The Contribution of the Preservation and Sustainability of Cultural Heritage to the Regional Economy: The Case of Kars Ani Ruins

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Keywords
Cultural heritage, Sustainability, Economic contribution, Ani ruins

Abstract
Although cultural heritage is a general concept given to works created by previous generations and believed to have universal values, it consists of all important values that remind societies and members of society of their common past and contribute to the dominance of feelings of unity and solidarity. The purpose of ensuring the sustainability of these values by preserving should be to protect the natural resource base on which future development will depend. In this context, it is concluded that the basis of reaching the future depends on the protection of existing resources. The essence of the definition of sustainability is not to endanger and compromise the needs of future generations while meeting our own needs in order to perpetuate human life. Therefore, this concept combines ecological, social and economic components together. The aim of this study is to determine the importance and economic contributions of preserving the Kars Ani Ruins, which is on the world cultural heritage list, and bringing it to the present day, to develop the sense of protecting the regional economy and the people living in the region. In this study, Phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used and random sample selection was made. The structured interview form was used in selecting the data collection tool. Within the scope of the study, a literature review on cultural heritage, sustainability, economic contribution and Ani Ruins was conducted. A group focus meeting was held with eight people who live in Kars province and Ani Ruins and contribute to the tourists who participate in cultural tourism from the touristic products offered by the cultural heritage. With the recording of the interview form, the data and themes were coded and presented in tables. According to the results of the research; It has been observed that the income levels of the people of the region who protect their cultural heritage and values have increased. At the same time, the importance of the contribution of the preservation and sustainability of the cultural heritage to future generations was mentioned. It has been concluded that in order to meet the increase in demand in cultural tours, it is necessary to protect the cultural heritage and to ensure its sustainability.

1. Introduction

It is seen that the trips made at the beginning of the tourism are not for holiday purposes, and the first trips made for tourism purposes are made with the feeling of seeing and learning unknown places. It is seen that the concept of cultural tourism was first used as a word in the European Commission in the 1980s to reveal cultural values and cultural identities (Çulha 2008[2]). Cultural tourism includes who a region, society or group is, how they live and what they eat, their history, art, lifestyle and beliefs (Erdoğan 2020[2]).

Culture Tourism; The increase in tourism demand is one of the most effective tools to protect the social and cultural values of the region, as well as the sustainable features of the natural environment and to provide economic benefit to the people of the region. In addition to natural features, the protection of historical and cultural assets is a service concept in which works of art, socio-economic and traditional touristic values of the region are offered to tourists in the form of products (Saçlık and Toptaş 2017[3]).

Although it is aimed to see historical places, artifacts, museums, ruins of ancient civilizations in general, local food, local cuisine, music, dance, environmental products, natural beauties, festivals and fairs are among the original features of the travels (Toptaş 2020[4]).

By causing environmental problems as well as cultural values; Pollution of natural and cultural values, unlimited use, unplanned construction, insufficient infrastructure, insufficient protection of historical and cultural values, increased luxury consumption due to natural resources, and seen as an inexhaustible economic resource. These reasons have caused the natural environment to exceed its carrying capacity and put forward the necessity to explain the fact that natural resources are limited and can be exhausted if necessary efforts are not made in terms of benefiting future generations from the blessings of sustainable history, natural resources and the environment. In order to include regions with intense cultural values in the sightseeing routes of cultural tours, the assets that are intriguing and valuable to buy must be presented to the tourism market. Studies have shown that the demand for cultural values...
The word sustainability comes from the Latin word “Sustinere” “Sustainability”. The definition of sustainability first came to the agenda in the conference organized by the United Nations in Stockholm in 1972 with the report “Limits of Growth”. In this report, the determination to act jointly in the international arena against environmental problems has been shown and the date of the conference, June 5, has started to be celebrated as the World Environment Day. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) was established on the subject and the Humanitarian Environment Declaration, which observes justice and emphasizes the socio-economic development and the inseparability of the environment from development, was adopted (Yılmaz 2015)[8].

In the studies conducted, it states that the main purpose of sustainability is to protect the natural resource base on which future development will depend (Baker 2006). In this context, it is concluded that the basis of reaching the future depends on the protection of existing resources. The essence of the definition of sustainability is not to endanger and compromise the needs of future generations while meeting our own needs in order to perpetuate human life. Therefore, this concept integrates ecological, social and economic components together.

