outdoor parks have become the most important indicators of city image. One of the important factors related to the urban environment is the development of the urban parks and open spaces (Taylor, 1999). Representations of space which is containing the meanings, symbolism and imaginations of urban space (Batuman, 2008) represent many popular public spaces of Eskişehir. Urban parks hold significant value for residents and visitors as sources of formal and informal recreation (Page, Nielsen, & Goodenough, 1994). According to Shinew, Glover, and Parry (2004), there is increased participation in outdoor parks and gardens today and this trend may rise in the future due to population aging. These parks and gardens, in which people with low and medium income show high interest, hold an important place in urban life. Recreational parks take the lead among the dominating factors behind the status of Eskişehir as a leisure town. Mayor Büyükerşen in particular became famous throughout Turkey for the outdoor parks he made available for the public. The City Park, Science, Art, and Culture Park, the Grand Park, Şelale (Waterfall) Park and excursion spots (Bademlik, forest nursery, Hasırca, Sakanlıcaları, Sakarya Başı, Bentbaşı, Musaözü, Şelale, Kalburcu, and Çatacık Forests) found in the city can all be called urban parks (Eskişehir Governor's Office's, 2015).

City Park, which is one of these additions, covers an area of 270,000 square meters. There are outdoor and indoor swimming pools inside the park and it has an artificial beach, the first of its kind in Turkey. There are restaurants, horse riding areas, and playgrounds in the area. Of course, new leisure or outdoor parks made or built in open spaces and green

spaces necessitate the construction of new buildings, structures, and centers (Jones & Hillier, 2002). In order to provide the best service to visitors, this needs to be organized because taking every possible measure carries importance with regard to the quality of service, security, and sustainable visits in outdoor parks that are visited by thousands of people every day.

According to Samkar and Alpu (2013), new urban parks and green leisure areas created in the city and reclamation works on the Porsuk Creek and other water channels to establish a lively and clean environment have become an important factor for the public's satisfaction with the municipality services. Urban parks have attracted the attention of the people with many features (Jaafar & Tudin, 2010). Many features of the Science, Art, and Culture Park in Eskişehir serve as a way to spend leisure time. There are cafes and restaurants inside the park serving food and drinks. There is a 1200 person capacity open air concert arena, an amphitheater, a life-size pirate ship, playgroups children consisting of fairytale characters, and a playground for children with disabilities. This park also includes the science experiment center where Turkey's biggest 'space house' is found, the fairytale world that is the first of its kind in Turkey, and a Japanese garden. Included in the Science, Art, and Culture Park is also a large indoor aquarium building and a zoo. Special excursion trains provide service inside the park area (Eskişehir Governor's Office's, 2015).

#### 2.4. Urban entertainment and nightlife

Leisure is associated with all types of recreational activities in a city. In this sense, cities also offer different and alternative entertainment opportunities. Cities are frequently cited as places of pleasure or fun seeking (Crivello, 2011). Urban entertainment is defined as "leisure within an atmosphere of city life" (Kooijman, 2002). The concept of experience seated at the center of leisure (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) is characterized in today's world as the main factor that lies behind the consumption of services. Leisure facilities and urban entertainment imply that people stay in a place longer (Kooijman, 2002); the duration of stays in a city can be related in many instances to the experiences being had.

Employment opportunities in the city attract well-educated young people (Karsten, Kamphuis, & Remeijnse, 2015). Eskişehir is a center of attraction due to both employment and opportunities provided by universities. The city, which takes its place among the leading cities of Turkey with its urban leisure opportunities, provides entertainment opportunities to people of all walks of life, starting with young people. According to Mullins, Natalier, Smith, and Smeaton (1999) new trends concerning cities are more related to entertainment and less about necessity and requirement. The leisure and fun aspect of Eskişehir, in turn, allow for new services to become widespread. Everyday places, such as restaurants, pubs, bars and cafes with a new concept offer their services to city dwellers and visitors.

