

TOURIST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SLEEPING VALLEY (MUGLA-MILAS) ACCORDING TO THE OPINIONS OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE

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Abstract: Recently, tourism demand turned its face towards rural areas. Tourism is an important opportunity for rural areas, which are extremely affected by the low income of the inhabitants. The aim of rural tourism is to take advantage of the resources, at the same time enhancing the living standards of the local people. The success of tourism in the rural areas depends very much on the resources, such as natural beauties, cultural elements and traditional handmade products. At the same time it depends on the attitude of local people towards tourist developments in their region. That is why investors in the field of tourism should be aware of the opinions of local people. The aim of this study is to analyze the opinions of the villagers in the Sleeping Valley (Mugla-Milas) regarding tourist developments. We have come up with a questionnaire consisting of 54 questions, which we used for the field research in the Gökçeler village. The findings of this study will be presented in the form of tables, bearing titles such as: infrastructure features or cultural infrastructure, as well as people's opinion regarding the developments in the field of tourism. Sleeping Valley is not a well known location, in terms of tourism, and that is why local people living there have positive opinions about tourism development. For this reason, the place should be advertised and investors should consider it as a new opportunity.

Key Words: Sleeping Valley, questionnaire, local people, opinions and assessment, Turkey

Introduction

Tourism is supported by the natural resources as well as by people's activity. That is why tourist activity gives rise to intervention with the environment and affects the life of local people. Generally speaking, tourism enjoyment and satisfaction is directly connected to consumption. Along the years this could lead to destruction and could affect, on a long term, the welfare of the society. In this respect, it is very important to hear local people's opinion regarding tourism developments, and understand if the intervention with the environment in the respective area will be positive, having as a result the attraction of a larger number of visitors and an increase in the income level. It is very important that tourist activities should be planned according to the Brundtland report, dated 1987, and following the principles of sustainability.

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Ecotourism is a type of responsible tourism which protects natural resources and respects the values of the local people. In the recent years, in Turkey, this type of tourism rapidly developed, following a world trend. New projects are continuously developed to open the gates towards natural beauties of small areas.

Sleeping (Uyku) Valley has a big potential, in terms of ecotourism (Vide: Oban, 2007). In order to assess this potential effectively and successfully, a coherent strategy is necessary, taking into consideration elements such as: natural beauties, cultural features, traditional products, and the opinion of local people. In this study we are examining tourism developments, according to the opinions of local people.

Physical Infrastructure

The area which we have studied is on the boundary of Milas- Muğla, Turkey, in the village of Gökçeler. Due to its natural environmental features, the region has a notable potential for tourism. This area has universal values in terms of natural and scientific beauties. It can be easily reached, being only 8 km away from the national road. Besides this, the village of Gökçeler is 15 km away from the Güllük Gulf, in the South-Western part of Turkey, and only 7 km from the international airport of Muğla Milas. From Gökçel, tourists can travel to other villages in the region, which can be reached by minibus, daily, on a pre-established schedule.

Infrastructure features are very important for the developments in the field of tourism. This is an important phenomenon in terms of supply and demand. For example, good transportation opportunities in an area can determine the progress in attracting tourists in the respective region. If a settlement has very good transportation conditions it will become the first choice for tourists.

Sleeping Valley can be reached by different means of transport. These opportunities indicate the fact that the region offers good opportunities in terms of transportation. This is supported by the results obtained from the questionnaire applied to the local people (Table 1).

People should take into consideration the possibility of opening accommodation facilities, restaurants, bars, stores and the traditional bazaar, so that they could attract tourists in the region. There is only one establishment in the whole *Sleeping Valley*, a restaurant, which is quite enough for the moment, as the region is not yet opened to the public. You cannot find any type of

