

## **The Role Of Tourism In Regional Development**

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### **Abstract**

Along with the acceleration of the globalization phenomenon, the level of development among the countries has been showing substantial differences. Developed countries have performed their development levels because they have a number of economic advantages and they have slightly minimized the imbalance between the regions. One of the most important problems of developing countries involves the development and underdevelopment. One of the ways to cope with this problem is to identify the priority sector for development of these countries. Performing the

development in developing countries is merely possible by evaluating the potential of their tourist supply. The tourism sector plays significant role on regional development and the efficient use of local tourism resources.

In this respect, the purpose of the research is to investigate the role of tourism along with development policies to resolve interregional imbalance. Therefore, it is intended to figure out the importance of tourism in regional development and focused regional development instruments. As a result, it is aimed to examine the role of tourism in developing regions on their development processes.

**Keywords:** Regional development, Tourism, Alternative Tourism

## **1. THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **1.1. The Concept of Region**

Content and definition of the concept of region which is a multi-dimensional, ambiguous concept, originated from the Latin word “regio” and its boundaries are very difficult to draw, vary from period to period. The concept of region which has begun to be used with the defining of areas which have similar soil properties, climatic conditions and topography with specific names by farmers, is generally used to specify the differences of a piece of land from the others.

There is not a common definition of the concept of region on which there is a consensus. The properties of a region differ from others may take their source from its geographical, economic, social and physical structure. For this reasons, various criteria are used in the classification of regions. The inclusion of legal, sociological, demographic, political and environmental disciplines in the analyses enhances the confusion on the concept (Gündüz, 2006:2).

The dimension of space that is defined with the word of region, may differ by the used context (for example: planning) as may differ by economic, social, cultural aspects. From the economic point of view, it's obvious that the region as a unit of planning and analysis corresponds to neither an area wider than a country's area nor narrower than a city's area (Şen, 2004:4; Ildırar, 2004:9).

Region is defined as a unit which is existed by the spatial integrity of sidled local units and enclosed by the lands of a state and the boundaries of which are drawn under the control of a state in the national approach. Anyhow it is defined as a unit that directly come open to international relations and a unit of which boundaries are changeable. In generally, a part of a spatial integral which is homogeneous in point of specific properties is described as a region.

## **2. Interregional Differences and Regional Development**

All regions of a country do not begin to develop simultaneously. Some regions show faster development than others for that reason, differences of development level exist. All countries have differences of development level in its regions. Differences of development among regions are more in developing countries than developed countries.

Regional disparities cause notable social problems. Main causes of regional disparities are as follows (Şen, 2004:7):

**Geographical factors:** Location, climatic properties, natural resources, arability of a region are the properties that effect regional development. These properties are not dispersed equally between regions and they are not used rational.

**Economic factors:** Macroeconomic instabilities and inhibition of mobility of the workforce are the economic factors cause regional disparities. The dispersion of production factors influences company decisions for choosing their locations of establishment.

**Social and cultural differences:** Production of a region takes its shape from the socio cultural structure of the region. Especially, general social capital as health care, education services and infrastructure of industrial centres are notably higher than that of underdeveloped regions. Therefore migrations become from other region to developed regions with the purpose of reaching social services in higher quality. These migrations cause social imbalances.

**Interregional differences** cause ineffective use of resources, social problems and even interregional conflicts. Compensating interregional differences is one of the main concerns of governments. Innovational development strategy is that governments must implement to achieve a sustainable regional development. Providing sustainable regional development by innovational development strategy is related to creating regional synergy, accumulation of human capital and knowledge generation. Basically, formulation of a sustainable regional development is exactly aimed at accumulation of human capital. Human capital directly accelerates rate of development and rate of growth, contributes to knowledge generation and knowledge stock of the region. Human capital stock works as a pool for existence of entrepreneurship (Oğuztürk, 2003: 74).

### **3. Importance of Tourism Sector in Regional Development**

Tourism sector has a great importance in regional development and efficient use of resources. Especially tourism sector may provide a development for regions that do not have agricultural and industrial development potential. The following factors must be considered for regional development by the improving tourism sector:

- Cultural values and infrastructural condition of the region,
- Present touristic facilities and feasibility of new touristic facilities,
- Foundations that product services or goods directly or indirectly related to tourism in the region,
- Public investments in the region,
- International tourism demand for the region,
- Perception level of tourism of the locals,

The efficiency of the tourism in the regional development could be substantially increased after analysing above mentioned factors realistically (Çeken, 2008: 299).