Some places used as entertainment centers in Eskişehir possess historic heritage. An old wine factory in the Factory Region was transformed into a huge disco called Eskişehir Hayal, preserving its building structure. Today, the courtyard in the middle of the winery is used as a summer garden, while the wine bottling section is used as a restaurant. In the same way, the old lumber mill has been transformed into a large indoor disco named 222 Park. Some of the tools and equipment that were used in the factory are exhibited in the venue (Yılmaz, 2014). Another building in the same region once in use as a wheel rim factory is now in operation as Buddha Bar, while a vegetable market has been restored as the Markets Youth Center and is now serving its visitors as a venue where, with its wine house, little restaurants, theater halls, cafes, and skating rinks, many activities that can be enjoyed together. In addition, another popular destination enjoyed by youth and tourists coming from outside of town is the Bar Street. This place, with its motto "there is life on the street," contrives to bring its visitors together 'alfresco'.

#### 2.5. Recreational shopping

Today, the organization of urban spaces can be largely shaped on retailing or consumption patterns (Erkip, Kızılgün, & Akinci, 2014). In this respect, it can be stated that retailing has a negative impact on many areas such as public spaces, car traffic, leisure activities (Erkip & Ozuduru, 2015), and green spaces. As indicated by Erkip et al. (2014) retailing and shopping malls have an impact on spatial organization and urban planning in the city. Above all, the contraction occurred in urban spaces because of retailing and large-scale shopping centers in the city downtown. In this regard, large shopping malls located in the center of Eskişehir are also considered an important part of the debate. Urban areas are being lost due to many small, medium and large-sized retailers. Decreases in urban spaces in the city may be due to reasons of retailing, light-rail systems (trams), and historical downtown locations. For example, it can easily be expressed that the malls of Kanatlı and Espark in downtown had an adverse impact on public spaces. Another important aspect of the issue is that large shopping malls have a negative impact on demand of traditional small trade people. Insufficient parking and traffic density are the dominant problems in the city center as in Ankara (Erkip et al., 2014) and other metropolitan cities. In recent years, suburbs are often characterized as new retail space (Erkip & Ozuduru, 2015). In contrast, because the suburban phenomenon has not been formed sufficiently in the Anatolian cities of Turkey, a big part of retailers remains in the downtown.

Recreational shopping, which became quite prominent during the 1990s, particularly in the US and Western Europe, has created a chain of consumption that creates a "magical" effect on the consumer. Shopping malls, or cathedrals of consumption, which were shaped according to urban design and at the same time shaped urban design, have led to consumption becoming a spare time activity (Bati, 2015). Shopping malls today have become the social community centers of their very own communities (Feinberg & Meoli, 1991). With shopping gaining a distinct status and importance as a "feel good" leisure pastime, the places where this activity is carried out are gaining more and more importance for consumers. In fact, such places are places enabling consumption with their fantastic environments and even push for it, in a way.

Shopping-related places such as shopping centers, factory outlet centers, regional malls, and retail stores change cities to a significant degree (Jones & Hillier, 2002) and can increase leisure-based visits. Today, shopping has gained a recreational meaning and the act of buying itself has become complementary to leisure. In other words, new forms and approaches of retailing reflect the new leisure aspects of urban life (Kooijman, 2002) and the post-modern style. That is to say, a person visiting Eskişehir from another town to spend the weekend can look at shopping as a component of leisure time. However, shopping itself also serves as one of the basic motivating elements. Eskişehir has a lot to offer in this aspect as well. On weekends especially, several malls or retail stores provide recreational services to their users. In many breakfast restaurants, there are indoor and outdoor areas where children can spend time. Visitors spend a large part or most of their time in these places, making use of their leisure time. Similarly, activities such as theater plays, movies, and art exhibits being held in shopping centers, especially on weekends, especially attract families, starting with the children.

