

An Evaluation on Community Based Tourism: The Case of Lavender Scented Village

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Abstract

Community-based tourism is a local development model aiming at both common participation of all local people in the tourism activities carried out in a destination and to ensure that everyone benefits equally. The increasing interest in community-based tourism has also raised the number of projects undertaken in this regard. Lavender Scented Village project is one of the projects carried out within this scope in Kuyucak Village of Isparta province. It is aimed to trigger the potential employment and entrepreneurship in the region by providing product diversity of lavender produced in Kuyucak Village with Lavender Scented village project. Thus, tourism in a rural area will be recreated and local economy will be invigorated with the new tourism developments. In this study, it is aimed to analysis the current situation of the Lavender Scented village project, to make some inferences regarding the project and to guide the decision makers and other prospective projects in the next steps of processes of the project. The data was obtained by face-to-face interviews with 13 local residents using the snowball sampling method in Kuyucak Village and evaluated by SWOT analysis technique. Results indicate that the community-based in Kuyucak Village is still at the beginning level. This is an important issue since the threats and opportunities are shedding light on the period of maturity and guiding managerial sense.

Key Words: Community-based tourism, local people, local development, Lavender Scented Village.

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Introduction

Development requires an integrative and comprehensive public participation. This integrative point of view defines development and brings forth the concept of sustainable development; which requires the participation of everyone in the society and includes the concepts of social justice and human rights, aiming to improve all aspects of life on the macro and micro levels, ensuring the sustainability of resources for future generations. For this reason, sustainability in economic development focusing on public participation and the management of local resources by the local population have gained importance, starting with the UN Conference in 1972 and continuing with 1987 Brundtland Report and Agenda 21 (Tasci, Semrad & Yılmaz, 2013). Public participation in tourism has been recognized as an important part of sustainable development in Agenda 21 for tourism presented by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (Wei, Xueyi, Yali & Xinggui, 2012). In the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the importance of public participation and entrepreneurship for developed and developing countries, combined with the cooperation of stakeholders to maximize the benefit of community development has been once again emphasized (Onderwater, 2011).

Public participation is an instrument designed to develop tourism. It works by encouraging the local communities to stimulate their own resources, identify its local needs, make their own decisions on how to use tourism to address these needs and take tourism development matters into their own hands. In other words, public participation as a tourism development strategy must be based on the community's own resources, needs and decisions; for this reason, the community members are the primary actors of development (Tosun, 2005). Since tourism products and activities are generally interrelated with the local community's special rituals, traditions and cultural values, the local communities know the nature and properties of their own tourism products better than the outsiders. Because of this, people living in that particular region should decide what would be better for the status of local resources and population during tourism planning and development process (Tosun, 2006). According to Timothy (1999), a development that is socially, culturally, economically and ecologically sustainable can be achieved when the local people is included in tourism enterprises in accordance with its own needs and desires. There are various sustainable tourism development models. Ecotourism and its variations, pro-poor tourism, community based tourism (CBT) and voluntary tourism have gained popularity as key sustainable development solutions for conserving the environment, protecting the cultural assets and reducing poverty (Ellis, 2011). While said tourism models are connected with CBT, CBT differs from these tourism types by enabling the sustainable development of communities through local ownership and management (Dunn, 2007).

Public participation in tourism is generally regarded as a perfect example of sustainable tourism development. The reason for this is that local community participation is crucial for the improvement and implementation of these projects, along with the benefits for the whole community (Brequel, 2013). This study aims to evaluate the Lavender Scented Village Project through the eyes of the local people and to examine the current situation using the SWOT analysis technique.

Literature

When the literature is reviewed, it can be seen that CBT does not have a universally accepted, unequivocal definition, but various definitions depending on its purpose and implementation. (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Trejos & Matarrita-Cascante, 2010; Demers, 2011). This is because CBT projects differ from one another based on factors such as geographical conditions, natural resources, cultural assets, economic conditions, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and tourism goals

(Boonratana, 2010; Giampiccoli & Kalis, 2012). While for some researchers, CBT may require a common decision-making process among an autonomous group of stakeholders to plan tourism development (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Reed, 1997), for others, it must include the establishment of cooperative groups or community-based organizations (MacDonald & Joliffe, 2003; Mbaiwa, 2003). Nevertheless, the most widely-accepted type of CBT requires a considerable portion of control and benefits to be in the hands of the individuals in the targeted communities (Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005). Moving on from the definitions in the literature, CBT can be described as a sustainable tourism approach that is planned, developed, managed and controlled in accordance with the community's own resources and consensus to ensure the development and benefit of the whole community and consequently, ensuring that the responsibility, benefits, costs and ownership are shared equally and justly (Karacaoğlu, 2017).

