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# Opinions of Local People in Turgutköy (Marmaris) on Ecosystem-Based Tourism

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## ABSTRACT

*Ecotourism has been encouraged by many proponents and supporters throughout the world recently. It has brought a new perspective to sustainable development approach as an alternative to mass tourism. With its nature, culture and hospitable people, Turgutköy is a tourism centre which possesses most of the key elements of successful ecotourism. The objective of this study is to figure out the opinions of local people on socio-cultural impacts of tourism. In addition, this study also aims at determining the tourism and ecotourism knowledge of the local people there. This study has both quantitative and qualitative patterns. According to the collected data, the opinion of participants on socio-cultural impacts of tourism is seen as positive. In the qualitative findings of the research, 3 different definitions, each for tourism and ecotourism, have been identified.*

**Keywords:** Tourism, Ecotourism, Environment, Turgutköy, Attitude.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the perception of tourism in the world is changing slowly. The concepts of eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, in which natural and cultural environment is protected, are observed to be preferred over mass tourism. Ecotourism is considered to be an effective means of sustainable development as opposed to environmental and governmental disruptions of mass tourism which has an uncontrolled development [1].

When the research literature on tourism is examined, there are many researches in which local people's perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development are studied [2-5]. The findings of this research show that there are tourism investments realized without damaging the ecological environment and preserving the local culture. Brunt and Courtney (1999) have suggested to promote the positive contribution of tourism in any touristic area and suggested that regional tourism can be realized as sustainable tourism by minimizing the negative impacts of tourism. They emphasized the importance of knowing and predicting the perceptions and attitudes of local people for a successful tourism activity [6].

Doğan (2004) claimed that it is necessary to get the support of the local people in a region for tourism development and sustainability [7]. Given the social impacts of tourism, gradual and

long-term changes in social values, beliefs and cultures are inevitable. This effect was found to be closely related with the number of tourists visiting the region, their features and visiting durations [8].

Socio-cultural impacts of tourism emerge as a result of mutual relation between local people and tourists [9]. Cultural impact includes daily changes in the traditional life-style of local people. Traditional thoughts, values, norms and feelings of belonging can be caunted among them [10]. If tourists visit a region for a long time, local people gradually begin to speak their language; foreign marriages among young couples start and some local cultural values begin to lose their originality [11].

The objective of this research is to explore the perspectives of the local people, living in Turgutköy which is an important tourism center, towards tourism and tourists. The structure of the study is designed as follows: ecological characteristics and socio-economic status of Turgutköy as a tourism center are presented in the introduction part; research methods, and research instruments in the sample group are studied in the methods section; the data, obtained by surveys and interviews in which sampling method was applied, is analysed in the findings and discussion part, and comments were made with reference to the related literature; in the conclusion part, some conclusions were made out through the findings based on this research and in the light of the findings of previous researches.

#### **Problem statement:**

1. What are the opinions of local people on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism?
2. What are the tourism and eco-tourism perceptions of local people?

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was designed on the field research model. The scientific nature of field research is because it contains variables concerning individuals in the society. These variables consist of the (independent) variables such as individuals' gender known as social phenomenon, socio-economic status, education level, age, occupation, geographic region where he lives and so-called psychological and socio-psychological behavior variables such as individual's thoughts, attitude, perception and interest. The field survey not only examines these variables one by one (mean showing distribution characteristics, standard shift, etc.) but it also tries to reveal the relationship between variables [12].

In qualitative side of the research, open-ended questions were asked in order to determine how the concept of tourism and ecotourism is perceived by local people. In this section of the study, the information will be given about the sample of the study from which the research data were obtained, data collection instruments and data analysis.

#### **Working Group**

The sample of the study is composed of local people living in Turgutköy, officially dependent on Marmaris district of Muğla province. A total of 48 people participated in the study.

#### **Data Collection Instruments**

Survey on Social and Cultural Impacts of Tourism; consisting of 14 items, this Likert-type questionnaire was developed by [13], then validity and reliability studies were carried out by [14] by being adapted to Turkish. Cronbach's Alpha value of the survey was .90. Necessary

corrections were made by receiving 4 experts' opinion for content validity. The answers to 5-point Likert-type questionnaire consists of (5-completely agree, 4-agree, 3-undecided, 2-disagree and 1-strongly disagree) options.

*Semi-Structured Interview Form*; this interview form, prepared for collecting data for the qualitative part of the research, has been applied to the participants after the opinions of four of the experts were received and doing the necessary corrections. This form consists of open-ended questions.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire named "*Social and Cultural Impacts of Tourism*" have been saved in the database created over SPSS 18, then frequency, percentage, arithmetic average, t-test and ANOVA tests of the data have been employed.

Content analysis was used in the qualitative data analysis. By examining the answers of each individual to the questions, categories were formed and then, original examples were given in relation to these categories.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, local people's opinions on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism in relation to the quantitative section of research were reviewed initially; then the perception of tourism and ecotourism was analyzed concerning the qualitative dimension.

