

## LOCAL PEOPLE'S VIEW ON TOURISM IN CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRINCIPLES: AN IMPORTANCE- PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

Considering their central role as stakeholders at destination, local people's views and active participation in decision-making and implementation processes are important for the sustainability of tourism activities in the area. Therefore, it is of great importance to determine the local people's attitudes towards sustainable tourism and development. Goal of the current study is to reveal the importance and perceived performance of the local people towards sustainable tourism, in line with the sustainable tourism principles determined by the World Tourism Organization. In order to examine importance that local people give to these principles and perceived performance of their application, Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) method was applied. Data was collected from 389 locals in Demre District of Antalya city in Turkey with the survey technique. According to the findings of IPA, local people reported high levels of importance to all sustainable tourism principles. On the other hand, perceived performance of local people towards application of all the principles, except "protection of biological diversity", shows low levels. Unique contribution of the current study is in providing the perspective on how local people evaluate sustainable tourism principles and emphasizes the awareness of important and perceived performance differences when it comes to sustainable tourism.

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## INTRODUCTION

Acceleration of globalization and increase in industrialization in recent years have assured high living standards in developed countries, but also the environmental degradation due to the increase in consumption (Mebratu, 1998). Additionally, excessive use of resources, environmental pollution, forest destruction, and competition over resources among businesses (Ayuso, 2006) are among destructive effects of population on the environment. Due to these environmental problems, deterioration of tourism development and attractiveness of the touristic area can also occur (Zengin, 2006). Moreover, unplanned tourism development can harm the environment and, as the result of accelerated consumption, represents a threat for future generations (Nepal, 2000).

Nowadays, as an important economic and social phenomenon, tourism sector constantly records growth and development, in addition to creating deepening diversity. Due to its close connection with development, it is considered as a driver of socio-economic progress. Tourism represents one of the main sources of income for many developing countries (UNWTO, 2020a), with business volumes being equal or succeeding that of other leading products such as oil, cars or food products. Based on the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020b) data, the number of visitors in the world in 2019 increased by 4% compared to 2018 (exceeded 1 billion 500 million), tourism revenues reached 1 trillion 700 billion dollars and the average per capita tourism expenditure amount exceeded 1133 dollars. In this state, tourism has become the most important industry, employing one in 10 people, providing 10% of the world's gross product, constituting 30% of the exports of the service sector, and realizing 7% of the world's exports. With 52 million 500 thousand visitors, Turkey broke a record in the number of visits, which is an increase of 14% in 2019. It entered into the world's top 10 most visited countries, ranking on the 6<sup>th</sup> place.

Nowadays, the understanding of tourism is gradually moving away from its mass- tourism-oriented approach, which destroys nature and its socio-cultural values, towards a nature-based tourism approach, where nature and educated nature-friendly user profiles are in focus. Although mass tourism preserves its large share in international travel, nature-based tourism continues to increase (Eseretal., 2012). One of the reasons that trigger this state is changing tourist profiles (Tanrısever, 2019). Tourists have started to prefer calm and clean places, highlighted with untouched nature (Çelik, 2016). Since mass tourism has visible negative effects on both physical and social environment, and considering the tourists' expectations,

it has become vital to assure sustainability of the tourism sector. This is necessary in order to minimize the risk factors, characteristic for this industry (Altanlar & Akıncı Kesim, 2011). The profile of tourist involved in sustainable tourism assumes an individual who makes his/her own decisions, prefers sportive activities and cultural excursions in nature, and does preparation prior to visiting country or destination. At the same time, he/she shows respect for natural resources, and has high awareness of environmental protection (Higham & Carr, 2002). Keeping tourist satisfaction at high levels by providing meaningful experience, raising awareness among tourists about sustainability issues and encouraging them to participate in these is the main premise of sustainable tourism (Selvi & Şahin, 2012).

The local people living in a destination are one of the most important stakeholders in ensuring, protecting, and applying sustainability at destination. It is not possible to ensure sustainability in tourism and to implement sustainable tourism principles by ignoring or excluding local people from tourism management processes.

