

The Future of Salt Lake Basin and Evaluation The Context of Sustainable Destination Management As An Attractiveness¹

Yusuf ACAR²

AksarayUniversity

Abstract

This research was prepared with the aim of evaluating the current and future situation of the Salt Lake basin which is a natural attraction and home to many endemic species, as well as an important route in the migration routes of birds, with different scientific perspectives such as ecological and sustainable destination management. Within the scope of the research, the technical information about the Salt Lake basin was obtained by interviewing with the biologists, geologists and environmental engineers who are related to the Salt Lake basin, and in addition to these negotiations, the local administrators working in the settlements around the basin and the relevant public authorities, a SWOT analysis was carried out in order to enable the implementation of alternative tourism vehicles as the future of the lake basin and as an attraction. The results obtained from the research indicate that the region can be consciously protected as an attractiveness element within the scope of alternative tourism with an effective tourism planning considering the ecological elements.

Keywords:

Salt Lake, Sustainability, Ecology, Destination Marketing, Aksaray

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²Asst. Prof.Dr. Yusuf ACAR, Aksaray University, Faculty of Tourism, yusufacar@aksaray.edu.tr

The concept of sustainability with the increasing awareness of the environment since the 1970s and the debate about the environmental issue in the international public opinion it has become one of the topics that have been emphasized in many researches in the field of tourism as well as in many areas (Uzun, 2012: 48). Sustainable tourism contains policies, guidelines and management methods for the healthy development of tourism (Hunter, 1997: 851) to ensure that any destination is susceptible to future developments and that these developments are protected from adverse effects (Hunter, 1997: 851). The concept of sustainability, expressed as the transfer of resources to future generations, consists of seven basic principles. These principles (Coşar, 2013: 10):

1. Future concern: The possible positive and negative consequences of the developments on the world are addressed more broadly than the predictions of politicians and the business world, considering the needs of future generations.

2. Intergenerational equality: the balanced use of existing resources without the obstacles of future generations' generations, and the transfer of resources from the beginning to the end.

3. Participation: All social and political groups should take part in the discussion and decision-making processes on development issues.

4. Balance of economic and environmental factors: Decisions on existing resources should be taken on a broader scale than economic factors, and environmental factors should be included in the main factors of development.

5. Environmental capacities: All environmental effects should be assessed in a way that does not impair ecological balance.

6. Attention to qualitative elements as well as quantitative elements: To make decisions about available resources, at least in the long run, attention should be paid to the principle of environmental damage, not on the basis of low cost.

7. Consideration of local ecosystems: The impor-

tance of sustainability of local, social, ecological, political and agricultural systems in development.

Except for the above seven principles on sustainability, the concept of sustainability is examined in five different ways. These aims are; protection of existing resources, human-made artificial environment, environmental quality, social equality and political participation (Schively, 2008: 770).

The essence of the concept of sustainable tourism is the transfer of tourism resources to the future generations with minimum irrigation in terms of tourism development by preserving the existing resources that the destination has. Sustainable tourism is expressed as a tourism idea that economically feasible; but does not harm the resources related to the socio-cultural structure of the host society and the physical environment to which the future of tourism is attached (Saarinen, 2006, 1124). Resources should be assessed on an ongoing basis and the conservation-aware front must be kept within the framework of this assessment for ensuring sustainability (Marshall, 1999: 706). In this context; lies in the idea of keeping environmental problems at a minimum level when tourism-related activities are carried out within the framework of the concept of sustainable tourism. That's why, successful implementation of sustainable tourism requires extensive cooperation of different stakeholders such as public, private sector, accommodation firms, transport firms, catering firms, tourist attractions, host society and tourists (Vernon, Essex, Pinter ve Curry, 2005: 326).

When destinations are regarded as tourism products, they differ in their attractiveness and exhibit distinctive features of their destinations, resulting in different literary characteristics of different researchers in the literature. The destination properties determined by Hsu, Kara and Soo (2004: 121-126) are as follows:

- The fact that the destination is an integrated product reveals the duality of the services and facilities offered in the destination. In this duality, the destination is composed of different parts, which are products related to direct and indirect tourism.

- Destination as a tourism product is made up of the experiences of tourists who are in the position of tourism subject. The level of control over the destination experience of destination marketers is very low. In this sense destinations can have different meanings and importance for every tourist.

- As a product of tourism, the destination is inevitably a single compound. Geographical areas called destinations are subject to evaluation in the local, regional, national and international context. This causes the semantic differences that are imposed on the destination between the person who is the manager and the tourist who is the product consumer when the destination is defined and shaped into a product.

- Destinations as tourism products are suitable for multi-sale. A region in the destination can be sold many times, with different characteristics foregrounded to different tourist groups.

- Sustainable destinations are defined as; from the concept of sustainability arising from the effects of human activities on environmental resources; sustainability principles, sustainable tourism policies and practices destinations where the economic, socio-cultural satisfaction of both tourists visiting the region as well as local residents and other stakeholders is vital (European Commission, 2012).