CBT is different from the top-down tourism planning approaches in the way that it emphasizes local input and control over the type, scale and density of tourism development. In this development model, the local community holds the power to decide or proactively maintains the control and in turn, directs the development in accordance with its own values and interests (Johnson, 2010). Different communities have different social, environmental, socio-cultural, economic and political properties and structures. These must be taken into consideration in the planning phase before CBT is commenced; the community must embrace the tourism development and the development must be appropriate for the community's expectations. In this regard, the expectations of the local community from CBT enterprises, the goals of community development and the things that community members and stakeholders are willing/unwilling to accept to achieve the desired CBT goals must be clearly determined (Asker, Boronyak, Carrard & Paddon, 2010). CBT's general direction of planning and development is human-centric; it focuses on the targeted community's needs and requirements and must aim to satisfy these needs and requirements in a way that is not environmentally detrimental to their traditional, cultural and daily ways of life, as well as providing economic benefits. From this point of view, the need for tourism enterprises that encourage sustainability in order to preserve both the environment and the culture becomes apparent (Pookaiyudom, 2012). Therefore, CBT generally means a model that is planned, managed and operated by the community, for the community's benefit. Such type of local tourism model focuses on the preservation and interpretation of the local culture and environment in favor of the local suppliers and service providers and communication between the stakeholders (Asker et al., 2010). In other words, CBT represents the type of tourism which includes the local communities. It takes place on the own land/property of the local community and is based on their own cultural positions and natural assets (Akunaay, Nelson & Singleton, 2003). While CBT projects initially focused on small rural communities and nature conservation through ecotourism, during the course of time the scope of the projects were expanded with various managerial models and tourism products such as local culture, folklore, gastronomy, traditional handcrafts (Shahmirzadi, 2012). CBT aims to diversify the tourism product while conserving the local resources by the local community; thus, enabling faster economic growth, prosperity and equality among the local community members (Ashley & Garland, 1994). CBT projects, which are established as alternatives to traditional mass tourism, constitute a type of model that let the local communities to generate wealth and employment. CBT activities and enterprises in this model must be designed based on the traditional means of living of the local community, such as agriculture, fishing, stockbreeding etc. The local community must see CBT as supplementary activities without abandoning their traditional means of living (López-Guzmán, Sánchez-Cañizares, & Pavón, 2011). These activities are important not only because they create a market for the promotion and development of local products and for employment, but also because they create new sources of income for the community through collaborative tourism enterprises such as cooperatives (Akunaay et al., 2003). CBT aims to conserve natural resources as well as respecting the hosting community. However, CBT projects must also establish social justice. Social justice means the fair distribution of income, participation in the decision making process of tourism activities and fair and just access to resources for all users and groups participating in CBT. A community in a CBT project must benefit from all of the factors mentioned above as a whole (Fiorello & Bo, 2012). In this regard, the projects

must be monitored, controlled and supported by stakeholders such as national and international beneficial organizations, local governments, universities and NGO's (Asker et al., 2010).

CBT is closely related to sustainable tourism in the sense of sustainable development. In this tourism model can become a successful solution for sustainable development by establishing the balance between development, environmental/cultural conservation and local needs. For this reason, it aims to improve the quality of life for the local community by optimizing the local economic benefits and conserving the natural and built as well as offering a high-quality experience to the visitors (Jamaica Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, 2014). When CBT projects are implemented, sustainable codes of ethical responsibility and behavior must be adopted by all of the stakeholders including the local community, local governments, private sector, tour operators, NGO's, universities and tourists (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006).

