



On The Right Path towards Benefiting From Tourism; A Compendious Debate on Sustainability

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Abstract: If well planned, tourism is considered to transfer viable and valuable sources of positive impacts to the local destinations. There have been many debates on the issue of sustainability in recent decades and hundreds of tourism plans have been proposed out of which just a handful could entice the admiration of the scientific communities. The secrets behind those successful master plans are their holistic and comprehensive perspectives that not only consider the benefits of each single stakeholder engaged in the plans but elucidate how to achieve such extent of participation through the plans they propose. In this research it has been tried to focus on one of the most outstanding tourism planning debates to attract the attention of the communities where the viability of such prospects for the cognizance of the tourism inadequacies has been underestimated. Northern Cyprus selected as a research area and the planning status of Famagusta city of this small island illustrated accordingly.

Keywords: Sustainability, tourism planning, economic impacts, environment, Famagusta, Cyprus.

1. Introduction:

As an overarching industry, tourism more or less has a share in economies of most of the world's nations. Based on the statistics presented by World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2013), tourism industry's direct contribution to GDP in 2011 was about US\$2 trillion and the industry generated about 98 million jobs in that year. WTTC (2013) also predicted an annual growth of 4% per annum over the ten years for this industry till 2022. The positive impacts of tourism are not limited only to the economic aspects. Tourism growth and development, if planned and controlled well, can lead to the destination community welfare and upgrade too. Tourism as a means can provide funds for the conservation and protection of historical places and heritages. It has the potential to change and renovate many redundant places to new attraction, shops, hotels or touristic facilities in favor of locals and visitors. Tourism development can lead to renovation of transportation systems and infrastructures, which are welcomed by both tourists and residents (Godfrey et al, 2000). Even the impacts of tourism on the destination communities go beyond and affect the social and cultural realms of the communities. Of the supreme positive impacts of tourism on the host population is cultural development and cultural exchange, upgrading the image of the destination and also development of amenities (Milman and Pizam, 1988). Mason (2003) mentioned that the positive social impacts of the tourism can be illustrated by enhancement in different aspects of the social scales such as health care, education, income and status opportunities especially for women. As mentioned above these are just a number of positive impacts of tourism that; contrariwise, if the procedures of tourism activities do not follow the accurate planning paradigms or in other words if the processes do not be sustainable, the impacts will work unpleasantly. Now the initial question of the research rises. While the poverty is a widespread knot in the world and tourism has been introduced as a poverty alleviative tool (Scheyvens, 2007): why all the communities should not benefit from its upshots? And while a considerable number of

the poor countries are utilizing tourism as leverage for enhancing their economy, how they can achieve sustainable tourism plans which may avoid negative influences of the tourism activities?

The answer to these questions is not that much simple and it is one of the major concerns of the tourism scholars. The authors of the current piece of work tried to discuss Burns' (1999) paper of paradoxes in planning as one of the promising discussions in realms of tourism planning among the academic territories. In order to enrich the line of argument here, the case of Northern Cyprus and specifically its famous city, Famagusta has been observed through the lens of this perspective.

In 1974 the Cyprus Island, due to some conflicts between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, was divided into two sections where the northern part was allocated to Turkish Cypriots which consists of about %55 of the whole island and the south parts was given to Greek Cypriots (Warner, 1999). In 1983 Turkish part of the Island was entitled Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) (Arslan and Guven, 2007). The population of Northern Cyprus in 2011 census was 294,906 (www.wikipedia.com). The largest cities of the TRNC are Nicosia, Famagusta and Kyrenia, respectively (www.northcyprus.cc).

This city Founded in 300 BC on the old settlement of Arsinoe, Famagusta remained a small fishing village for a long period of time. Later, as a result of the gradual evacuation of Salamis, it developed into a small port. This city was under British control for around 80 years.