### 1. What are the opinions of local people on socio-cultural impacts of tourism?

**Table 1. Frequency and Arithmetic Mean Values of Participants' Perceptions on the Socio-Cultural Impact of Tourism**

Tourism Development Impact Items	Mean	Variants (Individual)*				
		5	4	3	2	1
1. Tourism has created jobs for our community.	4.75	36	12	-	-	-
2. Tourism has attracted investment to our community	4.56	30	15	3	-	-
3. Our standard of living has increased considerably because of tourism.	3.81	21	15	3	-	9
4. Tourism has given economic benefits to local people and businesses.	4.25	21	21	3	3	-
5. High-spending tourists have negatively affected our way of life.	1.88	-	3	3	27	15
6. Tourism has changed our traditional culture.	3.13	6	9	24	3	6
7. Local residents have suffered from living in a tourism destination area.	2.19	-	3	9	30	6
8. Tourism has encouraged a variety of cultural activities by the local residents.	3.63	3	30	12	-	3
9. Tourism has resulted in more cultural exchange between tourists and residents.	3.94	12	30	-	3	3
10. Tourism has resulted in positive impacts on the cultural identity of our community.	3.69	15	15	6	12	-
11. Tourism has resulted in traffic congestion, noise, & pollution.	2.69	6	9	3	24	6
12. Construction of hotels & tourist facilities have destroyed the natural environment.	3.19	9	12	12	9	6
13. Tourism has resulted in unpleasantly overcrowded beaches, hiking trails, parks and other outdoor places in our community.	1.94	3	3	-	24	18
14. Tourism provides more parks and other recreational areas for local residents.	3.94	15	21	9	-	3
Overall Mean		<b>3.40</b>				

\*1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

If Table 1 is examined, it is found that the expression getting the highest arithmetic mean ( $\bar{x}=4.75$ ) from the participants is “*Tourism provides various employment opportunities for people in our village*”. 36 participants replied “totally agree” and 12 of them gave the answer “agree” to this statement. In other words, there is a consensus that tourism provides a variety of business opportunities for the local population. The arithmetic mean of the expression “*Tourism provides various investments to our village (such as hotel, workplace, substructure etc.)*” is found ( $\bar{x}=4.56$ ). 30 participants said “totally agree”, 15 said “Agree” and 3 of them replied “Not Sure” for this expression. Another expression the arithmetic mean ( $\bar{x}=4.25$ ) of which is high is the 4<sup>th</sup> item which says “*Tourism contributes economically to our village and local people*”. 21 participants said 'totally agree', 21 said 'Agree', 3 said 'Neutral' and 3 of them gave the answer 'Disagree' for this article. This finding is consistent with the opinions of [15] that the most important benefit of tourism is to offer job opportunities for local people and provide employment.

When Table 1 is examined, the lowest arithmetic average ( $\bar{x}=1.88$ ) is the 5<sup>th</sup> item expressing “*When we see very rich tourist, our lifestyle is affected negatively*”. 15 participants said “strongly disagree”, 27 said “disagree”, 3 replied “neutral” and 3 of them gave “Agree” response for this item. Another item unsupported by the participants is 13<sup>th</sup> item which says “*Tourism means unpleasant, too crowded beaches, parks, roads and open public space*”; its arithmetic mean is ( $\bar{x}=1.94$ ). 18 of the participants said 'disagree', 24 replied 'Disagree', 3 answered 'Agree' and 3 of them replied 'totally agree' for this item. This finding differs with the opinions of [16] that says the economic impacts of tourism on local people is positive, whereas it has negative effects and consequences in terms of social and cultural values. Because negative thoughts of local people about tourism and its impacts are quite limited. During interviews by investigators, some families have expressed that they are disturbed since their sons marry foreign girls.

## **2. How is the perception of the local community for eco-tourism and tourism?**

### **a) The participants’ expressions on “According to me, tourism means...” were evaluated in three categories:**

1. (18 respondent) *It is the travelling that people do to rest, enjoy and learn about the other cultures.*

Some expressions in this category are those:

“It is cultural introduction”,

“It is to take part in entertainment, cultural exchange, travelling and many different activities”,

“It is a trip to see and learn about new places and natural beauty, rest and enjoy”.

2. (21 respondent) *Tourism is a source of income for local community.*

Some expressions in this category are:

“It means the development of our country and the increase of living standards”,

“Money is a source of income”,

“Contribution to national income is a way of being opened to the world”,

“Money is to gain”,

“Spending money, gaining money”.

3. (9 respondent) *Tourism is cultural interaction.*

Some expressions in this category are:

“It is an activity that gives local community the chance of having new friends and meeting people from different culture”,  
“It is joining of people from different cultures”,  
“It is joining of different people and cultural interaction”.

**b) The participants’ expressions on “According to me, eco-tourism means...” are like those:**

*(48 respondent) It means the tourism activities which are carried on without damaging the natural environment.*

Some expressions in this category are:

“It is to improve the tourism without damaging the nature”,

“It is to protect the nature’, ‘It is the chance to see and know the nature”,

“It is the tourism that allows being in the nature by protecting the environment and the natural areas”,

“It is the tourism that only allows construction and building hotels in only permitted lands without changing the natural environment and protecting the forests”.