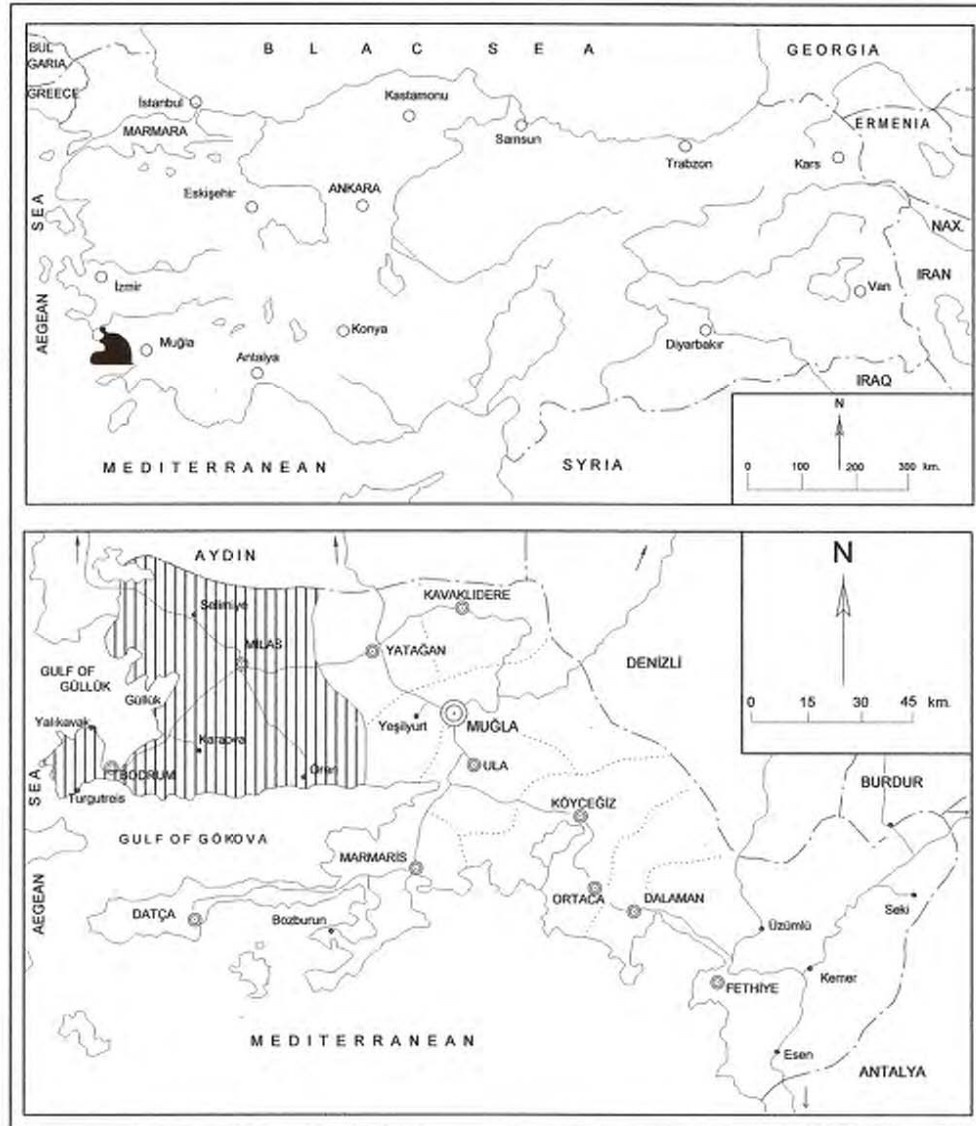


Fig. 1. - The location map of the studied area

accommodation in the region. Some of the inhabitants offer accommodation at home, but there are not so many of them.

Most of the persons interviewed affirmed that they might be interested in opening guesthouses, as they consider this form of tourism attractive for the tourists.

Table 1. Infrastructure features of Sleeping Valley

Infrastructure features	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Sufficient means of transportation	27.0	30.8	57.7
Sufficient parking lots	11.5	27.0	38.4
Enough food and drink	3.8	3.8	7.6
Sufficient shopping opportunities	0	7.6	7.6

It is understood from the field study and questionnaire display that this region needs some more establishments. Hence, according to the answers in the questionnaire, only 7.6 percentages of villagers thought that meal and drinking service and shopping centers are enough (Tab. 1). In order to turn the settlement into a tourist resort, apart from the investments made by local and central government, local people should set up some other accommodation units and restaurants, and involve in the other infrastructure investment. They realized that good services and more tourists mean more money.