There are four shopping malls found in Eskişehir, including Espark (Fig.9), Özdilek, Neo, Kanatlı, and the historical Craftsman Palace, Haller Youth Center (Fig.10). Moreover, Doctors Avenue, Adalar, and Hamam Yolu (baths road) are other places where residents of the city and tourists will have fun shopping. Since small business has played an important role within the tourism industry (Akbaba, 2012), many traditional small businesses around the Odunpazarı attract the attention of tourists.

### 3. Urbanization problems of Eskişehir

Although Eskişehir's urbanization provides many advantages (economic, socio-cultural), rapid urban and economic development in the



**Fig. 9.** Espark shopping mall.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.

cities in Turkey, has in recent years led to some problems regarding issues of social, cultural, environmental and urban policy (Vural-Arşlan & Cahantimur, 2011). Similar problems in Eskişehir have emerged as issues of urbanization, shrinking of public space, and leisure potentials. Unfortunately, because planning was not applied well enough in the past, Eskişehir – as in many cities in Turkey – has exposed many urban problems today, though when compared with other cities in Turkey, Eskişehir can be expressed as a more livable city.

As pointed out by Batuman (2013), similar to Yenişehir in Ankara, Batıkent in Eskişehir has been developing rapidly, and while traditional spaces in the old city continue to serve the local people, the residential prices in Batıkent attract the well-off. While traffic problems and other disadvantages caused by urbanization are experienced at a lower extent in this region, the abundance of green areas and public spaces provide advantages. Despite being a metropolitan city, the rate of urbanization is relatively low in Eskişehir compared to other cities (such as Ankara, Bursa, İstanbul, Kocaeli), which in turn creates advantages to the municipality for urban planning. Under such circumstances, local administrations in the developing parts of the city have more time to draw up their master plans, and there are further advantages in terms of adopting the necessary strategies for urban planning regarding the development of the city. However, a majority of public institutions are still located around regions such as Kızılay, İsmet İnönü, Hamamyolu, Governorship (Valilik) and Metropolitan Municipality (Büyükşehir Belediyesi), which are characterized as the old city. This leads to considerable drawbacks for urban life. While population growth rates have increased from 10.8% between 2011 and 2012 to 15.6% between 2013 and 2014, the city's population is estimated to increase by 12.7% from 2012 to 2023 (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014c). This indicates that the large prospective increase in population would have negative impacts on urban life. Even though the population of Eskişehir seems to be sustainable and manageable, it is possible to predict that it will increase considerably in the following decade, receiving migrants from other cities, as well as from the Middle East, Africa and Syria. It is possible to say that some of the immigrants from Syria are well-integrated to the city pursuant to their income and education levels. On the other hand, it can be predicted that



**Fig. 10.** Haller Youth Center.  
Source: Elif Canarşlan.

the relative expensiveness of Eskişehir compared to the other middle size cities of Turkey determines the demographic structure of Syrians migrating to the city.

In terms of urban planning, it is necessary to allocate public spaces to cultural events, especially at sites used mainly by the young (Batuman, 2006). Accordingly, another important function of public spaces is that they are the spaces of gathering and appearance for social and cultural events (Batuman, 2015). In this respect, public spaces are also frequently utilized in social events. For instance, during Gezi Park rallies, the open space in front of Espark shopping mall in Eskişehir had been utilized for demonstrations. Similarly, provincial spaces are put to use frequently in such demonstrations and celebrations. It is important for sports fans to celebrate the anniversary of the city's soccer team, Es-Es, at this space. The hiking areas around Porsuk Creek are used commonly for such celebrations, demonstrations and protests. As indicated by Arendt (1998), public spaces do not always exist, as their existence depends on the performance of social actors (Batuman, 2015).