The responsibilities and behaviors that must be adopted by the stakeholders in CBT can be generally summarized as; empowerment of the local community through local participation and local ownership, elimination of gender inequality, development and management of tourism activities through the absolute support, consent and participation of the local community, sharing a reasonable portion of the income gained from tourism activities with the community and using this income for the common good, improvement and maintenance of common benefits through social and economic development, conservation of natural and cultural resources, empowerment of local economy by decreasing leakage from local economies, creating a feeling of social belonging and respecting the local cultural traditions and heritage (Rocharungsat, 2005; Hiwasaki, 2006; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Onderwater, 2011).

CBT development may generate many potential benefits for the economy, population and the environment of local communities. However, if it is not evaluated, planned and effectively managed together with the community, it may bring up undesired costs to the community, environment and the dynamics between them (Asker et al., 2010). At this point, the longevity and applicability of CBT projects must be conditioned by socio economic development that includes the whole community (Fiorello & Bo, 2012); or else, the communities disillusioned by the failed, collapsed, stagnated or inadequate performance of a community based project may endanger their prosperity under the threat of devastation due to negative socio-economic conditions. Therefore, critical provisions for successful CBT applications must be determined and provided by all of the stakeholders before beginning a CBT project (Tasci et al., 2013), because the extent of its positive effect on the general prosperity of the community depends on the actualization of opportunities and the elimination of obstacles. For this reason, each different community must determine its own unique obstacles, threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths (Kwangseh, 2014).

The literature review shows that the problems of rural communities in the developing countries are generally related to inadequate resources (funds, tourism know-how and skills, education etc.), infrastructure, superstructure and access to the market (Braun, 2008; Graci, 2008). The lack of funds is a particularly chronic problem for tourism development in rural communities of developing countries (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Seeding funds are recognized as necessary catalysts for seeding CBT. Inadequate funds may hinder the communities' access to education necessary for tourism. The lack of education resources may cause a lack of local capacity in terms of proper management of CBT establishments and decrease the rate of success of CBT. Another obstacle in the way of establishing a suitable tourism industry in rural communities is the implementation of a marketing network for local resources, mainly caused by inadequate resources (Cooper, 2004). The lack of financial, educational and infrastructural resources will impair the participation of the local community to the tourism development process or will discourage the community from working in tourism-related businesses. Therefore, these factors are crucial for the successful CBT development (Tosun, 2000). At the same time, in order for CBT to succeed, the existing resources must be optimally taken in inventory and utilized, tourism must be diversified through unique activities that are based on the region's natural

and cultural resources, other sectors must be studied and approached for establishing critical connections, utilizing the opportunities for CBT development (The Mountain Institute, 2000).

The Aim and Importance of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine community-based tourism that is gradually gaining importance and popularity in the example of Lavender Scented Village Project in Kuyucak Village and to evaluate the current state of the project. In accordance with this main goal, the strengths and weaknesses of this project shall be determined and future predictions shall be made with connection to the opportunities and threats.

Determining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the projects and identifying the project-based problems carry importance in the sense of making the necessary and effective decisions for the development of community-based tourism. The analysis results may enable changes and rectifications on short and long-term plans. In this regard, the study is seen important in the sense of its contributions to the literature and decision makers.

Materials and Method

Research Site (Kuyucak Village/Lavender Scented Village)

The site of this study is determined as the Kuyucak Village in the Keçiborlu district of Isparta province. Keçiborlu district resides on coordinates of 38° 00' North, 30° East 15', in the Lakes Region of the West Mediterranean part of Turkey, 41 km. northwest of Isparta province. Kuyucak Village is deemed as the first among the 9 hidden regions of Turkey and has considerable transportation potential. The village is 47 km.'s from Isparta. It sits on a hill near the Taurus Mountains and its fields and hillsides are covered with lavender flowers. The village is only 9 km.'s from the motorway that connects Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Afyon, Eskişehir, Denizli and many other provinces to Antalya. Lavender was first brought to the village in 1975 and was distributed to 30 families in bare root form. According to TÜİK data, the village provides 93% of the lavender production of Turkey. The village currently has a population of 250 (<http://www.lavantakokulukoy.com>).



