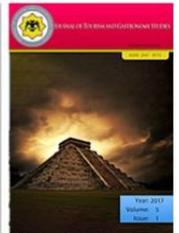




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A Study on Examining Turkey and Australia by Swot Analysis in terms of Ecotourism

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Abstract

This study is aimed to discuss the conditions of ecotourism in Turkey and Australia. Because Australia is one of the best ecotourism place country in the world, but Turkey have more ecotourism wealth despite of not significant place in the world. So the strengths of Australia are considered to be examples for Turkey. The research categorized the data collected through literature survey by SWOT analysis. With this categorization, is discussed Turkey's and Australia's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks in terms of ecotourism. The results of the study can be summarized as follows: Both Turkey and Australia have rich potentials in ecotourism. While ecotourism is supported with various strategies and action plans in Turkey, Australia holds a system of certification for ecotourism. In this study that whiles the cited certification system serves the sustainability of natural areas, the projects done in Turkey pose risks to natural areas. Besides, ecotouristic areas in Turkey suffer from such factors as infrastructure and superstructure defects, needs of enrichment, pollution caused by visitors, and shortage of inspection.

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Introduction

Various disorders resulted from intense use of natural resources for touristic purposes (Batman, Demirel & Kurdoglu, 2016; Cengiz, 2007) and the increasing environmental awareness in Western countries have taken effect in emergence of nature-based tourism (Closen, 2003, p. 72). It is fair to say that, in a world that has become so complicated, people seek consolation in natural areas and thus in ecotourism (Cetin & Sevik, 2016, p. 1). With increasing attention, ecotourism has come forward in academic circles since the late 1980's. From that time on, ecotourism has taken place in governmental policies, state-sponsored reports, consultancies, and institutional declarations including those of private sector (Hall, 2010, p. 24). This type of tourism is defined in various ways in literature, each being focused on some aspects of it. To mention a few:

“Tourism in a natural area that focuses on optimal resources use, leaves minimal impact on the environment and offers interesting ways to learn about the environment with operators that use resources wisely, contribute to conserving the environment and help local communities.”(www.ecotourism.org.au¹).

World Tourism Organization (WTO) defined “ecotourism is the main motivation of the tourists is the observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas, minimizes negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment and supports the maintenance of natural areas which are used as ecotourism attractions” (www.sdt.unwto.org).

Another definition is focused on its relation to indigenous cultures: “Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation” (www.billytea.com.au).

Ecotourism is a young industry compared to other types of tourism, provided that it involves significant activities to preserve natural and cultural resources and that it benefits both indigenous peoples and governments economically (Demir, Esbah & Akgun, 2016, p. 456). Ecotourism is quite effective in creating business diversity and employment opportunities (Thwaites, Lipscombe & Smith, 2002, p. 88). There are some rules to be observed in ecotourism, the first of which is the “sustainability of natural environment.” Another principle is of the “sustainability of indigenous cultures” and of the “benefit of indigenous peoples.” The latter principle requires that native peoples and environments should benefit from touristic activities, and that cultural elements, both material and spiritual, should not degenerate (www.ekoturizmdernegi.org).

Based on these definitions, it is safe to say that ecotourism signifies proper use of resources, preservation of culture and biodiversity, benefit of indigenous people, respect and protection for native culture. Besides, it can be argued that environmental practices and satisfactory experiences of participants will contribute to people's interests in ecotourism and their environmental attitudes (Lee & Moscardo, 2005, p. 546).