Through local people - visitors interaction established in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism, it is possible to protect natural, historical, and cultural resources, to keep the number of visitors to the region under control, to contribute to the local economy, to ensure mutual tolerance, and to reduce prejudices (Bramwell & Sharman, 2002). Otherwise, it may cause problems and negative attitudes of local people towards tourism and tourists (Altanlar& Akıncı Kesim, 2011). Moreover, in order to assure successful and sustainable tourism, it is vital to adhere to the attitudes of local people (Brunt & Courtney, 1999). Otherwise, when opinion and perception of these stakeholders are not considered, assuring sustainability becomes impossible (Mathieson & Wall, 1989). Therefore, the current study aims to examine the thoughts of the local people towards sustainable tourism through their importance and perceived performance evaluation of the sustainable tourism principles, determined by the WTO. Another goal of the study is to understand whether there is a difference in given importance and perceived performance related to sustainable tourism principles according to socio-demographic characteristics. This will provide an insight into local community's awareness of the sustainability concept, its issues and principles, perception of their role in the process of establishing and supporting sustainable tourism development, together with their evaluation of perceived performance in application of the sustainability principles.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Sustainable Tourism

The view that people can use nature as they desire for their own benefit changed in 1950s when the concept of sustainability was introduced (Barrow, 2006). However, this concept is used for the first time in the modern literature in the book titled "The Limits of Growth" published in 1972 by the think tank "Club of Rome" (Ehnert, 2009). The importance of sustainability concept was not understood until the 1972 and UN conference in Stockholm on "Human Environment" (Alkan, 2015). The UN World Commission on Environment and Development, published the report "Our Common Future" in 1987 also known as the "Brundtland Report". Here the sustainable development was defined as the one "that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UNWTO, 1987, p. 16). Evaluation of decisions adopted at Stockholm Conference and defining them into policies was done at environment and development conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Karaçor, 2020), with sustainability becoming an important and popular concept for all countries worldwide (Yavuz, 2015). Among the first principles of sustainability is adoption of a human-oriented thinking system and the idea that every individual has an equal share of natural life (Kervankıran, 2011). Second principle that was in focus was the necessity to establish the goal of economic development and growth in such manner that it meets the needs of sub-societies and to determine the methods that will ensure the continuity of ecological sustainability (Karayılan, 2014). Finally, in 1993 the first issue of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism was published as the reflection of the academic world's increased interest in the subject (Pünjer, 2013).

Although it has a long history, the concept of sustainability is still difficult and complex to define (Cooper et al., 2005). It can be considered as a participatory process that ensures the cautious use of all social, cultural, scientific, as well as natural and human resources of the society, creating a social perspective based on respect (Gladwin et al., 1995). Moreover, it assumes the efficient use of resources, widespread of clean production and recycling by reducing unwanted outputs and waste (Chapin et al., 1996). Based on these premises, the basic idea that constitutes the concept of sustainability is to benefit from natural and cultural resources without destroying their quality, while keeping in mind the needs of both present and future generations (Sarı Nayim, 2017).

By complying with the principles of sustainability, it is possible to establish a balance between the natural environment and human behavior (Atak, 2016). In this context, the concept and principles of sustainable tourism have emerged as a result of the reflections of sustainability principles on tourism phenomenon (Aydın Tükeltürk & Yılmaz, 2013). Sustainable tourism ensures quality growth that does not disrupt the environment but preserves the culture, history, and heritage of the local community (Edgell et al., 2008). Moreover, it meets the needs of tourists and local people, ensuring the protection of both natural and cultural environment and transferring it to future generations (Cernat & Gourdon, 2007). Besides being positive approach, aiming towards maximizing the harmony between the tourism industry, tourists, local people, and the environment (Garrod & Fyall, 1998), sustainable tourism also stipulates maximum attention to the protection of cultural integrity. On the other hand, it allows generation of the economic income by providing products and services (Jayawardena et al., 2008). Thus, implementation of sustainable tourism is possible through comprehensive examination of national or regional characteristics, determination of applicable policies and principles (Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997), as well as with the support of all participants, without damaging the country's ecological, social, and economic systems (Carey et al., 1997).

Besides benefits for today's societies, sustainable tourism also aims to ensure continuous protection of touristic destinations in the future regarding natural, social, and cultural resources (Belber, 2018). With an improved, manageable, and balanced approach and perspective that considers the carrying capacity of sustainable tourism (Edgell, 2006), destinations should envision attracting groups that are compatible with the supply in region or destination, moving away from solely demand-driven perspective (Gündüz, 2016). It should be managed with principles of niche marketing, aiming to maximize the satisfaction of both tourists and local people (Tahtasakal, 2019). Observed in this manner, sustainable tourism is the one that ensures future productivity and renewal of natural resources, that tourism experiences contribute to the traditions and lifestyles of people and societies, and that a fair share of the economic benefits is provided for local people and tourism activities at the destination (Butler, 1999).