Cultural Infrastructure

As far as the educational level of the region inhabitants is concerned, the field study revealed the fact that most people are only primary school graduates (53.8%), 7.7% of them have attended Junior High School, 11.5% of them have a High School diploma, and 11.5% have a University degree. In the category of *others* we included all the persons that have never graduated Primary School, 15.4%, but who are literate (Tab. 2).

There is only a small percentage of people that graduated University, although Gökçeler village people are extremely friendly, tolerant, open minded and really hospitable. Tourists come to the *Sleeping Valley* mainly for its natural beauties, but also for the quietness of the place and for the people. It has been revealed the fact that local people consider tourism as an extremely important development for their region.

Table 2. Education level of local people in Gökçeler village]

Education level	(F)	(%)	(M)	(%)	Total	(%)
Primary School	7	26.9	7	26.9	14	53.8
Secondary School	1	3.8	1	3.8	2	7.7
High School	0	0	3	11.5	3	11.5
University	0	0	3	11.5	3	11.5
Others	2	7	2	7	4	15.4
Total	10	59.4	16	59.4	26	100

F: Female M: Male.

Points of View of the Local People in Gokceler Village regarding the Developments in Tourism

To understand the points of view of the villagers about the tourism developments, a questionnaire is applied to 26 persons (10 women, 16 men) who live in the village. It is interesting to observe the fact that most of them (61.5 %) are under the age of 55 (Tab. 3).

Table 3. The distribution of age groups of local people in Gökçeler village.

Age interval	Female Number	Male Number	Total Number	(%)
15 den <	-	-	-	0
15-24	1	2	3	11.5
25-34	1	4	5	19.2
35-44	6	2	8	30.8
55+	2	8	10	38.5
Total	10	16	26	100.00

As for the distribution of villagers according to their employment status, it is seen that only 3.8% of the persons are working in tourism (Table 4), and as a consequence, tourism is not very well represented. From the interviews and the answers to the questionnaire we have observed that local people are ready to support tourism with their help, besides the agricultural products obtained from their work. It has also been observed that women are a better labor force for the field of tourism than men, in the *Sleeping Valley*. With their craft in the kitchen, preparing traditional food, women can play an important role in rural tourism (Table 4). On the other hand, the educational level and employment rate of local people indicate an inverse ratio. In other words, in spite of the fact that the educational level is very low, (53.8% have attended only primary school) they have a high employment rate (46.1%), mostly due to farming. But they are open minded people and willing to accept changes and improvements in tourism (Table 4). All attendants to the questionnaire consider that money and alternative job opportunities represent a motivation they really take into consideration, but the question is: what kind of service units do they need in the *Sleeping Valley*, so that tourism can become viable?

We have organized interviews in order to understand the way local people's opinion about tourism developments. The result was obvious: tourism is necessary in the region. Therefore, it became relevant from the answers of the local people that they are aware of the changes occurring in the field of tourism, and that they want to be a part of it. Findings of the interview are

supported by the questionnaire results. Interesting is the fact that male population is more optimistic about the new developments than the female population.

Table 4. Proportion of employed population by economic activities in Gökçeler village

Employment	Female	(%)	Male	(%)	Total	(%)
Farmer	5	19.2	7	27	12	46.1
Handicraftsman	0	0	1	3.8	1	3.8
Employee	0	0	2	7.7	2	7.7
Officer	0	0	1	3.8	1	3.8
Unemployed	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	5	19.2	5	19.2	10	38.4
Total	10	38.4	16	61.4	26	100

From table 5 we can figure out that a large amount of the village population considers tourism activities as having a positive effect on the community. According to the questionnaire, most of the local people, (88.3 %) consider that “tourism developments have a positive effect”; 73.0 % of local people stated that “these developments will solve the unemployment problems” and 76.8 % of the local people believed that “tourism decreases internal migration, while 50 % of local people believe that life standards will increase in the village”.

To the question: “What do you think about the role of tourism in the modernization of Gökçeler village?” most of the local people (73.0 %) stated that it has positive effects on the region. Thus, one way for the cultural development is dialogue and interaction between communities and societies. These results indicate that the local people living in Gökçeler village are extremely aware of the role of tourism.

