



## Evaluation of Local People's Perspective on Rural Tourism: Sample of Tekirdağ Province\*\*

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to determine the positive or negative rural tourism perception of the people living in the villages where rural tourism education was given by Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality and it is aimed to determine whether the rural tourism perception level differs according to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, marital status etc. In order to accomplish this aim, a survey was carried out with the method of quota sampling to the people who were given rural tourism education by the Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed, 421 of which were returned, but missing and inaccurate surveys were issued and a total of 390 questionnaires were analyzed. As a result of the analyzes, it was determined that the participants perceived the impact of rural tourism as highly positive. At the same time, it was determined that the perception of rural tourism showed significant differences according to the gender, age, marital status and income levels of the participants. Based on the information obtained as a result of the research, some suggestions were made to the stakeholders regarding rural tourism.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, tourism is an important source of income for many countries. With the development of international trade and the increase in living standards of people, there is also a significant increase in the tendency to travel. It has an important contribution in the development of tourism sector, especially in countries with historical riches and natural beauties. The realization of the negative consequences of mass tourism in recent years has contributed to the formation of environmentally sensitive tourism understanding in rural areas and the increase in projects and studies related to tourism in these areas. Especially tourism in rural areas (nature tourism, village tourism, plateau tourism, hunting tourism, agricultural tourism, farm tourism, faith tourism, eco-tourism, etc.) identified with the concept of sustainable tourism and tourism is one of the most important economic strategies in rural development. It has received (Dinçer et al., 2015). Due to these developments, rural tourism, which has become an important tourism type in recent years, makes significant contributions to the sustainability of the region as it does not harm the nature in the developed regions (Uslu et al., 2015). With the coming to the forefront of the understanding of local development, “rural tourism” within the tourism sector has started to gain more importance for all the countries that are trying to develop and are in a hurry to make their development sustainable. Rural tourism has a characteristic that can serve both rural development understanding and play an effective role in making development sustainable (Kuşat, 2014). However, the response of the local people in the places where the activities of Rural Tourism take place is also important for the sustainability of rural tourism. Because the attitude of the local people, who are one of the important stakeholders of rural tourism activities, on rural tourism may directly affect the development of this type of tourism. Therefore the main objective of this research is to determine the positive or negative perception of rural tourism in the villages where rural tourism education is provided by Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality.

## **Literature Review**

There are a number of theoretical studies aimed at determining the attitude of the local people towards the tourism activities taking place in their regions. Doxey's (1975) ‘Irridex’ model is one of the theories utilized. According to the Irridex model, local people show a range of reactions to the effects that arise from the development of tourism activities in the area where they live. Perceptions of tourism are changing with their experiences in tourism. In Doxey's Irridex model, four main phases are defined: happiness, apathy, anger and hostility (Ayazlar, 2017). At the beginning, the local people are pleased with the development of tourism. Visitors are welcome and there is very little planning for tourism. Apathy; as tourism evolves, visitors become enamored, and the established connections become more formal. Visitors are seen as the gateway to economic gain. In the process of resentment, the point of satisfaction is approached and the local people have various doubts. Rather than limiting growth, planners attempt a controlled growth of infrastructure. In the process of hostility, the anger towards the visitors is clearly expressed. There are various plans in place to prevent the destruction of the destinations reputation. Visitors are blamed for many economic, social and environmental negativity in the destination. (Okuyucu, 2016).

Çeken et al. (2012) conducted a semi-structured interview technique to determine the awareness of the local population living in Fethiye about the economic and socio-cultural effects of Rural Tourism and to determine the degree of willingness and readiness of the local population to participate in rural tourism activities. As a result of the research; in interviews with local people, they determined that the local people who are actively working in tourism

or are aware of the tourism activities in the region are attracted to rural tourism, but abstained from performing in their own living areas.

