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A RESEARCH TO DETERMINE LOCAL PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TOURISM: THE CASE OF SİNOP¹

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the perceptions of local people living in Sinop destination regarding tourism activities in their destination. In this context, an attempt was made to reach local people living in Sinop destination face to face and online and to determine their perceptions about tourism through the prepared survey. Survey technique was used in the data collection process of the research. A survey consisting of two parts and 30 questions was used in this study. The universe of the research consists of the entire local people living in Sinop destination and who could be reached during the data collection process of the research. The research sample consists of local people living in the destination of Sinop who could be reached during the data collection process (April 10, 2025-May 1, 2025). The survey prepared to provide an acceptable sample size (384 participants) that will represent the universe was delivered to the local people living in the destination of Sinop. In this study, simple random sampling method, which is a probability-based sampling method, was used to determine the individuals to be included in the sample. At the end of the data collection process of the research, a total of 605 people were reached and the feedbacks of all participants were included in the research analyses (SPSS 24.0).

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism concept; “not to settle permanently other than where people live permanently, in a liberal atmosphere, especially without pursuing a political or commercial purpose, for purposes such as business, curiosity, religion, health, sports, recreation and culture, or for reasons such as visiting family, attending congresses and seminars, It can be defined as “an industrial and social event that includes the business and relationships that arise from personal or collective travels and stays exceeding 24 hours in the places they go to” (Olalı, 1990: 6). It is possible to talk about many economic, social and environmental effects of tourism on the destinations and the local people living in these destinations (Kozak et al., 2008: 77). The concept of destination is expressed in its simplest form as “the place to be reached” (TDK, 2024). However, in this definition, no dimension of the concept of destination is examined. In the study of Destination Friks (1999); it is defined as “a geographical region or area where some types of tourist communities are found among ordinary local people” (Tinsley & Lynch, 2001: 372). To identify and promote markets that will help the most efficient use of the touristic values and resources of a destination (Aktaş, 2007: 117) and to increase the long-term welfare of the local people living in the destination, to ensure the satisfaction of tourists at the highest level, to support the existence of local entrepreneurs and to make their profits reasonable. It is very important to balance the socio-cultural, environmental and economic benefits and costs of tourism (Buhalis, 2000: 99). In order to achieve all these objectives, the interests of the local people as well as stakeholders such as tourists, entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises, local and central governments, tourism enterprises, tourism employees who make up the destination must be brought together on a common denominator (Tosun & Bilim, 2004: 128; Giritlioğlu & Avciokurt, 2010: 78). Because local people host all these stakeholders and tourism activities. For this reason, it is important to include local people as stakeholders in touristic planning, policy development, strategy formulation and investment decisions (Akova, 2006: 79). In addition, local people living in the destination should be taken into consideration in increasing the positive contributions of tourism to destinations and reducing negative impact perceptions (Duran, 2013). Because if local people are not included in the touristic activities, planning and strategy formation processes in their destinations, the chance of complete and holistic success decreases considerably (Simmons, 1994; Biçici, 2014). For this reason, it is important to periodically measure local people's perceptions and evaluations of tourists and touristic activities in their destinations (Akova, 2006; Nunkoo & Ramkinson, 2010; Gürsoy et al., 2010). In this context, the study aimed to determine the perceptions of local people living in Sinop destination regarding tourism activities in their destination. In this context, through the survey prepared, it was tried to reach the local people living in Sinop destination face to face and online and to determine their perceptions about tourism.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Information and communication technologies, social media, decreasing travel barriers, diversifying means of transportation and increasing the comfort of transportation positively affect the demand for tourist destinations. This situation supports economic, cultural, social, political and environmental developments and interactions (Emekli et al., 2006: 2; Cengiz & Kirkbir, 2007; Dilek et al., 2017). Destinations that want to get a larger share of the tourism market, in this process, increase the economic income of the local people, improve their quality of life, increase business and employment opportunities (Yoon et al., 2001; Çakıcı et al., 2014; Türker et al., 2016), bring women into working life, they achieve positive gains such as ensuring the transition to modern life (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011)

