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Obstacles to Heritage Tourism Planning: Socio-spatial Planning Problems within Mardin

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**OBSTACLES TO HERITAGE TOURISM PLANNING: SOCIO-SPATIAL PLANNING
PROBLEMS IN MARDİN**

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Abstract

Mardin represents a distinctive variety of natural and cultural resources. It is considered a major destination for heritage tourism in Turkey. However, the city suffers from a serious shortage in urban infrastructure necessary for sustainable tourism development. There is a need of implementing various approaches for the specific territorial orientation of tourism development. This paper poses two main factors-tourism infrastructure and local authorities 'opinion about Mardin's tourism development. In Mardin historical city centre (as a place with tourism potential) a field survey with the help of the spatial analysis is carried out to identify the effect of inadequate urban infrastructure (e.g. roads, waste disposal and water supply) on the site tourism potential and local life standards that represent a challenge for sustainable cultural tourism.

Introduction

In many developing countries existing urban infrastructure systems and adopted urban management policies and practices require major review to achieve a sustainable urban environment (Cohen, 2004).

Tourism, in all its forms, is of crucial importance to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the whole country which reflects the increasing disposable incomes, more leisure time and growing travelling opportunities, is one of the leading and developing industries. According to some critiques (Ritzer, 1999; Urry, 2001) culture has recently become an indispensable element to tourism system or "culture tourism". Cultural tourism is defined by the professionals of tourism industry as "travelling in order to experience the art, heritage and idiosyncrasies of a certain location" and is frequently referred to as one of the fields of global tourism that grow at the fastest rate (WTO, 2004). In UNESCO's 2003 report culture tourism is defined as a concept having a positive economic and social impact, establishing and consolidating an identity. It is also stated that it helps form

an image, protect the cultural and historical heritage, improves the harmony and mutual understanding among human beings together with culture, and supports culture (UNESCO, 2003). When evaluated with the “common heritage” viewpoint, it is acknowledged that protecting the historical cities is also an effective tool for social development. Protecting and offering the historical cities to tourism, which is tantamount to cultural heritage, are important issues for both contemporary and future generations. When used effectively historical and cultural environments invigorate local economies, open new employment areas and enhance tax revenues. However, these achievements cannot be fulfilled by the cities that expand and change in an unhealthy way due to sudden exposure to touristic development. Tourism industry has the potential both to cause deterioration in physical and cultural environments and to contribute to the protection of the heritage in a way that the visitors and residents could benefit from (Hovinen, 2002). At this point tourism business in urban spaces and historical cities requires a more integrated approach than the other sites do (which also takes the social, economic and psychological states of the residents into consideration); a systematic planning and site management understanding stand out (Gündüz, 2011). This study is a fragment of the more general task of applying different methods to build up a spatial model, which could be used to make expert assessments of the availability of potentialities for developing an economic branch or for carrying out certain activities on a given territory.

Key Concepts

The term “tourism potential” is widely used in the tourism literature but attempts for its precise scientific definition are scarce. As Krippendorf (1980) says “a complex of material and nonmaterial elements to provide satisfaction of needs and benefits to the tourist, offered for consumption”, generally, tourism potential can be defined as the ability of an area (territory) to form a complete tourism product and develop an economically vital tourism. It is not necessary for this ability to be displayed or realized at the present moment but it must exist, according to the knowledge of contemporaneous tourism (Tcholeev and Vodenska, 2006).

There is a correlation between tourism demand and location. In terms of travelling occasions, temporary relocation and staying there for a certain time is dependent upon the qualities that destination possesses. These qualities are natural assets which attract tourists and increase travelling motivations (natural beauties, climate, healing water and thermal springs); socio-cultural assets (historical artifacts, monuments, museums, festivals, food, exhibitions, clothes); economic factors and transportation opportunities (Bahar and Kozak,

2005). The resources alone, however, are not enough to prove that a territory has tourism potential or the ability of forming a tourism product. A tourist must be able to reach it comparatively easy (i.e. the position and accessibility of the territory are elements of the potential) and to get at least elementary services needed for his staying (which requires servicing installations such as food and accommodation facilities etc.). In other words, the functioning of such facilities requires the existence of adequate infrastructure, workforce etc.