Ayaz et al. (2012) conducted a research on 256 university students in order to determine the perspectives and perceptions of undergraduate and associate degree students in rural tourism education in order to contribute to the development process of rural tourism. As a result of the research, it was determined that the students who received tourism education at undergraduate and associate level perceived rural tourism as resting, stress relief, excitement, entertainment and learning different lifestyles. While students see rural tourism as an important tool for assessing culture and the environment, they are concerned that the natural environment will be polluted and degraded along with rural tourism.

Hanedar et al. (2015) conducted a study in a sample of 235 students with the aim of determining the perception of rural tourism by university students. As a result of the research, students of the Department of agricultural economics have determined that the ratio of rural tourism activities and definition of rural tourism is higher than other departments, that men want to work in rural tourism sector as the boss of their own business and women want to work as managers of rural tourism activities. At the same time, significant differences were determined between the idea of working in rural tourism according to gender and departments; the state of knowing the activities according to participation in rural tourism activities; the way of defining rural tourism according to departments and the state of knowing rural tourism activities.

Uslu et al. (2015) conducted a study to reveal the potential of rural tourism in Siirt province and the perspectives of students studying tourism in Siirt province to rural tourism. At the end of the study, tourism types such as gastronomy / culinary tourism, faith tourism, nature walking, rafting tourism, sport fishing, bird watching, store tourism and hunting tourism were determined to constitute the potential of rural tourism in Siirt. Students attend more to the positive aspects of rural tourism, while the negative consequences are less attended by the students of gender, places of residence, tourism and rural tourism in no statistical differences between the perceptions of the negative aspects of working time were found.

Arpacı and Aylan (2016) conducted a survey of 205 students in order to demonstrate their perspective on rural tourism in Karaman province; they found that while students participated more in the positive aspects of rural tourism, they participated less in the negative results. In addition, it was determined that the students participated in the statements about positive rural tourism perceptions at a high level and the statements about negative rural tourism perceptions at a moderate level.

Muresan et al. (2016) conducted a survey study of 433 people residing in the Northern Region of Romania in order to determine the perception of sustainable rural tourism. As a result of the research, local people saw rural tourism as an element of development, but the management and planning of this type of tourism should be done well in terms of sustainability.

Due to its important role in development, countries are in a race to attract tourists and generate more tourism revenue with their unique tourist attractions. At this point, the important issue is that countries can make the most of their tourist values. In this context, it will provide important advantages for countries in this race where different species can be blended and made together without being bound to a single type of tourism (sea-sand-sun etc.) or the

known types of tourism which are known-unusual. The desire of the visitors participating in tourism to have a different experience than usual, to discover new things and to see the different one increases the importance given to alternative tourism types. Rural tourism, one of the alternative types of tourism is one of the important tourism activities that can provide social and economic development of rural regions. Rural tourism activities, usually carried out by small businesses in places where agricultural activities or natural areas exist, can also affect the local population in many ways in a positive or negative way. This is why it is important to know the perception of the local people in the places where rural tourism activities take place. At the same time, determination of this perception is important for the continuity of social or economic benefit from rural tourism activities. Because the continuity or effectiveness of rural tourism activities to be carried out in the region may also depend on the support of local people in rural tourism.

### **The Purpose and Method of Research**

Rural tourism, one of the alternative types of tourism, is one of the important tourism activities that can provide social and economic development of rural regions. Rural tourism activities, usually carried out by small businesses in places where agricultural activities or natural areas exist, can also affect the local population in many ways in a positive or negative way. This is why it is important to know the perception of the local people in the places where rural tourism activities take place. At the same time, determination of this perception is important for the continuity of social or economic benefit from rural tourism activities. Because the continuity or effectiveness of rural tourism activities to be carried out in the region may also depend on the support of local people in rural tourism. The main objective of this research is to determine the positive or negative perception of rural tourism in the villages where rural tourism education is provided by Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality. The level of perception of rural tourism determined alongside this main goal is to ensure that people's age, gender, marital status, etc. it is to determine whether they differ by demographic characteristics such as. Adhering to these objectives, the following questions will be sought in the research:

1. What is the level of positive rural tourism perception of the local people?
2. What is the level of perception of rural people in Tekirdağ?
3. Does the local people's perception of rural tourism, positive or negative, vary according to their demographic characteristics?

