



A Theoretical Research on Sustainable Tourism in Aksaray

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Abstract

The social, cultural, economic and environmental transformations occurring in the world have been affecting tourism. The changes of the leisure, recreation and journey demands of the people have led to new types of tourism. Thus, besides the well-known tourism types, new types of tourism including historical, cultural and environmental elements have been rising. Sustainable tourism with the power to create change on a global scale is an important feat for Aksaray, which is one of the developing tourism destinations. In this paper, some studies on sustainable tourism in the world and Turkey were examined. In this context, the qualitative method is used by reviewing other studies in the literature and also reanalyzing the results of them in this study. The obtained data is associated to sustainable tourism process and potential of Aksaray city. Aksaray with culture, religious and ecotourism opportunities is seen as an attractive touristic destination. The results of this study were compared to other studies in the literature and also some new suggestions about the developing of Aksaray's sustainable tourism potential have been presented.

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INTRODUCTION

The sustainability has become a more and more important issue in different forms during the history of humanity. (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010: 3437) The limited availability of resources has led to the emergence of development within the framework of sustainability. Based on this concept, a report known as the Brundtland Report was published at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. In this report, the concept of sustainable development has come forward as a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Sardianou, et. al., 2016: 860). In the following period, the concept of sustainability was applied to the tourism sector, the concept of sustainable tourism emerged and many studies related to sustainable tourism were done.

Although the definitions provided for sustainability and sustainable tourism seem to be various, they all boil down to similar statements. According to Yavuz (2010) sustainability is seen as the ability to maintain the continuity of ecological systems and processes. According to Kuter and Ünal's study (2009:147) sustainability in tourism is expressed as the preservation of natural history, cultural and aesthetic values and an increase of attractiveness. In another study related to sustainable tourism, this concept is described as an understanding of meeting the needs of local people and tourists, while preserving future opportunities (Kaypak, 2010: 99).

The World Tourism Organization has made a more comprehensive statement on sustainable tourism. According to this explanation, it is important that the economic, social and aesthetic expectations be met in addition to preserving and developing opportunities, maintaining cultural integrity, maintaining basic ecological processes, preserving life support systems in the future (Sardianou,et, al., 2016: 861). The common point of all these definitions is the using of resources without harming the environment and their natural characteristics.

For similar reasons, many towns and small cities in Turkey are obliged to ensure socio-economic development and to break the shell. These settlements need efficiency, organization, and strategies to improve local potentials (natural and cultural values), production and income. (Yılmaz, Tuncer and Zorlu, 2016:2). Due to the globalization phenomenon, important changes are taking place in the tourism sector as well as in many other sectors in the world. It is understood that tourist areas in terms of history, nature, culture and rural areas have the potential for development and put tourism policies into effect to increase this potential (Kaypak, 2012). Located in the central part of Anatolia, Aksaray should be evaluated as a tourist destination with a sustainable understanding due to its cultural significance, international preoccupation, historical Silk Road, regional importance and tourism potential (AHİKA, 12).

Within this framework, a document review was carried out from qualitative research methods and the relationship between the obtained information and the sustainable tourism potential of Aksaray was tried to be determined. The document review contains an analysis of written materials including information on the cases or phenomena targeted for investigation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006: 187). The sustainable tourism potential of Aksaray is evaluated by examining various studies in the literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of sustainable tourism is still taking place on the tourism stakeholders' agendas due to issues such as meeting the needs of tourists, ensuring economic growth, assessing opportunities within the sector, and increasing the quality of life of local people. (Lee, 2013: 38). A study on this issue emphasizes the necessity of planning tourism and recreational activities within the framework of sustainable tourism approach (Eskin, Tuncer, and Demirçivi, 2017: 23). While sustainable tourism is perceived primarily as an environmental issue, it is also regarded as a managerial process to meet the needs of local people and tourists with regard to cultural integration, ecological processes, biodiversity and vital functions. (Sezgin and Karaman, 2008: 433). Sustainable tourism activities carried out with an ecological approach provide a great contribution to the protection of natural resources as well as to the development of countries (Koçan, 2011: 74). Tourism-related infrastructure, socio-cultural resource efficiency, investment owners and the contribution of the local people to the economy are part of sustainable tourism approach. (Kaypak, 2010: 100). In this framework, sustainable tourism can be defined as the process of preserving and using resources.

