



The Importance of Ecotourism Consciousness on Tour Guiding Education

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Abstract

Ecotourism is based on three main concepts: conservation and protection of the environment, supporting local cultures and economies and environmental education for both locals tourists and all stakeholders. Traditionally, tour guiding is one of the most effecting part of tourism industry. They are the mentor and leader of the tourist group who raise ecotourism consciousness and awareness. For this reason; the formal tour guiding education is an important issue in ecotourism. This paper investigated the ecotourism courses and their scope teaching at the department of tour guiding in Turkey. Within this scope, tour guiding curriculum in Turkish education system was determined and also the existence and prevalence of ecotourism were examined considering the Turkish tourism education. Ecotourism concept in structured education is available in different definitions and terms. Besides; it is important to have a broader perspective for tourism guidance students as they build environmentally oriented education that includes sensitive issues such as environmental ethics and environmentalist attitudes.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Ecotourism awareness, Tour Guides, Tour Guiding, Tour Guiding Education.

Turizm Rehberliğinde Ekoturizm Bilincinin Önemi

Özet

Ekoturizm üç temel konsepte dayanmaktadır. Bunlar; doğanın korunması, Yerel kültürleri ve ekonomileri desteklemek ve gerek yerel halkın gerekse turistlerin ve tüm paydaşların çevreye yönelik eğitilmesidir. Turist rehberliğinin turizm endüstrisinin en etkili unsurlarından biri olduğu bilinmektedir. Rehberler; turistlere ekoturizm bilinci ve farkındalığının aşılama adına grubun lideri ve kılavuzudur. Bu sebeple; turizm rehberliği eğitimi ekoturizm kavramı için önemli bir husustur. Araştırmada Türkiye’de bulunan turizm rehberliği eğitimi veren kurumlardaki ekoturizm dersleri ve içerikleri araştırılmıştır. Bu kapsamda; öncelikle turizm rehberliği eğitimi veren kurumların müfredatları belirlenmiş, müfredatlarda ekoturizm kavramının varlığı ve yaygınlığı Türk eğitim sistemi göz önünde bulundurularak incelenmiştir. Sonuç olarak; örgün eğitimde ekoturizm kavramı farklı tanımlamalar, isimlendirmelerle de olsa mevcuttur. Diğer bir sonuç da; turizm rehberliği öğrencilerinin çevresel etik ve çevreci tutum gibi hassas konuları içeren çevreye yönelik eğitimi inşaa etmelerinden dolayı daha geniş bir bakış açısına sahip olmaları gerektiği ve bu sebeple ekoturizmin turizm rehberliği öğrencileri için oldukça önemli olmasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ekoturizm, Ekoturizm bilinci, turist rehberleri, tur rehberliği, turist rehberliği eğitimi.

INTRODUCTION

Since the Brutland Report was written in 1987; There has been much concern and become an crucial aim that pratitioners of development struggle to meet. There are some difficulties to reach them. One of them is preseving the environment of today for next generations while also permitting for economic development to happen. The solution to this problem took place in 1980s; ecotourism that was based on traveling and learning about other cultures, environments, traditions while also assisting with

that area's economic development through the Money paid for these experiences without harming.

Ecotourism can be defined as involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (Weaver, 2005, 19). Another explanation is travel to fragile, pristine, and usually protected areas that strives to be directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities, and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights low impact and (often) small scale. It helps educate the traveler, provides funds for conservation (Honey, 2008: 33). According to Fennell; Ecotourism is a sustainable, non-invasive form of nature-based tourism that focuses primarily on learning about nature first-hand, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented (control, benefits, and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation of such areas (Fennell 2007: 2). Both are good definitions and there is commonality in that they both believe that ecotourism should involve natural areas, a local focus, learning on the part of the tourist, and conservation. We can assume from these explanations that ecotourism is strongly linked with educational learning, especially from tourism practitioners from waiter, maid to tour guide and general manager in travel or hotel management.

Eco-tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world today. It is a form of natural resources based tourism focused on experiencing and learning about nature. The term ecotourism can be well described with the following five criteria: nature conservation, low impact, sustainability, meaningful community involvement, and environmental education. Environmental education must be fulfilled to perform ecotourism and is the step towards the process of understanding the natural ecosystems. The aim of environmental education is to teach and educate the people about the natural environments and ecosystems in order to live sustainable.

