

Chapter 16

Sustainability Tourism and Socio–Economic Development

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to assess sustainable tourism theoretically and practically in a systematic point of view and to provide guidance for future plans and policies related to sustainable tourism. In accordance with this purpose, firstly, the concepts of sustainability, sustainable tourism, and socio-economic development have been discussed, and secondly, the purpose, the principles, and the tools of sustainable tourism were evaluated. Within the scope of sustainable tourism, carrying capacity, environmental impact assessment, and ecological footprint phenomenon were examined.

INTRODUCTION

All the ecological-cultural-social and environmental values of the world, in which we live today, are a common heritage of the whole humanity. It is a common responsibility of the whole humanity to improve and transfer this heritage. With the industrial revolution, our world has dealt with some serious environmental and climate challenges. Even though this situation may seem highly dreadful, it is possible to reverse these negative tendencies and trends (Bruyninckx, 2019). Since our economies depend on fossil fuels and land cultivation practices, the greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere increases; and this harms both the climate and the environment, which makes it difficult to pass these values on to the future generations. Our current economies have destroyed habitats and have caused many species to become extinct. Hence, the diversity in life has been lost at an unsustainable rate. Studies have shown that our economies are not sustainable (Kılıç, 2012). Our production models generate high amounts of waste. As a result, the ecology and the environment are damaged in an irreversible way. Moreover, the benefits of economic growth are unfortunately not shared equally all around the world. Even in Europe, where the living standards are considerably above the average, there are communities living below the poverty threshold. Climate and environmental change affect these communities the most. As long as these

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current trends continue, the future generations will have to experience challenging tests regarding the climate and the environment (Bruyninckx, 2019). On the other hand, sustainability is an environmental reaction to the production models which cause extremely negative effects on the environment, climate and society. From this point of view, sustainable tourism is an approach which serves sustainable development and gives importance to ecology, environment and society. In this respect, sustainable tourism enables us to gain significant ecosystems back, minimise the negative effects and protect the ecological-environmental values we have in a powerful way. In sustainability understanding of tourism; economy, climate, environment and society are inseparable parts of a whole. In this understanding, ecology is not regarded as an element of economy. However, economy is a part of ecology and the sustainability of values which constitute a resource for tourism is the most crucial issue.

Tourism has an increasingly important effect on socio-economic development. The direct, indirect and induced impact of tourism is 8.9 trillion dollars for global GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2019 (Wttc, 2020). According to Yu (2012), tourism is an economic pillar which triggers greater impacts on GDP. The benefits of tourism should be shared among a wide range of stakeholders (tourists, residents, tourism businesses, culture, ecology etc.) (Heslinga et al., 2019). Thanks to the interconnectedness of tourism with other industries, everyone benefits from tourism (Yu, 2012). According to 2030 Roadmap of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), partnerships amongst the stakeholders should be strengthened and collaborations should be enhanced since sustainable tourism requires transparent - clear actions, monitoring appropriate communication tools and liability to the society. According to World Tourism Organization and United Nation Environment Programme, sustainable tourism is a kind of tourism, which fulfills the needs of tourists, visitors, residents, the environment and the industry by considering all of its available and future economic-social-environmental impacts. In the sustainability approach, which is characterized as the future of the industry, it is also possible to consider sustainable tourism as a nature-based tourism, ecotourism or rural tourism (Pan, et. al., 2018). Sustainable tourism is a paradigm in which environment, biological diversity, ecological processes and cultural integrity are preserved without degradation. In this approach, it is expected to minimise the negative impacts of tourism on environment and community while it is also expected to preserve cultural heritage and natural environment by enhancing the quality of life in the destination through an interaction of tourists and the local people. Sustainable tourism, which intends to protect biodiversity, ecological processes and environmental values, is a responsible tourism understanding. In this tourism understanding, it is aimed to contribute to the local economy by minimising the negative effects of tourism on environment and society, and to improve the quality of life of local people and visitors. Tourism is a significant development tool particularly for developing countries. Developing countries regard tourism as an economic policy tool and try to overcome economic difficulties with the help of tourism. Even though tourism is regarded as an economic development tool, it also has several negative impacts on the socio-cultural environment. It is possible to destroy ecological and environmental resources in an irreversible way and by this way it is impossible to make these resources pass on to the future generations. Therefore, countries have started to adopt sustainable tourism policies in order to be able to transfer the current ecological and environmental values to the future generations and to ensure the permanency of the impact of tourism on development. Thanks to the widespread conscious use of ecological, social and cultural values, it has been possible to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. On the other hand, sustainable tourism is seen as an element of balance in terms of providing the local residents with social advantage and protecting the environmental values. Accordingly, sustainable tourism is considered as an extension of sustainable development. One of the basic principles of sustainable tourism is to bring in

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