Ecotourism in Turkey

Turkey has a rich potential for ecologically-based types of tourism. This potential is supported by the Turkey's Tourism Strategy 2023 (Batman, Demirel & Kurdoglu, 2016, p. 234). For the purpose of improving ecotourism,

Turkey's Tourism Strategy (2007) determined the points of infrastructure improvements, the tour routes, and the regions of developments/actions. Below is a summary of the studies about Turkey's eco-touristic destinations:

Ilgaz Mountain National Park: Located in Bursa, the destination facilitates sports, camping, birdwatching, picnic, trekking, wild life, skiing, and photography. Some argues that the park is not used effectively, and thus the following suggestions are made (Cetin & Sevik, 2016, p. 8-9):

- Preventing the air, soil, water, and noise pollution and working to improve the aesthetic appearance.
- Ensuring the sustainability of ecological, biological, geological, geomorphological, landscape, and cultural resources, preserving ecological balance, and improving the infrastructure and superstructure.
- Taking technical and administrative measures to preserve species in natural habitats.
- Educating local people and visitors to create awareness, and enlivening the local and regional economy.

Igneada: Announced as a national park in 2007, Igneada is known for its floodplain forests, lagoons, endemic and endangered species, and wild life. However, the sensitive ecosystem is threatened by some economic activities, overgrazing, and urbanization. Thus the improvement of ecotourism in the region entails economic, social, and environmental sustainability (Demir, Esbah & Akgun, 2016, p. 456).

Altindere Valley National Park: Located in Trabzon province, the destination has two preserved areas. The high number of touristic visitors has posed risk for the natural structure. Both natural and cultural resources of the areas should be preserved for sustainability (Batman, Demirel & Kurdoglu, 2016, p. 242).

Karagol-Sahara National Park: The biggest problem of the destination, located in Artvin, is that it lacks adequate interaction with local people, governmental institutions, universities, and society. With a focus on the needs of the local people, the rules of proper use of the national park should be applied and the protective understanding should be prevalent (Cengiz, 2007, p. 265).

Murat Mountain: Located between Kutahya and Usak provinces, the region lacks some physical needs, which are necessary for organized tours, concerning equipment, infrastructure, lodging facilities, and food services. In addition, those who visit the area daily or at weekends for picnic or camping litter the ground, whereas inspection service is not adequate. To draw attention to the region, the sociocultural life can be enlivened by introducing facilities like a market for local products, cafés, restaurants, a tea house or a tea garden, life and recreational areas, and skiing houses. The picnic and camping areas can be renovated, trekking activities can be encouraged, together with receiving support from local people (Dinc & Kocan, 2012, p. 189).

Beysehir Lake National Park: People want to spend their leisure time in places with natural resources within this area located in Konya province. It is noted that people visit the park for trekking, outdoor photography, seeing historical and cultural sites, and they demand guides and maps for important sites (Sezgin & Gumus, 2016, p. 345-346).

Golhisar: This destination, located in Burdur province, has an important potential for ecotourism with its natural and cultural resources. But shortages in advertising and infrastructure prevent the exhibition of the existing

beauties. To put these beauties in use of tourism, day trips should be promoted, establishment of new facilities should be supported, tourists should be introduced to the villagers' authentic life, agreements should be made with national and international businesses of ecotourism, local people should be educated in ecotourism so they may take part actively in the sector, and they should be enabled to sell their own products for additional income (Yılmaz, 2011, p. 248).

Ecotourism in Australia

Australian federal government introduced regulations for national parks in late 1960's and 1970's (Poirier, 2007, p. 354-355). The country is rich in terms of eco-touristic resources, but indigenous people have financial shortages for eco-tourism. Their low income and lack of wealth cause them to face financial difficulties in establishing businesses. In addition, business procedures, official works that are often needed, and financial plans have some shortages. Another obstacle is the lack of education and the need for special education in ecotourism. The following knowledge and skills are necessary for eco-touristic businesses and tourism sector: Business and strategic planning, financial management and inspection, marketing, and technical skills for necessary equipment (Caldicott & Fuller, 2005, p. 14).

