



Comparing Hedonism with Responsible Tourism Diversities*

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the importance and necessity of responsible tourism as a solution for problems arising from hedonic consumption and its negative impact on sustainability. Associated with the increasing production volumes of consumption goods in the market, hedonic consumption — a concept which involves consumers' use of products to fulfill fantasies and satisfy emotions — is directly linked to environmental pollution, destruction of limited natural resources, and loss of national values. Tourism is one of the sectors in which environmental, natural and social impacts of hedonic consumption unfold. Relying directly on nature and social environment, tourism has been losing its assets as a result of hedonic consumption. In this context, ecotourism — a mode of responsible tourism which advocates sustainable tourism — stands out as it does not disturb local lifestyles, while rural tourism can be considered as an alternative as it involves touristic operations held in villages and farmland which also conserve social life. Another alternative is cittaslow which protects local traditions and cuisines. Moreover, environmentally-conscious tourism offers certification programs which contribute to sustainability, awarding those businesses with best practices. Halal tourism, on the other hand, rejects wastefulness and places great importance on sustainable tourism with its respect to social life and religious beliefs.

Keywords

Hedonic consumption, Sustainable tourism, Responsible tourism, Environment, Halal tourism

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Introduction

Due to a number of factors such as increased income levels in the post-industrial revolution era which also gave birth to the concept of “spare time” have led to the trend of travelling. In addition to that; pursuit of discovery-adventure and reduced travelling times –thanks to breakthroughs in technology- also improved tendency towards tourism.

Offering a great economic potential, tourism found its deserved place in the economy following the 1950s. After the World War II, industrial stability was once again established and the liberalism movement gained momentum. Today’s developed Western states had believed that tourism was a great source of economic growth and development, and with the influence of liberalism, tourism as we know it today was born (Diamond, 1977: 539; Britton, 1982: 332; Copeland, 1991: 515; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999: 138; Hao, Var & Chon, 2003: 33).

Liberalism is highly related to private property which means a market system based on private enterprise and freedom and is divided into two both politically and economically. Economic liberalism is the ideology of capitalism and can be summed up with the expression “let [them/it] do and let [them/it] pass” (Şaylan, 2003: 47-48).

It is possible to see the wheels of liberalism turning in all the modern industries including tourism. The well-known quote by Adam Smith, i.e. “laissez faire, laissez passer, le monde va de lui même” (Let [them/it] do and let [them/it] pass, the world goes on by itself), is echoed in tourism in a way that tourists’ irresponsible behaviors have impaired the economic, social and natural environment.

With respect to the main virtue of liberalism, its famous slogan, “laissez-faire,” means that people in their economic activities, religious tendencies, ideas and culture should be free to do as they wish (Raico, 1990). In other words, liberalism emerged as a reaction to feudalism and against its irrational, individualistic, religious ideology (Akşin, 2000: 264).

As a result, religion, which has an impact on purchasing decisions such as traveling, staying in accommodation facilities and benefiting from food and beverage services, began to be ignored (Essoo & Dibb, 2004: 684; Soesilowati, 2011: 153; Demirel & Yaşarsoy, 2017: 34). This situation led to the emergence of the concept of hedonism and due to public resentment, now we know that “let (them/it) do” cannot be allowed. Hedonism is a behavior which cannot be explained as satisfying one’s needs, but it is a consumption behavior aimed at pleasure (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982: 92; Baudrillard, 2004: 94).

The growth of the tourism sector has led to environmental and social issues as hedonic consumers were catered for without caring or having to take responsibility

of natural, environmental or social issues and depletion. Considering these issues which emerged by the end of the 20th century and their economic importance, the “Brundtland Report” released by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). This itself offered a definition of the concept of Sustainable Development which then led to the emergence of the concept of Sustainable Tourism. Collin (2004) defined sustainability as activities meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Thus, tourism was reborn with an impetus against the destruction of the environment and natural resources with a hedonic approach which does not allow for the regeneration of the environment and natural resources. This revolutionary new mentality infused the phenomenon of tourism with sustainability and changing common practices that had emerged since the 1950s.

Although responsible tourism and sustainable tourism share a common purpose, responsible tourism requires individuals, organizations and businesses to be responsible for their actions. The reason behind this requirement is that each business expects the other involved parties to comply with the principles of sustainability (Zengin & Erkol, 2018: 371), so that all parties would stand off disruptive actions within sustainable activities.

The current study aimed to stress the importance and necessity of responsible tourism, which is necessary for sustainability, as a solution to problems caused as a result of hedonic experience.