Tourism has a positive influence on regional employment and income, but the magnitude of regional multiplier will vary according to the characteristics of each individual region. As tourism and regional development are closely linked, regions and local authorities play a key role in the formulation of policy and the organization and development of tourism and thus coordination

between local authorities increases the benefits of policies such as large scale infrastructure projects (Constantin, 2000).

#### **4. Tourism Focused Regional Development Instruments**

##### **4.1. Centres of Conference/Exposition/Exhibition**

These centres provide an economic recovery and a dynamic image to regions. Their importance is increasing every each year and cities tend towards convention tourism to disperse the tourism activities interrupted in a year, through the year. Istanbul is making progress in convention tourism during the recent years. The area between Maçka and Harbiye is called Valley of Congresses in Istanbul that hosted important events such as Habitat, World Architecture Congress, and NATO congress.

##### **4.2. Recreation (Entertainment) Parks**

Recreation and tourism are many times synonymous. Both bring enormous economic value to region throughout the country. In order to maximize the impact of recreation and tourism politically, specific goals and objectives should be included in the comprehensive plan for each region. In addition, strategic plans and budgets that facilitate the incorporation of parks, recreation and open space in tourism efforts need to be made at the regional level. Recreation (entertainment) parks may be run by private or public sector; they may be entertainment intensive as Euro-Disney or educational and scientific as future scope. Recreation (entertainment) parks are not only good instruments of tourism focused regional development, but also are essential to human well-being and liveability of a city. A city's quality of life is greatly enhanced by extensive parks and open space areas. Parks and natural areas directly mitigate climate change by moderating temperatures from the urban heat island effect (Combs and Tindell, 2008).

##### **4.3. Alternative Tourism**

Alternative tourism can be defined as 'forms of tourism that set out to be consistent with natural, social and community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences' (Wearing and Neil, 1999). Alternative tourism is used to describe the opposite of mass tourism, characterized by having a minimal impact of the environment, by being small in scale and by being locally based, ideally stimulating the local economy while preserving cultural identity. It is often referred to as rural tourism. Activities included under this definition include white-water rafting, scuba-diving, mountaineering and horseback riding (Cooper, 2004). Alternative tourism provides positive effects on employment, prolongation of tourism season, attraction and image of a region.

##### **4.4. Regional Natural Parks**

A regional natural park is a territory of high natural, cultural and landscape value, whose culture, nature, social structure and local economy are part of a sustainable development project, in harmony with the aspirations of the population (Clivaz, Hauser & Michelet, 2004). They are suitable areas for many kinds of nature sports and attracting tourists who want to do nature sports

or have trips in nature. Aosta in Italy, Camargue in France are among the regions that use regional natural park instrument successfully. Regional parks may get support from structural funds. European Union provides meaningful supports to efforts for protection of regional natural areas. Odra Delta Natural Park Project in Poland is being realized from October 2002 by EUCC-Poland in cooperation with EUCC-The Coastal Union International.

#### **4.5. Cultural Centres**

Cultural centres are buildings in which cultural assets are reserved, evaluated and exhibited. They are generally designed for multi-purpose usage, to serve as cinema, theatre and exhibit space. Cultural centres host various cultural organisations as exhibitions, plays, concerts and attract tourists, thus they help regional economy and development.

#### **4.6. Farms for Agricultural Tourism**

Due to gaining importance and a raising trend of agricultural tourism in recent decades, agricultural tourism could be used in cities and regions which are absent of historical, touristic values. Agricultural tourism is related with farms and agricultural activities. So tourists have different leisure experiences like picking fruits, attending rural festivals, participating rural daily life, milking animals, pruning trees and, they have authentic holidays thoroughly involved with rural life far from the stress and busyness of city life (Ertan and Güzel : 2009).

### **5.CONCLUSION**

Compensating of regional development disparities which cause several problems as ineffective use of resources, unbalanced distribution of population and migrations is an essential concern for providing sustainable development. For that reason, policies for development of undeveloped and less developed regions must be implemented to provide a sustainable development. One of the most effective of those policies is enhancing tourism activities in undeveloped and less developed regions. Tourism investments in order to compensating regional disparities have advantages such as their lower requirement of founding capital by comparison with industry investments and their contributions to social and cultural infrastructures of the regions. Globalisation and improvements in information and transportation enable diversification of tourism activities and so tourism investments that compatible with region's cultural, social and natural assets may be found for each region. For this purpose, tourism focused regional development instruments such as centres of conference/exhibition/exposition, recreation/entertainment parks, alternative tourism, regional natural parks, cultural centres; farms for agricultural tourism may be utilized. Types of tourism activities suitable, feasible and applicable for each region must be determined and these tourism activities must be promoted and supported in order to provide a sustainable regional development.

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