

Sustainable Strategies for Destination Management

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Abstract: Sustainability becomes a primary concern for international destinations. The aim of this research is to analyse the development of a destination and its sustainability in terms of economic sustainability. For the purpose of this research, initially the knowledge and research on sustainability in the context of tourism with a focus on economical dimension is discussed. Further, the importance of sustainability for destinations is explained. This is followed by a discussion on Turkey in terms of economic sustainability. As such a SWOT analysis is conducted for Turkey. Therefore, it is intended to draw a roadmap for tourism planners operating in this country for a better understanding of the concept of sustainability for their success. Finally, recommendations are drawn on the wellbeing and sustainability of the destinations in the conclusion.

Keywords: SDM; Economic Sustainability; Destination Management Organization

JEL Classification: M10

1. Introduction

Since, tourism has been increasingly important for destinations due to its economic and social contributions, providing its sustainability becomes a primary issue for both the decision makers and the principals. This concern stemmed from the industry's rapid growth and development in the course of last decade. However, the rapid growth experienced in the industry resulted in a fierce competition among the destinations. Unfortunately the interest in the destinations to develop their tourism industry resulted in unplanned and unhealthy further unsustainable approaches in development. This problem can be solved by educating the local authorities, entrepreneurs, civil institutions and the public. By doing so, a general understanding of tourism and sustainability together can be created.

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2. Sustainability

The original definition of sustainable development was provided by the Brundtland Commission, in *Our Common Future* as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). The concept of sustainability clearly covers the environment, people and economic systems. There are problems in tourism such as spread of diseases, pollution, cultural deterioration, opportunity cost, dependency on other countries, regional inflation, big seasonal changes in demand, tendency for importing foreign goods and lack of specialized people in tourism. Those problems are in general cultural, social and environmental. In the development of tourism there are new tourism approaches. Ecotourism, community-based tourism, ethical tourism, pro-poor tourism and sustainable tourism are some of those new approaches in order to solve the problems. Sustainability which is set forth to solve some of these problems is explained as a notion that at its most basic encapsulates the growing concern for the environment and natural resources, though sustainability has also had increasing resonance in social and economic issues (Mowforth&Munt 2003). This concern is stemming from the necessities which are the outcomes of rapid growth in the world tourism market.

The environmental pollution compels both the community and the market to organize themselves according to environmental issues. Especially since the new millennia sustainable architecture and sustainable energy sources are in demand. In order to consume less and to endure more, sustainable materials and strategies are gathered up. Sustainability is showing itself in different spheres of life. From the perspective of tourism, the issue of sustainability has become a necessity. Tourism is taking into account sustainable plans and developments. With ongoing concern for the environment in general, tourism has to be able to keep alive the destinations. Consuming behavior is included in tourism activities but it is possible to preserve while consuming. The understanding of sustainability is what brings this preserving mentality to touristic activities.

The discussion over environment, development and sustainability are under debate in contemporary tourism. The concept of sustainability is open to different interpretations. Activists and communities are after saving the environment while sustainability becomes for some corporations an issue of selling their products with promoting their concern for the environment (Mowforth&Munt 2003). For instance one of the leading German tourism company TUI wouldn't work with the companies which aren't sustainable in their applications. With an inclination towards a continuous, prosperous tourism in general, the future of the world, its sources and human-made sources have to be taken care of. Re-cycling, re-use and preserving natural sources must be emphasized for the implantation of sustainability. The impact of tourism, consumer behavior, tourism demand and its

future have an impact on the future of both tourism and the destination hence have an indirect effect on tourists and the local residents.

It is accepted that the motivations for touristic activities are diverse. Moreover it is impossible to predict exactly the tourism demand and its future although tourist psychology and motivations are well analyzed. We can only determine the possible boundaries but cannot predict what will happen within those boundaries. Nevertheless tourist demand and behavior is not predictable, their touristic activity has impact on environment. Environmental Assessment (EA) which is in CEQ-NEPA Regulation seeks to combine different data resources to understand how tourism development affects environment. Within the impacts of tourism, social, cultural and environmental ones are of concern for the sustainability approaches. Those impacts indicate the problematic outcomes of tourism which will abolish with sustainability procedures. The principles of sustainable tourism are the outcomes of tourism considerations and its effect in general.