2. Appropriate Planning approach

The significant contributions of tourism on the world's whole nations (e.g. variety of impacts) at one hand and its vital role on alleviating poverty in under-developed countries at the other have attracted the attentions throughout the world to this industry (Scheyvens, 2007) in a way that "Pro Poor Tourism" (Deloitte & Touche, 1999)

is now at the center of international disputations (e.g. WTO, ILO). But what is so crucial about this industry is the notion of sustainability, a phenomenon through which the benefits of tourism can be viable and much more valuable. Without a doubt in areas where tourism has been grown rapidly, there is much pressure on environmental resources and as a consequence the degradation of environmental founts is witnessed.

Sustainable tourism development which may bring positive local development along with environment preservation and socio-cultural enhancement of indigenous has been the main focus of many studies (Bimonte & Punzo, 2003; Franch et al., 2007; Godde et al., 2000; Milne & Ateljevic, 2001) and scholars have enriched their works by providing tangible examples of the sustainable and unsustainable plans in tourism destinations a lot. One of the most famous sample was Cancu'n (Mexico) where due to the unsustainable developments irreversible land degradation occurred there and pressures resulted from mass tourism, damaged the island which before held a variety of marine life and was an important nesting site for seabirds and sea turtles (Wiese, 1996 in Davenport, 2006). There are many other examples around the world that due to the lack of proper planning approaches facing serious hazards of destruction and degradation. The intense interdependence of the tourism and destination communities to the sustainable environmental developments enhances the postulate of this planning approach more. Thus it is better to have a definition of this fact. The review of the literature showed that there is not a common global definition of such sophisticated issue (Johnston and Tyrrelln, 2005) but what can be inferred from it in simple words is the development of the tourism destinations by concerning the reduction of costs and increase of benefits regarding all aspects of the environmental, economic, and social phases, as well as absorbance of the local community participation (Lindberg & Johnson, 1997), and finally satisfying the visitors' experiences (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005). In other words sustainability in tourism "is being consolidated at an international level as an

approach that should be used to make all types of tourism more environmentally, socially and economically beneficial" (Macarena, et al 2012, p. 659).

During its history, tourism has faced plenty of problems and as a result new solutions have been evolved. This evolutionary flow of development never will stop undoubtedly. Although the ordinary planning approaches (Elliot 1994; Gunn 1994; Inskeep 1991) were successful in terms of enhancing the number of visitors as well as overcoming the accommodation issues, according to (Bianchi 2002) they would have not been so pioneer at bringing welfare to the local indigenous whereas, the initial concern of sustainability is not "market development" but the community development and stakeholders benefits together with ecological protections' accomplishments.

Nevertheless among those touching approaches in the industry of tourism for identification of the obstacles of sustainability, reigns the "paradoxes in planning" (Burns, 1999).

Burns (1999) does his best in his article to deeply analyse the evolution of planning procedures, the attitudes towards tourism planning and the characteristics of tourism industry during the recent decades. At first the perceptions to this phenomenon was just a simplistic contemplation, from the consumers' side as a means of leisure, and from the suppliers' a means of economical benefits. But the changes and developments that gradually evolved in different aspects of man life affected the tourism and planning process as well. Specially the industrialization, modernization and globalization brought new insights to the sector and opened new doors to the tourism planning mechanisms.

In majority of third world countries where the industrialization has not reached to its pick gaining profit from tourism industry without regarding whether it is sustainable or not, is a controversial problem. In order to avoid the unexpected harms threatening the environment and also ensuring the benefits to different stakeholders involved in tourism the implementation of an appropriate planning methods are so vital. In order to

acquire such goal Burns (1999) emphasizes on a well surfed pre implementation researches regarding every dimension of the probable results of the plans in the target destinations. It should be noted that the most important factor in accomplishing the positive outcome of a plan is related to the clarified purpose of the plan, the detailed pre documentary agreement on the procedures of the plan (prepared by specialist from different field of majors), the cooperation of the stakeholders most importantly the local community and many other factors. The important role of the local community presence in the planning processes and the needs of an exquisite cooperation between local and national government under which a hoped-for spot to be brought out in favour of the local community' individuals are too necessary.

