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The Impact of Cultural Heritage on Sustainable Tourism Development: The Case of Bergama (Pergamon)

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Abstract

In this study, mainly the effects of being in the World Heritage List were questioned, especially by examining tourism development of Pergamon which is one of the most important districts for its development at cultural tourism in Izmir, became the 999th property added to UNESCO world cultural heritage in 2014 from the perspectives of sustainability. This article aims to discuss stakeholders' experiences regarding the contribution of UNESCO World Heritage List on sustainable tourism development. The study is based on a combination of qualitative interviews and observations. A case study approach used semi-structured interviews to collect data from purposively sampled local stakeholders. The interview questions spanned heritage awareness, local identity, cultural tourism and the contribution of UNESCO World Heritage List on sustainable tourism development.

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural and natural heritage resources are priceless and irreplaceable assets for the humanity as a whole (UNESCO, 2013). Cultural heritage which can help the local and national economy improve and attract tourists and investment. Thus, the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development of destinations is effective. In particular UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL), its growth through time, composition, and effectiveness in ensuring conservation, promoting tourism and, therefore, economic development have recently attracted great attention in the economic literature. (Cuccia, Guccio, Rizzo, 2015:1)

In this study, Pergamon, a small city with a rich cultural and historical significance in Turkey will be investigated. In 2014, Pergamon which was inscribed on UNESCO World Heritage List is a testimony to the unique and integrated aesthetic achievement of the civilizations. It endured the Hellenistic and the Roman, the Byzantium and the Ottoman; moved from Paganism to Christianity Judaism and Islam, all the while preserving its previous cultural features as well as the landscape of its historical surroundings.

The objective of this study a specific aspect of the relationship between WHL and sustainable tourism development, that is, whether the inscription in the WHL affects the technical efficiency of the supply of tourism goods and services according to the perspectives of local authorities. The importance of this study is to investigate the role of cultural heritage on sustainable development in the field of cultural heritage management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Tourism Development and WHL

Sustainable tourism should be a form of “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNWTO, 2004). In 1994, United Nation Environment Program (UNEP) defined sustainable tourism as tourism development that meets the needs of present tourists and host while it preserves and enhances the opportunities in the future. (Amir, Osman, et al., 2014, p.444) UNEP (2002) again outlined the basic principles of this concept.

- The principle of environmental sustainability, that offers development and preservation of ecological as well as biological diversity and resources.
- The principle of social sustainability, that offers development and preservation of traditional as well as cultural values and identity of particular community.
- The principle of economic sustainability, that offers development and preservation of local economic growth.

Sustainable development is widely discussed by many researchers because of the implementation difficulties of the three dimensions of environment, economy and socio-cultural.

According to some researchers, sustainable tourism can meet the demand of tourists, provide opportunities to the host, preserve the resources, improve the quality of life while giving bright quality in the future of tourism industry. (Amir, Osman, et al., 2014, p.444) Therefore, it leads to the expansion of other alternative concepts in the

sustainable tourism field, namely responsible tourism (Spenceley et al., 2002), pro-poor tourism (Goodwin & Francis, 2003), as well as community based tourism (Mbaiwa, 2004). These concepts have a similar objective of enhancing the positive impacts of tourism development hence reducing the negative problems specifically in three major areas- social, economic and environmental.

A World Heritage Site is a place or an area which has outstanding universal value and is listed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2008). It is internationally accepted that heritage sites with significant importance should be protected in order to prevent the loss of cultural and natural heritage all over the world. (Ertan, Eğercioğlu, 2015: p. 592) The world heritage sites selected according to this convention, gains not only a high prestige for the countries but also physical, social and economical benefits and as a result, high amounts of hard worked applications prepared by state parties to enter the World Heritage List are handed in to World Heritage Centre. However, parallel with this identification, site authorities faced with increasing social, cultural, environmental and economic changes and impacts must be increasingly integrating sustainable development into their plans and practices.

Pergamon as a World Heritage Site

Nowadays, role of culture as an essential pillar of sustainability is added next to the three traditional pillars of the environment, society and the economy. On the other hand, the role of the historic built environment in promoting economic growth is now fully acknowledged. Cultural heritage can boost the local and national economy and create jobs by attracting tourists and investment, and providing leisure, recreation and educational facilities (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007; Nijkamp and Riganti, 2008; Communities and Local Government, 2009; English Heritage, 2009).

In this study, Bergama was specially selected because of its multi-layered cultural landscape exhibit outstanding evidence of civilizations such as the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. This study examines what kinds of benefits are ensured about sustainable development after selecting World Heritage Site.

