



Investigation of Attitudes of Local People on Rural Tourism: The Case of Balıkesir

Kaan BATMAS^a Hasret ULUSOY YILDIRIM^b Özlem KÖROĞLU^c

^a (kaanbatmas@gmail.com)

^b Balıkesir Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi, Balıkesir / Türkiye. (hasretulusoy@balikesir.edu.tr)

^c Balıkesir Üniversitesi, Turizm Fakültesi, Balıkesir / Türkiye. (okoroglu@balikesir.edu.tr)

Extensive Summary

Economic, social and technological developments in the world have also affected the tourism sector (Aydın, 2012, p.39; Bozok and Kahraman, 2015, p.8), have established a ground for the emergence of tourism types that are alternative to coastal/sea tourism (Soykan, 1999, p.1). Tourism activities such as congress tourism, adventure tourism, sports tourism and cultural tourism, which are excluded from mass tourism activities, are called alternative tourism types (Yılmaz, 2018, p.3). Rural tourism emerges as an alternative tourism type that takes place outside of urban areas and interacts with tourists and local people (Denk and Mil, 2016, p.1). Changing the tourist profile and increasing environmental awareness have contributed to the development of rural tourism (Avcıkurt and Köroğlu, 2011, p.61).

The purpose of this study is to determine the rural tourism attitudes of the local people of Balıkesir and to provide suggestions for the studies to be carried out in this direction. Balıkesir province has both Marmara and Aegean coasts. It has a geographic location, easily access from three of the most crowded four city in Turkey such as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa. Rural tourism opportunities are among the reasons for being chosen Balıkesir as field of study. Balıkesir province, which has more than nine hundred villages, is rich in rural tourism potential. With the contributions of local administrations, tourism academics and local people, it is estimated that Balıkesir will be able to evaluate the rural tourism potential of the city in time. It is thought that knowing the local people's attitudes towards rural tourism in Balıkesir will contribute to the literature and will also be useful in the formulation of tourism policies to

be implemented. In the related literature, it has not been encountered, which local people's of Balıkesir attitudes towards rural tourism are determined. From this point of view, It is thought that the study will be able to contribute to the related literature.

According to 2017 data of the Address Based Population Registration System, the universe of the study is 1,204,824 people. 400 people have participated in the study, which the data was obtained through the survey technique. However, it was determined that all of the questions were not answered or more than one option was selected and 28 questionnaires were not evaluated. Thus, 372 participants have constituted the sample of the study. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient was calculated as 0.804 for the adequacy of the sample size. The scale created by Teye, Sönmez and Sirakaya (2002) and Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) was adapted to Turkish by Eren and Aypek (2012). In addition to this scale, the scale used in the study was created by blending and reinterpreting the variables in the scale used by Ertuna et al. (2012). There are a total of 15 expressions on the five-point Likert scale, 12 positive and three negative. Cronbach's Alpha value calculated for the reliability of the scale is 0.848.

When the findings are examined, it is seen that half of the participants themselves or their relatives are in relation with tourism in the form of training in tourism or employment in the tourism business. 65.9% of the participants stated that they have not participated in any rural tourism activities before. During the implementation of the survey, the majority of the individuals engaged in rural tourism activities stated that they visited Manyas Bird Paradise within the scope of rural tourism activities. In addition, 45.5% of the participants stated that they had not have enough information about rural tourism. Only 13% of the participants think that rural tourism is well known in Balıkesir. In the light of the data obtained, the most popular statement was *"I would like to increase the rural tourism investments in Balıkesir"*, which they most often choose *"I strongly agree"*. The statement that the participants attended the least was *"Rural tourism activities cause deterioration of the village culture"*.

In the light of the data obtained, it is concluded that the local people of Balıkesir province have a positive attitude towards rural tourism. Local people regard rural tourism as a source of earnings for themselves and support rural tourism investments to be made in Balıkesir. In addition, it is concluded that the people of Balıkesir province are eager to communicate with tourists and exchange culture. The results of the research show that the local people of Balıkesir province are indecisive whether the travelers who will come to their cities in order to engage in rural tourism activities, cause the environmental pollution or not. In addition, the participants have stated that some negative situations, especially environmental pollution,

originated from domestic travelers. Considering that people's attitudes towards rural tourism may change depending on various events over time, similar studies are recommended to be carried out at certain periods and intervals. It is recommended that similar studies are carried out in different regions with rural tourism potential. The continuity of these attitudes can be ensured by investigating the reasons of the positive attitude of the local people towards rural tourism.