TOURISM PARADOX VS. SUSTAINABILITY:

A CASE FROM TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The proposal offered by today's competitive paradigm that the more the number of tourists arriving at a destination, the more the income for the destination sounds good at first. New buildings, new lifestyles, foreign capital and new socio-economic relationships appear rapidly at the destination. The increased number of tourist arrivals gives the appearance of increasing desirability of the destination. Is it, however a feasible proposal for all cases? With the increased tourism activity, there is also an increase in problems faced by the local people and tourists at the destination. The tourism paradox begins to appear at this stage since the natural and cultural resources that are worth seeing are consumed by those who come to see them. The destination would shrink and disappear. Tourism paradox is the name given to this phenomenon where industrial tourism deteriorates or destroys natural and cultural environment which is necessary for tourism activities. Presently there is a need for successful examples of sustainable tourism development. New projects and approaches to solve the problems caused by the growth of urban populations and establish healthy sustainable tourism destinations are becoming more important than ever. This study presents examples of the tourism paradox in the Turkish context and discusses possible alternative sustainable solutions.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourism paradox, Sustainable tourism, Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

An analogy can be made of a scorpion stinging itself when surrounded with fire to local economies dependent on tourism. For such destinations tourism is sometimes embraced as a lifestyle and everything there becomes entwined with tourism, in effect tourism becomes the ring of fire causing "self-destruction" of the destination. Although this metaphor is not novel, it expresses the notion where tourism itself causes a downward spiral as put forth by previous tourism research that have considered the phenomenon from different points of view.

The important point regarding this fact is that although it doesn't "always" take place, it takes place "sometimes" bordering "often". This happens as a result of viewing tourism purely in terms of numbers and income. This view ignores the concept of sustainability, where demand and supply has to take into consideration the exhaustion and depletion of the natural and historical attractions that form the basis of tourism for the said destination.

Contemporary definitions of tourism tend to focus on "people going from one place to another", spending time there "for the purpose of one thing or another". It follows that the destination has to offer something that makes it worth going there. Be it the beach, the ruins, the food, the sites or some unique activity, a destination needs to offer something of value to the tourist that the tourist can't find at home.

Tourists travel, stay, experience and enjoy. It is an enjoyable experience to touch, smell, taste, hear and see the things the destination. The tours organized by Thomas Cook and his son, which are seen as the birth point of modern tourism, were looked down upon by some as superfluous exuberance by some. Louis Bertrand stated in 1910 that "… on tourist travels, the reality reaches you as altered like a text read from its translation", while someone else expressed his thoughts "the tourists don't eat up everything they find in the place and empty the shop shelves – but as they eat what they came for they find the supply of tasty tidbits fast running dry" (Urbain, 1991). Urbain states "tourism does not only make attraction resources authentic but also organize them, and it impairs them through 'sanctification'. Thus it make "the reality" artificial.

Regardless of the motive, the tourist will spend time at the destination, that is, they will "stay the night" for the travel to be tourism. The accommodation owners at the destination will provide these amenities to ensure that the tourist comes to the destination and spend money there. The quality of these facilities will be such as to offer the level of comfort the tourist has at home, if not higher. However, the tourist does not just stay at an accommodation but also consumes food and beverage, uses soap and shampoo, and has a bath or two, sometimes even more than they do at home. In other words, those who are accommodated consume things like various products, nature, air, water and much more.

These facilities will be located nearest to that is worth seeing, preferably right in the middle. In Istanbul, for example, the destination will be around Sultanahmet or along the Bosporus, whereas for Venice; a hotel located in the Piazza San Marco will be preferred. These are vital elements to create a demand for "going to" among the masses, and as a result to satisfying this demand. As the number of tourists visiting to a destination increases so will the revenue generated. Then it inevitably follows, facilities, roads, airports, and ports with the capacity to accommodate more people will be built for more income. This study aims to consolidate the relationship of "form and content" by approaching the concept of tourism from a variety of viewpoints.

THE PARADOX OF TOURISM

The equation "more tourists = more tourism income" is so simple. But the infrastructure necessary for more tourists will inevitably detract from the very attractions that the destination has. New buildings, new lifestyles, new social and commercial relationships will rapidly replace old ones in the destination. The income offered by tourism will be attractive for the local residents and the prospects of even more income will cause an increase in the tourism revenue generation capacity of the destination which often causes deterioration and devastation of the attractions in the region.   This is what is meant by the concept of "the paradox of tourism".

Tourism developments entered in the plans in 60s and in 70s Turkey adopted encouragement of mass tourism policy (Duzgunoglu and Karabulut, 1999). It may be claimed that the period starting from early 60s to mid-80s experienced a very low rate growth (Yolal, 2010). The Tourism Encouragement Law No. 2634 of 1982 is the fundamental legislation regarding tourism as well as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This is a law that is action oriented in that its main goal is increasing the tourist capacity and income of the country. It is an undeniable fact that Turkey owes its present tourism potential to this law (Goymen, 2000; Tosun, 2001). All tourism incentives including land allocation and the privileged zoning practices for tourism facilities are results of this law. In accordance with the spirit of this legislation incentivizing tourism had the same meaning as building plenty of facilities, and increasing the number of beds (Tosun, 2001).