The protection of cultural values makes important contributions to the economy of the country and the region. All professions, organizations and activities contribute to the economy. Economic contribution provides an increase in employment and business volume as well as an increase in income for the society. Tourism revenues are a sector whose economic returns are increasing every year due to its ability to positively affect national income, balance of payments, foreign currency income and employment.

2. Results and Discussions

2.1. Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to determine the importance and economic contributions of protecting the Kars Ani Ruins, which is on the world cultural heritage list, and bringing it to the present day, to the development of the regional economy and the sense of protecting the cultural heritage of the people living in the region. In addition, it was aimed to protect the Kars Ani Ruins as a cultural heritage and to increase the economic contribution to the people of the region by creating awareness.

2.2. Research Universe and Sample

Phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. In order to obtain the data in the study, group focus meetings were held with the local people living in Kars. Sampling method was used in order to obtain data from the participants. Find out if there are common or shared phenomena in the maximum diversity sampling, not the generalizations of the participants’ yeast have worked, and according to this diversity, the study has been tried to reveal different dimensions of the problem.”

Phenomenology design constitutes a suitable research ground to investigate phenomena that are not completely alien to us, and at the same time we cannot fully grasp the meaning (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013)[9].

Focus group study interview questions are listed as follows:

1. Could you briefly introduce yourself?
2. How many years have you lived in Kars and Ani Village?
3. What does Cultural Tourism mean to you?
4. What does cultural heritage mean to you?
5. What does the sustainability of cultural heritage mean to you?
6. Are the incentives provided to you for the preservation of cultural heritage sufficient?
7. Do investments in cultural tourism and cultural heritage contribute to you and the economy of the region?
8. Have you been involved in innovation to protect your cultural heritage?

3. Findings

3.1. Findings Regarding Participants

In the first two questions directed to the participants who were interviewed in the focus group, they were asked to briefly introduce themselves and how many years they have been tourism entrepreneurs in Kars and Ani villages. Participants’ ages vary between 34-52. It has been determined that the people who contribute economically by offering cultural heritage to the service of tourism are from Kars and have lived here for 12 to 35 years.

### Table 1. Focus Group Information Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number / Description of Entrepreneurs</th>
<th>Focus Group Subject</th>
<th>Focus Group Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The sustainability of cultural heritage and its contribution to the economy of the region</td>
<td>14.12.2020</td>
<td>Kars Center– Ani Ruins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8, people residing in Kars and Ani</td>
<td>Focus Group Information Form</td>
<td>Focus Group Area / Location</td>
<td>14.12.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group Subject</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2. Findings Regarding the Perspective of Participants on Culture and Tourism Perceptions

“What does cultural tourism mean to you?” The findings regarding the question were conveyed in line with the information received from the participants.

People living in Kars province and Ani village expressed cultural tourism as cultural tourism, which includes natural, cultural, physical, environmental and historical values, lifestyles, local food and drinks and tourists who come to buy folk dances. As a result of the analysis, the cultural and tourism perceptions of the participants were combined under the themes of “natural and cultural values”, “local people”, “cultural environment” and “cultural heritage”.

3.3. Findings Related to Participants’ Perspective on Cultural Heritage Perceptions

They have high knowledge and skills about cultural values in Eastern cultures, what they can do when cultural heritage shows them when they are given the opportunity to earn income, that this situation gives them a historical responsibility, that when cultural tourism is supported, positive entrepreneurial activities will be maintained and they can reveal the importance of the role they undertake in the protection of cultural values. They said. In this context, they mentioned the importance of Ani Ruins, which is approximately 45 km away from Kars province. The cultural heritage perceptions of the participants were combined under the themes of “natural and cultural heritage”, “local people”, “historical responsibility” and “cultural heritage awareness”.

3.4. Findings Regarding Participants’ Perspective on Sustainability of Cultural Heritage

They stated that their cultural heritage from the past is an important treasure and that it is important to pass it on to future generations as a legacy. They stated that with the increase in cultural tours, they became aware of their natural values later and that they brought these values to the service of tourists participating in cultural tourism attracted more attention than their expectations and provided them economic benefits. They believed it was important to ensure the sustainability of this heritage from their past. Participants’ perceptions of the sustainability of cultural heritage were combined under the themes of “sustainability”, “awareness”, “income impact” and “the importance of cultural heritage”.

