AN APPROACH FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
AT THE DESTINATION:
BUYUKADA (PRINKIPO) ISTANBUL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Destination marketing strategies have increased significantly over the last two decades. However, as Kotler, Bowen and Makens (1999:201) state that destination marketing literature focuses on primarily leisure and entertainment tourism; there has been little academic investigation regarding how to sustainable tourism development at the destination.

This study identifies sustainable tourism development perspective at an island called Buyukada as a destination. Buyukada means “big island” in english. Island situated in Istanbul which has an important role especially for foreign tourists (www.adalar.gov.tr/kultur.htm). The aimed of this study is to develop sustainable tourism development in the island that serves the needs of soft tourism such as, undamaged local life, involvement of local people to the tourism activities and the importance of historical aspects. In the first part, it has been given some important elements of the sustainable tourism concept related to the topic, then a brief history and an overview of the region has been mentioned. The literature survey is then followed by a discussion of the internal and external factors affecting tourism development under a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis is made to assess Buyukada’s internal resources and abilities and opportunities and threats in its external environment, based on the data and information gathered from the literature survey, the field observations and face-to-face interviews with the local residents, tourists who visited Buyukada and authorities of non-governmental and public organizations functioning on Buyukada (Demiroğlu, Cetin, and Izgi, 2007).

1.1. Definitions of Sustainable Tourism Development

WTO (1981) defines sustainable tourism as “Tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essentials ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems”. According to Aransson (2004); sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Kelly and Nankervis (2001) defines sustainable tourism products which are operated in harmony with the local environment, community, and cultures. Sustainable tourism meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Baharadwaj, Varadarajan, and Fahy, 1993).

As a result; sustainable tourism (Aransson, 2004),

- It is the optimal use of resources over time for the good of the people who have access to the resources, but only on condition that the natural and cultural variety is preserved, and that the consumption of resources must be seen in a global context.
- Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations (Coltman 1989:34).
- Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development.
Sustainable tourism development is, then, a matter of attaching equal importance to the geographical, physical and ecological aspects of the environment.

- Make optimal use of environmental resources.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders.

Good examples for this case; travelling from Europe to Asia; long journeys by air, the aircraft’s fuel consumption and pollution are significant and also seasonal accumulation of many people in one area.

1.2. Sustainable Development at the Local Level;

According to Gartner (1996), and the informations mentioned above; sustainable development at the local level can be defined as;

- Achieved by steering local development activities to simultaneously achieve three objectives:
  - Increased local social welfare;
  - Greater, and more equitably distributed, local economic wealth;
  - Enhanced integrity of local ecosystems.
- For tourism to succeed it must be sustainable,
- To be sustainable, it must be carefully planned and managed.

Moreover, Kelly and Nankervis (2001) recommended that all tourism planning should be based on the goals and priorities of the residents. It is better to explain the concept of tourism planning before understanding the goals and priorities of the residents.

1.3. Tourism Planning

Tourism planning is considered as the key to sustainable destination development (Bagozzi 1994). According to Bagozzi (1994), tourism planning must be regarded as a critical element in ensuring the long term sustainable development of the destinations. Hall (2000, 15), states that tourism planning can be defined as a process based on research and evaluation, which seeks to optimize the potential contribution of tourism to human welfare and environmental quality.

Halloway and Plant (1992) explain tourism planning by saying has evolved from two related but distinct sets of planning philosophies and methods. On the one hand, tourism is one of many activities in an area that must be considered as part of physical, environmental, social, and economic planning (Coltman 1989). Therefore, it is common to find tourism addressed, at least partially, in a regional land use, transportation, recreation, economic development, or comprehensive plan (Kotler and Armstrong 2001). The degree to which tourism is addressed in such plans depends upon the relative importance of tourism to the community or region and how sensitive the planning
authority is to tourism activities. Tourism may also be viewed as a business in which a community or region chooses to engage. Individual tourism businesses conduct a variety of planning activities including feasibility, marketing, product development, promotion, forecasting, and strategic planning (Halloway and Plant 1992). If tourism is a significant component of an area’s economy or development plans, regional or community-wide marketing plans are needed to coordinate the development and marketing activities of different tourism interests in the community. A comprehensive approach integrates a strategic marketing plan with more traditional public planning activities. This ensures a balance between serving the needs and wants of the tourists versus the needs and wants of local residents. A formal tourism plan provides a vehicle for the various interests within a community to coordinate their activities and work toward common goals. It also is a means of coordinating tourism with other community activities.

Finally, a sustainable approach to tourism attempts both to minimize the negative impacts of development activities on the environment and local communities, and to enhance opportunities for tourism to bring positive financial and social benefits to a destination.

2. Objective of the Study

- The objective of the study is to know how can sustainable tourism development be achieved at the destination Büyükada? Beside that to emphasize cultural and natural potential of Büyükada and develop it through public & private partnership.

