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SUSTAINABILITY OF CULTURAL TOURISM: SILLE SAMPLE

Abstract

In the last two decades sustainability has emerged as a force in the tourism industry, offering new directions and values for public policy, and inducing the creation of the concept of sustainable tourism. In order to determine the influence in the process of creating the concept of sustainable culture tourism, the appearance, presence and meaning of the concept were studied in the context. This form consists of four sections which structure the information contained in the document in accordance with the objective of the study: 1)Treatment of The Term Sustainable Tourism, 2)The Term of Cultural Tourism, 3)Development and Sustainability of Cultural Tourism, 4)Information About Sille, 5) Conclusion and Strategies for Developing Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Sille. The three sections are concerned with the details of how the concept of sustainable cultural tourism is incorporated. The “Conclusion and Strategies for Developing Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Sille” section centers on how the document can be applied, affirming whether there is strategic orientation and/or specific instruments or actions in this sense.

Keywords: Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Culture Tourism, Sille, Konya

Introduction

Cultural tourism is important for conserving and realising the value of our heritage. It also enables cultural exchange and encourages cultural diversity to flourish. Tourism, however, is an industry facing many different directions and one which has both local and global environmental implications. Reconciling the potential conflicts between promoting both tourism and sustainability is a major policy challenge for historic towns and cities. In this study, sustainability of traditional Sille settlement has been aimed and ecological characteristics with economic and socio-cultural characteristics of Sille have been taken as basis.

1. The Concept of Sustainable Tourism

The concept of “sustainability” was initially used in 1970’s but yet it was officially defined in the “Our Common Future” report released in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, sponsored by the United Nations. The report generally has the characteristics of a presentation about the environmental problems that threaten the earth and actions to be taken to solve these problems, both in national and international levels. While there still are great debates over, the concept of sustainable development, which takes part in the report, is an all-purpose definition that expresses a general opinion about the future of the earth: sustainability is defined as “development that meets the requirements of today without sacrificing the resources for future generations to meet theirs” in the report (WCED, 1987).

Objectives for sustainable development are arranged in the report as follows:

- to reinvestigate serious environmental and developmental problems, and to suggest factual proposals on how to deal with them,
- to develop contributive methods of international cooperation to form performative policies concerning necessary regulations on these problems,
- to increase attention of voluntary foundations, individuals, business communities, institutions and governments,
- to satisfy human needs,
- to preserve and enrich the future while present needs of local communities and tourists are being met.

As these objectives are being achieved; it becomes more of an issue to plan the management of resources that provide cultural integrity, improve biological diversity and support lives of creatures, fulfill the economical and social needs. (Kaya and Smardon, 2001). The basis of sustainability is based on productive use of natural resources, reduction of waste, recycling of resources and perpetual preservation of the environment so as to meet the needs of future generations..

2. Cultural Tourism

The word “culture” is derived from the Latin word “cultura” and has been in use in various languages since the 12th century. The word, which had previously been used to correspond to some lexical meanings of agricultural production and cultivation, was defined as attainments, arts, traditions of human communities and their total life styles as of the 19th century (Öter and Özdoğan, 2005: 127). As for our time, culture is defined as the whole which consists of

moral and material values including various information, practices, standards of judgement, general manners, opinions, thoughts and behaviours in a society. All of these form an exclusive way of life which is acknowledged by the people of the society and makes the society distinctive among others.

The processes which make culture and tourism related with each other can be grouped in two. The first is social and cultural values. The narrowing gap between super and subcultures, and between art and life, the increasing mobility of humans and articles, and the dissolving of intercultural borders speed up the development of these values. Secondly, experiences of tourists are acculturating and creating new forms of culture. Cultural motives related with travelling are consumed not only by tourists but also by other cultural industries (Öter ve Özdoğan, 2005: 128).

In literature, it is conspicuous that cultural tourism is defined in terms of two different approaches which are conceptual and technical. From the viewpoint of the conceptual approach, cultural tourism is defined as journeys of individuals that are headed towards culturally attractive, exotic destinations so as to attain new information and satisfy their cultural needs. As for the technical approach, it is all travellings of people to areas, which have artistic, dramatic and cultural heritage, excluding where those people normally live (Richards, 2001: 21).

