EXPLORATION OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION ISSUE WITH VOLUNTEER TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The main motivation of the article is to explore one of the contemporary tourism movement; volunteer tourism and its role in heritage conservation. Modernist tourism activities have been criticized for their consumer and harmful effects on the host destinations by several scholars such as John Urry. Accordingly, relationships between 'tourists' and 'host destinations' are defined as consumer and resources in the modern world. However, the postmodern 'volunteer tourism' concept started to discuss with its concern about the conservation and development purposes of 'travelers' for their 'experienced places'. Theoretically, Edward Soja express; standing points of modernism and postmodernism as well as effects of them to space from spatial, social, and cultural aspects. Through such expositions, this paper makes theoretical contributions about; differences between mass tourism and alternative tourism activities from the volunteer tourism perspective to figure out if the volunteer tourism movement is applicable for sustainable heritage conservation and development purposes.

Keywords: Volunteer tourism, Heritage conservation, Contemporary debate

1. INTRODUCTION

How can sustainable cultural and natural heritage conservation be sustained? Is it possible to minimize the negative effects of tourism and its pressure on heritage sites of urban and rural areas? Can contemporary touristic activities such as volunteer tourism be used for sustainable tool to conservation? Is the volunteer tourism movement so different than other mass tourism industries?

Throughout history, people have been visiting cultural, natural and historical lands. Today, this concept is one of the largest, global, and fastest-growing sectors which is called the tourism industry (UNWTO 2005). Tourism is defined as an activity for visitors who are leaving their daily living areas, for more than a day and less than a year, to travel to different places for several purposes such as holiday, leisure,

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business, health, education (WTO, 1981). As an industry, tourism is a sector that rents beautiful places temporary to customers who have a desire to experience different cultures, histories, and natures. On the other hand, both tourism activity and industry definitions are results in inevitable imprints from vegetation trampling to visitor crowding and recreation conflict on heritage lands (Marion & Reid, 2007).

The development conception of tourism has changed over time. Four main tourism development theories evolved from the 1960s to today. Firstly, Modernization Theory emerged after Second World War and it supported that tourism can be used as a development strategy to generate foreign exchange, increase GDP, attract capital and promote modern western values of life as well as a tool to create brotherhood between nations. At the same time, consuming experiences would fulfill tourists' ego which ends up with the mass tourism movement (Awang & Wan & Zahari, 2009).

Although, Dependency Theory questioned the usage of tourism as a development tool, because, mass tourism consumes resources and exploits local and undeveloped areas with capitalist tools like any other industry. Instead of diminishing the existing socio-economic inequalities within the developing countries, tourism, strengthen them through touristic boarder and its adaptation along traditional structures (Oppermann, 1993, p. 540).

Neo-liberalism affected tourism perception and created its theory. Chain of global events did as an oil crisis and economic depression that occurred from the mid-1970s to 1980s. The state-controlled approaches shifted to the rising influence of the private sector in the tourism industry as well (Milne, S., & Ateljevic, I., 2001). Thereby, the paradigm shifted from modernism to postmodernism, and the power of the nation-state declined (Harvey, 1990).

Private organizations were influenced by globalization and technological developments which created wide variety in leisure activities. Likewise, awareness of consumer and harmful side of mass tourism combined with sustainability concerns of researchers and governments while they were analyzing mass tourism and its negative effects. These developments and analyses had led to a search for, and growing interest in, alternatives (Lyons & Wearing, 2008).

Recently, the last remaining form of tourism development has been raised which is Alternative Tourism. According to its sustainable, individual, nature and culture cared, soft, responsible, green, controlled and small scale features. The term sustainability brings several techniques for tourism concept such as area protection, industry regulation, visitor management techniques, environmental impact assessment, carrying capacity calculations, consultation/participation,

codes of conduct and sustainability indicators which are serious requirements to create an actual sustainable system in the industry (Mowforth & Munt, 2008).