Contribution of the sustainability concept to the preservation of natural, historical, cultural, and other resources at tourist destination is enormous for both current society and future generations. At the same time, sustainability can have a leading role in regional tourism development, and in the process of making and managing tourism investments in a way that

will not cause environmental and socio-cultural damages within touristic destinations. In destinations with intense tourism activities, the concept of sustainable tourism is of great importance in ensuring the continuity and even further development of touristic attractions of the general and local environment. Thus, the sustainable tourism will enrich the visitors' and local people's satisfaction and strengthen the market power and popularity of the destination (Ercan, 2014).

According to Buckley (2012) tourism researchers started to examine social and environmental issues from the early 1970s (Young, 1973; Turner & Ash, 1975; Smith, 1977; Cohen, 1978; Brougham & Butler, 1981; Liu & Var, 1986; Farrell & McLellan, 1987; Cater, 1987; Allen et al., 1988;). Sustainable tourism studies have attracted great interest in many scientific studies and have been one of the rapidly developing fields of tourism research in 1990s (Nash & Butler, 1990; May, 1991). In this period, the term "sustainable tourism" was used for the first time. During the 1990s, basic frameworks from the fields of tourism (Hall & Butler, 1995; Hughes, 1995; Clarke, 1997; Hunter, 1997; Butler, 1999), economics (Driml & Common, 1996; Garrod & Fyall, 1998) and environmental management (Buckley, 1996) were studied. In the 2000s, Sharpley (2000), Gössling (2002), Liu (2003), Saarinen (2006) and Lane (2009) have introduced several reconceptualizations and criticisms of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism emerged as a partially negative and reactive concept in response to many tourism problems, such as environmental damage and significant negative impacts on society and traditional cultures (Bramwell and Lane, 1993). Slowly, tourism development was considered as a key solution that could create positive change through sustainable tourism ideas. In this context, sustainable tourism has contributed in identifying ways to assure positive benefits, as well as resident regulation and development control approaches (Bramwell & Lane, 2012).

The conception of sustainable tourism that embraces the principles of sustainable development, has gained great interest in recent years (Demunter, 2017). Besides achieving economical goals, sustainable tourism assumes evaluation of environmental and social dimensions by focusing on reducing, remediating, or improving negative environmental, social, and economic impacts (Loaiza et al., 2019). Finally, sustainable tourism contributes to the realization of the sustainable development goals agenda (SDGs) (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017).

When it comes to sustainable tourism, both innovation and adoption are critical for improving social and environmental performance across the

entire industry. While tourism businesses often pioneer new approaches, these approaches need government legislations to expand. Within the scope of these legislations, there are regulations such as improvement of sustainability in accommodation businesses at destinations, planning, impact assessment, protection of biodiversity and heritage, pollution control, energy and water efficiency, recycling, etc. Voluntary private initiatives can contribute by initiating regulatory change (Buckley, 2012). Both tourism and sustainability are changing faster than the industry is able to embrace sustainability improvements, which is affecting the future predictions about sustainable tourism. Conflicting social and economic pressures are impacting future of tourism (Becken & Schiff, 2011). In this context, local people's awareness and attitude are of great importance in the implementation of the sustainability procedures and practices that will provide optimum benefit among the stakeholders.

### **Sustainable Tourism and Local People**

Cooperation between different stakeholders (governments, local and regional organizations, associations, sector representatives, academics, and local people) is an important premise for the success of sustainable tourism (Gümüş Dönmez, 2016). It is possible to ensure the satisfaction of both local people and visitors through sustainable policies and planning. All stakeholders within the destination, especially local people, should be included in the policy- and plans-creation process regarding specific destination. Otherwise, incomplete, and insufficient application will come out (Genç et al., 2014). While tourists may be temporarily affected by the negative effects of tourism relations, such effect is constant on the local people and community (Prekarz & Callanan, 2013).