The universe of the research consists of people living in the villages in Tekirdağ who are given rural tourism education by Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality. There are a total of 10 villages where rural tourism education is provided. According to 2015 population data, a total of 6585 people living in these villages constitute the universe of this survey. Since it would be difficult to reach all people in terms of time and cost, sampling was made on the determined universe. Firstly, the sample number was determined. As a result of the calculation, the sample size of the study was determined as 364 people (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2004). After determining the number of samples, quota sampling method was applied to determine the participants. Quota sampling; It can be seen as a two-stage judicial sampling. First stage; to establish the control quota of the main mass. For this quota, the researcher prepares a list of control properties and determines their distribution within the mass. These characteristics are age, gender, geographic region, etc. there may be criteria. The ratio or share of the properties in the sample mass must be the same as in the main mass. In the second phase, the sample units are determined according to the basis of judicial or easy

sampling (Nakip, 2013). In this survey, 10 villages with rural tourism as their primary control characteristics and their populations were determined. In the following process, the sample volume (364) was divided into the main mass (6585) and the quota ratio (0.055) was determined to be taken from each village. The number of people to be included in the sampling from each village was determined using the quota rate found after this stage.

**Table 1.** Information about rural tourism villages

Districts	Rural tourism villages	Population	Rate in the total population (%)	Rate in the sample (n)
Saray	Bahcekoy	355	5,39	20
	Sefaalan	1187	18,02	66
	Gungormez	1291	19,60	71
Malkara	Elmali	335	5,08	19
	Saripolat	203	3,08	11
	Yaylagone	579	8,79	32
Sarkoy	Kirazli	294	4,46	16
	Hoskoy	1645	24,98	91
	Gazikoy	476	7,22	26
	Ucmakdere	220	3,34	12
TOTAL		6585	100,00	364

<http://www.trakyanet.com/istatistikler/nufus/tekirdag-belde-ve-koy-nufuslari.html#sarkoy>

In this study, a survey technique was applied from quantitative research methods. The survey used the “Rural Tourism perception” scale developed by Kastenholz et al. (1999) and Park and Yoon (2009), Ayaz et al. (2012), Uslu et al. (2015) to determine rural tourism perception of people living in villages. The rural tourism perception scale used in the survey is rated at a Likert type of 5 (1-strongly disagree with 5-strongly agree). In addition to the scale, there are demographic questions to learn about participants gender, age, marital status. There are 13 positive statements and 5 negative statements on the scale to determine people's perceptions of rural tourism. The survey study was conducted face to face with visits to the villages that make up the universe between July 1-30, 2018. A total of 450 surveys were distributed, of which 412 were repatriated, and 390 surveys were included in the analysis after incomplete and erroneous surveys were removed. Reliability analysis was conducted to determine the reliability of the scale used in the research. The Cronbach's Alpha model was used for reliability analysis. In the following process, frequency and percentage distributions were calculated for the demographic characteristics of the participants. At the same time, the opinions of the participants regarding the expressions mentioned in the survey regarding rural tourism perceptions were tabulated and interpreted by finding frequency, percentage distributions, standard deviations and arithmetic averages. Finally, the T test and single-factor variance analysis (Anova) were used to determine whether participants' perceptions of rural tourism differ significantly according to their demographic characteristics. As a result of these analyses, Tukey analysis was performed to determine which subgroups the difference was between. All these analyses were done through the statistical package program used in the social sciences.

## Findings and Discussion

According to Table 2, which includes demographic information for the participants, 69.5% of the participants were male, 80.5% were married and 29% were between the ages of 46-55. At the same time, 82.8% of the respondents have resided in the village for more than 13 years. Looking at the educational levels of the participants, 34.4% had a primary school degree and 43.6% had an income of TL 1501-2500.