Table 5. The proportion of attitude of local people towards tourism in Gökçeler village

Positive attitude towards tourism	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
The development of tourism is satisfying	34.6	53.8	88.3
It increases life standards	11.5	46.2	57.7
It decreases unemployment	27.0	46.2	73.0
It effects the other sectors positively	19.2	34.6	53.8
It decreases internal migration	30.8	46.2	76.8
It effects the modernization of the region positively	27.0	46.2	73.0
It develops agriculture	15.4	34.6	50

At the same time tourist activities have a negative impact on the touristic areas. But we can reduce these negative outcomes to a minimum level, by making people in the region aware of the problems of tourism, problems which can be solved with the help of government and business organizations.

That is why local natives of the *Sleeping Valley* have been asked questions which could reveal their level of understanding of the negative effects of the tourist industry. According to the questionnaire, people in the *Sleeping Valley* are aware of these problems. A large number of the people stated that “tourism lowers moral values of the young generation, causes degradation of the land and also affects negatively the environment”. However, the negative effects of tourism are not as damaging as the effects of the industrialization.

Table 6. The proportion of attitude of local people towards tourism in Gökçeler village

Negative attitude towards tourism	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Tourism creates environmental problems	11.5	27.0	38.4
Tourism deteriorates the environment	15.4	15.4	30.8
Tourism affects flora and fauna	30.8	46.2	76.8
Tourism influences negatively moral values of youths	11.5	19.2	30.8
Tourism destroys traditions and customs	0	23.0	23.0

According to the results of the questionnaire, most of the inhabitants, (76,8%) said that “industry has a negative effect on tourism”. Gökçeler village inhabitants consider that investment is really necessary, and that government representatives should take into consideration natural environment when making investments. This is an indictment of the fact that people are aware of these problems and that they have a positive attitude towards the possibility of solving those problems. However people are reluctant to industrial developments in the village, and this can be seen in Table 6.

To the question “In your opinion what kind of environmental problems occur in tourism?” most of the inhabitants (61.5 %) consider that some problems may occur due to the poultry farms in the region, which pollute the air, by spreading odor in the region (Table 6). What is more, people consider that the construction of new tourist locations will affect the overall image of the rural areas, creating traffic jams and litter problems in the region (Table 7). Furthermore, they agree that by avoiding industrialization, pollution and extensive construction, the environment will be protected, developing at the same time tourism in the *Sleeping Valley*.

Of course, extensive developments in the field of tourism can also cause problems. However, these problems can be solved. We have to be cautious and do the right thing in order to protect ourselves from unexpected hazards. The main issue is “which is the right way and how can we solve the problems?” That is why we have to study carefully the tourist potential of the region where investment is planned.

Table 7. The opinions of the local people related to the possible problems deriving from the tourism developments in Gökçeler village

Environmental problems	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Vegetation will be destroyed	15.4	15.4	30.8
Garbage problems due to restaurant construction	27.0	34.6	61.5
Poultry farms create odor	38.4	61.5	100
Litter problem occurs	15.4	19.2	34.6
Traffic jams will occur	34.6	15.4	50
Rural area environment will be affected	34.6	15.4	50

On the other hand we should know exactly “Whether people in the village are really interested to see developments in tourism” and so we can identify the persons that would be able to solve some of the problems that might appear. If people know their responsibilities and share them with government institutions, they will be able to attract investors, solve problems and overall, improve tourism in the region.

Table 8. The opinions of local people living in Gökçeler village about regulation and conservation of environment

Responsibility in regulation	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Imposed by law	30.8	53.8	84.5
Government	11.5	34.6	46.2
Public	27.0	46.2	73.0

People in Gökçeler village have been asked questions, so that researchers could see their level of awareness, involvement in the project and level of understanding of the responsibilities involved by such an extensive project. To the question “Who should be responsible for the preservation and conservation of the environment?” most of the inhabitants (73%) stated that society should be responsible for the environment, but at the same time 46.2% of them reaffirmed the fact that the government should be responsible for

environmental regulation and conservation (Table 8). On the other hand 84.5% said that a legal framework, regulating the tourist developments should be developed. These figures reveal the fact that people in Gökçeler village know their responsibility and wouldn't like everything to be regulated by the central government, but they would like some local involvement, too.