The 'alternative turn' in modernist tourism first started with the development of ecoturism. Later on, other forms of alternative tourism have emerged as well. Volunteer tourism is the new phenomenon for alternative tourism recently. Volunteer tourists who are volunteer to be a part of helpful actions for their holidays or vacations, in terms of, social, environmental and heritage conservation aspects (Wearing, 2002). Volunteer tourism defined as other dimension of postmodern tourism lay weight on the charming concepts such as, alternative, real, ecological and responsible forms of tourism (Uriely, 2003). Although the volunteer tourism concept seems to be an alternative solution of consumer mass tourism perception and aimed to contribute to heritage conservation issues, it is still evaluating a part of the tourism sector.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the phenomenon of volunteer tourism and its contributing and consuming effects on heritage conservation tools. That is why, consumer tourist perception and challenges of heritage conservation subjects are determined as important and problematic issues. Also, the volunteer tourism concept evaluating as a tie between. To make a theoretical contribution, Postmodern Geography perception of Edward Soja and Consumer Modern Tourists' perception of John Urry will be explored in this paper to lighten the way of seeing volunteer tourism and its heritage conservation aspect.

2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Tourism activities and the conservation of heritage values in touristic places are highly related to each other in sustainability terms. It is often argued that the tourism industry has harmful and consumer effects on host destinations, while, current trends in tourism continue to move towards the increasing objectification of tourism in the search for global profits. The paradigm shifts between modernist mass tourism and post-modernist alternative tourism are important subjects to enlighten the efficiency of these approaches on heritage conservation.

2.1. Consumer Aspect of Tourism

John Urry is one of the key thinkers who have a sociological background on space about globalization, mobility, relational geographies, and structuration theory subjects. Also, his books which are The Tourist Gaze and Consuming Places are made investigations about tourism and consumer side of this industry. This section of a paper will be lighted his perception and outputs about tourism.

According to Urry's Tourist Gaze book, tourism is simply about consuming goods and services in host places. Related activities generate pleasurable experiences

for tourists from different scenes of landscapes or townscapes while harming the values of those destinations. He claims that the tourist lifestyle is different from those typically encountered in everyday life and it is out of the ordinary. Even if, in different societies, especially within different social groups in diverse historical periods, the tourist gaze has changed and developed, tourism stayed as a marker of status and being a part of a modern system. He states that "Not to 'go away' is like not possessing a car or a nice house" (Urry, J., 1990).

Additionally, in the Consuming Places book of Urry, there is a The Consumption of Tourism section. This section is mainly about how tourism consumes the places out not only its cultural, historical, and natural resources and services but also its social dynamics. Although there is a clear intention to return 'home' within a relatively short period, tourist gaze consumes the features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from every day and routine experiences. This reflects the perception of being modern, and destination places need to cope with a mass character of the 'tourist gaze' with particular results which are dirt, noise, destruction of natural and cultural heritage, overcrowding, over construction, and consumption at the end (Urry, J., 1996).

Modern people from all the different social types believe that vacation from out of their ordinary life to different cities or countries for some time for rest is a "need" and prof of their "status". Relatively, within the John Urry perspective, it is possible to observe that tourism activities are mostly focused on leisure. Meanwhile, tourists consume; cultural, historical, and natural resources as well as services and social dynamics of touristic places with mass tourism approach.

2.2. Changes in Heritage Conservation

The previous part of the research was mainly about consumption features of tourism and John Urry`s perception. "What is being consumed?" and "Where are touristic places?" are the main questions to link between tourism and tourist places which are natural and cultural heritages in terms of this paper. Beside tourism development theories, approaches to cultural and natural heritage conservation changed overtime.

Natural and cultural assets of places have always been attractive and valuable to people and governments as well as their protection for various reason. Before the Second World War, every county deal with heritage conservation issues in their ways. After the war and disaster of it, UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) established to determine and conserve world heritage with the purpose of global awareness in 1945. However, there were no technical standards and global limitations for heritage conservation. Then, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) was established

in 1965, to, evaluate historical, cultural, and natural site areas and develop legal and technical researches for Venice Agreement members of UNESCO. Also, HABITAT I meeting arranged in Vancouver in 1976, from a more general perspective that evaluates only cultural, historical heritage. Nevertheless, HABITAT evaluates this as a part of the urban and rural area part, as well as 1996 Istanbul HABITAT II (Dağıstan Özdemir, 2005).