Source: <http://www.lavantakokulukoy.com>

Since Keçiborlu district of Isparta Province is the primary center of lavender production in Turkey, Keçiborlu Association for Solidarity, Assistance and Education, Keçiborlu District Governorship Union for Providing Services to Villages and Kuyucak Village Neighborhood unit have partnered to propose the project for “The Future is in Tourism” call for proposal conducted with the partnership of The

Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Anadolu Efes (<http://www.ispartakulturturizm.gov.tr>), in order to ensure the brandification of the district as a lavender producer, contribute in the existing employment, migration and development problems and create alternative income and employment resources. The reason for the village to be selected as the site of the study is the project of Lavender Scented Village, which was accepted and implemented in Kuyucak Village. The project aims to diversify the product range of the lavender produced in Keçiborlu District and Kuyucak Village, thus increasing the employment and entrepreneurship potential of the region. Another goal of the project is to improve the touristic activities to contribute to the regional economy (<http://www.anadoluefes.com.tr>).

Data Collecting Process

The data was collected via interviews with the local community members (15-20 minute, face to face interviews with 13 individuals living in the village during the time of the project) and was evaluated with SWOT Analysis technique. Snowball sampling was used to determine the participants. The questions asked to interviewees were toward the evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project, which constitute the main components of the SWOT analysis. The answers were sorted by the researchers, utilizing the literature. As part of the study, the participants were asked the below questions.

1. What are the strengths of Lavender Scented Village Project in your opinion?
2. What are the weaknesses of Lavender Scented Village Project in your opinion?
3. What are the opportunities that support the Lavender Scented Village Project in your opinion?
4. What are the threats that the Lavender Scented Village Project faces in your opinion?

Findings

The data gathered in the study is evaluated through SWOT analysis method. SWOT analysis determines the strengths and weaknesses of an establishment as well as the surrounding opportunities and threats (Shinno et al. 2006). For the project, this method is used to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project as well as other situations that require certain decisions to be made. *Strength* means: an internal quality that helps to achieve the goal; *Weakness*: an internal quality that is detrimental in achieving the goal; *Opportunity*: an external condition that helps to achieve the goal; *Threat*: an external condition that is detrimental in achieving the goal (Hay & Castilla, 2006).

This study reveals the current state of the study site and the project conducted in the study site through the use of SWOT analysis. In this regard, the below findings were achieved on Kuyucak Village and Lavender Scented Village project's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a result of the interviews made with the local community members.

Strengths

- The village's climate is suitable for lavender and rose cultivation
- The village is close to Antalya, a popular tourism destination,
- The village has advanced means of transportation,
- The village is close to Isparta Süleyman Demirel Airport,
- The village population is hospitable and desires to host tourists,
- The village population has embraced the project,
- The village population is conscious on cultivation lavender,
- The village has suitable areas for lavender cultivation,
- The potential of alternative tourism types in the village.

Weaknesses

- Guests may be neglected due to the excessive increase in tourist numbers,
- Narrowing of living spaces due to the vehicles in the village,
- Tourist dissatisfaction due to different pricing of the products sold in the village,
- The scarcity of guest houses,
- Traffic congestion,
- Environmental pollution and excessive waste production by tourists harming the lavender gardens,
- Scarcity of parking spaces,
- Scarcity of establishments like cafés and restaurants,
- Scarcity of workers during lavender season,
- Inadequacy of tourism activities,
- Problems due to the scarcity of road signs,
- High prices of the products,
- Booths set up in different places,
- Inadequacy of roads,
- Trespassing in lavender gardens,
- No recycling,
- Booths, people and vehicles in the same areas.

Opportunities

- Development of women employment and entrepreneurship,
- Development of accommodation services and increase in incomes,
- Establishment of the Women's Entrepreneurship Cooperative,
- Increase of the village's recognition,
- Utilization of idle areas in lavender and rose cultivation,
- Local population turning toward production focused activities (soap-making, lavender ice cream, lavender honey etc.)
- Planning of alternative roads,
- Education within the scope of the project (hygiene, diction, accommodation, entrepreneurship, sales, guidance, etc.),
- Prolonging the season by rose cultivation,
- Increase in the recognition of the village and the village community,
- Cultural development,
- Increase in employment opportunities.