3. Development and Sustainability of Cultural Tourism

Cultural items, which are exhibited in museums and historical areas as travelling motivation, have profound history. The word „Tourist“ is supposed to be related with the „Grand Tour“ in 1670 (McCain and Ray, 2003: 714). It is possible to say that culture is among the root causes of the organisation of the “Grand Tour” in Europe. The Grand Tour was undertaken as a very important part of the education of the nobles’ children. Highly motivated individuals who attended to the Grand Tour were rubbernecking particular areas, such as museums, cultural landscapes, churches and festivals. The basic purpose of the visits to those places was all of the diverse forms of culture to be experienced (Hausmann, 2007: 176). In between the years 1750 and 1850, cultural tourism meant to organise trips to Europe with the aim of studying and practicing fine arts. British aristocrats were returning „sophisticated“ after those trips. In the following century, cultural tourism was used to form a new social class. Trips on cultural purpose has taken on a dimension of touristic activity and visiting historical and cultural areas has become popular trips of today. Families, individual members and groups of upper classes, and even international visitors often prefer spending their spare time travelling to historical places. Although it dates back to the ancient times for culture to be a journey motivation, the term „cultural tourism“ was first put forward in the beginning of 1980’s in the European Commission during the studies to reveal the cultural identity and the cultural heritage of the European Union. When it comes to the 1990’s, it has gained more importance with tour operators stepping in (Çulha, 2008: 817).

Cultural tourism may result in cultural assets’ being frazzled or protected. These kinds of results make it essential to pay attention to cultural tourism in central and local tourism politics. Cultural tourism may increase the diversity of products and visitors at the destinations, the number of visitors, and help development considerate to the cultures of locals

(Öter and Özdoğan, 2005:128). The view which considers cultural tourism to have come out as a new potential for communities also goes along with the situation. As mentioned afore, cultural tourism becomes more of an issue in the sense of its income-generating effect along with the preservation of cultural values (Öztürk and Yazıcıoğlu, 2002: 189). Cultural tourism involves responsible actions which are based on willingness. Cultural tourism has tendencies to define and protect particular elements and resources (Donlon, 2010: 29-31).

Cultural tourism is quite important in terms of the upgrowth of the economic conditions of locals as a result of tourism activities; locals' having a better perception of the values and problems of the environment they are in with socio-cultural development; self-awareness of people by preventing the historical textures from turning into blighted areas and considering monuments and surroundings to be heritage rather than leaving them to become abandoned ruin fields; transformation of those areas into preserved and in-use centers of attraction; re-functionalising cultural heritage by investigating reuse possibilities of structures in historical areas and determining their capacities as results of some detections along with organising them to meet contemporary usage after restoration works to be done; dialogues between host societies and visitors bringing different cultures together and creating opportunities for them to be closely acquainted with each other by also using diverse cultures as instruments of communication, and providing environment for visitors in which necessary standards of living are generated by having come into existence of required standards for sustainable tourism (Özkan, 2005: 36–37).

4. History and Touristic Values of Sille

Sille is located in Central Anatolia Region of Türkiye, within the provincial borders of Konya. It is a residential area which has a neighbourhood status within the borders of Selçuklu which

is one of the central districts that constitute Konya City Center today. Being at a generally crinkled topography and having quality of a valley habitation, Sille is located over the valley of Sille Creek which flows between Takkeli Mountain (Minor Gevele Mountain) and Karabuga Mountains. Especially paleozoic based terrains and formations dating to various periods over them are seen in the territory where formations of all geological times are also seen. In the region where neogene and quaternary covers are seen, particularly volcanic elements take a wide space. There are caves at the upper sides of Sille where volcanic materials are abundant (Biricik, 1999: 38). Mountains that surround Sille are considered as the plateau area fragmented by the creek and the valley of Sille Creek. Major Gevele (1709 m.), Minor Gevele/Takkeli Mountain (1643 m.) form the primary mountainsides. In the region where continental climate is predominant, hot and dry summer days are superseded by cold and snowy days in winter. Annual average temperature is 11,6 °C and annual rainfall amount is approximately 320 mm. Sille Creek and the Sille Dam over it are the primary hidrographical elements.