As the structure of tourism necessitates a tourist cannot benefit from only one element; on the contrary, s/he purchases the “end product” resulting from the combination of various geographical, economic and social factors, and this end product is an important factor in the tourist’s vacation experience (McIntyre, 1993). Since the tourist resides at a hotel, eats at a restaurant, goes shopping, uses local transportation, communicates with the locals and visits various places at a vacation destination, the fact that a quality service would affect his/her decision to revisit that place should be taken into account and the condition of the place should be revised accordingly (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000).

Study Area –Socio-spatial Attributes and Tourism Development-

Mardin, a medium sized city located on the South-eastern region of Turkey, is one of the oldest cities of the upper Mesopotamia. It is situated on a 1325-meter plateau, at the western end of the region known as Tur Abdin in history and on the southern slope of a hill overlooking the Diyarbakır-Nusaybin road (Alioğlu, 2005).



Figure 1. Location of the study area

It is located on historical trade roads in both east-west (Silk Road) and south-north directions (Anonymus, 2002). It not only has a location possessing the view of Mesopotamia valley but also is situated on an important natural road connecting the valley to Diyarbakır (Erkanal, 2005).

Its location at the intersection of the roads leading to Diyarbakır, Urfa and Mesopotamia; Euphrate and Syria; Midyat, Tur Abdin and Tigris has earned Mardin the opportunity of having the control of a large area since the middle ages (Alioğlu, 2005).



Figure 2. A scene from Mardin traditional settlement

Home for a plenty of civilizations, Mardin is one of our cities which has been able to bring the artifacts and the rich cultures of the societies living on its lands for centuries. With the growing consciousness that the urban texture, which has been designated as decrepit and primitive until the 1980s, is actually art and civilization, initiatives to protect this texture started. Real estates in Mardin city center were registered and maintained as “Immovable Cultural Assets that Must be Protected” in accordance with the Law numbered 2863 as a result of the decision taken by Ministry of Culture and Tourism Immovable Cultural and Natural Assets High Council in 1985. Several houses at city center, Ottoman bazaars, and official buildings with historical-architectural value, older artifacts and Mardin Castle have been registered and included in the list of “artifacts and buildings that must be protected”.



Figure 2a. Example of a traditional house



Figure2b. A remote view of Mardin Castle

Mardin is located at the northern end of Asia Minor representing the true Mesopotamian traditions in terms of its strategic location and cultural richness. After Venice and Jerusalem which, with their architectural, ethnographical, archeological, historical and visual values, give the impression that time has stopped there, it is the third habitable protected city and acknowledged to be completely a historical heritage. Mardin, whose social history goes back to 10 thousand years ago and which has been the center of commercial relations and intersections due to its geographical location, possesses a multiethnic and multicultural position.

The present study area not only comprises one of the oldest urban life regions but also bears the habits and traditions of “coexisting in variety” required by urban life. Syriacs, Muslims, Turks, Kurds are neighbors to each other. Food has a traditional side to it with the plants grown in the region, climate and lifestyle. Mardin cuisine owns its richness to special foods prepared for religious ceremonies of various faith systems, traditional days after birth and death, and rituals.



Figure..A religious ceremony of Syriacs

Mardin is a city where large language and ethnic groups contact each other. Indo-European, Ural-Altaic languages (Kurdish- Turkish) and Semitic languages (Arabic and Syriac) are spoken in Mardin and these languages are intertwined with each other. Turkish is used in the official relations with the government and other than this all the three languages are used in every walk of daily life. Mardin has been home for several races, ethnic groups and religious communities for centuries. It is one of the important centers of Eastern Christianity. Sunni Arabs, Kurds and Turks constitute the Muslim part of the city while the majority of the Christians are Orthodoxies. Chaldeans, Catholics and Protestants live in the region as well. Today there are not Shemsi and Jewish believers; there is a small Christian population besides the Muslim majority (Bilge, 2001).