Evaluation of Salt Lake Basin in The Context of Sustainable Destination Management

This research has been prepared with the aim of evaluating the scope of sustainable destination management in terms of economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability with different scientific perspectives (Haştemoğlu, 2006: 9) which current and future situation of the Salt Lake basin which is the second largest, shallowest and salt-richest accumulation of water in terms of surface area, and it is an important breeding and wintering area for countless bird species located in in the intersection of Ankara, Konya and Aksaray districts of Central Anatolia Region which is hosted by ecologically sensitive plant communities and where 70% of the salt requirement of the country (TuzGölü Gezi Rehberi, 2017).

When the literature on the Salt Lake Basin is examined, It has been determined that there is not sufficient number and quality of work in the field of tourism but it is related to the subject in recent years especially in studies conducted within the scope of alternative tourism. Public projects on the sustainability of the Salt Lake basin made by the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Urbanization analyzes of the related projects and some research done in the literature are as follows:

- The Flora of Turkey and the East Aegean Islands, a collection of 10 volumes written by Hadland, Culen and Coode in 1965, examined the flora variety in the Salt Lake Basin in detail.

- Located in a closed basin, the lake is geologically tectonic in origin and was declared a protected area in 1992 and 'Salt Lake Special Environmental Protection Area' in 2000 (Tuz Gölü Özel Çevre Koruma Bölgesi, 2014).

- Salt Lake, which has the largest saltwater steeps of Turkey, has the status of 'Important Bird Area', 'Important Plant Area' and 'Important Nature Area' in addition to being a 'Special Environmental Protection Area' due to its biological diversity values(Tuz Gölü Özel Çevre Koruma Bölgesi, 2014).

- As a result of the field studies and the literature survey within the scope of the 'Salt Lake Special Environmental Protection Region Biodiversity Detection Project' work carried out in 2007, 38 endemic species, 4 endemic and endangered plant species, 4 local endemic species not yet introduced to the scientific world; 5 important species in terms of potential for cultural inclusion; 129 insect species (4 endemic species) and 15 mammal species were identified (Tuz Gölü Özel Çevre Koruma Bölgesi, 2014).

- 'Habitat Monitoring Project Floristic Variety and Habitat Analysis' study was carried out in order to be able to explain the climatic characteristics in the Salt Lake and to classify the habitat in 2010.

- Underground water resources in the Salt Lake Basin have been analyzed within the scope of the 'Water Resources Management Plan of Salt Lake' in 2010.

- ‘Salt Lake Biological Diversity Project’ was carried out and plant sociology studies were carried out in 2010.
- Gülçubuk (2007) carried out a study titled ‘Agriculture and Sustainable Development in the Salt Lake Basin in the Salt Lake Lower Basin’; geographical features of the area, socio-economic analysis of the area, agricultural structure and agricultural production possibilities were evaluated. As a result of Gülçubuk’s work, the Salt Lake Integrated Watershed Management Board has been established to strengthen active participation and find a solution to existing problems through the method of adopting participatory management approach based on findings.
- Groundwater data belonging to the Aksaray Plain, which is one of the important agricultural areas of Turkey and which limits the southern and eastern coasts of the Salt Lake, was evaluated by Kavurmacı (2010).

Salt Lake and its surroundings are of utmost importance not only in terms of their unique natural and biological values but also in terms of their economic value and livelihoods for the people of the region. It is considered that the economic value created by Salt Lake and its surroundings is 425 million dollars. Within the scope of the Special Environmental Protection Area Assessment Study, it was estimated that 130 million USD of irrigated agricultural activities distributed on 52 thousand hectares of basin in the lake area, added value of 25 million dollars from dry agriculture, and 182 million dollars of income from animal husbandry activities. Salt Lake, which meets approximately 70% of Turkey’s salt production alone, produces close economic value of around 17 million dollars from its salt and sodium sulphate production. When these data and statistics are taken into account, the economic value of the lake environment is placed in the first place in the country’s economy in terms of natural resources (Salt Lake Special Environmental Protection Area, 2014: 18).

Research Method

Within the scope of the research, biologists, geologists and environmental engineers working in

Salt Lake Basin in Aksaray University between 03.05.2017 and 05.07.2017, local administrators in Salt Lake Basin, Aksaray Municipality, Aksaray Tourism Provincial Directorate, Aksaray Governorship Environment and Urbanism Provincial Directorate, Aksaray Directorate of Forestry and Water Affairs Department, and a structured form prepared with expert opinion and using the interview technique, the daily practices that have been carried out with the Salt Lake Basin, how the Salt Lake should be evaluated within the scope of sustainable tourism and the future of the Basin findings and opinions were obtained and recorded. In this context, academicians who work at Aksaray University, Local administrators working in the towns and villages in Salt Lake Basin were interviewed with the officials responsible for the projects related to Salt Lake from Aksaray Municipality, Aksaray Tourism Provincial Directorate, Aksaray Governorship Environmental and Urban Development Provincial Directorate, Aksaray Forest and Water Works Branch Directorate. The questions in the questionnaire regarding the authorities for the purpose of evaluating the Salt Lake Basin as sustainable destination management as the future and attractiveness; the current situation deals with the current and future planned projects for the sustainability of the hindrance to the sustainability of the Basin, future prospects and destinations in terms of economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability effects. The results of the interview are; SWOT Analysis has been implemented in order to provide information to the local administrators in order to provide information to the local administrators in order to provide information to the researchers working in the field of tourism and to contribute to the accumulation of information on the scale of Turkey within the scope of sustainable destination management in Salt Lake.