The goal of achieving success and sustainability in tourism is largely dependent on the acceptance of tourism plans by local people. Local people, the basic human elements of a destination, evaluate the costs and benefits of destination they live in as their hosts and make inferences about tourism. Their perceptions need to be analyzed in order to obtain better understanding of dynamics and evolution of sustainable tourism (Bimonte & Punzo, 2016). This issue is among the main activities that will help to obtain information about the sustainability of tourism. Since local people are primary mass at destination, it is inevitable to think about them when it comes to practical application of sustainable tourism. Giving priority to local people and including them in the destination managing process will assure that the plans come to life in the implementation phase without many difficulties. As one of the most important stakeholders at touristic

destination, local people play a major role in supporting policies towards sustainable tourism in coordination with other stakeholders (Tokmak, 2019).

Local people need to understand, absorb, apply, and sustain the sustainability issue (Gündüz, 2017) because they can be directly or indirectly affected by the decisions made. Including local people in tourism-related processes and ensuring they have a word in decision making is considered important, as this may make them feel as a constructive part of tourism (Aas et al., 2005). Application of the policies for sustainability of tourism development is very important for the success of destinations (Yoon et al, 2001). When this is not achieved, changes in behavior and social habits of local people will cause negativity in terms of destination sustainability (Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997). This is especially the case if the living area of local people at the destination is disrupted, if there is a price increase, degeneration of the local language, or there is a need to protect the local socio-cultural structure from problems caused by visitors' consumption of alcohol and tobacco (Durovic & Lovrentjev, 2014). In addition, seasonal character of employment, increasing pressure on prices that further cause increase of life costs such as living or renting, are among the negative effects of tourism for local community (Brida et al., 2011).

During the high season, extreme flux of tourists, combined with traffic and parking problems at destination, may cause great pressure on the infrastructure of the region (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001). Among other problems are increasing costs of living, the use of alcohol and illegal pills, environmental damage, and increasing pollution. Once the perception of the excessive negative effect of tourism occurs among locals, their support for tourism starts to decrease (Sinclair-Maragh et al., 2015). These damages induced by tourism are causes for the formation of negative attitudes among local people towards tourism and tourists (Almeida-Garcia et al., 2016). However, sustainable tourism assumes minimization of negative and maximization of positive effects (Çelik, 2016). Among the positive effects of tourism for local community are new employment opportunities (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011), important revenue source, widening of the region's business environment, increase of the life quality among local people, assuring protection of the archeological heritage and monuments (Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2008). With sustainable tourism, the economy will revive, business diversity will increase, and, hence, improvements will occur in the working conditions and incomes of the local people (Baker & Cameron, 2008). In order to adopt the sustainable tourism idea, priority should be given to products such as local and authentic products and handicrafts, for



which knowledge and skills of local people are vital. This, in turn, can provide them with a source of income (Tatar, 2016). At the same time, local people are potential domestic customers for tourism businesses (Sağır, 2016).

As local people (communities) are in many cases the most affected, they need to be considered and assured with participation in the decision-making process (Gani et al., 2012). By many researchers, taking the views of the local people (community) as a stakeholder in touristic destinations and their active participation in decision-making processes are accepted as key factors for sustainable development and sustainable tourism. Godfrey (1998) evaluated the attitudes of local tourism managers following the principles of sustainable tourism. In this assessment, it was emphasized the necessity of involving local people in the planning and management of the local environment through community participation. This aspect is considered vital in defining the future of tourism activity in the country. In the same study, it was stated that if there is seriousness in harmonization between tourism and the host community, consultation and dialogue with the local people are of vital importance. Thus, it is necessary to listen to what the local people have to say.

In their study, Olcer and Ekiz (2016) stated that tourism is expected to stimulate the economy in a developing region. Thus, tourism development should meet the expectations of the local people by providing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits. It is suggested that local people's opinions about sustainable tourism should be taken and included in tourism planning and managing processes. In the study conducted by Ayad and Shujun (2013) among local people, it was determined that sustainable tourism development has positive effects on local community. Therefore, sustainable tourism development policies should be concentrated on tourism activities and projects that meet the expectations and needs of local people. In this context, raising awareness of the local people on sustainable tourism and taking their perspectives into account, as well as optimizing the benefits of sustainable development should be the main approach. Jeffrey and Jalani (2012) determined that local people attach great importance to the protection of the natural environment in the context of sustainable tourism. In their study examining the attitudes of the local people towards sustainable tourism development, Kostopoulou and Kyritsis (2003) revealed that the participants had a positive perception and that they cared about the necessity of planning, designing, and implementing activities according to the sustainable tourism approach.