Hedonic Consumption

The changes brought about by liberalism in the post-Industrial Revolution era have been felt in literally every aspect of life, and consumption is not an exception. The new system was built on production at every stage of development and both sale and consumption of anything what is produced. Today, the concept of consumption has become a social activity, a part of daily routine, rather than an attempt to satisfy needs. Consumers today are being conditioned by external stimuli to consume. Also there are several mental images of a product linked to them by the consumer. Such mental images guide them towards consumption activities which result in emotional pleasure (Ünal & Ceylan, 2008: 266). These activities fall under hedonic experiences and they are based on the mental image, fancy and emotional stimuli consumers associate with a product (Okado, 2005: 44).

Briefly, hedonism can be defined as the pursuit of pleasure. An ethical theory, hedonism defines things which give pleasure and deliver people from pain as good, and those which give pain as bad. In other words, hedonism can be explained as

the consumers' dedication to pleasure. Hedonic consumption, on the other hand, is defined as the pleasure taken from such dedication (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982: 92; Hopkinson & Pujari, 1999: 274; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002: 526; Altunışık & Çallı, 2004: 235). For a hedonic consumer, pleasure is the purpose of life and they often find themselves in a pursuit of pleasure in what they purchase.

In this context, hedonism can be approached from its philosophical and psychological aspects. From a philosophical point of view, the purpose of the consumer is to maximize pleasure. As a result, they work towards this goal throughout their lives. From a psychological point of view, consumers are conditioned by external stimuli to acquire the things they take pleasure in and they work towards these desires (Fromm, 1991: 19-20).

Accordingly, the main goal of a hedonic lifestyle is to ensure personal interests are fulfilled and to embrace personal desires. In other words, it involves worldly pleasures such as taste in food, sex, etc. Moreover, hedonic consumers tend to lack a belief in a Judgment Day, therefore they think they need to make the best of their lives.

Pleasure, an output of hedonism, allows for acts like vandalism, violence against women and children, same-sex relationships, bad habits such as gambling and drugs, and unacceptable practices such as eating live monkey brains under the guise of gastronomy.

Tourism was given an identity in the post-Industrial Revolution era by developed Western states; it was then introduced with liberalism and the relationship between humans and the subject of "tourism" was shaped based on the hedonic experience. This attitude paved the way for hedonist communities and nations (Yener, 2010: 43). As a result, limited natural resources and important values making up the social construct have been drained and undermined rapidly jeopardizing the future of tourism. In this context, responsible tourism practices have emerged as significant solutions so that we are to leave future generations the limited natural resources we enjoy now.

Responsible Tourism

A contemporary concept, responsible tourism was discussed for the first time at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) which took place in Cape Town, South Africa. This tourism approach looks out for the interests of both locals and tourists and is based on the notion of responsible practices in social, environmental and economic aspects of products (Zengin & Erkol, 2018: 369-370).

In this context, the purpose of responsible tourism is to generate greater economic benefits for local people, to involve local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes, to make positive contributions to the conservation of natural and

cultural heritage, to provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged, and to minimize negative economic, environmental and social impacts of hedonic consumption in touristic activities (UNWTO, 2002).

This mode of tourism has developed based on the needs, desires and expectations of tourists, just as it is the case in other modes of tourism. Among the expectations of this tourist segment we can mention about; respect for the local traditions, local culture, local behaviors, habits and lifestyle, adapting to this lifestyle and in doing so, adopting responsible behaviors as if it were their home. Thus, it has been made possible for people from different cultures to adapt to local cultures, which in turn offers an enriched product for tourism (Frey & George, 2010: 267; Zengin & Erkol, 2018: 371).

In this context, the following modes of responsible tourism help businesses increase their market popularity and create a brand: Ecotourism, Rural Tourism, Cittaslow, Environmentally-conscious Tourism and Halal Tourism (Zengin & Erkol, 2018: 372).

Ecotourism

Having a nature-oriented character, Ecotourism is known as a mode of tourism which is ideal for nature lovers and environmentally-conscious tourists. This mode of tourism uses natural and cultural resources from the perspective of sustainability and it consists of environmental, economic and social interactions (Weaver, 1999). Ecotourism is an environmentalist alternative to mass tourism in its understanding of nature and its respect to nature along with the pleasure it derives from nature (Erdoğan 2003).