To pursue such objective, the study will to answer the following questions:

- How can both a good physical and ecological environment and a good social and cultural one be maintained when developing tourism?
- When should it be developed?
- What level of tourism is desirable?
- Is it possible to lengthen the season?
- What form of organization for tourism issues should there be in the area in question?

To answer these questions, the study reconstructs the strategies implemented by the tourists and community-based answers. The reconstruction enables the study to identify the effects of each strategy and the problems encountered in their implementation. In consideration of these effects and problems, the study sorts out these strategies which worked and should serve as basis for a tourists and community-based measures by implementing a tourist product. To develop a tourist product that serves the needs of soft tourism such as:
• Undamaged local life,
• Involvement of local people to the tourism activities,
• The importance of historical aspects,
• Undamaged local nature of the site.

3. Limitations of the Study

It is useful to highlight some of the limitations of the research. It is important to critically evaluate the results and the whole study. The present study has certain limitations that need to be taken into account when considering the study and its contributions.

There are three limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed regarding the present study. The first limitation concerns “local peoples negative reactions on the term of sustainable tourism development.”

It can be seen that local people misunderstanding the term of sustainability. The local residents are against any sustainable activity that would occur in the destination. Therefore, they normally agree on tourism but wish to preserve their island by themselves. This does not mean that they are against visitors. Guests are welcomed always but they are not open minded to new variations.

The second limitation is about time limitation. The short time period taken to get the interviews at Buyukada because of lack of accommodation facilities and weather conditions. On several occasions when interviews were set, they had to be postponed at the last moment. It took 14 days to conduct 65 interviews at the centre of the island. This resulted in delays in beginning the reserve level studies.

Cross-sectional study as the data is gathered just once, over a period of two weeks. Another limitation of this study was bureaucratically limitations; since we went there on weekend, there were no government official or non-government member were there. We could not get a chance to contact. This can thus also be seen as a limiting factor in this study.

4. History of the Island

Buyuk Ada in other words the biggest one of the Prince’s Islands. Büyükada (in Turkish meaning "Big Island"; in Greek Πρίγκιπος Πρίγκιπος) is the largest of the nine islands consisting the Princes’ Islands in the Sea of Marmara, near Istanbul.

The islands have an intriguing and tragic history as they were the place to which exiles from the Byzantine court were banished. Emperors, empresses, and other high-ranking officials were exiled to convents or cells in monasteries on these islands because of revolts or scandals which often rocked the empire. That is how the Prince's Islands got their name.

The archipelago of islands includes Kinaliada, Burgaz, Heybeliada, Kasik, Sivri and Yassi, Sedef Adasi and Neandros.
Kinali (henna-dyed), once called Proti (first) is said to be so named because of the reddish colors of its cliffs. Some remains of the monasteries where Byzantine emperors and empresses were imprisoned exist on this island.

Burgaz (Pyrgos) is thus named because of an ancient watchtower that once stood on its summit and is mentioned in ancient travel books. Byzantines called this island Panormor or Antigone.

Yassiada has its place in Turkish history as the island where members of the toppled administration of Adnan Menderes were taken before being hanged in September 1961.

Sivriada, where there are apparently the remains of a monastery, is a small crag of an island, and is also said to be the island where the rounded-up dogs of Istanbul were taken, only to eat each other out of starvation.

Heybeliada, along with Buyukada, is one of the popular summer resorts. It takes its name, which means "saddlebags," also from its shape. On Heybeliada there is the only surviving Byzantine church on the islands, dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Kamariotissa. Another similar church, the church of St. Mary of the Mongols, still stands, though it has been rebuilt many times and is said to be the last church built before the Ottoman conquest.

Buyukada, whose name means big island, is, as its name implies, the largest of these islands.

In Byzantine times emperors, empresses, and other high-ranking officials were exiled to convents or cells in monasteries on these islands because of revolts or scandals which often rocked the empire.

5. Location of the Island
Only a short ferry ride away from the docks of Istanbul, the Prince's Islands are a great one-day getaway for those weary of the city's hustle, bustle and bang, or for anyone visiting this ancient city.

When getting on the ferry to visit the islands, it has a view of Istanbul's Asian shore as far as Gebze and beyond, full of cement buildings. In the old days when you looked at this shore from the islands there were green forests and hills. Then you can proceed straight for the Prince's Islands. The nine-island archipelago, of which three serve as summer residences for Istanbulites, is located off the Asian coast in the Marmara Sea.

6. Natural Attractions and Heritages Sites

**St. George Monastery:** It was built of two stories in the fifth century A.D. for a group of hermits. In the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries many parts were added to it. It has the shrine of St. George which was built in the fifth century A.D. It has also a copy of the document of the Caliph Omar Ibn el-Khattab dating back to the fourteenth year of Hegira. There are many splendid ancient icons in the convent ([www.adalar.gov.tr/mimari.htm](http://www.adalar.gov.tr/mimari.htm)).