Sustainable tourism continues to influence human beings from various angles. The main objective in sustainable tourism is to ensure that values related to tourism contribute to specific goals and that these values are not weakened (Eagles, et, al., 2002). The environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of tourism development have the power to create change on a global scale, increasing the need for sustainable tourism (Tuncer, 2017). The need to have a common understanding of sustainable tourism, to maximize social and cultural achievements for local communities, and to reduce environmental and cultural heritage issues is naturally a necessity for sustainable tourism. While globalization turns tourism into a locomotive sector, it, directly and indirectly, brings it together with other sectors. (Kavacık., Zafer and Ünal, 2012: 170). In this framework, the differentiation in relation to individual-society-space changes the conception of tourism. As a result of these differentiations, tourism applications are diversified. Thus, alternate searches with the influence of cities, climates and geography gain intensity. Tourism has been affected by this change and transformation process is taking its own share. (Sarkım, 2007: 22).

Sustainable tourism is naturally associated with available destination resources. The destination can be expressed as the sum of the tourism services that are formed directly and indirectly from the sources of the tourism zone. The destination should have features that attract tourists to the region (Özdemir, 2008: 3). In the development of the destinations, appropriate policies and plans are being made in order to use the rural areas effectively and to increase their contribution to the economy. (Sharpley, 2002: 222). In regional development, there are many elements that the destination can use; Natural elements: (geographical location, geological features, vegetation, climate, animal species, rivers, lakes, etc.), Sociocultural elements: (traditions and customs, food culture, museum, local architectural structure, cultural assets, social and political structure of the region etc.), Economic factors (price of tourist products, shopping facilities, infrastructure facilities, economic situation of tourism industry, etc.), Psychological elements: (life style, beliefs, fashion, habits, places of entertainment, art activities etc.) These are among the factors that affect the destination (Kervankıran, 2011: 33). Sources related to tourism can be said to have been driven by sustainable tourism understanding if they are used to reduce poverty, to employ qualified people, to

reduce infiltration and to create an ethical understanding in tourism.(Weaver and Jin, 2016: 668). Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that tourism activities must be presented in the sense of justice and equality that the local people expect, without discrimination and without exclusion (Jamal and Camargo, 2014). Within the framework of the information given above, it can be expressed that tourism resources will benefit more from the sustainability concept if the available resources are used effectively and efficiently

With regard to Aksaray destination, which has significant historical cultural accumulation, it can be said that; It is believed that Aksaray was first named as 'Nenessa' (Nenossos) in ancient Hittite texts. In the first millennium, Aksaray was known as Şinakhatum-Şinukhtu in the period of King Kiakki. The city, which was linked to the Cappadocian kingdom in the Hellenistic period and took the name garsaura, later became Arkhelais. Especially during the time of the Byzantine Emperor Nikafor, the number of Christians who took refuge in the region increased due to the increase of Muslim Arabs through Istanbul. Numerous underground cities and settlements have been established due to the easy digging feature of the tuff layer in the region. Many ornate rocks, churches and monastery churches were constructed, Ihlara and Monastery valleys and settlements like Güzelyurt were built. (tmo.gov.tr). In another study, different information about the history of Aksaray is mentioned: In the past, Aksaray remained in the Hittite, Persian, Hellenistic (Great Alexander), Roman, Byzantine, Seljuk and Ottoman dominions. Until the Republican era, Aksaray had been a sanjak connected to Konya, and it became a province in 1920. In 1933, Aksaray became a district connected to Niğde and became a province again on 15 June 1989. (AHİKA, 3).