That the acculturation process goes at a slower rate compared to the country average makes it possible to protect the multicultural roots and local existence. Architectural features such as houses, madrasas, mosques, churches, castle; performances such as celebrations, dances (Reyhani), food tradition, and artisanship are the reflection of the values and faiths that lie behind.

Traditional economic structure of Mardin is based on agriculture, commerce, production industry that has been recently growing and small scale industry and handicrafts. Mardin, neighboring the other cities and particularly abroad, Middle East, has an important location on the transit transportation route. The quantity of the industrial production that could be used in domestic and foreign commerce in the city and town is not on sufficient levels, yet on the rise with the new production opportunities in recent years (Anonymous, 2009).

According to the accommodation statistics obtained by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism from the tourism operation licensed and municipality-licensed accommodation facilities, the number of overnight visitors varies each year (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Distribution of the number of visits, staying overnight, average number of stay and occupancy rate in the Municipality and Operation Licensed Facilities according to years – Mardin City Center (Accommodation Statistics of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2009)

Year	Number of visits			Staying Overnight			Average number of stay			Occupancy rate		
	Foreign	Domestic	Total	Foreign	Domestic	Total	Foreign	Domestic	Total	Foreign	Domestic	Total
2005	441	9818	10259	461	10700	11161	1,0	1,1	1,1	0,54	12,43	12,97
2006	2328	28116	45990	2367	28409	30776	1,01	1	1	2,84	34,58	37,43
2007	6667	79513	86180	12944	96014	108958	2,05	1,2	1,25	3,42	27,09	25,52
2008	5496	39187	44683	8228	69586	77814	1,5	1,8	1,75	2,82	25,31	28,49
2009	11653	71537	83190	16767	105226	121993	1,5	1,5	1,5	5,31	32,54	37,85

Tourism activities in Mardin primarily focus on domestic tourism. The meeting of inter-religious dialogues held by the Foundation of Journalists and Authors in 2004, the visit of Prince Charles, movies and TV serious made in the city contributed to the advertisement of Mardin and thus an increase in demand was observed. City tours organized by travelling agencies include a program aiming at a one night-two days’ “Culture Tour” in an around Mardin.

After the abatement of terrorism, domestic and foreign tourists started to show a great interest in the religious centers in the city thus making Mardin the star of the Southeast region and carrying it to the headlines of the national press.

The fact that dominantly boutique hotels and a few boarding houses have developed within the borders of the historical city attracts the attention while making location selections for accommodation facilities. Since housing is limited in the urban site region, many-starred hotels are observed to invest in the locations around Yenişehir and on the way to the airport. The city's current bed capacity is 1000; however, it is expected to double with the investments that are going to be completed in the coming years.

Survey Data Analysis

This section presents empirical analysis of a number of the key field survey questions in order to point out some conclusions regarding the status of the study area in terms of infrastructure quality, local communities' conditions and development requirements.

The survey was undertaken in Mardin during the summer of 2009 and is based on face-to-face interviews with local authorities. The questionnaire was based on the literature examined, and it was specifically based on the research in "The Guide of Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies in and Around Protected Regions in Turkey". Specific questions on the field were developed by the researcher and the resulting questionnaire was applied. A self-completed questionnaire was administered to those who preferred to respond to the questionnaire by themselves. Otherwise, the field researchers completed the questionnaire via personal interview. A total sample size of 23 was completed.

At the same time expert opinions have been taken. In so doing, we paid attention to select eminent experts with publications, who have researched on this topic and acquainted themselves with this environment. In this direction, nine expert opinions from among the faculty members of Artuklu University and Selcuk University, and travelling agencies have been evaluated.