Ecotourism is built on the principles of respect, responsibility, and sustainability. As part of this sense of responsibility, tourists prefer accommodation at local houses, they prefer local cuisine and camping in nature and these factors add value to this mode of tourism. All these aspects translate into tourists' adoption of and compliance with the local lifestyle without changing the environmental conditions. Thus, it is possible to contribute to local development without abusing the nature or the local people (Erdoğan, 2003; Polat & Önder, 2006: 54; Şahin, 2009: 73). In this respect, ecotourism differs from hedonic consumption with respect to the aforementioned principles and practices.

Rural Tourism

Even though rural tourism may be associated with meadows and prairies, there is no consensus on a single definition of this mode of tourism and thus, this mode of tourism has had many names, such as farm tourism, village tourism, highland tourism, agro tourism and ecotourism, and involves activities such as touristic visits to farms, horseback riding, trekking, etc. (Soykan, 1999: 68; Esengün et al., 2001; Aydın, 2012: 40).

In this context, it would be fair to say that rural tourism embraces rural culture, natural environment and agriculture. With accommodation options such as village houses, farm houses or chalets (Soykan, 2003: 2), tourists act with a sense of responsibility without disrupting local lifestyle while accommodating to the environmental conditions; an approach which is the total opposite of hedonic consumption.

Cittaslow

Cittaslow is a term coined using the Italian word “Citta” and the English word “Slow.” The Cittaslow movement emerged in the face of globalization with the aim of giving cities their identity back and to conserve their characteristics (Cittaslow, 2012). This mode of tourism aims to create a peaceful and clean environment, while conserving local traditions and cuisines (Sezgin & Ünüvar, 2011: 128); it differs from hedonic consumption with respect to these qualities.

Accordingly, Cittaslow aims for the creation of better living spaces which improves the living standards of the people. In other words, this mode of tourism conserves the historic heritage while using technology efficiently for this purpose (Uslu, 2009: 53; Cittaslow, 2012; Sırım, 2012:120).

Environmentally-conscious Tourism

Environmentally-conscious tourism involves conservation of environmental assets in a way that allow future generations to enjoy these them. Following the Industrial Revolution, globalization led to the destruction of natural resources which in turn devastated the ecological balance. As touristic activities depend highly on environmental assets, it is a must for the tourism sector to take the lead in environmental protection. In connection with these conditions, touristic businesses boasting an “Environmentally-conscious Facility” badge or certificate contribute to their marketing efforts while making it convenient for them to adopt a sense of responsible tourism (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2016; Zengin & Erkol, 2018: 381). Thus, this approach stands at odds with hedonic consumption behavior.

Halal Tourism

Halal Tourism is a mode of tourism in which accommodation activities and the needs involved are satisfied with respect to Islamic beliefs and rules (Arpacı & Batman, 2015: 186). The main purpose of this mode of tourism is to offer touristic services to Muslim tourists with a commitment to religious beliefs and rules (Büyüksalvarcı et al., 2016: 1058). In this respect, this mode of tourism can be categorized as a mode of responsible tourism which respects the beliefs of people.

Recently, Halal Tourism has attracted great attention on the international tourism market. According to research, the global tourism market has grown at an annual average of 3.8%, while the halal tourism market has grown at an annual average of 4.8% (DinarStandard & CrescentRating, 2012). The most important reason behind this is the fact that the number of Muslims, especially wealthy Muslims, has increased steadily (Çetin & Dinçer, 2016; Arpacı & Batman, 2015). Here, it would be fair to say that religion along with social, cultural, personal and psychological factors have influenced tourists' purchasing decisions (Köleoğlu, Erdil & Gezen, 2016: 364).

In Turkey, the first Muslim-friendly Hotels were established in 1996 in an attempt to serve the the needs of Muslim tourists. Furthermore, since categorization under "halal tourism" began in 2002, the number of such establishments serving pious tourists has drastically increased (Yeşiltaş, Cankül & Temizkan, 2012: 196; Pamukçu & Arpacı, 2015: 320). A retrospective look at tourism activities which have been developing since the 1950s shows that halal tourism was very late to enter the market. There are several reasons behind this fact, but the most important reason is that the Industrial Revolution had emerged in the Western states.

Average education and income levels have increased following the Industrial Revolution, the concept of 'spare time' was created, and traveling times have decreased thanks to technological breakthroughs (Kozak, Kozak, Kozak, 2014: 31). Having emerged as a result of the increased traveling activities, tourism has been shaped based on the beliefs and lifestyle of developed Western states.