Conclusions and Proposals

In recent years big cities are faced with a set of new problems: traffic, noise, pollution, increase of the number of population and a hard working program of the employees. All of these problems give rise to stress, causing health problems. As a result people feel the need to turn their face towards rural areas, where natural beauty is unspoiled and can benefit from a peaceful rest in a secluded place. That is why tourism investments have been directed towards rural areas. However, before starting a tourist activity in a rural area one should be aware of the tourist potential of the region. For example, *Sleeping Valley* has an important potential in terms of rural tourism attractions. It benefits from soft climatic conditions, abundant vegetation, water source, and beautiful scenery. *Sleeping Valley* can offer tourist activities such as: picnic, seasonal tourism, animal observation, photo safari, wildlife observation, fishing, biking, horse riding, balloon tourism, camping and caravan tourism, cave exploration, hiking, trekking, agrotourism, etc.

Communication is easy to achieve. There is no other place in the region that can offer facilities similar to the ones in the *Sleeping Valley*. These features make the region extremely interesting and attractive for tourism investment. It benefits from natural beauties unequaled in the region, far from the artificiality of the modern world. People in the region protect and preserve their traditional values, but at the same time they are open minded towards the idea of receiving tourists. Because the valley is extremely silent, it was called *Sleeping Valley*.

Sleeping Valley can satisfy the needs of all tourists. It is a virgin land, but protected at the same time. For this reason, its potential should be assessed in order to serve tourism. And to assess the potential of the place, an extensive advertising campaign is necessary. However, before starting any tourist activity, it is very important to know if local people are aware of the region's potential and hear their opinion regarding tourism developments.

We have to find if people are ready to get involved in the program or not, if they really want or not to have tourist activity in the region, so that a solid investment plan could be developed. Thus, according to the result of the questionnaire, local people living in the *Sleeping Valley*, have a positive attitude

towards tourism developments. In addition, they are aware of the possible positive and negative outcomes of tourism in the region.

Tourism is a trade business and every member of the society should be educated in this respect. It is very important to improve the attitude of local people regarding tourism, and develop the cultural background of those involved. Local people should be open minded towards tourism. Besides, in tourism, men and women should work on equal grounds and even volunteer for certain services. Thus, tourists will come to rural areas for fresh air, clean water, unspoiled environment, organic food, and for certain activities done in the open air.

When we think of any type of tourist activity in a certain area, we should ask people first if they want these developments. For this reason, there will be necessary some educational activities, in the form of seminars, regarding the importance of people's attitude that can support sustainable developments in tourism. On these seminars people should discuss topics such as: tourism, urban and rural tourism problems, ecosystem, ecotourism, accommodation facilities, the importance of foreign languages, and communication issues.

Understanding between people, good services and good communication generate the bases of the success in tourism. But we should bear in mind the fact that we should take some precautions because tourism can spoil traditions and natural environment, if done extensively. Quality and originality should be positioned on a top level. For this reason we have to consider both natural environment and human activities, and put them on equal grounds. For example, tourist facilities, such as restaurants, hotels, stores should be harmoniously combined with the natural environment. Handmade products and organic food should be marketed at appropriate locations. Thus, villagers can improve their income and at the same time preserve traditions, by educating tourists in this respect.

We can conclude that *Sleeping Valley* offers an important tourist potential, in point of natural environment and cultural aspects. Almost all the people support the idea that tourism can enhance social, cultural and economic developments for Gökçeler village.

To conclude, according to the opinion of local people, in *Sleeping Valley*, the positive aspects outcome negative effects, as follows:

- Many tourists will benefit from the secluded beauties of the *Sleeping Valley*;
- Gökçeler village and *Sleeping Valley* have the possibility to become famous;

- There will be an increase in the number of visitors in the region;
- The income level of the local people will improve;
- Cultural level as well as the socio-economical one will be developed;
- As a result of the economic growth, new investors will be attracted in the region;
- Job opportunities will increase. Village people will improve their social status and bring additional revenue in the region.
- Unemployment will decrease.
- Social life will be more active.
- Migration from the region will downsize.
- Local people will understand the value of the natural environment and natural heritage and they will try to protect it more carefully.

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