Located at a crossroads, Aksaray is among the most important cities in Turkey. Also, when considering other features that increase this prominence, we can mention aquatic resources, climate, wide and flat terrain, a suitable structure for trade, the commercial life history of the city and archeological sites. (Gul, 2013: 150). Aksaray carries traces of many cultural elements (language, tradition, belief system) under the influence of silk road, which is one of the most important trade routes of history. (Gurani and Canbolat, 2012).

When Aksaray's historical and touristic potential is examined, it is seen that there is a very rich infrastructure. Some of the alternative tourism types that can be offered in Aksaray are Nature walk in Ihlara Valley, horse trekking in Selime region, mountaineering activities on Hasan Mountain, activities for ski tourism and camping. Activities related to cycling in Güzelyurt, organizing festivals in Güzelyurt and Sultanhanı, bird watching in Hirfanlı Dam and Salt Lake, activities for thermal tourism in Ziga springs, activities for river tourism in Melendiz and Ulırmak, sport fishing, and angling opportunities reveal alternative tourism potential of the region. (Orman ve Su İşleri Bakanlığı TMP, 2013: 54). If these resources are used with a sustainable understanding, these resources will have a significant contribution to the economy and social life of Aksaray.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Aksaray is an important destination in the middle of Anatolia, dating back to ancient times. Due to Aksaray's history and the historical silk road passing through this region, the city has an important cultural accumulation. For this reason, Aksaray needs to be managed with a sustainable approach in order to benefit more from the resources. This idea also is supported by Akıs (1999). According to his study, affecting sustainable tourism in Turkey, environmental, says that many political and economic problems. He emphasized that universities and planners

should collaborate to solve these problems. In a study highlighting the importance of local elements, Lee (2013) examined whether there is a relationship between sustainable tourism development and the support of local people. According to this study, the positive attitude towards sustainable tourism in the local population provides further development of this concept. In another study, the behavioral intentions of sustainable tourism entrepreneurs were evaluated. According to the survey, it is understood that these people have information networks and certified management systems, as well as local people expecting their support (Sardianou, et, al., 2016).

In a study on rural tourism, which is one of the tourism types that can be used with sustainable understanding, promotional activities for the external market, giving priority to the traditional villagers, obtaining the highest benefit from the local authority and giving the necessary importance to the educational activities have been emphasized. (Soykan: 2003). In parallel to this work, rural tourism is seen as an important part of rural development. In addition, in the development of rural tourism, the importance of cooperation between local governments, universities and non-governmental organizations has been pointed out. (Kuşat, 2014). In another research on the Ilgaz district, the fact that a region has traces of ancient civilizations and the ability to carry out four-season tourism activities is seen as important in the development of the destination (Dağdeviren, Özdemir and Göker, 2017). The fact that Aksaray carries the traces of various civilizations and the fact that many kinds of tourism can be realized here, naturally makes the city dependent on the understanding of sustainable tourism.

The interest of local people is necessary to achieve success in tourism activities in destinations. In the context of sustainable tourism, people's approaches such as voluntary tourism, pro-poor tourism, and fair trade tourism will be successful in destinations (Weaver and Jin, 2016). In one of the studies on Aksaray on the implementation of EU policies in Turkey, Aytüre (2013) has explored how these policies are reflected in Aksaray. According to this research, the EU funds have been proposed to be used in rural tourism projects. In a study on Güzelyurt from Aksaray's touristic regions, Acar (2016) explains that although the county has historical and cultural accumulation, the eco-museum potential has not been used sufficiently. Utilizing sustainable tourism without causing environmental and social deterioration is among the tasks of all the destination managers. Aksaray will be able to benefit economically from this situation if it protects and uses its natural historical and cultural values (Tuncer, 2017: 136).

When a general evaluation is made, the fact that Aksaray has many historical and natural tourism sources, undeveloped underground cities, thermal tourism facilities show the city as an important destination. In addition, Hasan Mountain's potential for winter tourism, Lake Salt, and its surroundings are the other factors that increase the tourism potential of the city. In order to make full use of this potential, a sustainable approach should be taken. Aksaray will take its place among the remarkable tourism destinations if the available resources are used with an understanding that is supported by economic benefit without breaking the natural environment for the benefit of society.

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