and increasing their foreign language learning levels and general education levels (Kozak et al., 2008). However, this competition also causes negative effects perceived and evaluated by the local people such as traffic and parking problems, crowding, inadequate infrastructure (Kozak et al., 2008; Akpulat & Polat Üzümcü, 2019), increased crime rates, alcohol and drug use (Keskin & Çontu, 2011), damage to natural beauties, increased general prices, language and ethnic conflicts (Çelik, 2019), social problems and cultural degradation (Çelikkanat & Güçer, 2014; Türker et al., 2016) in the destinations (Kim et al., 2020). In order to increase the positive contributions of tourism to destinations and reduce the perception of negative effects, the local people living in the destination should be taken into consideration in particular (Duran, 2013). Because if local people are not included in the planning and strategy development processes of touristic activities in their destinations, the chance of success in a complete and holistic manner decreases considerably. Therefore, it is important to periodically measure the perceptions and evaluations of local people regarding tourists and touristic activities in their destinations.

Research on the Relationship between Tourism and Local People

Giritlioğlu et al. (2015) conducted a study with 424 local participants in the Gaziantep destination and concluded that the local people perceived tourism activities and the concept of tourism positively in their destination, that touristic activities had not yet harmed the cultural structure, natural beauties and food culture of the destination, and that emphasis should be placed on advertising and promotion activities and the restoration of historical structures in order to ensure sustainability. Dilek et al. (2017) conducted a study with 347 local participants living in the Hasankeyf destination and concluded that the local people supported touristic activities in their destination and were satisfied with the socio-cultural and economic contributions of tourism to their destination.

According to the results of the study conducted by Dünder et al. (2018) to measure the perceptions of the local people living in Seferihisar, the first cittaslow city in Turkey, about the slow city philosophy; it was determined that the local people were pleased with the slow city philosophy and the economic revival of their destination and that they thought that their destination had developed in environmental, social and cultural terms, but they thought that the increasing touristic activities and visitor numbers in their destinations caused the start of irregular construction in the destination, the formation of regional inflation, and an increase in vehicle traffic, environmental pollution and crowding. In their study conducted by Olcay et al. (2018) with 984 local people living in Bitlis destination; it was determined that although the local people had a positive perspective on touristic activities in their destination, they believed that the tourism resources of the destination could not be sufficiently utilized for tourism..

Akpulat et al. (2019) according to the results of their study conducted with 209 participants living in Çeşme destination, it was determined that they think that the problems such as parking problem, traffic density, crowding, unplanned urbanization, environmental and noise pollution they experience especially during the tourism season in their destination are caused by tourism. Walker et al. (2019) conducted their study with tourists coming to Kesennuma destination, Japan and local people living in the destination and determined that local people are satisfied with the slow city philosophy practices and the touristic opportunities it brings, and also that local foods and flavors stand out as one of the important factors in choosing the destination. Kim et al. (2020) conducted a study with 793 local participants living in Jeje Island, South Korea, and evaluated tourists visiting local people's destinations in terms of their compatibility, economic contribution, responsibility towards the destination, positive

touristic contribution and negative touristic impact. The study determined that tourists visiting local people's destinations perceived their compatibility and responsibility levels as low, their economic contribution and positive touristic contribution levels as medium and their negative touristic impact levels as very high.