Although the light rail system on ground is cost effective compared to subways, the tram systems have led to a number of traffic problems in the city. Urban air pollution and urban noise are major factors that can degrade quality of life in the cities. Downtown parts (Bağlar Street, İsmet İnönü Street, Şair Fuzuli Street, Hasan Polatkan Boulevard) of Eskişehir display the high level of noise, population density and vehicle carbon emissions. Street retailers and shopping malls in downtown neighborhoods increase traffic load and parking in the urban core. As suggested by Erkip and Ozuduru (2015), having retail planning linked to urban planning would help prevent such problems. Even though Eskişehir is characterized as a European-style city, the lack of bicycle and pedestrian roads at Adalar locality around Porsuk Creek causes disturbances (Sançam & Coşkun Hepcan, 2015). This issue might be considered as a sign of the fact that there are further policies to be adopted to become a genuinely European city. Mass transportation is the most popular service in the Tepebaşı and Odunpazarı municipalities with the greatest level of satisfaction. In the Tepebaşı municipality, however, garbage and cleaning services, as well as the water and sewage services, are the least popular types with the lowest amount of satisfaction (Girginer & Kaygisiz, 2013). Tepebaşı municipality should direct urban planning to improve life quality and wellbeing of people living in the city, as recommended by Girginer and Kaygisiz (2013).

#### 4. Conclusion

This study is a touristic evaluation of the leisure time venues of Eskişehir, which is different from other cities in the region. As part of the evaluation, the city has been historically, geographically, socially, and culturally evaluated, and the impact of all these factors on the city image has been discussed in detail. Also, in terms of tourist attractions and leisure time activities, urban parks, entertainment and nightlife, and recreational shopping places have been described. Considering the development process of Eskişehir, even though the present shopping malls cannot be moved from their present locations, it would be a relief for public spaces within the city if new shopping malls were located uptown.

More than its geographical location, what makes Eskişehir so different is its efforts to position itself as a trademark city in today's world. Yılmaz Büyükerşen, who was elected for four terms and is the current mayor, has made great efforts to make it meet the European Council City terms and to provide it with universal urban qualities; by actively implementing strategic planning for it to become a trademark city, it has reached his goal. Whenever Eskişehir is mentioned, youth, university, culture, and freedom come to mind. The city is both small and large. Its smallness lies in the narrowness of the space it occupies geographically, while its largeness implies that it contains all the leisure attractions expected in big cities. The smallness of its surface area means life is made easier and traveling as a tourist without becoming tired or experiencing chaos, and having easier access to places that one wants

to see. Its largeness means that there are places where all types of activities that happen in big cities can be carried out, and that it is possible to move around freely in these places.

With the effective use of urban planning and municipal work, in addition to its socio-cultural, historical, and economic features, Eskişehir has been positioned as an exemplary, trademark destination in Turkey that is worthy of experiencing. In this respect, the city has come to a position of being admired by youth and tourists for its peaceful values that incorporate sharing and differences. Due to the high number of students present, all activities in the city have been designed for young people. The place attachment of people living or studying in Eskişehir is very high. There has been a rapid increase in accommodation services to host both domestic and foreign tourists. Realizing the city's potential, several profit-oriented investors in the accommodation sector are channeling their new investments into Eskişehir.

The UN projects that 60% of the world's population will be living in urban areas by 2030 (Muneer, Celik, & Caliskan, 2011). Given this projection, lack of effective urban planning may cause serious crowding, high density and traffic congestion. Public authorities must undertake more responsibility in increasing urban spaces in the new developing areas of cities. A holistic approach is required to arrange urban policies with relevant issues such as traffic planning, keeping public spaces, and determining locations of retail organizations (Erkip et al., 2014).

It is seen that, in terms of urbanization, planned and controlled development has been taking place in Eskişehir since early 2000s. Another important aspect that should be addressed in this respect is the habitability and the social fabric of the city. As underlined by Batuman (2011, 2013), in many metropolitan cities of Turkey such as Ankara, the municipalities have conducted the transformation of sociocultural life based on their Islamist and neoliberal perspectives for more than a decade. Nevertheless, being almost the only city in Turkey where a European, secular and modernist perception prevails, the urban planning in Eskişehir reflects an unrestrained structure in this respect. The European city identity and image seem to be an outcome of such a viewpoint.

