

Rurality, Sustainable Development and Rural Tourism

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Abstract

Nowadays rural tourism is a popular form of alternative tourism carried out in both developed and less-developed countries. The aim of this study is to present the role of rural tourism in sustainable development of rural areas. In addition, ecological, economical and socio-cultural dimensions of sustainability and investment types for sustainability were explained.

Keywords:Rural Development, Sustainability, Tourism, Turkey

Kırsallık, Sürdürülebilir Kalkınma ve Kırsal Turizm

Özet

Kırsal turizm, günümüzde hem gelişmiş hem de gelişmekte olan ülkelerde yürütülen alternatif turizmin popüler bir şeklidir. Bu çalışmanın amacı kırsal alanların sürdürülebilir kalkınmasında kırsal turizmin rolünü sunmaktır. Ayrıca çalışmada, sürdürülebilirlik için yatırım çeşitleri ve sürdürülebilirliğin ekolojik, ekonomik ve sosyo-kültürel boyutları açıklanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:Kırsal Kalkınma, Sürdürülebilirlik, Turizm, Türkiye

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Introduction

The basic philosophy of new tourism concept is tourism activity in four seasons, throughout the country via using cultural, historical, and environmental potential of the country. In recent years, alternative tourism types (in addition to mass tourism: sun, sea, and sound triangle) have gained importance especially in developed countries as parallel to changes in the desire of people (return to nature, adrenaline, mystic atmosphere), developments in their socio-economic situation (i.e. income, spare time). This has played a key role in the development of less-favoured areas that were economically and socially depressed (Blaine and Golan, 1993; Dernoï, 1991; Perales, 2002).

Tourism has long been considered an effective catalyst of rural socio-economic development and regeneration. Throughout Europe, in particular, tourism has been widely promoted and relied upon as a means of addressing the social and economic challenges facing peripheral rural areas, primarily those associated with the decline of traditional agrarian industries (Cavaco, 1995; Hoggart et al, 1995; Opperman, 1996; Williams and Shaw, 1998; Sharply, 2002). The social development of rural tourism as an alternative to agriculture (in tourism as a complementary activity), may cause young people to stay in rural areas because we speak of a diversification of employment, but also an increase of money incomes which ultimately contribute to higher levels of personal and family life (Elena, 2012). The decline in the ability of farm agriculture to generate sufficient income caused many farmers to seek new sources of income and for the diversification of the agriculture base (Swinerton, 1982; CEC, 1992). Rural tourism businesses have an important role in diversifying the income of the farm and thus strengthening and stabilizing the rural economies base, especially where occupation in agriculture is declining (Rickard, 1983).

Literature review shows that number of studies covering the positive and negative effects of rural tourism on rural society and milieu is very limited. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explain the importance of rural tourism in the development of rural areas point of view of sustainability.

Concepts of Rurality, Sustainability, Rural Tourism

Many people use the term rural, and many different concepts are associated with it. It can be both a noun or and an adjective and bring to focus pictures of the countryside or rural dwellers. Rural describes people, places, things, traditions, and spaces (Mountrakis and AvRuskin, 2005). Criteria defining rural settlements in some countries are: Places of fewer than 200 inhabitants in Denmark and Norway; towns of fewer than 10000 people in Portugal and Switzerland; all settlement units having less than

20000 populations in Turkey (OECD, 1994; Turkdogan, 1977; Akcaet *et al*, 2000). Spain's definition of "rural" is determined by the threshold population for an urban settlement that is set at 10000 (Hoggart *et al*, 1995). In the USA, the Economic Research Service (ERS) classifies any community with less than 2500 permanent residents as rural. The US Census Bureau defines rural areas as all non-urban areas, with urban defined as a community of over 50000 permanent residents (Gartner, 2004; Flora *et al*, 1992). Statistics Canada define rural areas as "persons living in sparsely populated lands lying outside urban areas (i.e. persons living outside places of 1000 or more inhabitants or outside places with population densities of 400 or more people per square kilometre) (Du Plessis *et al*, 2002). However, population size itself is not a satisfactory criterion of "rurality". For example, many large settlements in Andalucía, large enough in terms of population size to be considered urban, are essentially rural in their functions and characteristics (Gilmore, 1980; Barke, 2004). In addition, "non-urban territory in human (land-related economic) activity is going on" is defined as rural by Derno (1991). All these information show that there is obviously a vast difference between the definitions used by each country when trying to define "rural" (Gartner, 2004). The term "rural" seems to be strongly associated with and almost equated to words and/or phrases like "*the minority*", "*the underserved areas*", "*the economically disadvantaged*". Strong associations are made with the term rural and terms such as: low income, smaller areas, inner-city areas, suburban, small business customers, economically depressed, vocation home areas, discrete, insular, and underserved users (Venkatachalam and McDowell, 2002). Rural can be considered a place where small-scale enterprises dominate the economic scene, open space is abundant, contact with nature or traditional societies" is offered, development is slow growing using local capital and the types of touristic activity offered varies but reflects local resource capabilities (Lane, 1994).