In the principles of sustainable tourism, we can mention ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability. Ecological sustainability which aims to minimize the effect of tourist activities to environment, ecotourism is a related concept and means a tourism designed to take advantage of a region's natural attractions while providing income to local residents and leaving the region little changed from its pre-tourism conditions (Reece 2010). Social responsibilities towards environment in general, societies in specific are fulfilled. The concern of sustainable development and that of ecotourism are showing resemblance. In that sense it is useful to keep in mind what ecotourism is and how can we evaluate it. Social sustainability is a vital aspect in the sense that it is about the link between host community and the tourists. It is an issue whether the host communities are capable of managing the touristic activities in a long run. Sustainability is also applicable to abstract notions such as culture. The cultures of the touristic destinations are in need of sustaining their own culture. This is an ideological issue and has been part of sustainability in general. Cultural values of the tourism destinations have to be preserved. Another words it is deteriorating to introduce cultural values of the destinations as touristic objects only. Although, culture is a dynamic issue and is open to interactive changes, preserving cultural values are as crucial as keeping the environment clean and safe. Natural beauties and historical values need to be well presented and visited without making degrading like a consumable object.

Economic Sustainability

Sustainability can only be successful if it takes full account of the nature in general, the social life, economic activities, natural resources, human made remnants in specific. Without preserving every aspect of nature, none of them will stay sustainable. Economic aspect clearly seen in UNWTO's sustainable tourism

definition: "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" (UNWTO, 2014). There is a growing global concern about the ability of the earth's environment and resources to sustain the continued expansion of economic activity, including tourism (Page 2013). This concern begins to be dominant with the observed effects of climate changes. The economic necessities have also forced decision-makers to encourage tourism development without considering principles of development and sustainable development (Tosun, 2001). It is not only an ideological action but it is economically profitable and necessary to take into account sustainable approaches.

Economic sustainability comes from the fact that touristic activity is an economic activity in many ways. Tourists add value, spend time pleasantly and contribute to their cultural and personal developments and at the same time engage in economic activity. For the dwellers and workers in the destination, this activity is a way of economic gain. With sustainable development of the destinations, their tourism economy will develop and quality of life (QOL) of the visitors and the host community will increase accordingly. If this process of growing is done with seeking direct gains and without thinking the future of the destinations, economic development eventually will be terminated. The consequences can be irreversible. Misuse of the natural resources will come to a point of exhaustion.

The tourism destinations with all its natural resources and cultural heritages have also an economic value. Indeed, economic sustainability is about finding possible answers to the question; how can we meet the *economic* needs of the present without diminishing *economic* opportunities of the future (Ikerd, 2012). Suppliers, host, government regulations, competition are in need of handling with having sustainability in mind. Stakeholders should begin their efforts by identifying their target consumers, or those segments of the population who are most likely to be profitably served (Reece, 2010). If a destination aims to see itself as a tourism destination and wants to gain economic advantages, it needs to define itself as a destination and needs to develop its tourism activities with the idea of sustainability in mind. If considering a long term economic advantages, this principle is vital. Policies and mindsets need to be synchronized, have to be sustainable at first. This issue is not just a new trend or a matter of taste likewise a new economic market, but it is a philosophical concept that needs to be placed in our lives. Government and other policy-makers are responsible for deciding and specifying the resources and touristic activities.

Tourist satisfaction is predominantly related with the condition of destinations. Tourist may visit a place several times and immediately perceive positive and/or negative changes. When s(he) don't get pleased with his/her experiences s(he) will not prefer to come back. Sustainability is very crucial for keeping the destination as it is without preventing positive development like quality of life (QOL) of the

related parties. In planning phase of the destinations it is essential to keep tourists' profile in mind. For the sake of determining the direction of the touristic activities, the resources of the destinations and the tourist profile have to be well known.

Sustainability has to be a mindset, basic understanding and business philosophy in order to create a sustainable sphere. Economic sustainability enables destinations to provide tourists' need. This general view of economic sustainability is closely related with destination management. This management represents a tourism strategy which deals with the destination with aiming a long enduring improvement.

3. Strategic Destination Management Organizations

Destination management organization (DMO) is the outcome of an aim to have a high market share within the worldwide tourism. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) has three responsibilities; first of all it encourages groups to hold meetings, conventions, and trade shows in the city or area it represents. Secondly, it assists those groups with their meetings and meeting preparations. Last but not least it encourages tourists to visit and enjoy historical, cultural, and recreational opportunities that the destination offers (Fenich 2012). Strategic and operational management, resource endowment, and providing transparent information about performance all significantly influence the success of DMOs (Volgger & Pechlaner 2013). DMOs success is not directly affected from mediatic sources.

DMOs are working for increasing the flow of tourists to their specific destination. Tourism is a competitive area, it needs a fruitful management. Destination Management Organizations (DMO) have all the necessary information about the defined destination and by integrating and coordinating all the related accommodation, logistic services, entertainment, F & B establishment and technical support, not only support and manage to build up the image and brand of the destination but also help to promote and communicate to the target groups and consumers (Tavmergen & Aksakal, 2004). Their target is promoting a sustainable destination competition; sustainability plays a role in their aim.