A report called "Beyond the Green Horizon" was presented by the Tourism Concern (TC) and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) at the United Nations Rio Conference in 1992, and it was adopted by the World Tourism Organization. According to this report, sustainable tourism principles, which are formulated in 10 articles, play a significant role in the contribution of local people to sustainable tourism (TC & WWF, 1992). In this context, emphasize is on the views of local people and ensuring their participation in the planning, decision-making, and action processes for sustainable tourism (Dağlı, 2018).

### **Importance-Performance Analysis**

Importance-performance analysis (IPA) was first used in performance analysis for the automobile industry by Martilla and James (1977). This method was developed in tourism and hospitality industry in order to assess the importance of service features and customer satisfaction (Go & Zhang, 1997; Hollenhorst et al., 1986), more specifically for revealing product features that impact customer satisfaction and identifying factors that increase quality of a service (Bacon, 2003). Since it is not an expensive technique and it is easy to interpret the results (Bruyere et al., 2002), IPA has become a very popular method. Moreover, Oh (2001) states that its wide acceptance is due to ability to effectively reflect on obtained data and the strategic suggestions derived from these. In this way, it can be determined which of the examined product features are relatively more important for customers. Thus, effective marketing strategies can be developed by comparing the related product performances (Deng et al., 2008). Finally, business managers can make more rational decisions with limited resources and increased customer satisfaction. It is mainly used by researchers due to the positive correlation between performance and importance levels of features (Sampson & Showalter, 1999; Matzler et al., 2003). IPA was used in the previous literature in terms of evaluating the holiday destination (Pike & Ryan, 2003), in evaluating the dining experience qualities of restaurants (Hu et al., 2009), in restaurant positioning (Keyt et al., 1994; Hsu et al., 1997), in formulating and evaluating tourism policy (Evans & Chon, 1989), defining tourists' perceptions of the hotel industry (Lewis, 1985), in identifying tools to increase customer satisfaction (Almanza et al., 1994) and in enhancing hotel service providers' quality service expectations in order to determine customer perceptions (Martin, 1995).

Using a matrix design, IPA analysis is based on comparison between the importance of subject or dimension's characteristics and the performance of these features. This can allow managers to make more

accurate decisions, especially regarding to which areas limited resources should be transferred to (Albayrak & Caber, 2011). IPA framework defines the action levels that business managers should consider. This system consists of four quadrants (Table 1). Features in the first one are graded as those of high importance but low performance. This quadrant implies that managers need to take urgent measures in order to increase service or product performance, to plan performance-enhancing activities and to focus on this department. Second quadrant represents qualities that score high in both performance and importance. For these quadrant's features, it is important to preserve and continue with the same performance level as this will protect company's competitiveness and continuous commercial growth. Those features that are evaluated as a low priority in terms of both importance and performance are located in the quadrant number three. Thus, management should not pursue any action on these low priority attributes and should not divert management's scarce resources to customers' low priority characteristics. The fourth quadrant specifies features with high performance but low importance and priority. At this level, scarce resources in this section should be directed to other more productive and important activities of the company, primarily to those in the first quadrant (Obonyo et al., 2013).

The importance-performance analysis used in this study will enable the local people to reveal the level of importance given to the determined sustainable tourism principles, and the perceived performance level of all stakeholders in the context of applying sustainable tourism principles. Thus, this analysis will allow a comparative examination of the importance given to sustainable tourism principles and the perceived performance shown for the implementation of these.

Table 1. *Importance-Performance Matrix*

High Importance	I.Quadrant <i>Concentrate here</i> Need to Concentrate On	II.Quadrant <i>Keep up with the good work</i> Need to Protect
Low Importance	III.Quadrant <i>Low priority</i> Low Priority	IV.Quadrant <i>Possible Overkill</i> Possible Excesses
	Low Performance	High Performance

Resource: Martilla and James (1977)

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Setting

As of 2019, there are 407 5-star hotels in Antalya, which has 2.6 million population, and a total of 899 accommodation facilities certified by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. There are 500,583 beds in 899 facilities in Antalya, which has 42 percent of 1 million 200 thousand ministry-certified beds across Turkey (Antalyaekspres, 2020). Almost all of the 4- and 5-star hotels in Antalya are located on the coast and serve to sea tourism (mass tourism). As can be seen from the data, the density of sea (coastal) tourism in Antalya exceeds the tourist carrying capacity of Antalya Province in terms of sustainability in tourism. Demre district which has 51 hotels, and 3504 beds is also under the pressure of mass tourism with its coastal and sea attractiveness.