The essential element of park management in Australia is of resources. The primary role and the primary reason of establishment of national parks is to ensure natural preservation, which may be achieved thanks to the regulations introduced about natural, scientific, and cultural recourses (Poirier, 2007, p. 356). Australia's leading and most innovative ecotourism products provide an opportunity to learn about the environment with an operator who is committed to achieving best practice when using resources wisely, contributing to the conservation of the environment and helping local communities (www.billytea.com.au). Buultjens et al. (2010, p. 510) argue that the local tourism businesses are not compatible with ecotourism sufficiently. There are some factors explaining this condition, which are related to difficulties and to costs in the adaptation process for ecotourism. Some businesses contradict the NEAP criteria, some local operators ignore ecotourism or lack adequate knowledge about this sector, and those with sufficient knowledge are not interested in ecotourism. Importance of ecotourism in Australia can be outlined as follows (Ecotourism Australia-Annual-Report 2014-2015; p. 9):

- Ecotourism contributed over \$100 billion to the Australian economy in 2014 and is expected to grow by 1.6% annually for the next ten years.
- It plays an important role for Australia's tourism industry's growth to achieve its 2020 goals.
- Australia's natural resources are the most important attraction for international visitors and this will continue in future years.
- Maintaining Australia's brand and reputation is vital to the future growth and success of the tourism industry with the ecotourism industry providing authentic, memorable and safe visitor experiences.
- Visitors and market interests provide a significant opportunity for employment and business development for indigenous people.
- Protecting Australia's environmental and cultural assets is vital to underpin the diversity and quality of visitor experiences that Australia is well known for.

Ecotourism Certification Program

Certification is a way to ensure sustainability. A certificate defines the businesses to be rewarded for some certain criteria and determines standards for improvement of the truly sustainable tourism. The cited certification program is focused on visitors' satisfaction in economic, social, political, and cultural terms (Conaghan & Hanrahan, 2010, p. 95-96). With certificates, businesses stand out among their competitors and gain competitive advantage, and find partners with whom they gather around the shared purpose of contributing more to tourism by sustainable development (Font, 2002, p. 1).

Certification systems play a growing role in the voluntary practice of the elements taking place in legal regulations about travel procedures. These may be discussed under three main categories: environmental conditions of businesses, activities, and destinations; quality of products; and realization of institutional social responsibility in activities (WTO, 2003, p. 1).

According to the reports of World Tourism Organization, there are 59 certification programs and 17 award types in the world (WTO, 2002, p. 7). Conaghan & Hanrahan (2010, p. 102) summarized, in Chart 1, some data about the certification programs of STEP, Green Globe 21, Eco-Certification (Neap), GTBS, EU Flower, Green Key, Nordic Swan Ecolabel, and Legambiente Tourism:

Chart 1: Information about Certification Programs

Country of Certification	Coverage Area
STEP	World
Green Globe 21	World
Eco-Certification (Neap)	Australia
GTBS	UK
EU Flower	Europe
Green Key	Europe
Nordic Swan Ecolabel	Scandinavia
Legambiente Tourism	Italy

Source: Conaghan & Hanrahan, 2010, p. 102.

Certification programs differ in their titles and scopes (See, Chart 1). While the certification systems of STEP and Green Globe 21 are worldwide, the rest have limited scopes. Eco-Certification (Neap) is the system whose scope is Australia. This latter program is applied in the world for the first time (Holub, 2015, p. 70), and NEAP stands for "Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Programme" (Buckley, 2001, p. 165). The program is comprised of the following principles (Chester & Crabtree, 2002, p. 169-171):

- Being focused on natural areas
- Interpretation

- Environmental sustainability
- Contribution to preservation
- Working with indigenous communities
- Existence of cultural elements
- Ensuring customer satisfaction
- Applying responsible marketing

Certification system ensures the control of the use of environmental materials by independent inspection process carried out by third parties (www.ecotourism.org.au²). This system benefits consumers, local administrations, local communities, and local environment in various ways. The benefits of businesses are outlined below (Bien, 2007; WTO, 2003):

- It helps businesses improve themselves.
- Enables to reduce business costs.
- Ensures easy access to financial resources as it promotes the use of new technologies.
- Ensures marketing advantages.
- Ensures convenient governmental regulations due to environmental practices for social and economic developments.
- Enables to preserve environmental and cultural resources as the prosperity of tourism industry depends on them.