Recently, HABITAT III added their issue papers "Urban Culture and Heritage" topic in 2016. This issue paper defines threats to urban culture and heritages and proposes in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes the need to strengthen the efforts to protect and safe ground the world's cultural and natural heritage as a dedicated target of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (target 11.4). Socio-Cultural Urban Framework policy units define several approaches. These policy approaches are generally about developing master and strategic urban development plans, establishing programs and education platforms, increasing public awareness and participation (habitat3.org). However, activities and tools for sustaining awareness and participation have not been defined yet.

Heritage conservation approaches have been changed with time as well. While modern heritage conservation activities are regulated with legislations and institutions, postmodern and recent protection policies focus more on increasing public awareness and participation. Therefore, volunteer tourism concepts and relative activities give the image of a potential tool for the conservation of heritage lands.

3. VOLUNTEER TOURISM AS A TOOL FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

In postmodern life, growth in 'conscious consumption' increased. Consumers have thought about their purchases concerning such factors as organic foods, environment friendly, and human rights. Such conscious effect tourism for the growth of ethical tourism considerations, codes of tourism conduct, types of tourism. (Mason and Mowforth 1996).

The volunteer tourism concept raised in recent years with conscious consumption. The relationship between volunteering and tourism is the primmest dynamic of volunteer tourism as an alternative tourism type in terms of helping an issue in the place to visit for the travel time. Different than other tourism types, volunteer tourism activities include tourists or travelers who have willing and passion for conserving and protecting natural and cultural heritages for their host destination. Therefore, its potential for being a heritage conservation policy tool is outstanding.

3.1. Volunteer Tourism

The definitions of the term of volunteer tourism has begun to be popular in the academic and popular literature for decades. This new form of alternative tourism has variety of names: "volunteer tourism" (Henderson, 1981), "volunteer vacation" (McMillion, Cutchins & Geissinger, 2006), "service based vacation" (Ellis,2003) and "voluntourism.

According to Wearing, volunteer tourism can be defined as a form of tourism that makes holidays useful and involves tourists who volunteer to fund and work on conservation projects around the world. Volunteer tourists can be defined as persons seeking a tourist experience that is mutually beneficial that will contribute not only to their individual development but also positively and directly to the social, natural and economic context in which they are involved. Also, they have a desire to make a difference in the world and put something back into the natural or social environment (2002).

Volunteer tourism satisfies a need for tourists who want to travel with a purpose and make a difference during their holiday, enjoying a tourist experience with the benefit of contributing to others (Chen, L. J., & Chen, J. S., 2011). Volunteer tourists prefer to be wildlife up close, interacting with local communities, and meeting new people. In some cases, the tax deductions also make volunteer tourism more attractive. This genre of travel has been most popular among Western Europeans, Australians, Poles, Japanese, and North Americans (Brown and Morrison, 2003).

Studies about the nature conservation programs show that volunteer tourism participants have not only a nature base context with leavings legacy purposes, but also they look for the basic needs of relaxation, and pleasure-seeking (Cassie & Halpenny, 2003). Involvement, awareness, and performances in volunteering and conservation activities are variable between volunteer tourists. Also, contribution, trip duration, skill requirements create a different type of volunteer tourist category such as shallow, intermediate, and deep (Callanan & Thomas, 2005). Regardless of their purpose and performance, volunteer tourists supply workforce and labor for heritage lands while conservation tourism visitors pay to work as participants on conservation projects (Cousins, 2007).

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) have the crucial role to link between volunteer tourists and local communities, at the same time, some of them contribute to the further scientific field research through the use of volunteers. Also NGOs use volunteer tourism as a development strategy in undeveloped countries. (Conran, M., 2011). The United Kingdom has one of the largest and most known examples of the conservation volunteer tourism industry. Almost ten thousand people went on a conservation holiday in 2005. (Cousins, 2007).