As indicated by Vural-Arslan and Cahantimur (2011), due to the pressure on downtowns, traditional commercial districts in Eskişehir were abandoned because they could not meet the expectations of people with higher income levels. Therefore, new places (e.g., pubs, cafes, shopping areas, and countryside restaurants) have been put into service for people who can be considered of relatively high-income. In conclusion, although the city has some urban problems, Eskişehir can be characterized as a livable, modern leisure city.

#### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Andrew Kirby as editor, and five anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and contributions on the earlier draft of this paper. Additionally, the author wish to thank Ms. Elif Canarşlan for taking photos and permission to use these photographs; research assistant Taki Can Metin for help with providing Eskişehir maps; Ms. Havva Yigiter at the Turkey Statistical Institute for her kind support and help.

#### References

- Akbaba, A. (2012). Understanding small tourism businesses: A perspective from Turkey. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 19(1), 1–17.
- Anholt, S. (2006). The Anholt-GMI City Brands Index: How the world sees the world's cities. *Place Branding*, 2(1), 18–31.
- Argan, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Rekreasyon Yönetimi*. Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Web-Ofset Tesisleri.
- Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Batu, U. (2015). *Fantazmagori, Gündelik, Yaşamın, Estetiği Ya Da 'Sadece'*. Tüketim: Kentte, Alişveriş, Merkezlerine Genel Bir, Bakış (April 21.) [http://www.ugurbati.com/Portals/0/Dergi/A1\\_pazarlama\\_dunyasi\\_al%C4%B1%C5%9Fveri%C5%9F%20merkezleri.pdf](http://www.ugurbati.com/Portals/0/Dergi/A1_pazarlama_dunyasi_al%C4%B1%C5%9Fveri%C5%9F%20merkezleri.pdf) (Accessed 04.04.15)
- Batuman, B. (2006). Turkish urban professionals and the politics of housing, 1960–1980 (1). *Metu JFA*, 1(23: 1), 59–81.