Tour guiding has been an crucial part of the tourism industry for having many responsibilities. According to Cohen (1985); tour guiding was a pioneer of making tourists guiding a matter of scientific attention. Tour guiding are known as tour leaders, tour managers, tour escorts, local guides, docents and interpreters. Cruz (1999) adds that other names of a tour guide include tourist guide, local guide, and city guide but for the people outside the tourism industry call tour guides as tour managers, docents or interpreters. Tour guides are also known to be playing an important role in tourism with some reasons. One of them is protecting local community cultures and natural areas by showing the importance of sustainability and transmitting natural heritages to next generations. In this point our research is about to determine lessons about ecotourism and related subject and reveal the importance at undergraduate degree on Department of Tourism Guidance Departments.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism education is different from other forms of vocational education. The basic element in tourism education is humans. Tourism is an educational industry.

There are standards of service in tourism and the majority of it is international. For this reason, human and labor education in tourism is a privilege. A good education passes through the acquisition of basic knowledge as well as culture, behavioral science and technological knowledge. Discipline and tolerance are the main theme of tourism education (Hacıoğlu, 1992: 94). Teaching the tourism phenomenon and the tourism economy to the public and the youth who are studying is called tourism education which is made for the training of qualified personnel and managers who are knowledgeable about tourism (Sezgin, 2001: 135). Another definition is tourism education; A discipline that teaches to human to serve human directly and gives them knowledge, skills, human love, tolerance and professional awareness (Gürdal, 2002: 391).

Tourism education in Turkey has started with cooperation between the Ministry of National Education Youth and Sports Ministry and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1953 by the opening of tourism vocational courses in Ankara and İzmir Commerce High School and the arrangements of interpreter guidance courses of some tourism associations and gradually developed in the following periods (Tüylüoğlu, 2003: 15). The tourism education system in Turkey is planned in two ways, namely formal tourism education and non-formal tourism education in accordance with the structure of general vocational education. Formal tourism education expresses to tourism education for a diploma; Whereas non-formal tourism education refers to tourism education for a certificate (Hacıoğlu, 1992, 92). Non-formal tourism education in Turkey are composed from Courses opened by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, courses opened by the Tourism Development and Education Foundation (TUGEV), courses linked to the General Directorate of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education, paid courses opened with the contribution of universities, Open Education Faculty's television tourism education program and other tourism education institutions (Dağdeviren, 2007: 40).

As a subdivision of tourism education, tourism guidance education is given both as formal education and non-formal education. Formal education is offered in faculties, colleges and vocational colleges in associate degree and undergraduate level, and Non-formal education is given in courses opened by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Erkol Bayram, 2016: 137). It is seen that there is not a standard in education given in associate or undergraduate education but there are courses related to ecotourism in both degree. When the curricula of the faculties and vocational schools offering tourism education at the undergraduate level are examined, it is seen that there are courses available in the curriculum for the protection of the environment and the formation of environmental awareness. These courses are Tourism and Environment, Special Interest Tourism, Ecotourism, Ecotourism Guidance, Sustainable Tourism and Natural History and Guidance.

Tourist guides are almost as cultural embassies, bridges, and mediators as individuals providing interaction between selected destinations and guests (Cohen, 1985: 7; Leclerc and Martin, 2004: 182, Eker, 2016). The guide concept means guiding and showing routes. The concept of tourist guidance is expressed in many ways in the

literature such as tour guide, city guide, point guide, tour manager, tour companion or tour leader (Ap and Wong, 2001: 551; Dahles, 2002: 785; Zhang and Chow, 2004: 82).

In the tourist guide professional law, the tourist guide refers to the real person who has the right and authority to offer tour guiding service by being accepted to the profession in accordance with the provisions of the law (Official Gazette, No: 28331).