Muslim states, on the other hand, entered the tourism picture much later than Western states (Pamukçu, 2017: 1). The reason behind this is the fact that Muslim states were not immediately able to take advantage of the developments brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Shaped by developed Western states, tourism activities were at odds with Islamic beliefs, therefore the awareness around tourism was not created in Muslim states for a long time. Defined as the sum of social, cultural, and financial events and relations arising from traveling from one point to another (Olalı & Timur, 1988), tourism has been under the influence of hedonic consumption coupled with liberalism which was imposed by Western states. As a result, tourism was associated with being under the influence, gambling, prostitution and endless consumption of worldly pleasures which led to a perception that the other activities were also not part of the concept of tourism.

As there is no end to hedonic consumption and it is now known that such behavior jeopardizes our future, Human being have taken an approach from sustainable tourism which resulted in the emergence of many modes of responsible tourism. Halal Tourism, on the other hand, has emerged as a mode of tourism which places

importance on environment, bans wastefulness, and values human health and social life (Sarı, 2017: 507).

Islam orders people to protect the environment, it bans wastefulness and consumables which may harm the human body while advising respect to the beliefs of people. Muhammad (s.a.a.w), the prophet of Islam, even advised in a hadith for the economical use of running water. In this respect, it is safe to conclude that Islam does not pose a threat to social life or the environment, on the contrary, it supports responsible tourism which benefits the environment and the locals (Batman, 2017: 32).

Tourism is commonly referred to as the sum of activities which take place during a trip to one destination and back (Samori et al., 2016: 132). The common Islamic practice of returning to where one comes from also resonates with the definition of tourism. Nevertheless, Islam orders believers to travel. In Islamic belief, if Muslim travelers acknowledge where they come from and pray to Allah, then this is considered a type of devotion and it is considered a good deed to travel the world Allah created, while seeing and assigning meaning to it, i.e. contemplation (Aydın, 1966: 201; Batman & Arpacı, 2016; Pamukçu, 2017: 26). Nevertheless, Muhammad (s.a.a.w), prophet of Islam, stated that “one should travel to gain health”.

In light of this information, it is clear that Islam promotes traveling and when this approach is considered as a mode of responsible tourism, it plays an important role in the protection of the environment, reduction of tourism-related waste, respect to religious beliefs and social life; altogether it is very important for the sustainability of touristic activities.

Conclusion

Mechanization and industrialization have taken over since the Industrial Revolution, especially with the emergence of hedonic consumption. This has led to depreciation of natural resources and corruption of the social construct. The resulting environmental threat has grown to prepare for the demise of the human existence (Başol, Gökalp, 1997; Barlas, 1998). Although it relies on nature, the environment and social construct, tourism is yet another one of the industries to destroy the economic, social and natural environment.

Touristic businesses' poor use of land, their negative impact on flora and fauna, their waste discharge directly to the sea and ocean, and fuel burning systems without proper filtering contribute to pollution (Kahraman & Türkay, 2014). The fact that the number of tourist businesses with these practices increase every other day has a negative impact on local cultural identity and the social construct which is a very important handicap for sustainability.

Sustainable tourism requires minimization of environmental damage, paying attention to the local welfare and involving local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes. Mass tourism, a concept which promotes hedonic consumption at the cost of sustainability, threatens the environment and creates income inequality as large hotels operate excursions, airport transfers, etc. instead of the local people. On the other hand, a responsible tourism approach would allow the local people to earn 95% of the income in question (Kahraman & Türkay, 2014: 50).

As part of the responsible tourism approach, ecotourism ensures that the local lifestyle remains intact while adapting to the environmental conditions. Rural tourism poses no harm to the local lifestyle and environment as touristic activities are held in villages, farms or mountains. Cittaslow protects the local traditions and local cuisine, while environmentally-conscious tourism promotes sustainability and encourages businesses to obtain “Environmentally-conscious Facility” badges or certificates.

Halal tourism, as a mode of responsible tourism, stops wastefulness, encourages cleanliness, and allows for Muslim tourists and local people to live by the Islamic rules ensuring sustainable tourism activities. Halal tourism contributes to sustainability with its environmentally-friendly approach and it offers great economic potential to local communities.

Considering the fact that Islam has *1.8 billion* adherents, it can be said that there are 1.8 billion potential tourists. Moreover, according to statistics, the global tourism revenue will reach up to \$192 B. by 2020. These numbers place a great importance on the development of Halal Tourism as an environmentally-conscious mode of responsible tourism.

As a result, responsible tourism is of great importance in terms of sustainability against the concept of hedonism. The most important reason for pointing out responsible tourism types in this research is that individuals, organizations and businesses in responsible tourism are responsible for their own actions. In line with this idea, future research may be recommended to measure the perceptions of hedonism of tourists engaged in activities within the scope of responsible tourism.

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