History of Sille is supposed to date back to 6000 years ago. The oldest settlement is the mound of Sızma located to the north. Ruins of 8th-7th century (B.C.) Phrygian civilisation have been found in explorations made here. The region has been dominated by Hittite, Phrygian, Byzantine, Seljukian, Karamanid and Ottoman civilisations (Özönder, 1998, 50). The name Sille is reputed to be derived from Sileni who are the water nymphs of the earth goddess Cybele and the courtiers of Dionysus the god of wine, at the time of Phrygians. Silenos literally means floodwater and Sille Creek could have been restrained only after the building of the dam in 1960's (Çavuşoğlu, 1998: 28).

When historical settlement in Sille is evaluated, it is possible for three notable periods (Pre-Christian, Christian, Islamic) to be mentioned from the ancient times to the present. The area was one where Christians built their primary shelters and shrines because of its soil which is

convenient for easily digging and carving. Cave churches and caverns carved to the mounds in the region form a settling configuration similar to the ones in the Cappadocia region. Sille stone, which is a kind of a soft granite and also called bloodstone or hematite, is still quarried and diversely used along with being an ideal construction material due to its effortless penetrability, durability and evapotranspiration qualities. Sille stone was used in garths and clotures of distinctively architected traditional Konya houses of which more than 100-150 year olds are not prevalent because of being made of adobe (Çavuşoğlu, 1998: 29).

Being located on the route of Rome- Byzantium-Jerusalem, Sille used to be a camp for travellers of the 'Holy Pilgrimage'. While she was on her way to Jerusalem in 327 A.D. Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine the Great, stopped by Konya and ordered the Hagia Helena Church to be built as a shrine for Christians after seeing the engraved shrines dating back to the early periods of Christianity. The church in which there are depictions of Jesus, Mary and the apostles is one of the early Christian churches in Anatolia. Indigenous Sille stone was also used building the church. Besides, there are also a lot more of shrines, rock monasteries, holy wells and baths in Sille. The Hagios Khariton Monastery, the monastery at Salasorma, Koimesis Tes Panagias (Banaya), the Kyriakon Church and the Hill Chapel are some of the historical buildings that survive until today. Especially the Hagios Khariton Monastery, where Rumi also stayed for a while, had hosted both muslims and christians as a shrine throughout centuries. According to a rumour, Rumi made friends with the patriarch of the church and stayed there for 40 days (Çavuşoğlu, 1998: 29). The Hagios Khariton Monastery, which is reputed to be founded by St. Chariton in the 4th century A.D., is located on the lower slopes of the Takkeli Mountain. The monastery consists of two churches carved to the rocks, a holy well and monks' cells. The Koimesis Tis Panagias Church was carved to the rocks on the southern slope of Sille. The Kyriakon Church is

located at Subaşı neighbourhood close to Papaz Creek. It is regarded to be built between the 10th and the 11th centuries and was used as a pottery workshop in the 20th century. The monastery at Salasorma is rock engraved and consists of a church, a grave and unordered planned localities. The Hill Chapel is also colloquially called the 'Minor Church' and known as the 'Milk Church' due to its being visited by mothers hoping for help who went dry early. There is a muslim and non-muslim cemetery around the chapel (Anonymous,2012:15).

There are significant Ottoman Era mosques in Sille which is of importance in the sense of Turkish Islamic Art. Although they have underwent quite a lot of changes until our time, these mosques featuring all the qualities of Turkish carpentry are dated to the 18th and the 19th centuries. The architectural qualities of the Ottoman Era can be seen in the buildings named Kurtuluş Mosque (Mormi Mosque), Subaşı Mosque (Karhane Mosque), Mezaryakası Mosque (Kayabaşı Mosque), Orta Mahalle Mosque, Ak Mosque, Karataş Mosque and Çay (Anonymous,2012:31).

Having a crowded population in the 18th and the 19th centuries, Sille's aqua architecture is rich. Today; 2 Turkish baths, 17 fountains, 1 laundrette and 1 aqueduct can be seen in the settlement. Among the baths called Ak (Hacı Ali Ağa) Hamam and Subaşı Hamam, the former is in the bazaar to the east whereas the latter is to the west of the town. Both was built in the 19th century.

Konya has been a subject to many floods throughout history. Sille Creek is one of the five among streams which threaten Konya and its surroundings, and are referred to as lions in the idiom 'Konya is in the mouths of five lions'. Besides having the mission of irrigation, Sille Himmet Ölçmen Dam, which was built in the years between 1956 and 1960 to keep the town

safe from floods and periodically irrigate the farm lands, is a worthwhile resort with its surrounding picnic sites and natural beauties.