**Table 2.** Demographic Informations for Participants

Variables	Groups	f	%
Gender	Male	271	69,5
	Female	119	30,5
Marital Status	Married	314	80,5
	Single	76	19,5
Age	25 years and below	52	13,3
	26-35	50	12,8
	36-45	109	27,9
	46-55	113	29,0
	56 years and over	66	16,9
Period of current	Less than 1 year	1	,3
	4-6 years	9	2,3
	7-9 years	28	7,2
	10-12 years	29	7,4
	13 years and over	323	82,8
Level of education	Illiterate	1	,3
	Literate	19	4,9
	Primary school	134	34,4
	Secondary school	80	20,5
	High school	99	25,4
	Associate program	12	3,1
	Undergraduate	36	9,2
	Graduate	9	2,3
Monthly Income	1500 TL and below	116	29,7
	1501-2500 TL	170	43,6
	2501-3500 TL	76	19,5
	3501 TL and over	28	7,2

Explanatory factor analysis was performed to analyze the structural validity of the scale. As a result of the factor analysis conducted for the rural tourism perception scale, the KMO value of the scale was found to be 0.887 and the Barlett's test ( $p = .000$ ) was significant. Two sub-dimensions with an eigenvalue higher than 1 were detected on the scale. These dimensions were named as positive perception and negative perception, adhering to the original of the scale

Reliability analysis of rural tourism perception scale (cronbach Alpha) was carried out in the study. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the level of reliability of the scale was sufficient (0,709). When we look at the reliability values of the lower dimensions, it is also seen that the reliability level of the lower dimensions is sufficient.

**Table 3.** Cronbach Alpha Values of Variables

	n	Number of answers	Cronbach Alpha
Positive perception	390	13	0,866
Negative perception	390	5	0,701
Public perception	390	18	0,709

According to the descriptive statistics of the participants in Table 4 on rural tourism perceptions, the highest average in terms of the positive impact of rural tourism ( $avg.= 4.54$ ;  $ss.= 0,50$ ), which appears to belong to the phrase "rural tourism allows the incomes of local people to increase". Participants were found to have agreed with at least positive rural tourism statements ( $avg.= 3.96$ ;  $ss.= 1.07$ ), "rural tourism increases local partnerships and cooperation". The highest turnout when looking at statements on the negative effects of Rural Tourism ( $Ort.= 3.87$ ;  $ss.= 1.01$ )

where is the expression "rural tourism increases property prices in rural areas"; where is the lowest turnout (AVG.= 1,97; ss.= 0,92), while the phrase "rural tourism leads to social and cultural distortions" has been found to be.

**Table 4.** Descriptive Statistics of participants on tourism perceptions

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. Dev.
<b>POSITIVE EFFECT</b>	390	3,31	5,00	4,31	,496
Protect the Naturel environment and agrobiodiversity	390	2,00	5,00	4,19	,801
Keep away from stress	390	1,00	5,00	4,51	,652
Directs local people to use culture and environment suitable	390	2,00	5,00	4,28	,821
Increases the income of local people	390	3,00	5,00	4,54	,503
Contributes to the protection of environment and culture	390	1,00	5,00	4,14	,920
Contributes to the protection of historical structure	390	1,00	5,00	4,17	,923
Reinvigorate the rural economy with new tourism businesses	390	2,00	5,00	4,43	,727
Provides people with an opportunity to adapt to rural areas and nature	390	2,00	5,00	4,36	,749
Provides redirection of the excess number of tourists in destinations to rural areas	390	2,00	5,00	4,28	,843
Creates new employment opportunities	390	2,00	5,00	4,42	,757
Moves up the living standard of local people	390	2,00	5,00	4,38	,684
Creates new employment opportunities for women	390	2,00	5,00	4,38	,836
Improves the cooperation and local partnership	390	1,00	5,00	3,96	1,070
<b>NEGATIVE EFFECT</b>	390	1,00	4,00	2,80	,656
Causes rich entrepreneurs to exploit the countryside	390	1,00	5,00	2,78	1,271
Increases the property prices in rural areas	390	1,00	5,00	3,87	1,011
Causes traffic problems on rural areas	390	1,00	5,00	3,21	1,322
Causes social and cultural degradation	390	1,00	4,00	1,97	,926
Causes environmental degradation	390	1,00	5,00	2,19	1,164