Many issues such as inefficient use of bed capacity, deterioration of the supply and demand balance, and the adverse effect of competition through price on tourism income are worthy of discussion. The number of facilities with investment certificate rose from 301 in 1970 to 877 in 2010, while the number of beds in those facilities rose from 25,872 to 252,984, and the number of facilities with operation certificate rose 292 in 1970 to 2,647 in 2010, while the number of beds in rose from 28,354 to 629,465 (The Ministry of Culture and Tourism-MCT, 2012). When taking public lands allocated or to be allocated within tourism areas by the Ministry into account, we are certainly not close to a "standstill" in regard to increase in the supply of beds in tourism.

Although the increase in bed supply has not come to a stop, sensitivity to environmental issues has risen to a point where prospects of profit for entrepreneurs are not enough in itself to sustain the previous levels of increase in supply (Yolal, 2010). Though present trends in tourism investment tend to take into consideration, if not focus on sustainability, it is evident that such sensitivity is a case of too little too late as observed by the state of mega-

destinations in Turkey like the Kemer-Alanya coastal strip or the Bodrum peninsula.

The legislation that until recently encouraged and promoted tourism investments without any regard for natural or social impact from 1982 until recently now has been modified in such manner that negative natural social impact of tourism investments is the central focus of prohibitions regarding investments. Today, tourism investments face more restrictions than incentives. Environmental and social organizations have become more vociferous and active in their opposition to investments in "endangered" areas. It can even be said that tourism and environment have become diametrically opposed concepts.

CONSERVATION ATTEMPTS by RESTRICTION and PUNISHMENT

In Turkey conservation policies take the traditional of restriction and punitive sanctions. This is perhaps reflexive behavior caused by rigid etatism present in the Turkish society where the authority of the state is transcendent. The Law on the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage No. 2863 of 1983 involves the most severe sanctions (MCT, 2012). Unauthorized excavation or placing a stone atop another in areas proclaimed as Archaeological Site or first-degree Natural Site is punishable by two year prison sentence, which cannot be suspended or converted into a fine. The legislation is aggressively enforced by the various ministries with jurisdiction. In other words natural and heritage sites in Turkey are protected in an unprecedented manner.

While our cultural and natural heritage is under such protection, some regions are under even more stringent protection. Towards this end, Environmental Protection Boards were established under Article 9 of the Environment Law No. 2872, and in this context the Decree-Law No. 383 was issued in 1989. Under this law, once an area is covered by the Resolution of the Council of Ministers, what the protective authority titled as the Environmental Protection Institution says goes. If an area is under special environmental protection, it means double protection. Article 1 of the Resolution of the Council of Ministers on the protection of an area is exactly as follows (MCT, 2012): "The areas whose land and maritime borders are stated on the attached maps, have been defined as and proclaimed 'Special Environment Protection Area' with the aim of protecting against environmental pollution and degradation, ensuring the inheritance of their natural beauty and historical ruins to future generations." For example, Fethiye Ölüdeniz has been protected under the authority of the Environmental Protection Institution since 1988. Although Ölüdeniz have been under protection since then, it has reached its current situation. The old picture of Ölüdeniz and the new image of the same area from Google Earth brings forth the question; just how has Ölüdeniz been protected?

It can be said that method of protection through prohibition and punishment is doomed to failure as long as it contradicts with needs. Hence the Tourism Paradox is the underlying cause for the problems and failure to conserve through restriction and punishment.

Ölüdeniz is a prime example to the Tourism Paradox. Until the early 90's the destination which is basically a lagoon and its surroundings had rudimentary facilities like camp sites and bungalows, which in effect was light impact tourism investment as far as the environment is concerned. The whole area was classified as a protected natural area. Ölüdeniz now has hundreds of mass tourism facilities with thousands of beds and has been transformed into a modern city with a plethora of hotels, restaurants, discos and shopping centers. The lagoon itself which gives the area its name (Ölüdeniz in Turkish is literally translated as "dead sea") is trapped in a corner of the city and has been ruined as can be seen even from satellite images. Ölüdeniz is indeed progressing rapidly towards being a "dead sea". The experience of Ölüdeniz provides not only proof that conservation through restriction and punishment is futile but also how the tourism paradox works.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Sustainable tourism began to be used from late 80s and early 90s the term has become more commonly used (Swarbrooke, 1999). Research on sustainable tourism has provided many ideas and tools in advancement of sustainability in addition to defining and delineating the concept. Despite the theoretical contributions provided by extent research positive, real-world examples of the concept of sustainability of tourism in general and destinations in particular are necessary. But the remarks about the negative impacts of tourism are intended to demonstrate and explain the tourism paradox. Tourism itself is not an environmentally and socially "negative" activity that should be avoided. Tourism has many positive economic and social benefits that are indispensable. But there does exist a form of tourism that is not destructive or paradoxical.