Tour Guides should have many qualifications and skills. In addition to being knowledgeable, equipped and educated, They must be honest, trustworthy, tolerant, well-groomed, gentle and humorous, outward-looking and social, persuasive, listening and communicative, Communication, management introduction and informing, entertainment and fairness (Yıldız, Kuşluvan and Şenyurt, 1997: 11). In addition to constantly renewing information and acquiring new information, tour guides should have various features (Nebioğlu, 2009: 24). One of the most required feature is tourism guide education. Tourist guidance education at the undergraduate level is an important issue. There are many researchers who argue that the Professional Tourist Guidance training in Turkey should be given only in the four year guidance programs of the universities. Because the guidance courses given at the undergraduate level are spreading for a long period of time like four years, more various courses can be transferred more efficiently. After completing the guidance training given at the undergraduate level, teachers can be added to the tourism vocational high school by getting training in formation. In addition, undergraduate education can be important for the training of specialist academic staff in the field who have great interest in training guides (Eker, 2016: 62).

2. METHDOLOGY

In this study, it is aimed to examine the contents of Ecotourism and related courses in the Tourism Guidance, Travel Agencies and Tourism Guidance sections of the universities at the undergraduate level. The method of research is the analysis of content from qualitative research techniques. According to the year 2017, there are 183 universities in Turkey, including 118 as state university and 65 as foundation university. Approximately there are 800 academicians and 18.000 students are studying at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the field of tourism. There are 22 tourism guidance departments in Turkey with undergraduate education, and 18 of these universities have courses on ecotourism and related fields (YÖK, 2017). In the research; Internet pages of state and foundation universities in Higher Education Institution were examined. Courses related to ecotourism and ecotourism (special interest tourism, sustainable tourism, sustainability in tourism, alternative tourism movements, natural history and guidance, ecotourism guidance) were included in the survey and the contents of the specified courses were expressed as table form and interpreted.

3. FINDINGS

Table 1. Courses on Ecotourism

		Compulsory Courses	Optional Courses
Ecotourism	3	-----	3
Ecotourism Guide	2	1	1
Special interest group	13	7	6
Sustainable Tourism	7	1	6
Alternative Tourism/ Movements	4	2	2
Natura History and Guidance	1	-----	1

The number of courses are given in Table 2. When the table is examined, 5 courses related to Ecotourism are found. Four of these courses are optional courses and one of them is taught as a compulsory lesson. Three of these courses are taught with Ecotourism names and two of them are educated with Ecotourism guidance names. Special interest tourism lesson is seen as the most (13) educated lesson in the tourism guide departments. The course being taught as compulsory courses in seven department are educated as optional courses in six departments. Sustainable Tourism course is taught in seven departments (one Compulsory, six optional), Alternative Tourism / Movements lessons is educated in four departments (two Compulsory, two Electives), and Natural History and Guidance lessons is taught in one department (Optional).

Table 2. Courses and Contents

University	Department	Course	Content
Adnan Menderes University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	The students is informed about the difference between general interest tourism movements and mixed interest and special interest tourism movements and the conceptual and quantitative importance of special interest tourism for today. Then the characteristics that being distinguished to the special interest tourist participants from other tourist types will be conveyed in the light of the typing works.
		Sustainable Tourism	The objectives of the course are the relationship between sustainable tourism and transportation capacity, the dimensions of transport capacity (ecological dimension, physical dimension, social dimension, psychological dimension) and sustainable tourism basic principles.
Afyon Kocatepe University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	Special interest tourism context and Nature-based Special Interest Tourism Types. Detailed analysis of touristic activities within the scope of special interest tourism and transferring of marketing efforts towards these activities as context and strategy.
		Sustainability in Tourism	To establish an important relationship between the natural and cultural values that constitute the foundation of tourism and sustainable tourism development.

Table 2. Courses and Contents (continued)

University	Department	Course	Content
Akdeniz University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	No content for the course was found.
Balıkesir University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	Concepts of Tourism Product, Introduction to Special Interest Tourism Concept, Concepts such as Third Age Tourism, Youth Tourism, Rural Tourism, National Parks and Tourism, Sustainable Tourism and Eco Tourism, Yayla Tourism, Culture Tourism, Faith Tourism, Congress Tourism, Health Tourism, Winter Tourism is aimed to teach in this lesson.
Batman University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	No content for the course was found.
Ege University	Tourism Guidance	Alternative Tourism Movements	Special interest tourism is examined by taking into account the types of tourist products, their characteristics and the conditions of supply and demand. The theoretical data given by the researches of the students and the presentation of the experts.
Gazi University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	It is aimed that the students will be able to observe and evaluate the special interest tourism types and characteristics of the students and the developments both in our country and in the world.
Gelişim University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	Introducing about Special interest tourism and its types to students. To be able to dominate sustainable tourism. To comprehend ecotourism conservation Alternative tourism knowledge
İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University	Tourism Guidance	Ecotourism Guide	It includes information about which students can interpret natural attractions and which tour management can be aware of in the process.