Studies on the ecotourism destinations of Australia, which has NEAP certification system, are outlined below:

There is a nature-based facility in SOL region, located in a pristine natural environment on the wild South Ocean. This facility is an element of marketing attraction (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2011, p. 565).

An action plan was made for nature-based tourism in South Australia. This plan offers opportunities to grow sustainable experiences and for places with growth potential. The plan includes walking against wonderful views, having experiences of matchless wild life near Adelaide and of matchless, absorbing wild sea life, and leaving lasting moments out of these emotional experiences (www.environment.sa.gov.au).

Looking at the conditions of ecotourism in Ningaloo and Legendre, it can be said that the sea potential in these locations has impact on ecotourism. As Ningaloo's ecotourism industry is greater, its ecotourism potential is higher. Negative effects of ecotourism and the effects of use levels may be defined by "The Ecotourism Sorensen Network." Ningaloo's overpopulation has negative impact on biodiversity. Increase in the monetary circulation in local economy can be considered an example of positive impact. As for Legendre, industrial harbor activities may cause damage to the qualities of the sea, and this may create a conflict in the future. Using the information in "The Ecotourism Sorensen Network" in ecotourism areas and using this information in the management of

administrators and policy makers, impacts of ecotourism may be prevented or minimized (Mason & Moore, 1998, p. 153).

Ningaloo is discussed in another study as follows: It has been popular and profitable to observe underwater sharks in Ningaloo. There are worries that sharks may be affected negatively due to visitors' interaction with them in ecotourism activities. But studies showed that ecotourism activities do not do harm to sharks. It is suggested that necessary measures should be taken to preserve their habitats, considering that the number of eco-tourists will increase in time (Sanzogni, Meekan & Meeuwig, 2015, p. 1-14).

Purnululu National Park: This park takes place in World Heritage List and is close to Warmun Aborigine Community. A study on the park and the community argues that local people's culture has provided non-material outcomes. Local people may gain considerable benefits from selling handiworks, but this is not the case currently. There are physical and administrative difficulties, including those of resources and motivation, in area visiting. Local people should be educated in ecotourism so they may be part of sustainable development. Local people's lack of interest in tourism or in being part of sustainability will create failure in the sector. The cited study shows that some of local people do not want to be involved in tourism. It is suggested that more works are needed so that all members of the society may be part of sustainability (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013, p. 38).

METHODOLOGY

Study Site

The scope of this study is comprised of Australia and Turkey. Australia is indicated among the prominent countries in ecotourism on the "www.gezimanya.com" website, and among the most exotic green travel destinations on the "www.mailce.com" website. These are the most popular tourism websites in Turkey. These include place reviews and can conduct potential tourist.

Turkey has a rich potential in terms of ecotourism, but it faces the risk of the degeneration of environmental assets due to unmindful use (www.ekoturizmdernegi.org). Therefore, it is considered that, as a leading country in ecotourism, Australia may be a good example for Turkey in the sector. So Turkey's ecotourism share can get more entry and more well-known place.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study is to examine Turkey's and Australia's positions in ecotourism and evaluate them by Swot analysis. As an important eco-touristic destination, Australia's position was analyzed with an argument that Turkey may turn its weaknesses and risks in ecotourism into opportunities with the example of Australia. This is what makes this study significant.

The research used content analysis for method in order to reach the objectives and searched in articles, books, and journals in respect to the ecotourism destinations in Australia and Turkey. Information about the cited destinations were included in the study by considering the purpose of the study. The collected categorized data by Swot analysis and drew general conclusions for the countries.