Two public buildings dated to some time between the 19th and the 20th centuries have made it to the present day. First one of them is the arsenal at the entrance to the east of Sille. The other public building is Sille Primary School which is dated to 1941 and currently serves as Sille Cultural Center after being restored by the municipality.

The urban Greeks were moved to Sille from the castle as a safety precaution due to the conquest conventions after Seljuks had conquered Konya. Gevele Castle which is strategically located above Sille used to be a point of defence regarded as highly important by Mehmed the Conqueror. Because he annexed Konya to the Ottomans by taking over that famous castle. In the Ottoman Era, the region's being located over the silk road caused it to be regarded both socio-politically and socio-economically important (Özönder, 1998, 50). It is said that Sille had a population of 18.000 before the republican period. The population has grown even more because of the religious and financial constructions. In the 1900's, there were 19.000 people living in 16 neighbourhoods (Kapar, 2008, <http://www.sille.org.tr/index.php?p=icerik&id=89>). However, the Turkish population living in the Balkans settled here whereas the Greek population living here went to the Balkans as a result of the decision taken in the treaty of Lousanne to exchange population (Tapur, 2011: 19). The region, where plenty of craftwork used to be done economically, went further in various craftwork areas and kept its place as a substantial centre of trade. Such that approximately 300 workshops, 7 mosques and 7 churches are mentioned to exist in the period (Kapar, 2008). A great majority of cultural footprints, historical places and areas concerning multiple nations from past to present are still existent in Sille. Churches, mosques, fountains, historical mansions and traditional Sille

houses which are considered to be among these cultural and historical assets were examined, and Sille was declared to be an “Urban Protected Area” in 2001 (decree no 4378 of 19.11.2001) by the High Commission for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets (Tapur, 2009: 19). While rug business, grapery, apiculture, stone craftsmanship, candle production, rose production and pottery were densely practised along with trading in the past, agricultural activity at a certain extent and tourism are being dealt with today. Sille has a significant tourism potential with the restored Hagia Helena Church, several mosques, cave churches, baths, mansions, fountains and bridges.

Sille, which has already been tight-knit to the Turkish-Islamic cultural wealth, keeps the values of the past alive as it were standing against having fallen into a rut by modern times. The people of Sille keep their customs and traditions alive by wedding feasts, sending males off to serve their times in the military service and greeting them back, the collective celebrations called ‘Gereğiler’ in the beginnings of vintages, monthly assemblies and the Sille Day events that take place annually on the last Sunday of September. Sille is also of quite an importance in terms of food culture. It contains its own exclusive tastes within itself in addition to the rich Konya cuisine. Especially wedding feasts, dinings en mass called ‘Halfene’ which every family pays for its own (similar to Dutch treat), and dinner parties called ‘İnce Manca’ are feasts hold where those flavours are commonly presented. From the Sille cuisine, the vast majority of which consists of meat dishes, yoghurt (dolga) and gombo, water heurek and milk pastry, farci-stuffed grape leaves, noodle pilaf, crisp flaky pastry, köşeli, dried fish (gavinna), lamb’s feet, omelette (gaygana), calla, shredded wheat in syrup (kadayıf), baklava and dried fruits and vegetables called ‘Kak’ are intrinsic to Sille. Music plays an important role in the oral tradition of Sille. Local songs are still being tried to have kept alive in the region where zither, oud and saz are used (Anonymous,2012:118).

5. Conclusion and Suggestions for Sustainability of Cultural Tourism in Sille

Tourism Development Strategies

- a. Creating a plan on a local scale considering the tourism supply and demand of the region in accordance with the Tourism Strategy of Türkiye.
- b. Encouraging investors in favour of fulfilling the needs of the regional infrastructure.
- c. Encouraging small business owners, who are a part of the tourism supply in Sille, in favour of improving their contribution to the regional economy.

Tourism Development Principles

- Ensuring active participation and administering coordination of shareholders who play a part in the development of tourism.
- Evaluating destination resources integrally in order to facilitate coordination in management of touristic products.
- Implementing plans in the sense of preserving and improving the cultural and natural values of Sille.