The importance of the environment not only to the existence of tourism industry but also to the continuation of the human beings lives is another factor to be figured on. Therefore there must be a consensus among different stakeholders in relevance to the environmentally friendly development activities. Burns (2004) stated that "The industry presents a prime opportunity for jobs, investment and community activity to work in partnership to use and not abuse the environment" (Burns, 2004, p.30).

The concept of "tourism first" and "development first" and their elaborated concerns, features and philosophies **Figure1** are flashing lights based on which the status of the tourism planning in destinations can be identified. These scales implicitly beget a very determinative question: what is wanted from the tourism and by whom exactly? It means finding the objectives of the plans which it pursues in local, regional and national levels.

Development first can correct the infirmities of the distribution channel of the justice within the community and blossoms the locals glorious awaited future. The positive impacts of the development first influence the cultural and social bases of the society. On the other hand, tourism first, insists on the development of tourism industry by itself without regarding the sociological factors of the destination community.

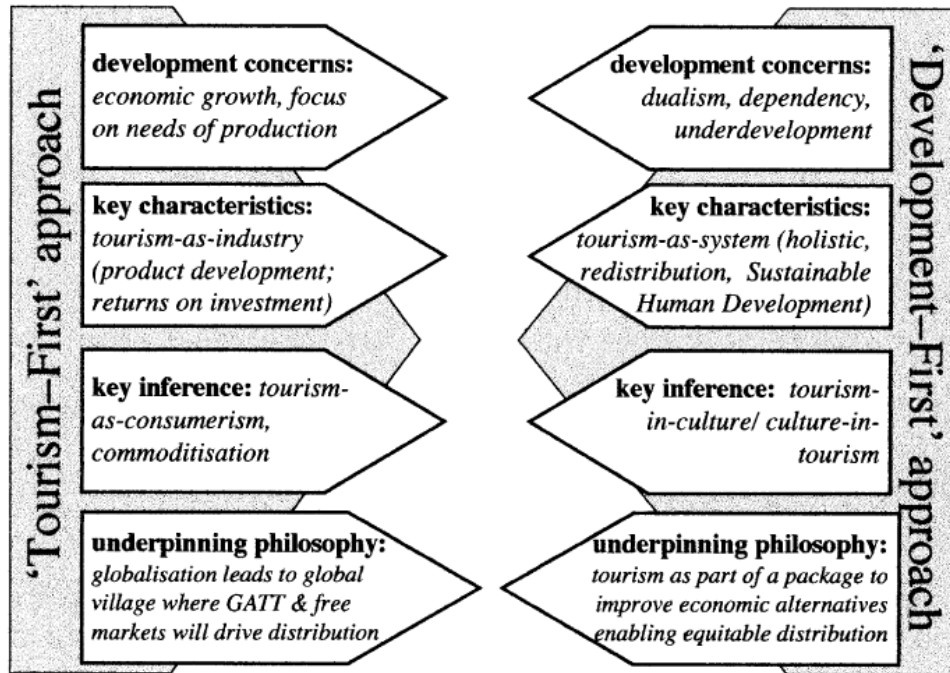


Figure1. Bipolarities in Tourism and Development Source: Burns(1999)

3. Famagusta region, Northern Cyprus:

The third largest Mediterranean island after Sicily and Sardina is Cyprus, a typical small island with limited natural resources Fig. 2. The island is 224 km long and 96 km wide and has 768 km of coastline. Just nine years after the partition of the island to northern part (Turkish Cypriots) and southern part (Greek Cypriots) in 1974, the northern part was established as Turkish Republic on Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in November 1983.



Figure. 2: The location of the Island

Source: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/people-profile>

Famagusta is a city on the east coast of North Cyprus. It is located east of Lefkoşa, and possesses the deepest harbor of the island Fig. 3. This city of Famagusta offers many attractions to visitors, including beaches, nightlife, sightseeing, historical sites, Byzantine churches, and nature-based activities – not dissimilar to the tourism offerings and characteristics in the rest of Cyprus.