In order to determine whether participants perceptions of rural tourism differed according to their gender, it was determined that the positive and negative impact of Rural Tourism showed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) by gender. The positive impact perception of rural tourism was highest in females (avg=4.42) while the negative impact perception was highest in males (avg= 2.81) participants.

**Table 5.** Comparison of Rural Tourism Perceptions by Gender

Effect Level	Gender	n	Ort.	Stn.Dev.	T Score	p
Positive effect	Male	271	4,26	0,48	-3,00	0,020
	Female	119	4,42	0,49	-2,98	
Negative effect	Male	271	2,81	0,68	,261	0,004
	Female	119	2,79	0,58	,276	

When the participants perception levels of rural tourism were compared to their marital status, it was determined that marital status had significant differences in terms of positive impact ( $p < 0.05$ ) but no significant difference in terms of negative impact ( $p > 0.05$ ). The positive impact of rural tourism was perceived at almost the same level in terms of married and single participants (avg= 4,31).

**Table 6.** Comparison of Rural Tourism Perceptions by Marital Status

Effect Level	Marital Status	n	Mean	Stn.Dev.	T Score	p
Positive effect	Married	314	4,314	0,47	-0,035	0,002
	Single	76	4,316	0,59	-0,031	
Negative effect	Married	314	2,78	0,63	-1,29	0,357
	Single	76	2,89	0,72	-1,20	

In order to determine whether the participants perceptions of rural tourism differed according to age levels, it was determined that the positive and negative impact of Rural Tourism showed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) compared to the age levels of the participants.

**Table 7.** Comparison of Rural Tourism Perceptions by Age Groups

Effect Level	Age Groups	n	Mean	Stn.Dev.	F Score	p
Positive effect	25 and below	52	4,49	0,44	10,838	0,000
	26-35	50	4,32	0,32		
	36-45	109	4,37	0,46		
	46-55	113	4,08	0,54		
	56 and over	66	4,47	0,48		
Negative effect	25 and below	52	2,86	0,89	4,777	0,001
	26-35	50	3,03	0,32		
	36-45	109	2,84	0,64		
	46-55	113	2,80	0,63		
	56 and over	66	2,53	0,60		

Tukey analysis was performed to determine which groups the differences were significant. As a result of the analysis, significant differences in the positive effect were found between participants aged 25 and under and those aged 46-55. The level of positive impact perception of rural tourism is higher in participants in the 25 and under age group (avg= 4.49) than in the 46-55 age group (avg= 4.08). In terms of negative impact on the significant differences, it was determined that the differences were between the age group 26-35 and the age group 56 and above. The negative impact perception level was 3.03 in participants in the 26-35 age group and 2.53 in participants in the 56 and older age group.

The comparison of participants perceptions of rural tourism based on their duration of residence and education levels could not be done because the frequency values of many groups were below 30.

