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Tourism in Peripheral Areas - A Case of Three Turkish Towns

The objective of this research is to investigate the residents' attitudes towards tourism in peripheral areas. Three locations that are close to the major tourist destinations in Turkey were selected and a questionnaire containing fifty questions were administered randomly and the results were tabulated. The initial conclusions is that these peripheral areas do not see themselves as competing with the major tourist destinations and share most of the attitudes that the residents of the major tourist centers.

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This research shows that residents of peripheral areas share the perception of residents of core tourism areas based upon a survey done in peripheral areas. According to Webster's Dictionary, "periphery" means outer limits or border. The term peripherality, however, is more than merely a geographical notion. In modern parlance, to describe something as peripheral is often to dismiss it as unimportant; of no interest to the majority and of no significance to world events. In other words, to be peripheral means to lack power and influence, and therefore carries social, political and economic implications (Brown and Hall, 1999). Usually studies dealing with peripheral tourist areas have been conducted in various remote areas of Europe, especially those which are highly dependent upon the core areas where the main economic activity takes place. It should be mentioned that the concept of peripherality is quite vague. The idea to conceptualize the world as divided into core and periphery was a product of development studies and became part of dependency theory (Frank, 1967; Wallerstein, 1974). This was a theory that stresses the dependency of underdeveloped countries upon strong, industrialized countries, which control advanced technology and capital in order to extract surplus and impose unfair terms of trade, leading to the continuing economic disadvantage of the undeveloped countries. This disadvantage, in most cases, leads to out-migration from underdeveloped, or peripheral, areas to developed countries or regions.

In tourism, the concept of periphery has usually been applied to the relationship between wealthy and industrialized tourist-generating countries and the less developed and often predominantly rural or coastal tourist-receiving regions. The former remain in control of the industry and extract holiday surplus from the latter. However, the latter do

not enjoy the profit. Brown and Derek (1999) suggest that it is perhaps more useful to take Frank's (1967) notion of metropolises and satellites, rather than core and periphery, since it allows us to conceive of both satellite areas within the metropolises and metropolises within the satellites.

In this research, as suggested by Frank (1967), the term peripheral refers to smaller tourist areas around an important destination. They share several characteristics of the larger destination, but remain more rural and less developed in terms of their tourism product. Three well-known tourist destinations (Izmir, Fethiye, and Mugla) and their respective peripheral areas (Eski Foca, Gocek and Dalyan) in western Turkey were selected. These peripheral areas are all small towns that share similar characteristics in terms of their tourism development. All of these towns have limited resources and could not accommodate large numbers of tourists. They are located in agricultural areas around beautiful bays that are used for commercial fishing and occasional sailing. Another characteristic of these peripheral areas is summer cottage communities. Although we do not have reliable statistics, owners of the summer cottages are visitors who may stay whole summer. In some respects, they are long-term tourists, as perceived by the permanent resident.

The objective of this research is to measure resident attitudes towards tourism impacts in these small rural communities on a comparative basis with core tourist areas. The research utilized a random sample of the residents and was conducted through face-to-face interviews. Fifty questions, covering benefits and costs of tourism, were asked. In answering the questions, a six-point scale was used, one representing complete disagreement and six representing complete agreement with the statement. A total of 139

responses (45 from Eski Foca, 68 from Dalyan, and 26 from Gocek) were obtained.

Considering the sizes of these small towns, the responses were quite representative. The questions were related to job creation, income generation, attitudes towards tourists, tourism investments, negative social impacts, environmental degradation, impact upon municipal services, and trade-off between job creation and environmental protection. Demographic information included income, level of education, age, occupation, and the length of their residency.

Several hypotheses were formulated about resident perceptions of tourism costs and benefits in metropole, as well as satellite areas. The perceptions that were considered include job creation by tourism; comparison of the income from traditional activities, like farming and fishing with tourism activities; and issues related to pollution of coastal areas. Other considered perceptions were price level increases due to tourism demand; decline in agricultural land; expenditures for infrastructure are mainly used by increased number of tourists; changes in family structure and the effects upon residents; attitudes towards summer home owners and foreign tourists; sharing facilities with tourists; and over crowdedness.

The preliminary results indicate that residents of peripheral areas are very supportive of tourism development in core or metropole areas. They do not see any problems that should concern them. Their responses demonstrate an awareness of tourism benefits. However, the respondents are also aware of some of the negative impacts of tourism. An question that deals with the trade-off of jobs versus environmental protection is strongly rejected by the residents of these three locales. Residents, in general, do not think tourism development and increased numbers of tourists would alienate them or

change their attitudes towards tourists and summer homes. Demographic variables such as income, length of residency, age, and educational levels did account for variances in the responses obtained.

Conclusion and Further Research:

The results indicate that these peripheral areas perceive themselves to be as extensions of the core areas and, thus, share the perceptions of residents in the core areas. However, in order to reach a sound conclusion, it is necessary to compare attitudes of core and peripheral area residents using a similar questionnaire containing similar sets of questions at the same time.

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