Figure. 3. The location of Famagusta

Source: <http://www.weather-forecast.com/locations/Famagusta>

4. Materials and Methods:

In order to understand to what extent the notion of sustainability is being followed in parallel with the aforementioned model in Famagusta (Northern Cyprus), this study applied different techniques. Although quantitative research method is widely used in hospitality sector, Walle (1997) stated that it is the qualitative research approach that can foster the understanding of the phenomena related tourism industry. He indicated that the qualitative method can present precious functionalities of what is going on and also it can describe them more comprehensive. Since the issue of sustainability and also the phenomenon of planning approaches are multidimensional and are related to different aspects of humane (social life, culture, environment and so on) this study has applied qualitative methods with an interpretive headings. The opportunity of living within the context of the research area for a couple of years provided a chance for the

researchers to have a wide accessibility to different planning settings in study area. On the other hand variety of local individuals as the major stakeholders (community members) in Famagusta could be accessed in result of this occasion as well. The process of collecting data started on January 2012 by direct observation of the famous constructions of the area and field research as educational tours conducted by the planning course outlines. Then the process continued through semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders selected purposefully on an unscheduled basis which lasted till May 2012. The total number of people from whom the data collected was 17. In order to illustrate a tangible picture of the area for the readers in discussion part, two famous planning infrastructures of Famagusta have been described within the discussion section.

5. Findings

The results of the data collected indicated that there are major obstacles against sustainability achievement in tourism plans in Famagusta. Majority of the respondents agreed on the point that resulted from the social conflicts which forced the Island into partition a culture of short-termism dominated the plans in Famagusta. Thus the local land owners just focus on the plans which with the least investment return maximum benefits for the owners. For instance a local construction worker stated: *What can you see more around the city nowadays are the unshaped apartments that have been built to be rented to the tourists.* The effect of such perspective also could be seen in the restaurant businesses of the city as well.

They also mentioned that majority of the large tourism accommodation infrastructures are owned by what they call "outsiders". They believe that the benefits of the hotels go out of the city and have minor positive impacts on the local community. Tourism travel agency clerk stated: *The hotel managers tend to hire foreign part time workers instead of us. We never work with the few wages they pay for part time workers which usually are foreign*

students. I rarely know any indigenous to work in hotels with such circumstance without insurance and below standard wages. But the foreign workers do so.

They also indicated that the political uncertainty and the lack of crystal clear rules and regulations beside the professional planners in the body of the local government as another influencing factor for the planning processes of Famagusta. *For the government there are much more important issues than sustainability right no. Who cares what is going on. Take it easy.* Stated a receptionist.

Considerable number of the respondents mentioned that the planning of the whole city is improper and is not restricted just to the tourism sector. *When there is a rain because of the lack of suitable planning system the flooding dominates every street and allies!* Stated a local cashier old lady. These kinds of complaints were not less during the interviews.

The lack of a systematic sewage equipments beside the ways the tourism sectors behave with the waste disposal were the other theme the respondents pointed out. *In fact what the hoteliers care least is the environment. They just force us to keep the appearance clean and neat. What happening outside is not important.* A part time hotel staff mentioned. These problems also heard from other interviewees in relation to their own experiences of residential place in the city.

Cooperation was another factor that the respondents find it an ignored issue in the tourism sector in the area. Majority stated that *when there is no defined profit why they should cooperate in something that even nobody called us for?*

6. Discussion and Conclusion:

Had those involved in the tourism industry (all of the stakeholders), consider the sustainability phenomenon which is a multidimensional combination of processes of managing and organizing and using the resources in a way that they can be kept intact and preserved for the future in every layer (local, regional, national and international) and every aspect, the outcome would be what the scholars in the tourism industry wish

to occur. Although the accomplishment of such a goal is not easy, under certain circumstances it is not out of reach.