- Batuman, B. (2008). The Image of urban politics: Turkish urban professionals and urban representation as a site of struggle. *Journal of Architectural Education*, 54–65.
- Batuman, B. (2011). Early Republican Ankara: Struggle over historical representation and the politics of urban historiography. *Journal of Urban History*, 37(5), 661–679.
- Batuman, B. (2013). City profile: Ankara. *Cities*, 31, 578–590.
- Batuman, B. (2015). "Everywhere is Taksim": The politics of public space from nation-building to neoliberal Islamism and beyond. *Journal of Urban History*, 1–27.
- Biçer, N. (2014). Dr. Emek Üşenmez'in Eskişehir 2013 Türk Dünyası Kültür Başkenti Faaliyetleri Kapsamında Yayınlanan Eserleri Üzerine. *International Journal of Turkish Literature Culture Education*, 3(3), 248–259.
- Carlino, A. G., & Saiz, A. (2008). Beautiful city: Leisure amenities and urban growth. *FRB of Philadelphia working paper*. 08-22, .
- Crivello, S. (2011). Spatial dynamics in the urban playscape: Turin by night. *TPR*, 82(6), 709–731.
- Erkip, F., & Ozuduru, B. H. (2015). Retail development in Turkey: An account after two decades of shopping malls in the urban scene. *Progress in Planning*, 102, 1–33.
- Erkip, F., Kızılgün, Ö., & Akinci, G. M. (2014). Retailers' resilience strategies and their impacts on urban spaces in Turkey. *Cities*, 36, 112–120.
- Emür, S. H., & Onsekiz, D. (2007). KentSEL Yaşam Kalitesi Bileşenleri Arasında Açık Ve Yeşil Alanların Önemi – Kayseri/Kocasinan İlçesi Park Alanları Analizi. *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 22(1), 367–396.
- Ertin, G. (1994). *Eskişehir Kentinde Yerleşimin Evrimi*. Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Eskişehir Governor's Office (2015). Yeşil Alanlar ve Parklar, April 28. <<http://www.eskisehirkulturenvanteri.gov.tr/halkkulturedetay.aspx?ID=32>> (Accessed 09.05.15).
- Evans, G., & Shaw, S. (2001). Urban leisure and transport: Regeneration effects. *Journal of Leisure Property*, 1(4), 350–372.
- Feinberg, R. A., & Meoli, J. (1991). A brief history of the mall. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 18, 426–427.
- Girginer, N., & Kaygısız, Z. (2013). Cost-utility analysis in municipalities: The case of Odunpazarı and Tepebaşı municipalities in the city of Eskişehir. *Habitat International*, 38, 81–89.
- Hakala, U., & Öztürk, S. A. (2013). One person can make a difference – Although branding a place is not a one-man show. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 1–7.
- Jaafar, N., & Tudin, R. (2010). Uparqual: The development of an urban park satisfaction measurement scale. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 11(2), 17–34.
- Jones, P., & Hillier, D. (2002). Urban leisure complexes in the UK: Planning and management issues. *Management Research News*, 25(11), 75–83.
- Gelibolu, L., Kanbir, H., Saydan, R., Tutar, H., & Yavuz, M. C. (2014). Kars Algısı İmajı ve Marka Kimliği Araştırması. In U. Çalışkan, H. Tutar, & Sallan S. (Eds.), *Serhat Kalkınma Ajansı*.
- Gilboa, S., Jaffe, E. D., Vianelli, D., Pastore, A., & Herstein, R. (2015). A summated rating scale for measuring city image. *Cities*, 44, 50–59.
- Güneş, İ., & Yakut, K. (2007). *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Eskişehir (1840–1923)*. Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Karsten, L., Kamphuis, A., & Remeijnse, C. (2015). 'Time-out' with the family: The shaping of family leisure in the new urban consumption spaces of cafes, bars and restaurants. *Leisure Studies*, 34(2), 161–181.
- Kooijman, D. (2002). A third revolution in retail? The Dutch approach to leisure and urban entertainment. *Journal of Leisure Property*, 2(3), 214–229.
- Mullins, P., Natalier, K., Smith, P., & Smeaton, B. (1999). Cities and consumption spaces. *Urban Affairs Review*, 35, 44–71.
- Muneer, T., Celik, A. N., & Caliskan, N. (2011). Sustainable transport solution for a medium-sized town in Turkey – A case study. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 1, 29–37.
- Odunpazarı Municipality (2015). March 5 <http://www.odunpazarı.bel.tr/haberler.aspx?id=2706> (Accessed 22.03.15)