Pergamon is placed on Bakırçay Basin, north of Izmir province and Aegean Part of Aegean Region. It is surrounded with Ayvalık, Burhaniye and İvrindi districts of Balıkesir province in the north; Kınık (Izmir) and Soma (Manisa) districts in the east; Manisa central district and Aliağa (İzmir) district in the south and Dikili (İzmir) district in the west. Pergamon district is 110 km away from Izmir city center, 60 km from Ayvalık, 27 km from Dikili and 17 km from Kınık (Baykal, Emekli 2013, p. 61).

Pergamon is extremely rich in its rivers, underwater sources and thermal waters. The most important river is Bakırçay. Kestel Dam, Yortanlı Dam, and Madra Dam (on Ayvalık district boundary) are all situated in Pergamon. Primary water sources of the district (Cleopatra Beauty Spa, Mahmudiye Spa) have healthy waters having healing effect against many disorders; however there is no facility on any of them (Ataberk, 2011, p. 595). While natural resources have an important place in the assessment of tourism potential of a vicinity, other attractive tourism elements supporting the natural resources like historical and cultural values, also share the same importance.(Ataberk, 2014, p. 30)

Becoming one of the most important provinces of Rome in Asia, Pergamon became a metropolis during the Roman Period. The Romans maintained the already existing structures of the Hellenistic Period structures while adding new functions as a cultural and imperial cult centre of the empire. Consequently, during the Roman Period, many important structures were built, including the extensive remains of the Asklepiion Sanctuary, a well-known healing centre whose sacred spring still flows; the Roman Theatre; and one of the biggest Roman amphitheatres; a great aqueduct; and a perfectly preserved Trajan Temple. Also included is the world's biggest Serapeum. During the Byzantine Period due to the relocation of the trade roads and political centres from Aegean Region to northwest Anatolia, especially to İstanbul, Pergamon experienced a new transformation from being a major Hellenistic and Roman centre into a middle-sized town. Pergamon now has particular potential as a multi-layered cultural landscape preserving and presenting this transformation. During the Byzantine Period, Pergamon also continued its cultural-religious importance as home to one of the Seven Churches of Revelation.(UNESCO,2014)

After the arrival of the Ottomans, Pergamon experienced one more cultural adjustment. This was especially evident on the Bakırçay Plain. The Ottomans provided the city with all necessary urban structures, such as mosques, baths, bridges, khans, bedestens (covered bazaars), arastas (Ottoman markets) and water systems which spread especially on Roman and Byzantine layers.(UNESCO,2014)

In fact, as a multi-layered city inhabited continuously from early ages onwards, the urban form and architecture in Pergamon is the result of material existence and use of space of different eras and cultures as well as the interchange of human values through time.(UNESCO,2014)

METHODOLOGY

The Purpose and Method of the Study

The purpose of the study is to show the important role of cultural heritage in sustainable development and also to reveal the contributions of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List to the sustainable tourism development in terms of destination. To this end, among the qualitative methods to collect data, observation and interview techniques were also used in order to examine the perspectives about local government, tourism of local shareholders, cultural tourism and sustainable tourism development and changes in terms of destination in Pergamon, which has become the 999th cultural heritage by taking its place in UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List in 2014.

All interviews took place either in the respondent's place of work. They lasted between 45 and 90 minutes each. The interviews were semi structured in form.

All the tape recording was transmitted into the computer and transcribed into written form and content analysis was applied. The reliability of content analysis is ensured in two ways:

- Same coder coding the same text at different times in the same way
- Different coders coding the same text in the same way (Bilgin, 2006).

All the tape recording was analyzed two times and same themes were found. These themes were associated with quotations in finding part. Thus, the existence of quotations increased the reliability of this study.

Items taking place in the interview questions were formed through reviewing the related literature. The items in the interview include topics such as cultural heritage, local identity, UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List and sustainable tourism development. On the other hand, observation was made twice, the former preceding the interviews whereas the other one following them. Thus, some criteria taking place in the interviews could also be observed. The required notes were taken in the field study.

The Sample of the Study

Within the body of this study, local shareholders were chosen based on the view that they represented the population and; thus, they were interviewed based on the studies and applications conducted in Pergamon. In other words, sampling based on purpose (intentional, judgment sampling) technique was carried out. Within the body of this sampling technique, the factors composing the sampling involve the participants who are thought to provide the answers that the researcher is searching. 5 authorities from the local government, who are considered to be influential in the sustainable tourism development of Pergamon, were interviewed.