Table 2. Courses and Contents (continued)

University	Department	Course	Content
Kastamonu University		Sustainable Tourism	Environment: Dimensions of the Environment, Physical Environment, Natural Environment, Artificial Environment, Social Environment, Environmental Values and Pollution, Relationship with Tourism and Environment, Variables with Tourism-Environment Related, Sustainable Tourism Policy and Planning
		Alternative Tourism Movements	No content for the course was found.
Mersin University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	Special interest tourism based on product development in tourism, product creation, market analysis, product analysis, supply of market, sustainability and alternative tourism, culture, nature, education,
		Natural History and Guide	In this lesson; It is informed about the points connecting and separating ecotourism flora and fauna, the species in natural areas and eco tourism possibilities in Turkey.
Necmettin Erbakan University	Tourism Guidance	Sustainable Tourism	No content for the course was found.
		Alternative Tourism	No content for the course was found.
		Ecotourism Guide	No content for the course was found.
Nevşehir University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	Tourism system and special interest tourism place in the system, special interest tourism types, world and Turkey applications, distinction between general interest and special interest, evaluation of special interest tourism with a holistic approach, evaluation of tourism trends in terms of special interest tourism.
		Sustainable Tourism	Concepts and approaches of sustainability, concept of sustainable tourism, basic principles of sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism development approaches, sustainable tourism and bearing capacity relation, tourism bearing capacity concept, tourism bearing capacity (ecological dimension, physical dimension, economic dimension, social dimension, psychological size), factors affecting tourism bearing capacity, level of tourism development and bearing capacity balance, sustainable tourism strategies

Table 2. Courses and Contents (continued)

University	Department	Course	Content
Pamukkale University	Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	The students is informed about the difference between general interest tourism movements and mixed interest and special interest tourism movements and the conceptual and quantitative importance of special interest tourism for today. Then the characteristics that being distinguished to the special interest tourist participants from other tourist types will be conveyed in the light of the typing works.
		Sustainable Tourism	Modern environmental movement and sustainable development, sustainable development and sustainable tourism, alternative tourism, mass tourism and sustainability, ecotourism, tourism circles, sustainability in industry, organizations and principles of behaviour, sustainable tourism in developing countries
		Alternative Tourism	Alternative Tourism Planning and Management Alternative Tourism Products, Cultural Tourism, Faith Tourism Tourism, Sport Tourism, Health Tourism, Alternative Tourism Pricing, Alternative Tourism Promotion, Alternative Tourism Distribution
Sinop University	Tourism Guidance	Ecotourism	Definition of ecotourism concept, related concepts, development process. The main features of Ecotourism and ecotourists. Ecotourism practices and Ecotourism businesses.
		Special Interest Tourism	Special interest tourism types based on product development, sustainability and alternative tourism in tourism, special interest tourism, culturally based special interest tourism varieties, nature based special interest tourism varieties based on education and hobby.
Adıyaman University	Travel Agency and Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	Special interest tourism based on product development, product creation, market analysis, product analysis, market supply, sustainability and alternative tourism, culture, nature, education, hobby.
		Ecotourism	Within the concepts of mass, alternative, nature and sustainable tourism, ecotourism place and importance and eco-tourism applications constitute the content of this course.
Çanakkale 18 Mart University	Travel Agency and Tourism Guidance	Sustainable Tourism and Environment	Understanding to Tourism and environmental policies in Turkey and the importance of environment in terms of sustainable tourism, gaining of environmental awareness, Effects of tourism activities on natural environment
		Ecotourism	Introduction to the definition, principles and practices of ecotourism. Examination of eco tourism enterprises. Discussion of the impact of responsible travel on local people
Kırklareli University	Travel Agency and Tourism Guidance	Special Interest Tourism	All types of tourism that are included in special interest tourism are handled and examined. This course is informed about the situation in Turkey and the world together with the special interest tourism concept.