The very activity of tourism should not necessarily consume the very cause of the activity. Tourism can indeed not only provide the impetus for conservation, itself can be based on conserving or financing the conservation of the destination in short, it can ensure sustaining of tourism. Common sense should prevail over policy, lessons gleaned from mistakes of other destinations should direct destination development, and most importantly tourism should not be conceptualized as a finite stream of revenue where profit maximization is the logical course of action, but as a renewable resource that requires care and attention in its utilization. Sustainability should be substantiated through policy and legislation and should be primary objective in all decisions regarding tourism. This covers a multitude of areas of study and

implementation ranging from, but not limited to, environmental, social, economic and urban development and design. A prime example may be the cittaslow or slow cities which originated in Italy but has gained popularity not only in Europe but also in the USA.

The concept of cittaslow can be an effective model in destination development for sustainable tourism. The very philosophy underlying cittaslow focuses on low impact, which will ensure economic, natural, social and cultural sustainability. Cittaslow itself has been influenced by "slow food" movement in its development (Radstrom, 2005). Both these concepts rose out of the myriad of problems created by life in modern urban settings, such as air and noise pollution, urban sprawl, cultural and lifestyle degeneration and loss of local identity. These problems have led to novel, eco-culture friendly tourism practices. One of these types of tourism is "slow tourism" (Matos, 2002).

Cittaslow is a concept that is opposite of the fast paced lifestyles of modern cities. It encompasses a wide range of activities from urban planning to culture and slow pace in everything is central to the concept. Life should be slow, tranquil and enjoyable while all aspects of life should include respect and responsibility.

The term slow tourism means in a way "high-level wellness" to be obtained by tourism activities performed in a certain region, and involves "healthy nutrition", "motion", and "cultural" and "spiritual renewal" (Mueller & Kaufmann, 2001). To develop a region as a sustainable tourism destination by protecting its natural, cultural and historical potential from negative impacts of mass tourism, product development, service and promotion should also be focused on sustainability. These efforts also play a crucial role in the development of the destination as a cittaslow town.

CONCLUSION

The essence of tourism is based on pleasure derived from the destination itself and activities undertaken when there. For travelers preferring cittaslow approach this pleasure is derived from a lower impact, slower paced destination. Destinations that wish to become cittaslows need to carry out some activities. Based on an understanding that is distinct from mass tourism, a new tourism destination where the cultural and historical heritage is utilized needs to be created through investment, promotion and marketing that is focused on sustainability. The following activities can be suggested for destination development based on sustainability and the cittaslow model.

• Activities necessary for strategic planning should be carried out, and the cooperation of public and private sectors should be ensured after determining the applicability of cittaslow approach.

• Projects which focus on and emphasize the economic, cultural and social benefits to be derived from becoming a cittaslow should be undertaken to inform the local population of these opportunities.

• Training should be provided to build awareness and skills necessary for the processes and procedures involved in becoming a cittaslow.

• Infrastructure should be improved, especially the infrastructure necessary for sustainability of tourism.

• Food and beverage vendors which represent the authentic nature of the region, and where regional dishes are promoted and served to visitors should be established taking the philosophy of Slow Food into account.

• The awareness of locals and visitors should be raised in order to prevent damage to the historical and cultural environment, the carrying capacity of the region should be determined under sustainable principles, and local governments and non-governmental organizations should cooperate against adverse environmental effects caused by tourism.

• Local population should be encouraged to participate in the cittaslow movement.

• Foreign and domestic promotions should be made more effective through good web design.

• Festivals or events devoted to the region should be organized.

• The success of cittaslow towns depends on effective destination management and marketing involving the principles of pleasure, rest and hospitality. Public and local authorities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, universities and professional organizations should cooperate in all practices.

It is expected that domestic and foreign visitors will in the future prefer greener, more serene, and more natural destinations where they can easily find the values stated in the basic principle of cittaslow, and they feel healthy, relaxed and secure. The development of cittaslow towns as sustainable tourism destinations also requires, apart from the measures taken in accordance with these principles, the common and intensive efforts of local population, non-governmental organizations, local governments, and tourism enterprises for the investment, promotion and marketing.

"Recommendatory" and "orienting" approaches rather than "prevention" should be adopted in legislations; local authorities should be supported in their endeavors towards sustainability. In respect to structure of tourism, "nonindustrial" scale and types should be subjected to a different set of rules different from the areas and facilities of mass tourism. Rights and powers of local governments over implementation should be expanded.

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