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Utilization of natural and cultural resources of Dikili (Izmir) for tourism

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Abstract

Agriculture, fishing, greenhousing, carpet manufacturing, granite stone engraving and tourism are the primary sources of income in Dikili, Izmir. Tourism started to develop in the region since the 1980s and recently, coastal tourism and domestic tourism have gained importance.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that beside coasts where coastal tourism takes place, Dikili, has natural and cultural sources required for development of thermal tourism and rural tourism/ecotourism. Additionally, presenting these sources give way to provide numerous opportunities as a power, is complement aim.

The presence of high-flow geothermal water sources in Kaynarca and Ilıca districts in Dikili provides opportunities for heating houses and performing greenhousing in the districts, however Nebiler, Bademli, Kocaoba, French hot springs and etc. offer a great potential for the development of thermal tourism. The land allocations for the establishment of two facilities in Dikili indicate that the region will soon be mentioned with thermal tourism.

Except for the Aegean Sea and geothermal waters, the mountains, mountain pastures, islands, lakes, waterfalls, caves, forests, monumental trees, natural medicinal plants, wild animals and scenic beauties indicate how rich natural geography Dikili has. Local economic products (olive, olive oil, marine products, Yağcıbedir carpets and etc.), ancient cities, rock tombs and ruins of castles as well as villages display the diversity of cultural sources in the region. These all sources mean great attractions for rural tourism/ecotourism and the only shortcoming is that these products have not been branded or turned into touristic products yet. In this sense, the design of tracking paths, the establishment of shopping stands and the opening of some restaurants in some villages are primarily steps and touristic products to launch tourism.

Finally in the study, SWOT analysis is made and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Dikili in terms of thermal tourism and rural tourism/ecotourism are suggested.

The paper has been written in the field of tourism geography and prepared after data collection, geographical observations, analysis and synthesis.

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1. Introduction

It is witnessed that several innovations have taken place beyond the classical understanding of tourism in the recent development trend of tourism. Sustainability, conservation-use balance, holding capacity, alternative tourism, diversification, complementarity, integration, competition, brand, image and etc. appear as the most mentioned concepts. The subject of this paper is directly related to diversification in tourism.

“Diversification of touristic products” is the most important pillar of diversification in tourism. Touristic products are closely associated with sources of supply (natural attractions, cultural attractions and service attractions). Richness and variety of sources of supply have an impact on the degree of success of diversification in tourism. Diversification in tourism ensures the optimum use of a tourism locality for tourism in terms of time and space and is also compatible with the concept of sustainability. It is necessary to prepare specific plans and programs in order for the activities carried out for diversification of touristic products to yield beneficial results in every aspect.

The saturation of mass tourism, the damages it has inflicted to the natural environment and the fact that tourists are headed for different attractions instead of sand-sun-sea and look for different excitements have brought the concept of “alternative tourism” to the agenda. Alternative tourism is a concept that covers those types of tourism that have developed as alternatives to mass tourism, in which sun, sea and coasts are used as sources. Types of alternative tourism are gradually increasing in number, and they increase their shares in the tourism pie. Although the concept of alternative tourism is used by many countries around the world, generally two basic approaches are mentioned. The first one is that alternative tourism plays a role that is dependent on and complementary to other types of tourism, whereas the second one is that it is stimulated with more special issues with features that are different from those of traditional tourism.

Under the present competition conditions, it is necessary to adapt the existing touristic products to the trends of tourism or to develop new touristic products. Since those destinations which fail to accommodate to this change and which do not track innovations cannot meet the expectations of tourists, their chances of competition will decrease and they will have the risk of losing their market shares. Touristic destinations prefer diversification of touristic products in order to increase their existing demands, to create new demands, to increase the occupancy rate by extending tourism to the whole year and to enhance profitability.

In the “Tourism Development Plan of Izmir” [1], it is requested to stimulate the unused or inefficiently used source potentials in the province within the scope of sustainable tourism. With this purpose, emphasis is laid on the development of varieties of touristic products such as mountain, winter sports, plateau, nature, farm, golf, hot spring, yacht, cruise, congress, youth and entertainment.

Policy alternatives to transform Izmir into a destination that can compete in the national and international tourism markets are provided in the study of Izmir Development Agency, dated 2009 (Varieties of Tourism in Izmir and Analysis of Need for Tourism Investments). In the last section of the study, Izmir is divided into four main regions, and explanations are provided for the types of tourism that might be developed in accordance with the potential of every region.

Konak, Cesme, Selcuk, Menderes, Foca and Balçova are the outstanding districts in the tourism of Izmir. On the other hand, Bergama, Dikili, Karaburun, Odemis, Seferihisar and Urla have lagged behind in terms of investment and promotion and failed to obtain any share from the market, although they have tourism potential in terms of resources [2].

Although not at the desired level, some noteworthy tourism development is observed in Dikili, Foca and Bergama among the northern districts of Izmir. Besides Dikili and Foca that have partially acquired the characteristic of being a destination in coastal tourism, Bergama has not been able to fully reach the stage of being a destination for cultural tourism yet.

The district of Dikili is located in the west of “Coastal Aegean Section” of the Aegean Region and in the north of the coasts of the Aegean Sea. The district territories surrounding the Gulf of Dikili are bordered by the Gulf of Candarli in the south. The Lesbos Island is located some 18 nautical miles west of the district center of Dikili (Fig: 1).

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