The current study was conducted in Demre district of Antalya province, one of the 6 most important cities of the Lycian civilization. Demre district is located in southwestern part of the Antalya Province (Figure 2), which is considered Turkey's tourism capital and one of the most beautiful places on the Mediterranean coast (Figure 1). It was founded in the 5th century BC when it was disconnected from the sea as a result of the alluvium brought by the Demre stream. St. Nicholas Church, Myra Ancient City and its Theater, Andreake Ancient City, Rock Tombs, Simena Ancient City are only some of the extraordinary touristic attractions in this area. St. Nicholas, known as Santa Claus, was born in Patara and buried in Demre. In the honor of St. Nicholas, today known as the main saint of many countries, a ceremony is held every year on December 6, calling for peace, friendship, and brotherhood. He is also known as the Santa Claus in the children's world. Demre is also known for its Kekova island and the sunken city, surrounded by clean sea and wonderful climate. However, despite all these beauties, Demre cannot get the deserved share from tourism. Although it has a great potential as a tourism destination, due to its historical background and geographical location, it is still undervalued because of the transportation difficulties and the scarcity of accommodation facilities. The majority of its economy is based on agriculture, with early vegetables grown in greenhouses (MCT., 2020). The reason for choosing Demre as an area to conduct the research is due to its extraordinary natural, historical, and cultural heritage combined with coastal tourism. Moreover, this area still has not suffered from negative effects of mass tourism, as it still has not been opened to tourism at a sufficient level.



Figure 1. *The Map of Turkey*

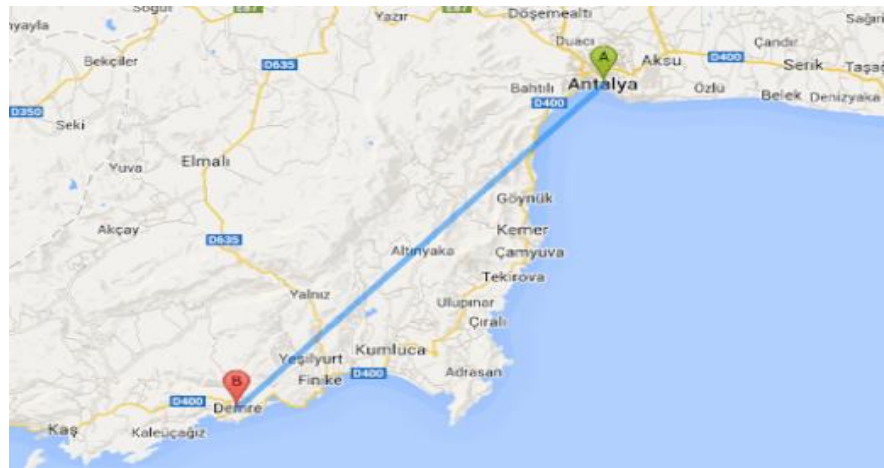


Figure 2. *The Map of Demre Town*

## Data Collection

According to the statistical data for 2019, 26.362 people are living in Demre (Nufusu.com, 2020). The study population consists of people over the age of 18 living in Demre district. By adopting a quantitative research method, data were collected from 389 participants with a convenience sampling method and face-to-face survey technique. Participants were volunteers, over the age of 18, easily accessible and randomly selected among the citizens living in Demre District. The sample of 389 participants can represent the research population targeted in the study (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004). As a non-random sampling method, in which the population sample is selected according to researcher's judgment, convenience sampling was adopted in collecting data. The researcher tries to select the units that he/she believes represent the sample in the best way from each part of the sample. This choice varies from person to person.

According to this method, the most easily found participant is the ideal one (Malhotra, 2004; Aaker et al., 2007). Kinnear and Taylor (1996) reported that there is the 53% rate of convenience sampling use in practice, while Kurtuluş (2004) noted that in Turkey this rate goes to approximately 90%.