In general DMO's have a check-list which is for building a successful tourism management (GACB, 2005). DMOs must conduct a visitor-demand study. This study should aim to find out about tourists' identity and their expectations & preferences. The purpose of their trip, length of stay and touristic activities should be observed. The reason of touristic visits, the preferable places for the tourists and the resources of the destination are identified. In relation with these points the destination's attractiveness will be elaborated. A SWOT analysis will be a helpful tool for strategic decisions. Being a sustainable and an eco-friendly community and

the image of that community are subjects of DMOs. Developing and implementing destination marketing plan will involve making researches about the destination resources, identifying visitor segments, determining responsibilities and tourism economy and hiring an expert to make market research.

Sustainable development is the most prominent discourse that aims at reconciling economic development with the rising needs of environmental protection (Mori, 2013). There are at least four ways to interpret tourism in the context of sustainable development: a sectoral view-point such as economic sustainability of tourism; an ecological viewpoint emphasizing the need for ecologically sustainable tourism; a viewpoint of the long-term viability of tourism, recognizing the competitiveness of destinations; and a viewpoint accepting tourism as part of a strategy for sustainable development throughout the physical and human environments (Coccosis, 1996). For those interpretations of tourism, a SWOT analysis will be a helpful study tool.

4. Method

The study is to reveal the success story of Turkey on the basis of secondary data. Further, a SWOT analysis is conducted for Turkey. As a part of the strategic planning to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats before constitute a formulation of a strategy (Roth and Washburn, 1999). In this study I aim to develop strategies for Turkey which has rapid improvement as a tourism destination.

5. SWOT Analysis

Turkey's tourism receipts reached to 32.3 billion USD by 2013 (TUIK, 2014). Tourism is a significant part of Turkey's economy, particularly in İstanbul.

According to the Global Destination Index, İstanbul ranks as the sixth most popular destination in the world and became European Capital of Culture in 2010. It is highly possible for a place like İstanbul to have scattered attraction places. Each of these destinations has to be evaluated separately. In short, destination places are needed to be organized economically according to their touristic activity and capacity.

Table 1. Country's Strength as a Sustainable Tourism Destination

• Growth rate of general tourism industry in Turkey, which is usually the double of the annual global figures.
• Logistically speaking easy accessible country.
• International price competitiveness
• Convenient accessibility within the country through the international transportation network.
• Numerous natural resources and existence of cultural, natural, historical, archaeological, religious and commercial attractions.
• Growing level of sustainable tourism awareness within the country.
• Positive consumer perception of country in travel market.
• Potential for growth and differentiation of sustainable tourism
• Increasing sustainable tourism investments and developments throughout the country.
• Countries improved image among organizations and associations in international arena as a result of string of successful events (e.g., Eurovision Song Contest, Formula 1 etc.)
• Greater affordability and value for money compared with its competitors.
• Local efforts that promote the country in the world market.

Table 2. Country's Weaknesses as a Sustainable Tourism Destination

• Insufficient budget for promoting and marketing Turkey as a sustainable destination.
• Excessive bureaucracy and red tape implemented by many Turkish organizations.
• Insufficient crisis management, disaster mitigation plans.
• insufficient coordination among relevant bodies.
• Shortage of skilled human resources specific to sustainable DMO.
• Negative images of Turkey in the media link to negative events.
• Inadequate application of sustainable tourism management principles
• Low price for tourism packages and services, leading to an image as a cheap destination (Bulu, 2001). Doesn't fit in well with goals to achieve sustainable tourism management.
• Lack of creative and tailor-made strategies for Turkey
• Lack of coordination, communication among different sub-sectors
• Environmental degradation and pollution affecting natural resources

Table 3. Potential Opportunities for Turkey related to Sustainable Destination Management

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in global sustainable destination management and the demand for its services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of sustainable destination management in the world market.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics and researchers that indicate the demand for leisure travel services are likely to remain stable despite turbulent economies and global crisis (Yesawich, 2008). Especially if you are planning with social responsibilities in mind.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing demographic and psychographic profiles of sustainable destination management market and sustainable destination management trends that are suitable for Turkey's sustainability product.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding economic relations between Turkey and other countries as result of countries greater integration into the global economy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing international demands for trips to Turkey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of new source and destination market as a result of European enlargement and Turkey's role in these developments (Turkey is the candidate of European Union and is part of European Customs Union.)