**St. Cristos Monastery:** The Christos Monastery can be reached on foot or by bicycle on the 163-metre high hill in the north of the island.

**The house of Resat Nuri Guntekin:** The house is not open to visitors. It is near the coastal side.

7. Image of Büyükada

There is not a certain image in the minds of domestic tourists because some of the people do not know what kind of facilities there are in the island due to the lack of promotion. In international area the history of island is known but the lack of accessibility opportunities, they sometimes cannot reach the destination.

8. Field Observations

To establish our “field observations” the steps below had been made;

- The interview with the mayor of Büyükada,
- The interviews with the residents,
- Transportation Facilities: By boats and sea buses, no motor vehicles,
- Food and Beverage Facilities: Fish restaurants located on the shore, level of service is low whereas the prices charged are high.
- Attraction Sites: Mostly religious based and not easy accessible,
- Cultural Events: Theaters, cinemas and festivals are carried out on a small scale,
- Tourist Information: One bureau which operates only specific times of the week
- Seasonality: Population: 6,500 (winter); approx: 40,000 (summer).
- Accomodation Facilities:
Three Hotels called Splendid, Saydam Planet and Princess Hotel.

According to the field study, we have acquired both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data we have gathered will be analyzed via frequencies in order to get the general picture of the main aspects that are our main area of interest.

9. Tourism Types In Büyükada

Visits can be classified on the basis of two important types of tourism:

1. Daily visitors in Büyükada (roadside scenic areas, outstanding natural areas, cultural places, F&B outlets, shopping areas).
2. Overnights in Büyükada (water sport facilities, festivals, events).

10. Methodology

It has been made structured interviews and prepared questions set specific to the interviewee. Those different question sets will be distributed to related community groups. In data analysis, in order to offer a profile of all the relevant aspects of Buyukada, we will apply frequency analysis. Moreover, we will apply content analysis in order to take into consideration the most valuable data obtained from the interviews. Content analysis will be used in order to analyze the transcripts of the interviews.

11. SWOT of Buyuk Ada

In the study, it has been prepared an overall SWOT Analysis for the destination Buyukada. The objective of this analysis is to identify key strengths to build upon in the strategies developed for the tourism development plan, weaknesses that must be addressed, the range of opportunities to consider, and some threats which must also taken into account.

11.1. Strengths

Buyukada has much strength to build on, shown as follows,

- A tranquil place in a very busy metropolis
- Historical background of the island
- Undamaged nature
- Old, beautiful, elaborate wooden houses
- Beaches in the middle of Istanbul
- No air and water pollution
- NGOs – Adalilar Dernegi
- No allowance of private motor vehicles
11.2. Weaknesses

There are also a range of weaknesses that must be addressed:

- Conservativeness of local people to the tourism activities
- Weather dependability of sea transportation
- No restoration of old houses
- Insufficient hospitality facilities
- Seasonality
- No tourism information bureaus or desks
- Garbage on the street and beaches
- Bad smell because of horses
- Not remarkable tourism support
- No usage of sea bus in the off-season

11.3. Opportunities

There are many potential tourism development opportunities to consider, as shown below:

- New policies on regional promotion rather than city promotion as a whole
- Promotion of soft tourism in Turkey
- Possibility to increase in hospitality facilities
- Possibility to include islands region into Bosphorus tour program
- Technological improvements to reach the island easier

11.4. Threats

Specific threats must also be examined and addressed by strategies.

- Being in Marmara Sea which is on the line of earthquake
- Decrease in already existing demand because of insufficient hospitality opportunities
- Better promotion of other regions of Istanbul
- Bad reputation of Istanbul because of terrorist attacks

12. Product Name

Buyukada, with all aspect is the product as a sustainable tourism destination. The main component that makes the destination as a sustainable tourism destination is its potential. With the help of the research, it can be concluded that the attitude of local
people towards tourism are very positive and they are hospitable to the tourists. As a product, it can be worked on the components of the destination. The Core Product can be a trip to an island in Istanbul for experiencing protected town life, attractive heritage sites and natural aspects in a harmony.

13. Facilitating Products

13.1. Transportation:

We think that sea transportation is insufficient now and with the sea buses the duration of the time can be reduced, but in winter times, sea buses are not being used to islands region and the duration is almost one hour and a half. Sea bus system should be made twelve months of the year.

13.2. F&B Facilities:

When we look at the characteristics of F&B facilities in the island, the restaurants are mostly on sea food based. The variety of cuisines would be beneficial for attraction of people with different tastes. Also all restaurants are on the sea coast and there is almost no F&B facility inside the island, especially around St. George Monastery. There should be more inside of the island.