Threats

- Inequality of income among the community,
- Increasing sanitation problems,
- Deterioration of social order,
- Deterioration of the community members' personality structure (due to high income desire),
- Exceeding the village's capacity due to uncontrolled increase in tourist numbers,
- Accommodation problems due to the scarcity of guest houses and hotels,
- Uneven distribution of funds,
- The decrease of lavender's value due to increased yield,

- Conflicts among the local community (in order to gain customers)
- Lack of regulations on pricing,
- The lack of directions for the village population regarding the example project activities
- Decision makers not taking the opinion of the local community

Conclusion

CBT is a type of alternative tourism, a development model that governments, NGO's and development agencies utilize to contribute to the society's empowerment and development (Dolezal & Ricaurte-Quijano, 2017). It is especially on the agenda of developing countries. However, rather than starting CBT's in a destination, the important point here is the sustainability of the benefits of those projects to the local community. The studies in this area show that the successful CBT projects are based on a strategic plan where the local community actively participates and has the local ownership and management, the benefits and costs are distributed as fair and equal as possible and there is collaboration among the stakeholders. The success of strategic plans increases correspondingly with the steps taken during this process. Current state analysis is one of the most important steps among these and SWOT method is now commonly used to this end. This study focuses on the Lavender Scented Village Project, which is conducted in the Kuyucak Village as a local development model. The project aims to contribute to the development of the Village. Predicting the long-term benefits and costs of the project beforehand is deemed crucial. The local community's opinions on Kuyucak Village and the project are gathered with the study and a current state analysis was conducted through SWOT analysis technique.

CBT is based on the active participation of the local community. It must help building a relationship between the local community and the guests while ensuring the collaboration of different public administrations, NGO's and private institutions with the local community (López-Guzmán et al., 2011). Understanding where the community ends and individual interests start arises as a subject of discussion in CBT where all the stakeholders must work together (Zapata et al., 2011). At this point, it can be said that thinking as a community instead of individually is the primary basis of CBT's existence. While the start of the project and the income that came with the village's touristic opening has satisfied the local community, the following developments has shown that there is dissatisfaction about income distribution and sharing of resources. Different prices in booths set up to sell souvenirs or village products and fights over customers show that the project is straying from the community perspective and into an individual profit mindset. These findings suggest that the project has strayed from "equal income to everyone" principle of CBT and may give way to conflicts among the local community, should the individuality continue. This finding is similar with the results of the study conducted by Karacaoğlu, Yolal and Birdir in Misi Village of Bursa (2016). As suggested in the said study, ensuring the distribution of the benefits gained from tourism development among larger groups and conducting participatory processes can help alleviate the perceived negativities in the project.

Community based approach aims to both improve the life quality of the community and conservation of the resources (Scheyvens, 1999; Manyara & Jones, 2007; Nunkoo & So, 2016). While the findings of the study show that the tourist numbers have increased with the village's opening to tourism and this has, to some extent, increased the life quality of the local community with increased income and new employment opportunities, it can also be seen that the tourist density decreases the life quality of the local community by narrowing down their living space. On the other hand, uncontrolled increase in tourists bring about certain problems and suggest that the resources cannot be conserved in the sense of sustainability. Environmental pollution, damaging of the lavender gardens because of garbage and waste is an indication that the project's output in the long term may not be sustainable.

In the general sense, it can be said that the local community has embraced the Lavender Scented Project and is satisfied by the activity as the village is opened to tourism and the employment

opportunities for the women and children. Improved roads and local community's positive attitude towards lavender cultivation as a means of living may also be deemed as the positive qualities of the project. Moreover, the community's awareness of the project's advantages and self-improvement through education together with the increasing the rose cultivation and extending the tourism season seem as the strong and opportunity-creating points of the project, suggesting a positive outcome for the future. On the other hand, the insufficiencies in equal distribution of income, the local community's participation in the decision-making processes and direction constitute the negative aspects of the project. The project's efficient implementation in the following process can be realized by taking the local community's desires and expectations into consideration. Taking into account the damages that the tourist density has done, it can be suggested that the region's carrying capacity should be determined and that the planning should be done in accordance with this capacity.

The data shows that community-based tourism is in its infancy. This state carries importance in the sense that it sheds light into the ripening of the threats and opportunities and provides guidance in the administrative processes.

The study has some limitations. The SWOT analysis is based on the village population's evaluations in accordance with their knowledge level and lacks any nominal data. Therefore, the implications based on the Lavender Scented Village Project are only applicable to this project and cannot be generalized for all projects. Later studies may evaluate different CBT projects that are utilized for local development together and make a comparison between them.

Kaynakça

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