3.5. Findings Regarding Participants’ Perspectives on Incentives Provided for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

They said that they are aware of some of the incentives provided to you for the preservation of cultural heritage, the incentives provided are sufficient, but they cannot benefit from the incentives due to long and challenging project preparations. They stated that it is important to combine the brand and image of the products they produce, not just money in the incentives provided. Participants’ perceptions of incentives provided for the preservation of cultural heritage have been combined under the themes of “tourism incentives”, “preparing an incentive project”, “brand” and ‘image’.

3.6. Findings Regarding Participants’ Perceptions of the Contribution of Cultural Tourism to the Regional Economy

With the use of the Eastern Express for tourism trains, the demand increased in Kars and the provinces of the region, tourism investments increased due to this process, the increase in hotels and other tourism facilities increased the trade in the region and the increase in the sales of the products and services produced for cultural tourism contributed to them and the economy of the region, they said that employment increased. Participants’ perceptions of the contribution of cultural tourism to the economy are combined under the themes of “tourism economy”, “income increase”, “employment” and “tourism investments”.

3.7. Findings Regarding the Innovation Studies of Participants for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

In order to meet the demand from tourists who want to stay in the natural environment of Kars and Ani villages, they prepared the natural village houses as guest accommodation places and enabled the tourists to live the village life for a short time. They have started to use by renewing all their cultural heritage specific to their regions, which they aim to increase capacity according to the accommodation demand. They have offered them to the service of tourists by making innovation studies on local entertainment, food, drinks and souvenirs for incoming tourists. Participants’ perceptions of the protection of cultural heritage are based on ‘innovation’, ‘capacity’, “touristic product” and “marketing”.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Unconscious and excessive use of cultural and natural assets by people and seeing these values as an unlimited resource causes pollution of the environment and destruction of cultural heritage. With this study, the importance of the economic contribution of the preservation of cultural heritage and the income effect it will provide to future generations both today and if it can be sustained, and its positive results on the development of the region have been tried to be revealed.

It is an important source of value that will learn the cultural heritage of the people of the region from their past and pass them on to future generations. The importance of the effective and efficient use of touristic product resources to be offered to cultural tourism has been determined. The support to be given to the people of the region will contribute to every segment with positive results.

It is important to carry out the necessary studies to make the people of the region aware of the incentives and grant programs provided by government institutions and non-governmental organizations. It is not possible for them to prepare a project for calls for proposals made in certain periods. Considering that the grant and incentive project preparation institutions, which have increased considerably in recent years, do not have the power and authority to pay the amounts they want, this problem should be solved and they should benefit from the incentive opportunities. These supports, which have been put into practice in recent years, should be increased and continued, and the support provided should be explained with face-to-face meetings with people in the regions where cultural tourism is intense and they should be encouraged to participate in production.

In order to protect cultural and environmental values, the public and private sectors should act together, implement effective policies and entrepreneurs should be encouraged to invest in these areas. Control of cultural responsibility should be ensured by coming together of private sector representatives, entrepreneurs and local people. Creating this awareness of responsibility will make a significant contribution to the transfer of cultural values to future generations as a legacy. It is necessary to raise awareness and mobilize the local people by explaining the economic contributions of the demand that will arise against this interest in which cultural and environmental values attract national and international attention. Studies should be conducted to investigate and revive lost or nearly lost values. The interaction quality of societies with different cultures should be considered. It should be known that each segment has a duty to enrich the experiences in mutual cultural interaction, to support the projects in which they can reveal their knowledge, knowledge and skills and to guide them.

As with every study, this study has some limitations. First of all, the population of the region living in Kars and Ani villages constitutes the sample of this study. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results of the study neither for the provinces, nor for Turkey, nor for the local people operating in regions where cultural tourism is intense. In new studies to be carried out, it is thought that it would be more appropriate to collect data with the “phenomenology” phenomenology pattern. Secondly, it will be useful to determine whether the results of this regional study are in harmony with the structural characteristics of cultural tourism, conceptually and sectorally. There is a need for new academic studies in which the economic, social and entrepreneurship issues of cultural tourism and the protection of cultural values are covered and the scope is expanded.
References


