



Journal of Recreation and Tourism Research

Journal home page: www.jrtr.org
ISSN:2148-5321

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR CITTASLOW: THE CASE STUDY OF SAKARYA-TARAKLI

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EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

“Cittaslow” and “Sustainable Tourism” subjects are discussed in the case study of Sakarya-Taraklı in this article, as it’s accepted as one of the best application examples on reaching the target of “Sustainable Tourism Development”. Respectively, first of all the position of tourism sector today, sustainable development and sustainable tourism development concepts and secondly cittaslow projects are examined in this context.

In the wake of tourism activities occurred worldwide in 2015; international tourist arrivals was 1,186 billion people, domestic tourism travels was 6 billion people and international tourism revenues was 1,260 trillion US Dollars. With a direct and indirect stimulated revenue effect %10 of the World’s Gross Domestic Product consisted from tourism revenues and 1 of 11 employments occurred in tourism sector. According to these data, it’s obvious that tourism sector has uttermost importance on world economy and development. However, the magnitude of tourism sector on world economy became an element of oppression towards natural habitat. We may specify these tourism borne oppressions as environmental pollution, destruction of biological diversity, loss of aquatic resources, air and noise pollution etc.

To proceed with tourism activities hence economic development, environmental resources are needed and tourism-environment ties have the utmost vital importance. At this point, “Sustainability” and “Development” concepts become prominent. These concepts take part as interrelated and multi-dimensional concepts on literature generated by scientific disciplines different from each other such as economy, environment, agriculture, and tourism and etc. Ultimately these concepts were merged in scientific literature and accepted as “Sustainable Development”.

When we emphasize the “Sustainable Tourism”, we encounter a definition by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO): “*Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*”. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments.

One of the best application examples on reaching the sustainable tourism development target is the Cittaslow project, and movement. The term “Cittaslow” formed from “Citta” (City, in Italian) and “Slow” words. And in tourism literature, it’s sometimes referred as Slow City.

The “Slow City” movement begun with the resistance and protest against a fast food restaurant which was opened at the Spanish Steps area in Rome in 1986. It was protested because the architectural aesthetics of the square was going to be damaged and as the fast food concept was abhorrent to Italians, as eating in Italian culture is not and action made in a fast and hasty nature. Consequently, “Slow food” movement was born.

The Cittaslow movement was officialized in 1999 Chianti-Greve, Italy. The first manifesto pointed out that; “Although globalization provides convenience on communication, knowledge and experience sharing among people, it suppresses diversity and individuality, and therefore it leads to detrimental effects such as standardization and communization of people. The movement which evaluates these outcomes as detrimental, indicates that local and authentic values shall be protected and developed to prevent the negative effects of globalization.

Accordingly, the cities which participate to this movement are expected to protect their own traditions; historical identities; food cultures; and to determine their own strengths/ weaknesses and to form strategies on protecting and developing their own local authenticity within the bounds of possibility. Cities which are partaking or candidate are expected to perform %50 percent of the 71 sub-criteria related with different main criteria (supporting environment, infrastructure, technology, hospitality, awareness and slow food projects).

Today, 182 cities from 28 countries, and 11 cities from Turkey are included in the Slow City Movement. Taraklı County, which this article refers, was declared as a Cittaslow in 2011. At same time, Taraklı County is declared as an EDEN (European Destination of Excellence) within the framework of the theme; “Accessible Tourism” at the “Outstanding Destinations of Europe” contest by the European Commission in 2013. The purpose of the research in this manner; is to determine the importance of economic and cultural aspects of the sustainable tourism for Sakarya-Taraklı.

Research Method is designated as; Forming content via Qualitative Content Analysis Design which is one of the “Qualitative Design” types (source/literature review) and gathering qualitative data via Qualitative Field Research (observation) and data gathering by Descriptive/Depictive Research Design (survey) which is amongst the types of Quantitative Design.

With respect to the outcomes of the research; effective measures to prevent the destruction of historical and cultural assets and economic development projects have vital importance for sustainable tourism development in Sakarya-Taraklı.