**c) The expressions of the participants on the answers about the question “According to you, what are the reasons for people’s coming to Turgutköy?” were evaluated in three different categories:**

*(9 respondent) To know the village culture, and learn about the village life.*

*(30 respondent) To swim in the sea by seeing the natural beauty, waterfall and the historical artifact.*

*(9 respondent) To enjoy the sea and the nature through cheap living conditions in a quiet and peaceful environment.*

Turgutköy is a village settlement in Marmaris district of Muğla Province. It is 30 km away from Marmaris. Small buses depart for Turgutköy from Marmaris Minibus Terminal every hour. There are 10 small buses serving between Marmaris and Turgutköy. These small buses start at 7.00 in the morning and serve until 7.00 in the evening. Tourism activities in Turgutköy are conducted depending on the sea in summer months, and provide partial contribution to the region economy. It cannot be claimed that all the people in the region take part in tourism activities. One of the most important negative activities that disturb tourists is leading the tourists to the arranged shops. Turgutköy presents an authentic environment with its special bay, beach, historical and natural beauty to the tourists. It is feared that this region will lose its authentic properties in result of mass tourism pressure in the following years.

A 5-star hotel building is going on in Turgutköy at present. Entrepreneurs from local community and some other cities build apart hotels and hostels as tourism management. It is known that people spending their holiday in the quiet and peaceful environment of the village come again in the following years, and suggest this place to the people around them. Some other tourists come to Turgutköy on yacht or by their private cars, swim in the sea, see historical places and the waterfall which presents a wonderful beauty, and they lastly buy thyme honey, peanut, and other organic fruit and vegetables cultivated in the village and around it. In addition, some foreign tourists usually come for just one day through jeep-safari due to the lack of mass tourism places, such as disco, bar, etc. The beach of Turgutköy has an appropriate character for caravan tourism thanks to its width and quiet environment. Therefore, people coming for touristic intents and staying for more than one day are domestic tourists, and they are generally from inner Aegean and Mediterranean regions.

Turgutköy and the forest around it (*Pinus Brutia*) have a rich structure in terms of vegetation, and medical and aromatic plants. Some necessary precautions should certainly be taken to protect the biological variety and to transfer to new generations.

There are six facilities which serve as apart hotels in Turgutköy. There are 28 flats in these apart hotels totally. One-night stand in an apart hotel is between 50 TL and 75 TL for the year 2010. Tourists can cook their meal by themselves in these apart hotels which have furniture. It is possible that tourists can buy whatever they need to eat and drink from the markets in the village, fruit and vegetables stalls in the village square, and the travelling vans. There are two markets in the village. Organic fruit and vegetables, such as tomato, pepper, eggplant, cucumber, gherkin, black-eyed pea, bamia, bean, melon, watermelon, almond and plum, are cultivated in the village.

Agricultural areas for the village are extremely appropriate for the activity 'Hobby Gardens' which is intended for the tourists planning to stay longer in the village. However, it is understood from observations of the researchers and interview with the village habitants that such an activity has never been done so far.

Until 1995, when tourism starts in the village, plants cultivated in the village, such as sage tea, thyme and daphne were collected and sent to İzmir via merchants. Peanut cultivating and apiculture (pine honey and thyme honey) were in advanced level. Cultivating citrus fruit and olives, as well as animal raising were done just to meet the needs of the village people.

Because the young of the village work in touristic places, it is hard to find the workforce for the agriculture. Although agricultural production and earning were high in the past, they decrease day by day. Villagers do not want to work for agriculture since working in tourism is seen clean and easy.

## RESULTS

It is understood that opinions of the local people living in Turgutköy about the effects of tourism on socio-economy are positive. It is remarkable that participants emphasize that the effects of tourism on finding job and presenting infrastructural services are positive. Besides, the local community does not agree with the opinions about the negative effects of tourism. Tourism has become a remarkable working area since the opportunities of some working areas, such as agriculture and commerce, are limited.

Participants' perceptions on tourism and eco-tourism are also positive. It appears that the emphasis on tourism's being a way of cultural interaction and income. From the interview made with local people, it is understood that the issue of tourism's providing new job opportunities for the local community has become more important. Local community wants the protection of historical and natural beauty beside wanting the coming of more tourists. On the other hand, it seems that local people do not have any attempts for ecological tourism.

It is seen in Turgutköy that some families benefit from the economic advantages of tourism by building apartments and hostels on their lands especially for the domestic tourists while some others are not in any attempt. To open small tourism facilities can be provided for those who have enough land by supplying them various credit options.



The region has an important potential in terms of producing thyme honey and pine honey, as well as peanut. People who have low income can be encouraged to take part in such kind of economic activities.

It is understood that local people are not sensible enough for issue of protecting ecological environment. Certain activities can be organized to inform the local community on this issue.

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