The architectural quality of the houses in Sille gives the region an authentic appearance. Andesite, which is abundant in and around Sille, was used while numerous historical structures were being constructed in the region and Konya. In the recent years, historical mansions in Sille have been in restoration in favour of presenting Sille to the tourism industry. Restoration of historical assets preserving their qualities has an importance of handing cultural values down to the next generations. Putting these mansions into service as boutique hotels when the aforesaid restoration works are done is of quite an importance for the sustainability of cultural tourism in the region. Boutique hotels generally have less than 25 rooms and they are small hotels which draw attention with their specific interior designs and architectures.

Compatibility of touristic accommodations to be constructed with the historic texture of Sille and participation of local people in tourism activities as managers both are indispensable strategies for sustainable tourism. Such boutique hotels located in Sille are crucial for the increase of the number of stays and economic recovery in the region.

Notably the ancient churches and monasteries inherited from the Christian period; mosques, fountains, bridges, baths from the Seljukian and the Ottoman periods are significant touristic values with their authentic architectures, however they can't be presented to the tourism industry due to the lack of infrastructure today. Infrastructural investments need to be improved and the progress should be managed in cooperation with the public and the private sectors.

Local people need to be encouraged to engage in agricultural activity and to contribute to the economical activities by fruit growing, grape and cereal production pursuant to the geographical characteristics of the region. On this wise, it is necessary for the food offered to the tourists to be produced in natural environment and to be indigenous, in order for Sille to become a touristic brand.

It is on records that carpet weaving in Sille goes back to Phrygians. A plant commonly known as 'buckthorn' which grows in and around Sille and is used in dye production, also had an effect on the development of carpet weaving there (Sarıköse,2008:259). Sille was one of the most significant carpet centers of Konya region. Carpet business in Sille improved by coloring and designing in an intrinsic style as from the 17th century. Red, light yellow, light green, black, pink and cream colors were used in Sille carpets. As of today, carpet looms have lost their significance and weaving has substantially come to an end in Sille. Textile workshops need to be reestablished and cultural values need to be revived.

History of pottery production in Sille goes back to the prehistoric ages. The mud used was obtained by mixing the clay dugged out of 5m deep cavities to the south of Sille and fine sand. Pottery produced in workshops called 'Karhane' in Sille were used as cups, bricks, tiles, tandoors, drinkware and pots, and marketed to others areas of the country. However, pottery which was an important source of income for the people has almost been forgotten nowadays. The most famous one of the few karhanes that maintain production is the workshop founded at the rock engraved complex where the Kyriakon Church is, and only one master is involved in the process of production. Pottery workshops need to be established as done in Avanos district of Nevşehir province, and production and marketing activities need to be increased. Tourists visiting those workshops and experiencing pottery production would possibly be an attractive quality for cultural tourism. During their visits to Sille, tourists would buy sovenirs peculiar to Sille and those objects would be substantial motivation instruments for them to visit the region again.

In Sille, production of wax made of animal tallow has been an agelong economical activity. As of today, production is managed only in one workshop and the candles produced are of quite an importance in the country's exportation. Wax production needs to be increased and presented to tourism industry via local tradesmen.

Sille clothing and accessories preserved in the museums in Konya and Sille, in special collections and in dowries of the people living in Sille are quite important. Exposing local Anatolian clothing qualities, the outfits differ from the outfits of adjacent regions particularly Konya, with their highly intense and elaborately purred titivation. Locally produced ornaments and clothes which expose native patterns of Sille should be sold in souvenir shops.

Local people should be persuaded to welcome tourism activities and tourists by raising their awareness about tourism. Cultural tourism is a kind of tourism which forms intercultural

clemency as a result of the resultant acculturation of people rubbing shoulders with others from different cultures. Adoption and appreciation of tourism by the local people is a very important factor in favour of tourism to develop and be made sustainable.

As of 2013, tourism training is being provided in three tourism faculties in Konya. In order to meet the requirements of trained tourism industry workers in Sille, tourism professionals studying in and graduated from these schools need to be orientated.

Not exceeding the bearing capacity of the region should be paid attention to in order not to affect the historical texture and cultural values of Sille along with the daily lives of local people.

Promotion of the historical assets related with Christianity and the historical past of Sille should be provided abroad as well. Sille culture should be handed to tourists by organising events and local festivals on holy days of Christians.

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