As a result of the analyses conducted to determine the differences in rural tourism perceptions according to income levels, it was determined that the positive and negative impact of Rural Tourism showed significant differences according to income level of the participants ( $p < 0.05$ ). These differences were determined between the income group of 1500 TL and below and the income group of 3501 TL and above and the income group of 2501-3500 TL in terms of positive impact. While the positive impact perception average of the income group of 1500 TL and below was 4.16, the income group of 2501-3500 TL was 4.35 and the income group above 3501 TL was 4.51. In terms of the negative effects of rural tourism, the differences were determined to be between 1500 TL and 1501-2500 TL and 2501-3500 TL with the lower income group. While the positive impact perception average of the income group of 1500 TL and below was 4.16, the income group of 2501-3500 TL was 4.35 and the income group above 3501 TL was 4.51. In terms of the negative effects of rural tourism, the differences were determined to be between the income groups of 1500 TL and below and between the groups of 1501-2500 TL and 2501-3500 TL. The negative impact

perception average of income group of 1500 TL and below is 2.75, income group of 1501-2500 TL is 3.00 and group perception of 2501-3500 TL is 2.39.

**Table 8.** Comparison of Rural Tourism Perceptions by Income Levels

Effect Level	Level of income	n	Mean	Stn.Dev.	F Score	p
Positive effect	1500 TL and below	116	4,16	0,61	5,762	0,001
	1501-2500 TL	170	4,36	0,45		
	2501-3500 TL	76	4,35	0,34		
	3501 TL and over	28	4,51	0,42		
Negative effect	1500 TL ve altı	116	2,75	0,69	17,781	0,000
	1501-2500 TL	170	3,00	0,58		
	2501-3500 TL	76	2,39	0,55		
	3501 TL and over	28	2,96	0,63		

### Conclusion and Suggestion

In this research conducted to determine the rural tourism perceptions of the local people in these villages which started to perform rural tourism activities after the rural tourism training given to ten project villages in cooperation with Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality, it was determined that the perception of rural tourism was positive especially in terms of increasing the income of local people. According to the gender distribution of the interviewees, it was determined that women reported higher positive rates than men. In addition to the local winter products, such as tarhana, couscous, cut, pickles, marmalade, yufka and tomato paste, which are prepared mostly by women in the villages within the scope of the research, the local food, pancake, buttermilk, tea, coffee and hot products are served by the local women.

The perception of rural tourism has been more positive in young people than in older people. The reason for this may be that the elderly consider rural tourism to disrupt the socio-cultural structure, while the young are concerned with the economic dimension of rural tourism rather than the socio-cultural structure. In terms of income level, it was observed that those with higher income levels perceived rural tourism more positively. This perception can be explained by the fact that those with high income levels are the owners of facilities opened in the region for rural tourism.

As a result, rural tourism also plays an important role in development for rural regions. Combining natural resources, local values and tourism with tourism products in the regions where agriculture is realized primarily will contribute to the decrease in the development gap between regions in economic context. The development of rural tourism also supports rural development by preventing migrations for business purposes, especially as it provides new business activities in the regions where agricultural activities are performed.

In the regions where rural tourism will be developed, tourism investments should be made primarily by the people of the region and the income to be obtained should be the primary objective to remain in the region. Thus, the increase in the value of property or land prices in the region will be prevented and local people will continue their agricultural activities. Rural tourism allows the people of the region to claim their own identity and culture, albeit for an economic benefit. Rural tourism activities in the region of the local people about the benefits of rural tourism activities can provide to the local NGOs, municipalities or universities should be given information. An effective marketing mix and destination image should be created for the rural tourism resources of the region. For example, festivals can be organized for promotional purposes related to the rural tourism resources of the region. Where rural tourism begins

to develop, the lower and superstructure elements needed to reduce traffic problems (village roads, sewerage etc.) importance should be given to its development. Providing incentives by the government to the enterprises, such as restaurants and pensions, which are thought to be made by the local people for the development of rural tourism, may be important. Thus, rural tourism activities in the region will develop and local people will be able to participate in employment.

In the study, only local people's perceptions of rural tourism were evaluated for reasons such as time and cost constraints. For researchers who are interested in rural tourism and want to work on this subject, the relationship between rural tourism and the environment can be examined, whether the environment is used within its carrying capacity or the effects it has on natural resources such as air, soil and water resources.

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