Considering that the sample should appropriately represent the main mass, authors tried to reach individuals from different segments. For these reasons, in this study, a sample stack was formed from the segments that represent the local people. The questionnaire, which was prepared in line with the sustainable tourism principles (as 10 items) determined by the Tourism Concern (TC) and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), and adopted by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), was applied voluntarily to the local people living in Demre. Sustainable tourism principles have been translated from English to Turkish. The relevant principles were arranged in order to reveal the level of importance that local people attribute to these principles, and perceived performance in their implementation. Demographic-related questions were included in the first part of the questionnaire. Second part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 expressions that can reveal the importance that local people attribute to sustainable tourism principles. This part is followed by 10 expressions about local people's perceived performance of these sustainable tourism principles. For the second and third parts of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate the expressions from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To reveal the local people's attitudes towards the determined sustainable tourism principles, the survey was applied to 389 people living in Demre between November 2019 and June 2020, and SPSS 20.0 package program was used for the analysis.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Participants Demographic Characteristics

Important aim in this study was to reveal whether there are differences in the importance and perceived performance attributed to sustainable tourism according to demographic variables. Thus, to determine the demographic characteristics of the local people living in Demre, 5 questions related to gender, age, income, education, and profession were asked and percentages were given in Table 2.

The relations between the average level of importance to sustainable tourism principles according to the demographic characteristics of the participants and the average perceived performance levels in the context of

the application of these principles were examined with t-Test. When looking at t-Test results, there is no significant difference in importance levels between gender, but there is a significant difference ( $t: 2.891$   $p < 0.04$ ) between gender and perceived performance levels: female (mean: 30.09) were found to perceive a higher perceived performance level compared to men (mean: 26.84).

Table 2. *Demographic data*

<i>Variables</i>	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	217	55.8
Female	172	44.2
Total	389	100
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	150	38.6
26-35	108	27.8
36-45	78	20.1
46-60	35	9.0
61 and over	18	4.6
Total	389	100
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
0-1500	106	27.2
1501-2500	103	26.5
2501-3500	80	20.6
3501-5000	65	16.7
5001 and over	35	9.0
Total	389	100
<b>Education</b>		
Basic Literacy	18	4.6
Primary School	49	12.6
High School	142	36.5
Vocational School	79	20.3
Faculty	92	23.7
Master-PhD	9	2.3
Total	389	100
<b>Profession</b>		
Student	104	26.7
Housewife	25	6.4
Public Employee	61	15.7
Farmer	42	10.8
Tradesmen	64	16.5
Private Sector Employee	70	18.0
Private Sector Manager	11	2.8
Public Employee Manager	12	3.1
Total	389	100

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a method that allows analyzing the general variance belonging to the examined variable in the data set, obtained from the sample group by separating it into the elements that contribute to this change. Aim of the current study is to determine the

importance given to sustainable tourism principles of some socio-demographic elements and the differences in perceived performance related to these principles with the ANOVA test. The test is supposed to show whether there is a significant difference between the importance and perceived performance levels of sustainable tourism principles according to participants' profession, income, education, and age. As a result of the t-test and ANOVA, data reveal the importance local people give to sustainable tourism principles as well as the perceived performance towards these principles according to their demographic characteristics. In line with these data, the ability of local administrators and destination organizations to infer the level of local people's knowledge and awareness about sustainable tourism provides important contributions to making the right strategic decision about the destination.

While there was no significant difference between the average importance levels of the participants according to their income, there was a significant one between their average perceived performance levels ( $F: 4.043, p < 0.03$ ). Participants whose income was between 3501-5000 TL had higher average perceived performance levels (mean: 31.95) than compared to other income levels. According to the education levels of the participants, a significant difference was found between both the average importance levels ( $F: 4.664, p < 0.000$ ) and the average perceived performance levels ( $F: 2.315, p < 0.043$ ). The higher the education level (e.g., primary education mean: 40.71 and faculty mean: 44.84), it was found that the importance levels increased, while the perceived performance levels (e.g., primary school mean: 29.61 and faculty mean: 26.09) decreased.

Results showed the differences between the participants' occupations according to both importance levels ( $F: 4.214, p < 0.000$ ) and perceived performance levels ( $F: 4.018, p < 0.000$ ). In this context, while the importance given by farmers (mean: 40.73) is lower than other professions, private sector managers' level of importance (mean: 47.36) is higher than other professions. When the perceived performance levels are examined, the perceived performance of the tradesmen is lower (mean: 22.89), while farmers' perceived performance (mean: 33.21) is higher than other professions. However, there was no significant difference between the average importance levels and average perceived performance levels of the participants according to their ages.