Evaluation

Evaluation of Tourism Demand

TOURISM DEMAND	
Can you guess the amount of the current tourist-visitors?	
How much money is spent each day in tourist-visitors?	
The average duration of stay?	
Can you define the current tourist-visitors profile?	
Group Structure	Age
Individual travelers	Young(15-30)
husband and wife	Middle aged (30-65)
Families	Elderly(>65)
Tour Groups	Others
Others	
Motivation Factors	
Which of the basic factors in the area play an important role for which tourists and visitors? e.g. Nature-Culture-Health- Sun ...	
Comparison with similar areas	
Is Mardin comparable with any other city that you know? (National-International) Why?	
Are there areas now and in the future can be a competitor to Mardin? If so which ones and why?	

87% of the participants stated the yearly visitor number as 500.000 and over. The amount of expenses distinctly varies among the visitors. It was noted that the visitors predominantly spent 101-200 TL (83%). Visitors stay for 1.5 days on average and their profiles manifest a tendency towards families, tour groups and middle-aged people. “Culture” factor plays a significant role for the visitors in the region. The town of Midyat and Toledo (Italy) was found to be comparable. It is considered that the city of Mardin has an equivalent neither in its region nor in Turkey.

Evaluation of Tourism Supply

TOURISM SUPPLY			
Condition			
To an international airport	Close (less than 2 hours) (100 %)	Mid. Close (2-4 hours)	Far (more than 4 hours)
Reaching the site by	Bad (%)	Enough (%)	Good (%)
Railways	100	-	-
Personal vehicle	-	13	87
Public transport	4	22	74
Others			
Reaching the area is	Easy and comfortable? 91%	Possible with a little effort? 9%	Difficult and dangerous? -

Mardin airport which was built in 1999 is 20 kilometers away from the city center. Domestic flights are available through the whole week; connected international flights are operated in this airport too. The city can be accessed by private vehicles and public transportation, and the service is evaluated to be good, easy and comfortable.

Infrastructure in the historical site	Bad (%)	Sufficient (%)	Good (%)
Transportation network	9	4	78
Local Transportation Network	9	4	78
Link to major highways	-	26	74
Local public transport	-	30	70
Fees	-	43	57
Lines/stations	-	43	57
Roads	-	22	78
Road Signs	39	26	35
Signs and information sheets for public areas	48	26	26
Parking places for cars and buses	70	30	-
Information, education and interpretation facilities	52	48	-

As for the infrastructure of the city, transportation, local roads and their connections with main roads are deemed as good. Local and general transportation, fares, routes and stops are sufficient. Road signs are adequate yet signs and information boards for public areas, parking lots for private vehicles and buses, information, education and translation facilities are evaluated as bad. The historic city centre is heavily crowded with visitors (mostly local from different parts of Türkiye) with their automobiles distributed all over the centre, along the street sides due to the shortage or absence of parking. Illegal on-road parking aggravates the problem by substantially reducing road carrying capacity. In terms of traffic flow, the historic city centre suffers from heavily jammed roads during rush hours. This is attributed to some reasons. Firstly, the central business district area is on the main road of centre where all trading shops are located, attracting heavy traffic for long periods.

Catering and Accommodation			
Number of restaurants (nearly)			50
Standard of food	High (%)	Sufficient (%)	Bad (%)
	13	48	39
Accommodation facilities	High (%)	Sufficient (%)	Bad (%)
Traditional Mardin House	48	39	13
Touristic hotel (4-5 *)	52	39	9
(2-3 *)		22	78
City Hotel		9	91
Guesthouse	4	57	39
Other	-	-	-

In terms of catering and accommodation, there are almost 50 restaurants around the historic city centre. These are restaurants, cafes, patisseries and gyro-places, sandwich houses and snacking places. The standards of catering are sufficient. The standards of the hotels in terms of accommodation opportunities are assessed as sufficient too.

