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ECOTOURISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF TOURIST GUIDES: A STUDY ON PERCEPTION, RESPONSIBILITY AND ROLES

Gül ERKOL BAYRAM^a

^aSinop Üniversitesi, Turizm İşletmeciliği ve Otelcilik Yüksekokulu, Sinop, Türkiye (gulerkol@windowslive.com)

EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Ecotourism has become an increasingly important segment of World's tourism industry and is regarded by many as having the potential to foster the sustainable development and use of natural resources (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 1999; Dowling & Charters, 2000). Activities associated with this form of tourism typically occur in remote and fragile environments, though they are becoming increasingly common in more urban area. Regardless of the setting, however, visitors engaging in ecotourism experiences are generally accompanied by a tour guide. Indeed, Lindberg, Epler-Wood and Engelbrum (1998) suggest that guides are the heart and soul of the ecotourism industry. Ecotour guides have a vital role to play in fostering positive visitor attitudes towards protection and conservation of such environments. In this regard, their environmental knowledge, communication and interpretation skills are critical in facilitating the development of visitor knowledge, attitudes and behaviour as well as in enhancing visitor enjoyment and satisfaction (Ballantyne, Crabtree, Ham, Hughes & Weiler, 2000).

Literature Review

Ecotourism is the environmental travel and visit to the natural areas for the purpose of contributing to the socio-economic progression of the local people and increasing the protection with minimum visitor effect, to accompany each of the present and past cultural characteristics, and to evaluate and entertain nature. Erdogan and Yagci (2002: 23) stated that ecotourism is based on the relationship between the conservation of natural areas and the provision of an economic input in parallel. It is worthwhile to emphasize that the concept of ecotourism is the direction that supports the development and rural development with the economic input that provides sustainable development and provides sustainable development. Ecotourism with its most general definition; It can be defined as a type of tourism which is evaluated within the scope of protected area concept and supports sustainable development, considering the wishes and expectations of future generations, and it aims to progress with today's wishes.

Tourist guides are one of the job groups who help their guests during the tour, convey their cultural and historical background and make sense of them, strengthen the communication by building bridges between local people and tourists, develop an awareness of conservation awareness, develop a positive image and provide revisits. In a tour organized by a travel agency, tour guides do not only translate to the guests the language they are connected to, who are with them until the end of the tour and who are interested in them, but also help the tourists to learn about the history and culture of the region visited, the professional group (Erkol Bayram, 2016: 115). Considering the relationship between ecotour and tourist guide; it is seen that this was a new concept. It is known that it is a concept which is developed with the birth of ecotourism and not frequently used in the tourism

system. Ecotour guide; It is called the person who emphasizes the importance of natural resources and tries to minimize the negative effects of tourism, transfer the resources to the next generations by sustaining the sustainability of the resources and help to develop this awareness in the daily lives of the tourists (Black et al., 2001; cited in Tetik, 2012: 8).

Methodology

The main purpose of the research is to determine the professional tourist guides' attitudes towards ecotourism and their duties and responsibilities related to ecotourism during the tour. Another aim of the study is to determine the differences in ecotourism and ecotourist attitudes, duties and responsibilities depending on the demographic data of the tourist guides. The questionnaires used in this study have been applied to the Professional tour guides. Research analyzes were conducted on 254 questionnaires. The intentional sampling method was used to determine the sample. The questionnaire consists of three parts. In the first part, demographic questions were created to obtain the demographic data of the participants; in the second part, "The New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale developed by Avolio, Jackson (2007); in the third part; "Perceptions of their roles on ecotour" was developed in 2001 by Ballantyne and Hughes.

Findings

66.5% were married, 57.9% were married, 83.5% were pre-graduate and undergraduate, and 40.9% were graduates with a Bachelor's Degree (24.4%). The average of the Natural Environment Expressions is 4.20; With an average of the highest average of 5,44 on this scale, " people should live in harmony with it to save nature The lowest mean is People are created to rule the rest of nature. One of the sub-factors of the Role and Responsibilities of Tourist Guides in Nature Tours 'scale; the average of expressions about expression content is 4,29; the highest average expression on this scale is 'Avoiding racist and sexist discourses with 4,65. The lowest mean is; Providing alternative information to the unanswered questions of the guests .One of the sub-factors of the Role and Responsibilities of Tourist Guides in Nature Tours 'scale; The average of Expressions for Visitor Awareness / Sensitivity is 4.34.the highest average of this scale is Understanding and Speaking at Average Speed with an average of 4.60. The lowest average is expressed Developing a Guest-to-Guest Shape 'with an average of 3.97. One of the sub-factors of the Role and Responsibilities of Tourist Guides in Nature Tours 'scale; the average of the Phrases for Minimum Effect Techniques is 4,23; with the highest average score of 4.55 on this scale is Encouraging the natural environment to be protected and valued by the guests. The lowest mean is 3.23, which means minimizing the natural effects of wildlife. One of the sub-factors of the Role and Responsibilities of Tourist Guides in Nature Tours 'scale; Using the Interpretation Techniques Meanings are 4, 03 with " To ensure that guests are included in activities and events taking place. The lowest mean is 3.51 with " Model, drawing and figures. As a result of the T-test, a statistically significant difference was found between the variables of gender and mode of work and negative social effects sub factor. Based on this result, male guides believe that visitors are more effective in developing awareness of nature than women guides. The attitude of the self-employed guides towards the natural environment is more positive. In terms of minimum impact techniques; while the average of the self-directed guides is 4.27; the average of the guides working in the agency is 4,10. Based on this result; independent working guides; It shows that tourists have more effect on their attitudes towards natural environment compared to the guides working in the agency.

The relationship between the attitudes towards the natural environment and the sub-factors related to the duties and responsibilities of the tourist guides in ecotour were investigated and positive directional linear relations were determined. According to the results of the analysis, a one-unit increase in the sub-factor of expression, the attitudes towards the natural environment; Visitor Awareness / Sensitivity A factor increase occurred in the sub-factor, Attitudes towards Natural Environment was 0.293; In the Minimum Effectiveness Techniques, a one-unit increase occurred in the sub-factor; One unit increase in the sub-factor of Using Interpretation Techniques increases the Attitudes towards Natural Environment by 0.20. Briefly, it can be said that as long as the Tour Guides have their responsibilities and roles in Ecotour, positive attitudes towards the natural environment are formed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In the results of the research, it is seen that the Tourist Guides' attitudes towards nature are above average. But at this point, as a role model for the protection of nature, the guides may be more sensitive. In this context, this guidance can be given to potential guide candidates in formal and non-formal education and can be reinforced by courses. Within the scope of the research, the responsibility and roles of tourist guides were examined. These responsibilities and roles are divided into four sub-headings. According to the research results; The average of tourist guides' responses to these sub-factors is high. It is very necessary for the guides to realize their tours with this awareness and sensitivity. The continuity of this sensitivity and the adoption of all guides have been identified as significant relationships between the attitude towards the Natural Environment and the roles and the role of the Guidelines in nature tours. Sensitive attitudes of the Tourist Guides towards natural and environmental factors will affect their way of expression in their tours, their ability to direct, interpret and interpret visitors; Various specialization programs and trainings can be arranged to allow them to be remembered as their unique and unique guide. In this context, enhancing the awareness of the professions and the guidance candidates 'candidates' responsibilities and requirements with the ecotourism approach will positively affect their attitudes towards the natural environment.