Table 2 contains course content on ecotourism being taught at the undergraduate level tourism guidance departments in Turkey. 22 universities with tourism guidance and travel agency and tourism guidance departments have taken place at the undergraduate level and 18 of them have taken courses related to

ecotourism. The courses in the fields of Tourism Guidance and Travel Management and Tourism Guidance are given with names such as Ecotourism, Sustainable Tourism, Special Interest Tourism, Alternative Tourism, Natural History and Guidance. Three universities to teach under the name Ecotourism have been identified; Adıyaman University, Çanakkale 18 Mart University and Sinop University. When the contents of the courses are examined; Transferring of ecotourism consciousness with the perceptive of students, tourism, tourist guide and use of natural resources according to conservation-use principle has been aimed in this lesson. Today, tourist guidance is devoted to different professional fields such as gastronomy, museum, culture, faith, city, ecotourism guide. Turkey is at a level where it can compete with many countries of the world in the field of ecotourism with its natural resources. Domestic and foreign tourists are also part of this tendency; They hope to tourist guides as a qualified ecotour guide. Considering this need, İzmir Katip Çelebi University and Necmettin Erbakan University are giving to ecotourism courses. The main aim of the course is to train expert guides in the field of ecotourism. According to Table 2, most courses belong to special interest tourism. The main aim of the special interest tourism course, which is included in the tourism guidance section of 13 universities, is to inform the students about the types of alternative tourism, the public institutions and the private sector about their activities, plans and policies in this subject. Countries considering the adverse effects of mass tourism on nature and culture oriented to tourism activities that protect nature, cultural heritage and enable future generations to use it. With special interest tourism nowadays having a big market; And this interest is hoped to rise in the future. The sustainable tourism lesson, which is taught in eight departments, covers different concepts and subjects within the context of special interest tourism. Ecotourism is a philosophy, an understanding of tourism. Perception of students' sustainability concept can be expressed as a very important issue in terms of tourism industry. Alternative tourism / movements course is taught at Ege University, Kastamonu University, Necmettin Erbakan University, Pamukkale University. The concepts of sustainable tourism, special interest tourism concepts and current events are explained theoretically to the students and Also, Experts participate to lessons. History and guidance of nature taught at Mersin University; is aimed to Tourism guide candidates to love nature, to protect natural heritage and to raise qualified ecotourism guides.

CONCLUSIONS

A significant change has been observed in tourism consumption patterns in the world and Turkey in recent years. The new types of tourists who are more prominent over time can be summarized as an active holiday in pristine natural areas, away from the usual tourism centers where the sea, sun and sand triangle prevails, a good room in non-exaggerated facilities, good service and all of these at a pristine and clean environment.

Ecotourism is seen as an increasing issue in the world and in Turkey every passing day. In this context, Ecotourism has become an extremely important issue in terms of tourism guidance. When the undergraduate programs in tourism guidance

education are examined, it is seen that information about ecotourism is given at different levels of importance in different courses. When examining the 22 university departments subject to research, 30 courses were identified that could be directly or indirectly associated with Ecotourism. This result can be interpreted as the lack of importance of Ecotourism in the sections.

Courses related to ecotourism have vital importance as art history, anatolian civilizations, mythology and so on. It is one of the indispensable courses for tourism guidance departments and the awareness of guide candidates on this issue is important for the future of tourism. When the contents of ecotourism related lessons are examined, it is seen that the contents differ according to universities. It is proposed to work together with experts in the ecotourism subject for increasing the quality of education and establishing common standards for universities.

In parallel with the development that the country has shown in the tourism sector, the number of tourism guidance departments which can be opened easily and easily has increased continuously over time. It should be taken into consideration that the quality of education is important rather than quantity.

It should not be overlooked that the development of Ecotourism, being great importance in terms of tourism sustainability, and the awareness of guide candidates to this issue are important not only in terms of tourism but also in the human life quality.

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