Potential of resources	Score the resources ¹					
	Available	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
<i>Natural</i>						
Mountains		-	-	-	-	-
Forests		-	-	-	-	-
Caves						87
Climate		-	-	-	-	-
<i>Cultural</i>						
Historical buildings or places						100
Monuments						100
Archeological Places						100
Folklore and traditions					100	
Handcrafts				43	57	
Museums				43	57	
<i>Social</i>						
<i>Human resources</i>						
The size and structure of the active population						100
Educational level and professional information				100		
Skills, tendencies				100		
Wealth /Poverty			100			
Unique/characteristic/traditional					100	
Economical facilities and arts including non-professional				43	57	
Approaches to tourism development						100
Hospitality, service trends						100
Governance with local organizations and administrations					100	
Culture and identity of the Site						100
Image and perception of the Site						100
<i>Different economical sectors</i>						
Agriculture		100				
Industry						
Other						
<i>Infrastructure</i>						
Water systems		100				
Communication networks						100
Health facilities		78	22			
Transportation terminals		100				
Power supplies		100				
Sewage systems		100				
Solid waste disposal system		100				
Roads /paths			22	78		
Security systems				78	22	

When the tourism potential of the natural resources in the region was evaluated it was discovered that the caves had the potential of being visited by the tourists. In the sense of cultural resources, historical buildings and places, monuments and archeological sites constitute the core and have the potential. Mardin city is rich with numerous archeological tourist sites attracting large numbers of tourists. Existing tourism sites, such as Dara, Deyrulzafaran Monastery, are not adequately developed as tourism destinations. This lack of development and attention directed to those sites is partially the responsibility of the local community and related authorities. Folklore and traditions, handicrafts and museums are appraised as factors that could be taken into account by the visitors. When the participants were asked to evaluate the human resources, the size and the structure of the active population, approaches to tourism development, the understanding of hospitality, originality, culture, identity and perception of the region were stated to be perfect for tourism development. Local businesses, administrations and governance were found to be good tourism development. Education level and professional knowledge, skills and tendencies were evaluated as “insufficient yet improvable”. This is true, as although agriculture sector is regarded as the primary sector of employment the share of agricultural production in Turkey is below 1% and this figure ranks 75th on a national scale. Mardin is among the last ten cities with regards to the sum of entrepreneurs and industry workers. Agriculture has been evaluated as insufficient yet improvable for tourism development in terms of various economic sectors.

As for infrastructure, only communication networks were found to be perfect for tourism development. All the other options were evaluated as insufficient. Due to the geographical location of the city and the scarcity of water resources in the region Mardin has faced water-related problems for ages. It is known that water requirement is satisfied through water wells. Along with the inadequacy of resources and allocation in public investments, inefficiency in planning and management stemming from the low corporate and technical capacities of local administrations fails in remedying the problems of accessing the healthy and sufficient potable water although investments concentrate on potable water sector. The method of storage and collection of domestic waste within the urban protected areas is unhealthy and insufficient. Because of topographical obstacles and narrowness of the streets modern garbage collection trucks do not have access to narrow streets. Since the society do not have the consciousness of collecting the garbage in bags and leaving them on certain spots in certain times to be collected later piles of garbage pose a great threat against health and environment, and create an unpleasant sight. There is a shortage of special regional programs for solid and liquid waste management, given the large amounts of waste produced from the

pesticides, fertilizers and other toxic liquid/ solid materials used in agriculture and other industries in the area.

TOURISM POTENTIAL			
Infrastructure			
Jobs and services	Good (%)	Mediocre (%)	Insufficient (%)
Bakery			100
Butcher			100
Grocery			100
Supermarkets			100
Rent a car	100		
Taxis	100		
Buses		100	
Rent a bike			100
Post office	100		
Banking facilities	100		
Doctors and dentists		100	
pharmacies		100	
Cafes and restaurants			100
ATM	100		
Banks	100		
Other works and services			100

In terms of jobs and services post-offices, taxis, banking services and banks, ATMs, rental vehicles have been evaluated as good; doctors and physicians, buses as mediocre and the others as insufficient.

Discussion and Recommendations

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. The planning process provides the opportunities to help make new development more sustainable, both through the preparation of development plans and while decisions are taken on specific schemes (Anonymous, 2006).

For the communities which adopted tourism as one of the development alternatives, they would put more effort in developing the tourism industry. The relationship between economy and tourism development underpin the issues that shape agendas, drive interests and, ultimately, influence decision-making processes. Tourism is regarded as one of the important sustainable income sources that serve to improve life quality and increase the income of the local people in Mardin.