METHOD

This study aims to determine the perceptions of local people living in Sinop destinations regarding tourism activities in their destinations. In this context, a survey was prepared to reach local people living in Sinop destinations face to face and online and to determine their perceptions regarding tourism. Survey technique was used in the data collection process of the research. In this study, a survey consisting of two sections and 30 questions was used. The first part of the survey consists of six questions to determine the participants and their demographic characteristics (gender, age, education level, occupation, evaluation of the impact of tourism on the destination and perspective on tourists in the destination) and the options that the respondents can choose regarding these questions. The second part of the survey consists of 24 questions and a 5-point Likert scale (5: Strongly Agree and 1: Strongly Disagree) to determine the perceptions of the participants regarding tourism activities in the destination. The demographic and Likert-type questions in the survey were taken from the study titled "Hasankeyf Residents' Attitudes Towards Tourism Development" published by Dilek et al. (2017). In this study, opinions were obtained from the academicians of Sinop University Faculty of Tourism on text and linguistics in order to ensure the content validity of the survey. In addition, approval was obtained for the survey and data collection process with the decision of the Sinop University Rectorate Human Research Ethics Committee dated 1 November 2024 and numbered 2024/341. The universe of the study consists of the local people living in the Sinop destination and who could be reached during the data collection process of the study. According to TÜİK data, it was determined that a total of 229,716 people lived in the Sinop destination as of 2023 (TÜİK, 2024). The research sample consists of the local people living in the Sinop destination who could be reached during the data collection process (April 10, 2025-May 1, 2025). However, it could not be determined exactly how many people lived in the destination as of April 10, 2025, which was the beginning of the data collection process of the study. For this reason, since the number of individuals in the target population is unknown, the formula $n = t^2pq/d^2$ was used to calculate the research sample (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2007: 70) and according to the calculation result, the research sample number was determined as 384. In determining the individuals to be included in the sample, the simple random sampling method, which is a probability-based sampling method, was used. In the simple random sampling method; all units and individuals have equal chance of selection (Kılıç, 2013: 45). The survey prepared to provide an acceptable sample size (384 participants) that will represent the universe was delivered to the local people living in the destination of Sinop face to face and online. At the end of the data collection process of the research, a total of 605 people were reached and the feedbacks of all participants were included in the research analyses. The data obtained as a result of the research were analyzed in the SPSS 24.0 statistical data program. Frequency analysis was applied to all data regarding demographic variables and scale expressions obtained from the research survey with percentage and frequency values.

RESULTS

Findings Regarding Demographic Variables of Participants

Of the local people participating in the research, 51.90% are male, 44.13% are between the ages of 25-60, 37.36% have a bachelor's degree, and 27.60% are self-employed. In addition, 77.52% of the local people participating in the research evaluate tourism as beneficial for their destinations, and 83.64% of the participants have a positive perspective on tourists visiting their destinations (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n=605)

Demographic Characteristics		Number (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	291	48,10
	Male	314	51,90
Age	15-24 Years	220	36,36
	25-60 Years	267	44,13
	61 Years and Above	118	19,50
Education	Primary Education	59	9,75
	High School	154	25,45
	Associate Degree	41	6,78
	Undergraduate	226	37,36
	Postgraduate	125	20,66
Occupation	Student	28	4,63
	Self-Employed	167	27,60
	Private Sector Employee	28	4,63
	Public Employee	154	25,45
	Retired	118	19,50
	Housewife	56	9,26
	Unemployed	54	8,93
Assessing the Impact of Tourism	Beneficial	469	77,52
	Harmful	136	22,48
Perspective on Tourists	Positive	506	83,64
	Negative	99	16,36
Total		605	100

Findings Regarding Research Statements

According to the frequency analysis results (Table 2) regarding the distribution of participants' perceptions of tourism perspectives, the statements with the highest level of agreement by the participants are; Efforts should be made for further development of tourism in the region. (x=4,56), tourism causes problems such as overcrowding, noise, traffic problems. (x=4,56), tourism contributes to the protection and development of the natural environment. (x=4,52), tourism increases the prices of products and services in the region. (x=4,48) tourism contributes to the cultural development of local people. (x=4,46), It has been determined that tourism development causes environmental pollution (garbage, etc.) (x=4,46) and tourism improves environmental quality for future generations. (x=4,40). It was determined that the statements in which the participants showed low level of agreement were; tourism negatively affects the attitudes and behaviors of the local people. (x=3,35), tourism causes the destruction of the cultural values of the local people. (x=3,28) and tourism causes social problems such as crime, prostitution, drugs, etc. (x=4,46). In other statements, the agreement levels were close to each other and at a medium level (x=4,14-4,37) (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' Means Regarding Research Statements (n=605)