The results of the current study obtained from collected data revealed that the notion of sustainability is a vague term in Famagusta tourism planning approach. But as Bell & Morse (2003) stated in their research the sustainability is not a universal concept and it may be influenced by local environmental, social and economic contexts. Therefore it would be so lucrative to rummage the context within which the current outcome reaped. Famagusta as a part of Northern Cyprus has been intensively affected by the international sanctions eventuated from the unsolved political conflicts. Since the tourism industry is sorely sensitive to the political rulings the morbid situation of the tourism planning procedures in Famagusta dose not sounds incoherent with this trend. The second issue about the study setting is that based on what the respondent stated the sustainable tourism planning is not on the top priorities of the local government. Thus there should not be any expectation of the establishment of the sustainable procedures not only in tourism planning but any other segments as well. According to Burns' (2004) model of the first points in any sustainable plans is the "decision to plan for sustainable".

Since the "culture is crystallized in human beings' everyday language" (Nasirahmadi et al., 2014) the overall conversations of the respondents alluded to the fact that short-termism has been a dominated culture through the procedures related to the planning processes. This school of thought is the result of unknown future that the individuals may predict for themselves. Thus a permanent political agreement would gradually change this culture in the community.

In order to illustrate an image of the tourism planning processes in the area the authors decided to put two examples of the accommodation sectors (Names Intentionally Omitted).

The direct quotations are the notes taken by the authors while visiting the places during a field research conducted by EMU University in 2012.

Figure.4. Hotel (A):

“If one ignore the labyrinthine traverse leading the site (despite the sustainability criteria of accessibility), the seating plot of the plan is obviously nonsense, either its distance to the seashore or to the neighbourhood resorts” stated a well known professor of planning from Famagusta.

The overall visage of the plan was extremely unshaped and undesirable in a way that the visitors at the first glance are being bombarded by the negative senses of likely being at a convict cincture. The colour and the used materials in the building are miles away from the harmony it should have been regarded the Cyprus overall environment. “The building has no identity by itself and there is also no sign or symbol around the building to introduce its utility to the visitors”. Instead of using the potential beauty of the rocky seashore, it has been tried to remove the rocks away and built sandy seashore which the results was neither sandy nor rocky. Because of the natural forces the carried sands were being washed by the sea.



Figure.4. Hotel (A)

Another problem was a buffer which unwisely has been built Figure.5 exactly between the sea and the resort that prevents the visitors to view the sea comfortably. Parking lot was another unsustainable signs of the building which was located near the main building and in front of the resort which makes a very awful view.



Figure.5 Hotel (A) and the buffer between the sea and the resort



Figure.6 Hotel (B) External view

The significant problems of the building's planning failures are: its lack of an entrance gate, any logo or sign, no harmony, lack of suitable illuminating systems, a proper sewage system and waste disposal. To put it in a nut shell: this building can be listed as a real example where the sustainability criteria have been ignored. What was concluded from the data, these resorts and buildings almost have no benefit to the local community considering the economic aspects and environmental issues.



Figure.7 Hotel (B) Internal view

Based on the results of the study the tourism planning conditions in Famagusta has been gravitated more towards “tourism first” approach. The dominant conception about this industry is economical benefications and the lacks of a systematic and holistic view to the planning process can be felt. In sum the fact is that the sustainability is a must factor which nowadays in such a severe competitive world, affected by globalization its absence can result in serious negative impacts and problems to the host communities. Unfortunately such an important factor is not being taken into accounts in Famagusta city so obviously. The results of ignoring the sustainability phenomenon in this area are so tangible within the community and have been affected the environment negatively. If the local government does not take any actions regarding the sustainability, the whole area will experience irreparable harms not only regarding the environmental destructions but also the decline of the visitors as well as the local community discontents. It is suggested that the above discussed approaches “tourism first and development first” can be used as an advantageous scale that in long term by benefiting from the positive aspects of each side blissful future is not unachievable for the tourism and planning of the area. Like any other study this research also have some limitations. The first limitation of this study is that just the perception of the local individuals were assessed and in the future it is suggested that the respondent also get chosen from political institutions and decisions makers as well. Another limitation of the study is that it just concentrated on the Famagusta and the results are not deemed to be generalized.

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