Rural development is accepted equal to village or agricultural development in less-developed countries (Eraktan and Yildirak, 1989). Rural development is "a process integrated with economic and social objectives, which must seek to transform rural society and provide a better and more secure livelihood for rural people" (Oakley and Garforth, 1985). Rural development policy must be multi-disciplinary in concept, and multi-sectorial. It must be based on an integrated approach, encompassing within the same legal and policy framework: agricultural adjustment and development, economic diversification-notably small and medium scale industries and rural services, the management of natural resources, the enhancement of environmental functions, and the promotion of culture, tourism and recreation (Gosar, 1990; Koscak, 1998).

The increasing incidence of environmental problems and the resultant discussions and concerns regarding environmental conservation in the 1980s gave birth to the concepts of sustainability, sustainable development, and also sustainable tourism development (Bramwell and Line, 1993; Baum and Conlin, 1994; MacLellan, 1997; Wall, 1997; Jithendran and Baum, 2000). There are many alternative definitions of sustainability, with the annex in Pearce *et al* (1989) identifying at least twenty-four (Colman, 1993). The most commonly cited comes from a report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) on Our Common Future. Sustainable development is defined as “*paths of human progress which meet the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their*”. For another example, as Solow (2000) puts it, “*sustainability [is] a matter of distributional equity between the present and the future*”.

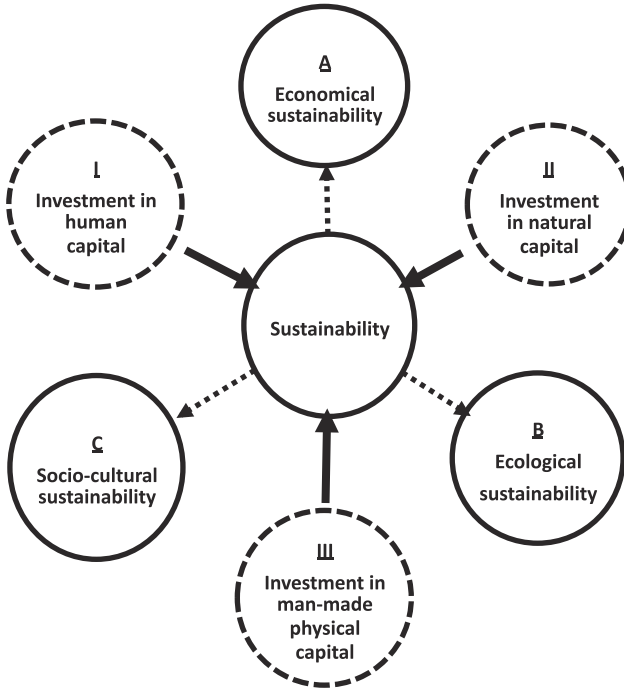
The sustainability issue has several aspects. WTO (1993) introduced its influential principles that included three dimensions of sustainability: ecological sustainability, social and cultural sustainability, and economic sustainability. According to the WTO, development should be designed to i) improve the quality of life of the host community, ii) provide a high quality of experience for the visitor, and iii) maintain the quality of the environment on which both the host community and visitors depend (Hjalager, 2004). In this context, sustainable development requires three types of investment. These are: i) investment in human capital - knowledge of people, ii) investment in natural capital - the resources of the country, and iii) investment in man-made physical capital to provide new and clean technologies (Meier, 1995) (Figure 1).

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (Elighet *al*, 2002; WTTC *et al*, 1995).

The Linkage between Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development

Sustainable tourism refers to an approach that seeks to reduce the environmental impact of tourism by addressing the physical degradation caused by visitors, such as through footpath erosion; resource depletion resulting from the operation of tourism-related business, such as the utilization of fossil fuels, water and other naturel resources; and possible negative socio-cultural impacts on host communities (Coccosis, 1996; Vernon *et al*, 2003).