There is also almost no entertainment places and pubs in the island but in a way these are the musts of attracting guests to the destinations in tourism.

13.3. Supporting Facilities:

13.3.1. Guidance: There should be a tourism information office in the island, because there is no one professional guiding the people in the island. In the horse-drawn carriages, there can be professional guide informing the guests about the history of the island.

13.3.2. Security: We could not see any security precaution around the island. We especially realize that along the way to St. George Monastery, there are almost no lights. The way is surrounded by a small forest and may be dangerous in evening times. Precaution should be taken.

13.3.3. Information Facilities: Local people are so conservative to tourists and they clearly show that to the guests of the island. In order to create a tourism product in the island, the most important think is to be able change the minds of local people and make them conscious about tourism benefits. NGOs of the island also can spend some efforts in creating a good image for tourism in the eye of local residents.

13.4. Accommodation Facilities:

As we observe, there are only two accommodation facilities in the island working actively. There are many houses that are suitable for accommodation facilities
but they are not restorated and look like people leave them. There can be more accommodation units in order to increase the tourist capacity of the island.

13.5. Attractive Facilities:

The house of Resat Nuri GUNTEKIN (Turkish author) can be open to visitors with new concepts such as being a museum of the island which is a lack of island. There can be created a festival specialized for the island. For restoration facilities, there can be competitions in international area with the contribution of young architects. There can be a sea museum on the island that there is no museum. The horse-drawn carriages can be more beautiful in appearance. Most of the tourist admire these vehicles and find them more comfortable than motor vehicles, also more authentic. The renovation of the vehicles should be done.

In the forest part of the island, in order to use efficient land, picnic areas can be chosen and planned for the entertainment of people.

During the sea transportation, in order to decrease the time and make the way more attractive, some attractions can be made such as a TV in the boat.

14. Image of the Island:

Regarding the questions that have been asked to the tourists, there is not a certain image in the minds of domestic tourist because some of the people do not know what kind of facilities there are in the island because of the lack of promotion. On the other hand, in international area the history of island is known but the lack of accessibility opportunities, they sometimes cannot reach the destination.

15. Basic Competitors

15.1. Fener And Balat: To be the center of both Christians and Jewish people. The variety of heritage sites but no natural beauty.
15.2. Heybeli Ada: Natural beauties, bigger beaches than Buyuk Ada, has bigger and well-planned picnic areas but no heritages sites.
15.3. EMINONU: Harmony of cultures being a must of tours, easy transportation tourist based products. The minuses are no natural beauties, crowded places, security issues such as street boys

16. Competitive Advantages

16.1. Location:

The location itself has uniqueness in Istanbul. The island is always interesting for people. Having sea transportation makes the site attractive.
17.2. Interesting History:

As we mentioned in the beginning part, the history of the island is in a way tragedy and makes people to wonder about the island.

17.3. Social Life:

Protected town life and not allowance of motor vehicle make the place unique in Istanbul and attracts the people from working life in order to relax with the silence of the island.

18. Pricing

In pricing strategy, we recommend value-based pricing which is the practice of setting prices with reference to what customers are willing to pay for the value they believe they will receive. Flat-rate pricing as a part of value-based pricing system allow people know the price they will pay in advance. Also in order to reach sustainable tourism, in off-seasons promotional prices can attract people to the site.

19. Environmental Impacts

19.1. Water: Moderate effect because of heavily usage of beaches and the affect of sea bus to the coast with big waves.
19.2. Air: Minor effect on air because of heat system for winter term in order to spread the business into 12 months.
19.3. Noise: Moderate level on noise. More entertainment facilities would result in more noise in the island but time restrictions can manage the problem.
19.4. Solid waste disposal system: Moderate effect on solid waste disposal system. The population of the island would increase highly in summer terms that would affect the problem.

20. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the SWOT analysis and facilities in the island, Buyukada has an important potential to be developed as a sustainable tourism development. However, there is no tendency of locals to make the place sustainable tourism destination.

To conclude; all of the suggestion should be revised in order to get the maximum benefit from the island in terms of tourism facilities. The site is much protected and we do not think that it is easy to make local people believe that tourism is beneficial if it is made in sustainable terms. Sustainable tourism can be reached in the site but infrastructure and superstructures should be enhanced immediately. Soft tourism is a small-scale tourism, developed by local people and based on local nature, characteristics and culture. To get maximum benefit from the island in terms of tourism facilities by providing a good relationship between local People and tourism professionals. Infrastructures and superstructures should be enhanced immediately.
Particular group of visitors or market segments who may be influenced in relation to specified products should be selected and targeted. Private organizations which can be involved in planning and marketing for tourism and supplying the products should be identified. Finally, the newborn urban council should form a work group who would focus on sustainable tourism development issues and communicate their findings to the authorities and the public through seminars and panels.
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