Research Findings

Determining the problems and threats to the Salt Lake Basin through the assessment of the Salt Lake Basin as a future and sustainable destination management as a charm element and identifying risk factors, problems and projects to be applied to the

Salt Lake and its environs for the development of solution proposals and taking the necessary precautions The SWOT Analysis findings created with the aim are as follows:

Strengths:

- To be a breeding, migration and wintering area for a large number of different bird species populations, especially flamingos.
- Hosting ecological and biologically endemic species.
- Unique flora and fauna that can be considered as a charm element within its own and sustainable tourism.
- Having the economic value of the basin due to the processing of the salt taken from Salt Lake and contribution to the economy.
- Salt Lake Basin is declared as 'Important Bird Area', 'Important Plant Area' and 'Important Nature Area' beside 'Salt Lake Special Environmental Protection Area'.

Weaknesses:

- There is no sustainable tourism policy developed for the region.
- Inadequacy of tourism investments in the region.
- Lack of incentives and support for tourism activities in the region.
- Inadequacy of the area in terms of infrastructure elements.
- The lack of awareness of the people of the region about the tourism potential possessed.
- Inefficiencies eco-tourism applications in the region.
- Inability to actively promote tourism potentials and values that the region possesses.
- There is no arranging touristic tours to the region.
- Lack of coordination among the public institutions responsible for the Salt Lake Basin.
- The region does not have its own natural history and cultural inventory.

Opportunities:

- Especially local governments and public and private organizations are enthusiastic about supporting sustainable tourism activities in the Salt Lake Basin.
- The region has suitable areas for eco-tourism.
- In recent years, Aksaray Municipality, Aksaray Tourism Provincial Directorate, Aksaray Governorate Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization, Aksaray Forest and Water Department Branch Directorate conducted field researches related to the region to make important projects about sustainable tourism activities to take rational steps.

Threats:

- Decrease of underground waters.
- Carrying capacities of the region.
- Economic activities carried out in the region ignore the environment.
- Illegal-hunting in an unconscious way against endemic species.
- Increase in the number of illegal water wells used in agricultural irrigation.
- The proximity of the salt processing plant to the lake.
- Excessive pollution in the environment and lake water.
- Air pollution.
- The people of the region do not have environmental sensitivity.
- Agricultural structure in the habitat and misapplications.
- Emptying the wastes of settlements around the basin into the Salt Lake.
- Inability to use resources as part of sustainability principles.

As a result of the SWOT analyzes; It has been determined that the Salt Lake Basin carries a number of risk factors in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability for the values it has.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Research results; determining the ecological tourism potential of Basin and sustainable tourism strategies through the study of natural history and cultural inventory and requires the following actions to be taken with the emergency action plan to be established:

- Increasing the coordination among institutions within the scope of sustainable tourism activities, transferring these funds to alternative tourism resources by providing necessary funds.
- Establishment of rehabilitation unit facilities in this way by identifying the hot water resources in the region for health tourism.
- Development of income-increasing sustainable agriculture and tourism policies in line with environmental conditions.
- Awareness raising and education of the people of the region on eco tourism applications.
- Within the context of alternative tourism activities, to create bird watching points, to determine the breeding areas for birds, especially flamingos, and to determine the negative factors affecting the environment in these areas.
- Take special measures to protect the species in the basin and establish a seed bank so that the plant species that grow in the region can be transferred to future generations.
- Establish an inspection mechanism to control the leakage water wells to ensure the sustainability of Salt Lake Basin.
- Creating bicycle routes within the basin.
- Establishment of water monitoring stations to monitor water pollution and conduct continuous analyses.
- Increasing awareness of the biological and ecological values of the region and arranging tours to and around Salt Lake in accordance with carrying capacities for this purpose.
- Prevention of illegal hunting and preparation of regional directive on hunting activities.

- Opening stands for the promotion of values that the region has at international fairs.

In order to develop sustainable tourism in the Salt Lake Basin and for protecting the region consciously and to be used as attractiveness in the scope of alternative tourism, it is necessary to develop an effective tourism planning and new projects considering the ecological elements by firstly developing the activities in the region with nature oriented. For this reason, the projects that are planned to be done in the future, taking into account the sustainability principles, are important in terms of transferring the resources that the region possesses without any deterioration to the future. Furthermore, in order to achieve sustainable tourism success, preservation of the ecological landscape, the history of natural resources and cultural heritage are very important. The carrying capacity, environmental impact assessment and ecological footprint for sustainable tourism development should be determined according to each destination, and audits should be carried out periodically in this context.

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