Strategic integration and co-ordination of all tourism related planning and activity is vital for the creation of sustainable tourism marketing management that delivers social, economic and environmental well-being. The current activities in Mardin would appear to be

failing social, economic and environmental objectives. Currently the site maintenance including the care of features/exhibits, physical site and paths at the site is poor but the local authority is trying to upgrade them all. Although local managers (especially the registered charity and the public sector) do consider that it is important to preserve and protect for sustainability, they have the potential to make detrimental decisions that may threaten any economic and social well-being.

In Mardin, effective planning, management and control are a precondition for a sound relationship between cultural heritage, conservation and tourism. This study demonstrates that currently there is an unsustainable approach to managing and marketing tourism in Mardin. Unless the measures are taken timely and effectively interactions and collaborations between the key organizations at the site, with private sector organizations and between public and quasipublic sector organizations may cause lack of integrative and collaborative management planning. This results in a poorly managed, uncoordinated, fragmented tourism service product and a limited tourist experience for visitors. There is a need for on-going, collaborative, interactive and hands-on management with relevant expertise to ensure that the unique environment is respected while making the sites' offerings attractive to the diversity of tourists. In this way Mardin can bring some (much needed) economic benefit to the local economy and contribute to the long term development of sustainable marketing offerings and a more holistic approach to tourism can be achieved.

Tourist profile in Mardin is to be taken into consideration as much as the local people for a sustainable tourism approach. Spending tendencies of the visitors during touristic activities may be guiding while re-determining the entrance and accommodation fees.

The inability of the people living particularly in underdeveloped and developing regions to generate solutions against the problems caused by uncontrolled tourism is left to the authorities whose main responsibility is to initiate the planning and implementation processes.

In the process of tourism development, in order to protect and exalt the interests of the local people all kinds of civil, public and private institutions, particularly Ministry of Culture and Tourism, should make sustainability principles inseparable and integrated elements of planning and implementation. The services to be provided in Mardin city center in the light of these principles should be put on the agenda considering the eagerness of the local people to participate in tourism.

Attraction areas and activities that are to be created for tourists should be designed by carefully estimating the physical and psychological carrying capacities, and in order to preserve the supply, appropriate demand should be created in terms of quantity and quality. Natural environment and urban texture of these regions should not be put under threat for the sake of short-term commercial purposes and mass tourism. The quantity and quality of the demand to a region could be controlled by playing with the strategies of accessibility, promotion and pricing of the product, and by way of measures and incentives to create environmental consciousness on the side of the tourists.

The eagerness of the local people to take part in the tourism development process as was showed in a study (Gündüz and Erdem, 2010), should definitely be taken into account by the planning and implementing units and turned into advantage. Local people's opinions and views should take priority while determining the important elements of a tourism product during the planning process. The implementations that enable the local people to be prioritized in partaking in the employment should be included in the planning (such as promoting boarding housing, creating a souvenir sector for the improvement of local products, training people to work in guidance and touristic services, inciting the third party investors to employ common people and developing agricultural tourism). Hence, local people make the utmost use of advantages of tourism, realize the value of the resources they have and gain consciousness to protect and improve these values. The effectiveness of the local administrations, which are closest to people, on tourism should be financially and intellectually consolidated. To this end, a public-private joint destination organization company could be founded; this company could diversify tourism activities and take part in the marketing activities in the international tourism market and on the virtual media. Such kind of a formation could be realized in assemblies and/or working groups in the body of "Urban Counsels" that are put into practice by today. While creating attraction elements primarily focusing on the superstructure and culture within the scope of tourism planning, the current structure storage of the urban texture, which is observed to have an important potential in terms of touristic attraction, should be benefited from. Restoring these buildings and assigning them functions (such as hotel, pension, restaurant, culture-house and museum) will enable the protection of the historical and cultural heritage as sustainable.

Consequently, economic, social, cultural and environmental planning should be carried out on a macro level and in accordance with the sustainable development conditions by taking into account the superiorities and weaknesses of the region, opportunities and threats.

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