RESULTS

Turkey Swot Analysis

The swot analysis of Turkey in the direction of the books, article and literature search is show that Chart 2;

Chart 2: Turkey’s Swot Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
It may be argued that Turkey has a rich potential because of the eco-touristic diversity in it. Besides, ecotourism is supported with various strategies published nationwide and with action plans.	Ecotourism regions face physical lacking and infrastructure difficulties. It can also be said that the ecotourism areas have low quality and there are shortages in determining the tour routes. Visitors cause environmental pollution, and there is not sufficient inspection. Inefficient use of ecotourism areas and inadequate advertisement are other factors.
Opportunities	Threats
The number of eco-tourists increases day by day. Organizing day trips in areas where it is not available, and thus enlivening sociocultural life may create further opportunities.	The increase number of visitors poses risk for ecological balance, and the air, soil, water, and noise pollutions caused by visitors threat the eco-touristic areas. The destinations are also threatened by the lack of knowledge on the part of local people, by over grazing, increasing urbanization, and communication difficulties among the partners of ecotourism.

Australia Swot Analysis

The swot analysis of Australia in the direction of the books, article and literature search is show that Chart 3;

Chart 3: Australia’ s Swot Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Australia has a certification system and has introduced national parks regulations. There are nature-based facilities in this country with high eco-touristic potential. One may have quality wild life experiences in this country where ecotourism is combined with sea and where fish watching is among eco-touristic activities. Among Australia’s strengths in ecotourism are tour operators who use resources mindfully and the fact that ecotourism makes contributions to local economy.	Lack of awareness and lack of interest in tourism on part of local people comprise Australia’s weaknesses. Local people face difficulties in selling regional products and in financial terms. Procedures and costs are high in ecotourism business. Beside overpopulation, there are also physical and administrative difficulties.
Opportunities	Threats
The increasing number of eco-tourists makes the country more attractive. It is a renowned brand in ecotourism, with its quality visitors. Beside these opportunities, local people’s participation in ecotourism may create further employment.	Eco-touristic activities related to sea may cause damage to the sea life. These activities may also contradict with industrial harbor activities.

Discussions and Conclusions

Diversity in ecotourism in Turkey will bring about diversity in eco-touristic activities. It is safe to say that tourists with higher number will visit the country if a wider range of eco-touristic activities are offered. In this regard, activities that integrate sea into ecotourism, as in Australia, should not be neglected. The nationwide published strategies and action plans are important factors to enrich ecotourism. However, the cited plans should be compatible with practices. Ecotourism needs to be supported by worldwide certification systems or by nationwide environmentally attentive systems like “Yesil Yıldız” (Green Star). Nature-based facilities of Australia may be taken as examples when establishing new facilities or renovating the existing ones. Besides, those tour operators who use natural resources mindfully should stand out in Turkey as in Australia.

In ecotourism areas, defected infrastructure should be improved, physical shortages should be completed, and areas should be enriched. In carrying out these works, the examples of the leading countries in ecotourism should be studied and necessary regulations should be introduced. Environmental pollution caused by visitors should be prevented by inspection, and further works are needed so as to use the areas more effectively. Inspection mechanisms in Australia may be studied while planning these works. Additional works are also needed to improve advertisement. Different types of promotions should be made through various communication channels.

Increasing number of eco-tourists will increase the income nationwide. To this end, sufficient equipment is needed to accommodate tourists well and advertisement should be increased consistently. It can be said that organizing day trips in areas where it is not available may increase the number of tourists and thus enliven sociocultural life. By taking into account the increasing number of visitors, measures should be taken to prevent the air, soil, water, and noise pollutions, in order to preserve ecological balance. Local people should be educated so they may acquire awareness and support ecotourism, and overgrazing should be prevented. Local people should be encouraged to sell local products, which will contribute to local economy and enrich ecotourism, as well as create further employment opportunities. Legal regulations and plans should be introduced, local people should be educated for awareness, in order for ecotourism not to be affected negatively from increasing urbanization. By fulfilling the necessary things to be a brand in ecotourism like Australia, the quality of visitors should be ensured.

Communicative difficulties among partners of ecotourism is of a threat to the sector. Communication among partners who may be effective in maintaining, preserving, diversifying, and operating the eco-touristic areas should be established. Each partner should be asked of their opinions and should be included in the management process. Besides, further regulations are needed in regard to the failure of sustainability in the ecotourism areas and the air, soil, water, and noise pollution caused by visitors.

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