Findings of the Study

The findings from our case studies are reported in two principal parts. The first part concerns the development of local resources related to tourism. The second part concentrates on issues related to tourism marketing in a broad perspective, including possible effects resulting from this particular type of destination development.

Sustainable Tourism Development and Pergamon

In this items, paper focuses on four dimensions of sustainability including economic, environmental, social and cultural in their study of participants' perceptions towards Bergama as a sustainable destination.

In consequence of the interviews, it has been stated that local authorities have a good many of studies for the conservation of the cultural and natural resources that Pergamon embodies as well as the sustainability in terms of tourism. These studies date back prior to 2014, the time when Pergamon took place in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List.

Besides, participants stated that Pergamon, an important destination in terms of tourism, hosted annually 400.000-500.000 visitors on average. However, it was pointed out that tourists arrived in Pergamon via tourism agencies and left upon sightseeing tours for the archeological sites by the buses on the same day; that is, without accommodation. With its position in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List, it is expected by the authorities that the current status of Pergamon is likely to change as the "explorer tourist," rather than mass tourism, make visits to Pergamon

Related to this topic, one of the participants asserts that:

"Tourists visiting Pergamon leave the town without an overnight stay and not even getting around in the streets. In fact, the streets have their own texture. Moreover, they can taste different traditional dishes of the town in local restaurants."

Any sustainable approach for the touristic development of destinations requires the consideration of the development of the touristic product they have and also its nature. Based on this, participants have demonstrated various opinions about providing the sustainability of cultural heritage as a touristic product. Related to this issue, a participant noted that:

“After Pergamon entered the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List, the applications have been in accordance with the principles of UNESCO. Since 2014, planning has been done such as the improvement work of roads within the urban area, the work for the purpose of maintaining Kale Street’s own texture and reducing the number of floors in the buildings in order to maintain the general view of Antique Pergamon town.”

The participants have pointed out that upon Pergamon’s taking place in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List, local authorities and other authorities in town have conducted mutual projects to develop sustainable tourism and they succeeded in running some of them. One of these projects is called “Pergamon is calling your name!” Within the body of this project, the local tradesmen had training about tourism. Some stickers in the form of “happy tourist happy tradesmen” were prepared to be stucked on the stores. Within the body of this project, tours were organized to Pergamon in order to develop domestic tourism. Participants are also of the opinion that in providing sustainable tourism the local community plays a prominent role. Moreover, the local government has some projects to raise the awareness of local residents about cultural heritage and sustainability in terms of destination. It has been pointed out that the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Administration representatives of Pergamon Municipality have also paid visits to the schools and trained both students and teachers separately on the cultural texture. In addition, it has been noted that some work has been done through holding meetings with non-governmental organizations in order to the raise awareness of the populace whom they are representing. Participants have also stated that the studies, which are aimed at developing the sustainable tourism upon the entrance of Pergamon in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List, accelerated and increased. Related to this issue, one of the participants has noted that:

“We have been devising mutual projects with various universities. In particular, we are in contact with the academicians from the department of architecture from different universities about the studies of restoration and renovation. We have managed to come to an agreement with some universities.” As part of the projects devised so far, various tour routes, both short and long, are planned.

Another issue which authorities negotiated during the interviews was the handicrafts, which pertains to Pergamon and faces the risk of being extinct. It has been pointed out that with the restoration of the historical Ottoman bazaar, production and sales of the handicrafts take place in the stores. Particularly, there exist some souvenirs written on parchment papers, shoe-dealers and quilt makers.

Pergamon Municipality has prepared brochures introducing the 999th World Heritage to be delivered to both outsiders and the local residents. In the brochures, information is presented about both UNESCO and the criteria through which Pergamon achieved its title of as a cultural world heritage.

Apart from these, other questions that the local residents might wonder about Pergamon have been answered. In this way, the residents are informed about UNESCO as well as the qualities of the town as a cultural world heritage.

UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List and Promotion

Participants have started to note that upon its status in World Cultural Heritage List, Pergamon has started to appear in national and international media. Thus, this has contributed to the publicity of Pergamon. Its entrance to the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List has aroused the interest of various tourist profiles. Participants have suggested that apart from the tourists visiting Pergamon through travel agencies, some special groups, who want to experience the manifold cultural layers of the town entirely and spend a night, started to emerge. A participant has put forward his opinion related to this issue:

“The number of studies which aim to develop the tourism potential of Pergamon has started to increase in number after 2014. With the increase in the number of tourists visiting the town on an individual basis, historical streets, dishes and music, traditional handicrafts and trade, apart from the high-capacity archeological sites, took their share in terms of tourism.”