Figure 1: Dimensionsof sustainability and types of investment for sustainability



Rural tourism has become an important and in some cases a dominant factor in the rural economy of Western Economies (Robinson, 1990). Majority of the agricultural economists expect that rural economies everywhere can no longer rely on agriculture and other traditional sectors to regenerate their economies and boost employment. In this context, many rural areas have been benefiting from tourism, with closer collaboration between policy makers responsible for rural development, agriculture, tourism and the environment and the involvement of the private sector and local communities (Edmunds, 1999). Local governors in many rural areas promote tourism as a complement to their traditional economic base (Leitch and Leistritz, 1985; Kottke, 1988; Taylor *et al*, 1993; Chhabraet *al*, 2003). And for example there is a wide and innovative set of rural/agri-tourism products and services available to the traveling public in all Canadian provinces. It includes agri-tourism, agricultural festivals, special events and festivals, the celebration of village historic sites, country fairs, agricultural travel routes that feature themes (Irshad, 2010).

Lack of studies on rural tourism is compounded further by the absence of a commonly accepted definition as to what constitutes rural tourism. Sometimes rural tourism is equated with farm tourism (Oppermann, 1996). Some authors include outdoor recreation and tourism in national parks and wilderness areas into rural tourism (Ladki, 1993; Owens, 1984); but Derno (1991) excludes them. On the other hand, Pearce (1990) discusses second homes in the context of rural tourism. Rural tourism can be generally defined as the tourism that takes place in the countryside (Iakovidou, 1997). Under this broad umbrella, different concepts can be recognized. Depending on the services and activities offered, different tourist products could be defined as ecological, cultural and gastronomic tourism, agro-tourism, geo-tourism, etc. (Aikaterini *et al*, 2001). The following activities are included in the concept of “tourism in the rural milieu”: rural spas; rural convention centres; places for executive training; natural sports resorts; trekking; visits to relatives and friends; visits to museums, churches, landmarks and historical buildings; festivals, rodeos and regional gourmet; camping sites, vacation camps; country hotels, ranch resorts, nature sports, such as canoeing, mountain climbing, fishing, hunting; country homes and town houses as second residences, among others (Campanhola and Graziano da Silva, 1999).

Common development imperatives of rural tourism are characterised by small-scale initiatives that emphasize the integration of tourism, environmentally, economically and socio-culturally within the local community’s capacity (Lane, 1994; Gannon, 1994; Page and Getz, 1997; Roberts and Hall, 2001).

Farm-based tourism, as an important element of rural restructuring and revitalisation, can play a crucial role when small farms have to adjust to depressed agricultural prices and increased agricultural prices and increased competition. Employment creation, income growth, rejuvenation and integration of rural environments, growth of the aspiration and ambition of farmers, reorientation of farms to such specialisation as organic food production, improvements in the appearance of villages and development of infrastructure have all been credited to farm tourism development in Central and Eastern Europe (Maciejewska, 2001). The participation of local women in rural tourism development process can help to shift the balance of economic power in rural households and communities, with often considerable domestic and wider cultural implications (Kinnaird and Hall, 1996; Hall, 1999).

It is expected that rural tourism can affect rural areas positively or negatively economical, socio-cultural and environmental point of view (Table 1).

Table 1: Likely Effects of Rural Tourism

<p><u>Economic Effects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * generates additional income to rural dwellers (+) * reduces migration from rural to urban areas via creating new job opportunity (+) * helps women contribute to household income (+) * promotes economic development of disadvantages areas (+) * Unfairly increases price of houses (or real estate costs) in rural areas (-)
<p><u>Socio-Cultural Effects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * helps urban people attend alternative activities (ride on horse, etc.) (+) * provides urban people to outline nostalgic desire “return to nature” (+) * helps transfer of new ideas from urban to rural areas (+) * transforms rural households from peasant to modern community (+) * changes statues of women within family (+) * increases quality of life in rural areas (+) * can increase number of crime problems (-) * can decrease parental control over the children (-)
<p><u>Environmental Effects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * preserves naturel beauties (flora, fauna) of rural areas (+) * contributes to build up rural infrastructure (+) * can lead to destruction of environment (-)

(+): Positive Effects, (-): Negative Effects

Adopted from Akcaet *al.* (2000: 31)

Conclusion

To sum up, rural tourism seems to be an appropriate tool to revitalise the declining rural areas and to ensure their sustainable future via job retention/creation/diversify, farm support, broadened cultural provision, landscape and nature conservation or the maintenance of rural arts and crafts as tourist attractions (Swarbrooke, 1996; Ratz and Puczko, 1998).

Following sentence: “*I want to feed and live in the place where I was born, under the living conditions that modern people have*” summarises the desire of rural dwellers in many countries. To achieve this aim, there is a need to develop new employment opportunities and income generating activities in rural areas in addition to agriculture. While doing this, the advice of Akcaet *al.* (2000) should not be forgotten “rural tourism can be a complementary of agriculture, not its alternative in rural areas”. In addition all positive and negative effects of rural tourism should be taken into consideration while implementing rural tourism in any area.

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