Local People's Perspective on Tourism...	Average (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation
Efforts should be made to further develop tourism in the region.	4,56	1,918
Tourism investments in the region should continue to increase.	4,37	1,065
I support the development of tourism in the region.	4,14	1,245
Tourism should continue to be an important part of society.	4,27	1,456
Tourism improves the quality of life of local people.	4,25	1,230
Tourism contributes to the cultural development of local people.	4,46	1,118
Tourism contributes to the protection and development of the natural environment.	4,52	1,978
Tourism provides economic gain to local people.	4,28	1,188
Tourism is one of the most important sectors in supporting the local economy.	4,38	1,201
Tourism improves the quality of the environment for future generations.	4,40	1,128
I am pleased with the public services that have developed with tourism.	4,25	1,095
I am pleased with the environmental change and development that tourism has created.	4,16	1,345
I am pleased with the social opportunities and facilities that tourism provides to the region.	4,22	1,860
I am pleased with the economic developments that tourism has provided to the region.	4,28	1,652
Tourism causes high cost of living in the region.	4,25	1,444
Tourism causes problems such as overcrowding, noise, and traffic problems.	4,56	1,238
Tourism increases the prices of products and services in the region.	4,48	1,256
The development of tourism causes environmental pollution (garbage, etc.).	4,46	1,309
The development of tourism positively affects my business.	4,28	1,286
If there is no tourism in the region, my business will decrease a lot.	4,24	2,013
I generally benefit from the development of tourism in the region.	4,28	1,445
Tourism negatively affects the attitudes and behaviors of local people.	3,35	1,328
Tourism causes the destruction of the cultural values of the local people.	3,28	1,987
Tourism causes social problems such as crime, prostitution, drugs, etc.	3,28	1,638

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to determine the perceptions of local people living in Sinop destinations regarding tourism activities in their destinations. In this context, a survey was prepared to reach local people living in Sinop destinations face to face and online and to determine their perceptions regarding tourism. It was determined that the participants cared about the further development of tourism in their destinations, valued tourism investments, supported the development of tourism, saw tourism and society as a component and thought that tourism contributed to the quality of life. Participants determined that tourism supports local culture, contributes to the protection of the natural environment, provides economic gain, supports the local economy, increases environmental quality, provides quality in public services, contributes to social opportunities, supports their businesses positively, benefits them in general, and that their businesses would directly decrease if there was no tourism. However, participants from the local community think that tourism increases crowds and traffic, increases

product and service prices, causes environmental mess and increases the amount of garbage. Participants also stated that tourism, even at a low level, can negatively affect attitudes and behaviors, destroy cultural values, and cause crime, drugs, and other social problems. The local people's perspective on tourism and tourist activities carried out in destinations and their evaluations of tourists may differ individually and across destinations. However, this study concluded that local people agree on the positive contributions of tourism (Dyer et al., 2007) and its negative effects (Gürsoy et al., 2010). In short, it has been concluded that local people have positive social, cultural and economic contributions to their destinations regarding tourists visiting their destinations (Nunkoo et al., 2016), that they feel that tourists are in harmony with themselves and their destinations, that they see tourists as responsible, and that they do not think that tourists' harm to their destinations is partial. In order to benefit from the contributions of these positive perceptions of the local people, which are very important for the destinations, local tourism organizations, tourism planners and marketers should carry out their work. In particular, creating the content of tourist investments, infrastructure works and promotional activities within the scope of the perceived positive aspects of tourism and focusing on these points will contribute to the correct management of resources and the optimization of efforts. On the other hand, the evaluations of the local people about the tourists in their destinations are positive and constructive in terms of the negative and destructive effects of tourism in the destinations such as garbage and noise pollution, traffic congestion, traffic accidents and parking problems, extraordinary price increases in the local economy, increased crime rates and damage to the natural environment. This is supported by both the fact that Sinop destination is still in the "beginning phase" of the destination life cycle model (Buhalis, 2000: 105) and the results of studies conducted on the subject in different destinations before (Akova, 2006; Cengiz et al., 2007; Keskin et al., 2011; Çakıcı et al., 2014; Çelikkanat et al., 2014; Giritlioğlu et al., 2015; Park et al., 2015; Dilek et al., 2017; Olcay et al., 2018; Akpulat et al., 2019). It is thought that this research will contribute to the relevant literature, destination management and subsequent studies. Because the theoretical deficiency in the Turkish literature and the fact that no study has been conducted on the subject in the Sinop destination in terms of application have been determined as the importance of the study. It is thought that the study will guide destination management organizations, planners and marketers within the scope of the data obtained from the research results. However, due to financial resources and time constraints, the sample size was within the limits accepted in the literature but could not be applied to a larger sample size.

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