Participants have also suggested that some tourism agencies have started to include Pergamon in their destination lists thanks to its position as a world heritage brand. Accordingly, as a result of the interviews, the view has emerged that getting its place in the world heritage list has highly contributed to the promotion of Pergamon as a destination. What is more, it has accelerated the studies conducted by the local authorities.

Local authority representative suggests that the world heritage brand name has highly contributed to the promotion of the town; therefore, they state that they also employ this world heritage theme in their own promotions. Related to this issue, he has also pointed out as follows:

“As local authorities, we apply for and attend a good many of fairs for the purpose of publicizing the town in the international domain. In all the national and international fairs, we tell people about the cultural heritage which Pergamon embodies in its body. While doing this, Pergamon’s being the world heritage highly attracts people.”

Another important point that participants emphasize is that the quantitative results of these publicizing events cannot be revealed evidently. One of the reasons of this is the fact that Pergamon has just taken its place in this world heritage list. Furthermore, the number of tourists has shown no significant increase. However, it has been observed that there are some differences in the quality of the tourists visiting the town. For example; before the tourists who came with the agencies rarely spend money without agency costs, now the tourists who come individually and spend money for exploring everything about destination. Besides, the news taking place in the national media has stimulated domestic tourism. In particular, the number of the tours that non-governmental organizations and local travel agencies are organizing to Pergamon has increased. Additionally, it has been noted that the number of tourists coming from Izmir for one day has revealed a significant increase.

Some participants maintain that getting a place in the world heritage list has notable importance in terms of tourism and they add that there exist 15 cultural heritages in the world heritage list and this number is too little

when the entire cultural heritage in our country is taken into consideration. The general opinion that has been revealed so far is that Turkey embodies the culture of numerous civilizations and the pace of the studies needs to be faster in order for these cultural heritages to enter the world heritage list.

Some of the participants have emphasized the need for the consideration of the external opportunities and constraints despite Pergamon's getting its place in the world heritage list and its positive contribution to destination marketing. Given these realities, the recent adverse events (i.e. refugee problems, increased terror incidents) have led to a decrease in the general demand for Turkey (www.tursab.org.tr). However, according to the participants there is still a need for studies on an urban and national basis irrespective of this negative outlook.

CONCLUSION

With this study, the contribution of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List to the development of sustainable tourism development has been focused through industry supply. Below, there are the results which have been revealed as a result of the interviews:

- The cultural heritage Pergamon embodies has a conservationist local government. Prior to taking its place in the world heritage list, the town could not utilize its cultural heritage in the tourism industry although it has a high potential in terms of cultural tourism.
- When the figures are considered, the town could earn income from the historical archeological sites and museums; however, its historical streets, bazaars and stores were not among these routes. Upon its declaration as a world heritage site, there has been a significant increase in the number of visitors coming there on an individual basis. Thanks to these visitors' planning their own routes in the town, the economic income has increased.
- The most notable advantage of taking Pergamon's place in the world heritage list has revealed itself on the raised awareness of the local residents and local producers and their conservation of the cultural heritage.
- There has been a significant increase in domestic tourism. In particular, there has been a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting Pergamon from nearby places without stay and also visitors coming for one-night stay. Thanks to this, there has been an economic revival at the weekends in particular. This increase has been the natural outcome of taking Pergamon's place in the world heritage list and thus, having press coverage.
- The projects preceding Pergamon's current status used to be actualized through the efforts of local authorities whereas there exists a national sense of responsibility following its taking place in the world heritage list in terms of urban development and protection of the general texture of the town.
- The studies conducted at universities in order to maintain the town's own texture are important steps in terms of sustainable tourism. Therefore, the sense of responsibility is taken to forefront for this world cultural heritage.

In conclusion, there exists no primary correlation between World Heritage List and the concept of cultural heritage in terms of sustainable tourism. However, it has been revealed that getting a place in the world heritage list

has highly contributed to the conservation of cultural heritage related to the large destination and protecting the values of the local residents. What is more, it has been revealed that the perspective of the local authorities is about developing the town in terms of social and environmental facilities rather than merely fostering tourism in town.

In this study, the impact of cultural heritage on sustainable development was investigated at the perspective of sectoral offer. Thus, limitation is the perspective of demand part. The effects of cultural heritage in fostering tourism demand can be explored for future research.

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