



A Research on The Sustainability Activities of Travellife Member Travel Agencies

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Extensive Summary

Introduction

Long-term continuity and competition in the tourism sector is possible with a sustainable tourism approach. The basic idea that creates the concept of sustainability; taking into account the needs of present and future generations, using all natural and man-made resources without destroying, degrading and improving them (Demir and Çevirgen, 2006: p.95). Sustainable tourism advocates that securing the future of the sector can be achieved to the extent given to the natural environment and socio-cultural values (TOI, 2005: p.10). On the other hand, due to the nature of the tourism sector, the fact that the fragmentation is intense and the activities are carried out with the cooperation and coordination of many stakeholders make it difficult to find sustainability in practice. Travel agencies play an important role in ensuring effective resource management and integration among businesses in sustainability initiatives in the sector with its function in supply and demand chain (Sigala, 2008).

Travel agencies have the ability to manage the attitudes and behaviors of sectoral stakeholders and customers throughout the entire production process, from product supply to production, presentation and evaluation stages (Hamıd and Isa, 2020). From this point of view, it is obvious that the participation of travel agencies in the sustainability initiatives and the initiatives they will make will contribute significantly to the sectoral level. Its important position and function at the sectoral level has led to the discussion of sustainable tourism-centered initiatives of travel agencies internationally. Sustainability in agencies at the international level was first evaluated with the 1992 EC Directive on Package Tour document. However, Tour Operators Initiatives and Travellife are other initiatives where sustainability is

evaluated in travel agencies. In the Tour Operators Initiatives and Travellife system, which encourages sustainability activities in travel agencies, sustainability is evaluated in five dimensions (TOI, 2003; UNEP, 2005; Travellife.org). These dimensions are (i) internal management, (ii) supply chain management, (iii) cooperation with destinations, (iv) customer relations, (v) product management and development.

Internal management explains sustainability in business practices, which is the main starting place for sustainability activities in travel agencies. *Supply chain management* includes the travel agencies' relations with stakeholders. *Cooperation with destinations* express the power of travel agencies to support and influence decisions that can be taken at sustainable tourism, in collaboration with local authorities and local actors. *Relations with customers* describe the process of travel agencies' interaction and communication with customers. *Product management and development* explains that travel agencies take environmental sensitivity into consideration in route, activity and service preferences in product production and management processes (UNEP, 2005; Budeanu, 2007; Arıca, 2013).

The dimensions determined in terms of sustainability in travel agencies have been evaluated in a single or holistic perspective in many studies. In some of the studies, it has been determined that travel agencies can contribute to sustainability initiatives through internal management activities (Budeanu, 2007; Arıca, 2013; Goffi et al., 2018). On the other hand, in some research, it has been determined that travel agencies can contribute to sustainable tourism with their initiatives in product management and development processes (Carbone, 2003; Tepelus, 2005; Anderson et al., 2013; Byrnes et al., 2016). In addition, it has been determined that travel agencies can contribute to sustainable tourism with their relations with customers (Hardeman et al., 2017; Marin-Pantelescu et al., 2019) and their initiatives in supply chain management (Budeanu, 2007; Arıca, 2013; Goffi et al., 2018; Hamid and Isa, 2020) and their relations with the destination (Budeanu, 2007; Khairat and Maher, 2012; Byrnes et al. 2016; Marin-Pantelescu et al. 2019).

The common conclusion reached in most of the researches where sustainability is evaluated in different dimensions in travel agencies is that sustainability activities are not found in the agencies at a sufficient level or are not implemented for their main purposes (Budeanu, 2000; Arıca, 2013; Lozano et al., 2016; Hamid and Isa, 2020). Two components have an effect here. The first of these; while it is the factors that barriers travel agencies from turning towards sustainability activities, the second; the fact that travel agencies tend not to know about the opportunities they will get as a result of their tendency to sustainability initiatives. Factors

preventing travel agencies from turning towards sustainable tourism activities; economic barriers, legal shortcomings, market-oriented barriers (Curtin and Busby, 1999; Schwartz and Font, 2009; Khairat and Maher, 2012; Arıca and Çorbacı, 2017; Marin-Pantelescu et al. 2019). In addition to this, the opportunities that travel agencies will obtain by orientation towards sustainable tourism initiatives are; market(ing) oriented opportunities and economic advantages (Budeanu, 2007; Khairat and Maher, 2012; Goffi et al., 2018).

Methodology

The aim of the research is to determine the sustainability initiatives of travel agencies. In addition to, in the research, it is aimed to identify the factors that barriers and encourage the participation of agents in sustainability activities. In this context and businesses operating in Turkey are members of the Travellife were included in the sample. It is a member of Travellife there are seven travel agencies operating in Turkey (Travellife.info). In this context, research data was obtained from business managers using semi-structured interview method. The sound recordings obtained during the interviews were deciphered and converted into written text. Content and descriptive analysis methods were used in the analysis of written texts.

Results

The results obtained in the research show that sustainability activities in travel agencies find a response in supply chain management and product management and development dimensions. However, it has been determined that travel agencies have sustainability-oriented initiatives in internal management, customer relations and relations with the destination. Although sustainability initiatives are present in travel agencies, it is difficult to say that this is adequately implemented. According to the results of the research, sustainability activities in travel agencies are not sufficiently implemented due to insufficient legal regulations, economic barriers, market (ing) barriers, supplier-related barriers, tourist region and customer related barriers. Reducing the factors that prevent travel agencies from turning towards sustainability activities is important for the promotion of sustainability initiatives. In this context, it has been determined in the research that, thanks to the reduction of obstacles, travel agencies will provide advantages from the sustainability process to obtain market(ing) opportunities, economic opportunities and opportunities to improve the organizational structure.