Thanks to, internet, the distribution of information and can be a useful research tool to find organizations across the globe offering volunteering holidays. For instance, Real Gap, a company set up under the name of The Work and Travel Company in 2000, is now one of the largest of these organizations in terms of volunteer numbers and offers hundreds of gap year experiences catering mostly to those between sixth-form and university. Similarly, Blue Ventures is a marine conservation not-for-profit organization set up a research base in Madagascar. Volunteers work with local scientists to collect data at monitoring sites and survey the ecological health and status of coral reef habitats. (Cousins, 2007).

3.2. Postmodern Version of Tourism or Conservation Policy Alternative?

The evolving processes of tourism and heritage conservation approaches look mostly positive; eco-friendly, aware, participatory, responsible, equal, sharing, and so on. However, is it possible to assume that alternative tourism types such as volunteer tourism do not have any flaws? Is it purely dependent on innocent purposes? Most importantly, is it working?

Space more than the time that hides consequences from us. Making geography, more than the making history that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world of postmodern geography. Postmodernism as the third spatialization that is a cultural and ideological reconstruction, a changing definition of the experiential meaning of modernity, the emergence of a new, postmodern culture of space and time (Soja, E.,1996).

Changes responds to the particularities and possibilities of the contemporary moment via science, art, philosophy, and programs for political action (Soja, E., 1996) as well as tourism development in the manner of this paper. Likewise, volunteer tourism can be evaluated as a postmodern way of tourism because this concept also includes cultural and ideological reconstruction and changing the meaning of modernity with mass tourism approaches.

According to Soja, the reconstructed ontology of human social patterns uneven regional development. The process of the social production of space and what socially produced can be socially restructured and transform (Soja, E. 1985). The shift between modernist mass tourism to postmodernist alternative tourism can be evaluated as the retheorization of space in social theory. Also, Soja claims that geographical uneven development in societies organized primarily around capitalist social relations. Contemporary retheorizations is nothing more than a reinterpretation of geographically uneven development (1985).

Modern tourists might have good willingness and awareness, symbolic boundaries between art, high culture, academy, on the one hand, and everyday life and

popular culture on the other, are dissolving (Urry, J., 1995) similarly with postmodern tourism movements. International and national money and capital flow did not disappear, nor did the pressure of industries and capitalist visions of them on the places, even if there was some significant restructuring in their organizations (Soja, E., 1985).

If tourism is being a part of being modern and mass tourism activities as consuming the spaces (Urry, J., 1995), modernist tourism approaches can be evaluated mostly abusive. Developments on technology and conscious consumption of tourists lead to a rise in alternative tourism approaches that have a more different understanding than the dynamics of Urry's aspect. In terms of volunteer tourists, they do not desire to be a part of leisure-based events and consume cultural and natural heritage. On the contrary, they have a desire to be useful for their destination, the environment, and society. However, these improvements do not change the fact that they are still tourists who support the flow of capital and being a reason for uneven geographical development. It is just a restructured version of the global economy that is constantly evolving and shaping.

4. CONCLUSION

Cultural and natural heritage lands are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. Likewise, cultural and natural heritages are legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on future generations(unesco.com). In that manner, it is considerable and sustainable to link postmodern heritage conservation policies with postmodern approaches to tourism activities. However, it is arguable that the tourism industry and its capitalist effects stronger than the passion for heritage conservation. That is why the volunteer tourism concept evaluated deeply in this paper to contribute a theoretical understanding of the subject.

There is a lot of organization, institution, approach, and movement that have a purpose of cultural and natural heritage conservation such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, HABITAT that is taking the role to create awareness and policy on this very issue. Recent conservation policies point out the importance of public awareness and public attendance to conservation activities. That is why the volunteer tourism concept explored to determine the alternative activity for conservation policies. Even if volunteer tourism is willing to contribute to the conservation issue, there needs to be more accurate, global, and appropriate solutions.

In conclusion, mass tourism is depending on the abuse of the heritage lands without awareness of tourists. However, volunteer tourists who are under the

alternative tourism movement, are postmodern and more aware of the corruption and need of the world and societies. However, it is still can be questioned with features of mass tourism as Urry mentioned, even if it is deeply postmodernism. Likewise, Soja supported; postmodernism includes versions of capitalist tools and modernist approaches for all sectors as well as the tourism sector as a whole.

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