- Okumuş, E. (2013). Odunpazarı Evleri'nde Ramazan Gecelerinde Boş Zaman Mekânları. *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*. 14. (pp. 103–140) (Özel Sayı).
- Oyman, M., Yılmaz, H., & Kutlu, Ö. (2010). Motivations for visiting heritage sites: The case of Eskişehir. *The International Journal of The Humanities*, 8(6), 131–145.
- Özdemir, Ş., & Karaca, Y. (2009). Kent Markası Ve Marka İmajının Ölçümü: Afyonkarahisar Kenti İmajı Üzerine Bir Araştırma. *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi İ.L.B.F. Dergisi*. 1 (II). (pp. 113–133).
- Ozdetik, E., Cicek, A., & Arslan, N. (2012). Early antioxidative defence responses in the aquatic worms (Limnodrilus sp.) in Porsuk Creek in Eskişehir (Turkey). *Toxicology and Industrial Health*, 29(6), 541–554.
- Page, S., Nielsen, K., & Goodenough, R. (1994). Managing urban parks: User perspectives and local leisure needs in the 1990s. *The Service Industries Journal*, 14(2), 216–237.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Republic of Turkey Ministry of Development (2013). Bursa Eskişehir Bilecik Bölge Planı 2014–2023. <http://www.kalkinma.gov.tr/Pages/Arama.aspx?k=eskisc5%9Fehir> (Accessed 08.06.15)
- Samkar, H., & Alpu, O. (2013). M regression approach for satisfaction of municipality services: The case of Eskişehir. *Quality and Quantity*, 47(3), 1629–1637.
- Sarıçam, S., & Coşkun Hepcan, Ç. (2015). A research for defining recreational use of Porsuk Riverside and Adalar Area, Eskişehir. *Ege Üniv. Ziraat Fak. Derg.*, 52(1), 1–11.
- Shinew, K. J., Glover, T. D., & Parry, D. C. (2004). Leisure spaces as potential sites for inter-racial interaction: Community gardens in urban areas. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36(3), 336–355.
- Sivri, M. (2013). *Eskişehir'in Kültür ve Edebiyat Elçileri: Şairler ve Eskişehir*. *Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* Kasım, 14. (pp. 73–102), 73–102 (Özel Sayı).
- Şimşek, G. (2014). River rehabilitation with cities in mind: The Eskişehir case (1). *METU JFA*, 31(1), 21–37.
- Tanrıverdi, F. (1987). Peyzaj Mimarlığı Bahçe Sanatının Temel İlkeleri ve Uygulama Metodları. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Ziraat Fakültesi Yayın No: 291*. S:367, (Erzurum).
- Taylor, D. E. (1999). Central park as a model for social control: Urban parks, social class and leisure behavior in nineteenth-century America. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 31(4), 420–477.
- Tek, M. (2009). *Kamu Yatırımlarında Turizmin Yeri, Türkiye Turizm Stratejisi 2023'de Marka Kentler Projesi: Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme*. Cilt 20, Sayı 2. (pp. 169–184). Anatolia: Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi, 169–184 (Bahar).
- Timur, M. N., Çevik, S., & Kicir, G. K. (2014). Etkinlik Turizm: Kültür Başkenti Etkinliklerinin Başarı Unsurları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme. *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 2(2/1), 56–83.
- Tourism Newspaper (2015). Odunpazarı'na 2.5 milyon turist, <[http://www.turkiyeturizm.com/news\\_print.php?id=39554](http://www.turkiyeturizm.com/news_print.php?id=39554)> Accessed 15.02.15.
- Turkey Statistical Institute (2014a). <<http://rapory.tuik.gov.tr/18-02-2015-13:46:49-556465653476202445874363742.html?>> (Accessed 12.04.15).
- Turkey Statistical Institute (2014b). <<http://rapory.tuik.gov.tr/18-02-2015-13:49:11-1605279027452581501916937183.html?>> (Accessed 12.04.15).
- Turkey Statistical Institute (2014c). <<http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>> (Accessed 12.10.15).
- Üsküdar, Ş., Cakır, M., & Temizkan, S. P. (2014). Yerli Turistlerin Eskişehir'in Kültür Turizmine İlişkin Algıları (the perception of domestic tourists regarding Eskişehir's cultural tourism). *Journal of Tourism and Gastronomy Studies*, 2/2, 67–76.
- Vural-Arslan, T., & Cahantimur, A. (2011). Revival of a traditional community engagement model for the sustainable future of a historical commercial district: Bursa/Turkey as a case. *Futures*, 43, 361–373.
- Yılmaz, H. (2014). Eskişehir'in Biricik Destinasyon Önerisi: Endüstriyel Miras. *Eskişehir'in Biricik Destinasyon Önerisi: Endüstriyel Miras* Cilt:29, Sayı:2, Yıl: 2014, ss.205-225.