Table 4. Potential Threats for Turkey related to Sustainable Destination Management

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing competition in the Sustainable Destination Management (SDM)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global financial crisis which affects businesses to cut down travel costs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sophisticated customer expectations (e.g., top quality, luxury, comfort but at the same time highly sustainable expectations).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over dependence on technology leading to the demolish sustainable services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing supply of sustainable SDM around the world.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in more competitive offers with lower price, driving prices down
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing regional competition in SDM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental degradation, pollution, their effects on tourist attractions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing political clashes and wars in the bordering regions and political instability in Turkey.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in natural and man-caused disaster ranging from earthquakes, tsunamis, potential pandemics of infectious diseases (e.g., avian flu, terrorists attacks, coal mine workers tragedy).

Several strategies are suggested below, taking into consideration Turkey's strength in SDM as well as opportunities that need to be taken advantage of. This method is adapted from a strategic audit conducted for Club Med (School of Business and Public Management, The George Washington University 1997).

Table 5. Strategies involving strength and opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of new strategic marketing tools to appeal to new markets.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding existing markets and penetrating new markets by using the differential advantages of Turkey's SDM.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a suitable method for SDM in Turkey in order to produce a coherent package. It is also possible to develop new partnership with other nearby destinations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive new market segments by using existing products, developing a well trained work force, using product differentiation and introducing new products via appealing promotional strategies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Turkey's cultural and historical attractions to develop a unique image.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressing new products features such as new technologically complete sustainable facilities in promotional messages.

Table 6. Strategies involving weaknesses and opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming any negative aspects of Turkey's image and eliminating inconsistent marketing message by focusing on opportunities link to the growing SDM.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperating with international environmental groups and implementing training to improve environmental sensitivity to overcome environmental problems.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving levels of quality and technology of current facilities (e.g., marinas) and developing new facilities & need infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing red tape and increasing the speed with which administrative procedures are undertaken.

Table 7. Strategies involving strengths and threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the new management techniques, unique products, strategies and new partnership to compete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building loyalty among SDM for Turkey by focusing on the countries differential advantage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing all the elements of modern services marketing to offer a variety of SDM to tourists.

Table 8. Strategies involving weakness and threats

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming the negative image associated with the region (as a result of political instability, high frequency of natural and man-cause disasters) by using cutting edge crisis, management tools and developing a stable disaster preparedness plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing fresh promotional campaigns on an ongoing basis to improve Turkey's sustainable destination image above its competitors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping up-to-date on professional and academic developments relevant to SDM via trade and scientific publications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully utilizing all elements (not just the prices) of the marketing mix to promote and market Turkey as a SDM, and especially focusing on sustainable quality.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing sustainable management techniques to overcome environmental problems.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Turkey has been successful in establishing itself as a destination for SSS (sea, sun, sand) tourism, but its share of SDM doesn't reflect the same level of success. However, although Turkey's tourism sector is in the development stage, it promises to have a significant positive impact on the economy. It is important to note, however, the future prospects of SDM in Turkey depend on a range of internal and external influences, some of which are country-specific, such as geographic location and regional affiliation, while others are more generic. Several recommendations are made below which can help to ensure the successful SDM for Turkey. In order to effectively penetrate the SDM, Turkey needs to continue to develop the infrastructure. It must also upgrade the standard of existing infrastructure and facilities. Turkey needs to promote its unique cultural and historic attractions as part of SDM to add, appeal and value its offer and to successfully compete in the market. It must also continue to make significant marketing and promotion efforts for SDM. New and creative marketing and SDM strategies should be implemented in order to take advantage of opportunities in SDM, while overcoming potential threats. For example, in its promotional and sales efforts Turkey should stress its differential advantages over its competitors referred to its numerous and unique untouched natural, cultural, historical and commercial assets. In this context, considering the variety of attractions that Turkey offers visitors, it needs to promote special tours to its activities, not only to enrich its SDM but also participants' experiences. A somewhat related matter, CRM and one to one marketing efforts also have to target particularly niche markets through individual attention to repeat visitors, thereby building brand loyalty.

Throughout all of Turkey's SDM efforts, the importance of maintaining the highest standards of quality needs to a high priority. The application of quality management techniques is also important to a company the sectors efforts to assure repeat visitation and brand loyalty. It is essential for Turkey to identify and document quality standards and implement continuous improvement strategies to its service standards for more effective competition, particularly given the fact that its competitors include numerous developed SDM around the world.

Finally it is strongly recommended for Turkey to develop disaster preparedness and crisis management plans, in order to be equipped to overcome potential threats to the growing SDM.

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