Table 3. Averages of importance and perceived performance expressions

Question No.	Expressions Used	Importance	
According to me in terms of sustainable tourism;		$\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation
1	Resources must be used in a sustainable manner.	4.455	0.844
2	Excessive consumption and waste should be reduced.	4.434	0.789
3	Biological diversity should be protected.	4.413	0.831
4	It should be included in tourism planning.	4.347	0.828
5	Local economies should be supported.	4.308	0.892
6	Local people should be included in decision making process.	4.118	1.000
7	Stakeholders and the public should be consulted.	4.275	0.935
8	Staff should be educated.	4.449	0.864
9	Tourism marketing should be done in responsible manner.	4.429	0.781
10	Scientific research should be conducted.	4.334	0.920
Question No.	Expressions Used	Perceived Performance	
According to me in terms of Sustainable Tourism in Demre		$\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation
1	Resources are used in the sustainable manner.	2.971	1.349
2	Excessive consumption and waste are reduced.	2.979	1.363
3	Biological diversity is protected.	3.012	1.293
4	It is included in tourism planning.	2.886	1.269
5	Local economies are supported.	2.933	1.239
6	Local people are included in decision making process.	2.789	1.351
7	Stakeholders and the public are consulted.	2.758	1.395
8	There is the sufficient educated staff.	2.655	1.298
9	Tourism marketing is done in responsible manner.	2.709	1.345
10	Scientific research is conducted.	2.586	1.459

10 sustainable tourism principles were translated and arranged in line with the study's goal to reveal the importance that the local people attach to the principles and their perceived performance. In Table 3, importance level and perceived performance averages are given in line with the answers given by the local people living in Demre. Importance level and perceived performance averages ranged from "strongly disagree (1)" to strongly agree (5)". According to average importance results, it was determined that "local communities should be included in decision-making processes" (4.118) is the expression with the lowest average while "resources should be used in a sustainable way" (4.455) was the one with the highest average. According to average perceived performance findings for Demre, the lowest expression is "scientific research is being done" statement (2.586), while the highest expression is "biological diversity is protected" (3.012).

The scattering made to form the importance level and perceived performance matrix is shown in Figure 3. First, the importance and perceived performance of the expressions were averaged. Secondly, the

median of the 5-point Likert scale was taken to determine the cut-off points of the stated averages. As a measure of the central tendency, median values are theoretically preferred to the mean value because the mean may not be a true range scale (Martilla & James, 1977; Silva & Fernandes, 2011). This is the reason why median values were used. In general, it is the researcher's or manager's decision at what point the axes intersect. Changing the axes' intersections provides flexibility in interpreting results and determining product or service standards (Bruyere et al., 2002).

In the formation of crosshairs, the use of median that divides the series into two, according to the 5-point Likert scale, was deemed appropriate for this study. Although sustainable tourism principles have been put forward, it is necessary to take into account that there are not yet generally accepted indicators and sub-indicators to determine whether a tourism activity is sustainable. For this reason, the selection of crosshairs that outline the main indicators was made. According to Azzopardi and Nash (2013: 226), "the choice of crosshair points is rather subjective and depends on the researcher's objective". The matrix created is shown in Figure 4.

*Concentrate here (High importance and low perceived performance)- Quadrant I:* According to the median of the scale, it is seen that all sustainable tourism principles put forward by the WTO are given high importance by the local people. However, it was determined that their thoughts about the perceived performance level that should be applied in ensuring the sustainability of tourism is at a low level with respect to all principles, except the principle of "Protection of biological diversity-(A3)". According to the mean of data "Staff education-(A8)", and "Responsible tourism marketing-(A9)" are in this quadrant (Table 1).

*Keep up with the good work (high importance and high perceived performance)-Quadrant II:* According to the median of the scale "Biological diversity protection" is in this quadrant. However, according to the mean of the data "Use of resources in sustainable manner-(A1)", "Reduction of Excessive consumption and waste-(A2)", and "Protection of biological diversity-(A3)" are in this quadrant. Expressions in this segment of the matrix are those for which local people's view on importance and perceived performance is high and imply which elements should be protected (Table 1).

*Low priority (low importance and low perceived performance)- Quadrant III:* According to median of the scale there are no expressions in the possible overkill Quadrant of matrix. However, according to mean of the data, there

are "Local people included in decision-making process-(A6)", "Stakeholders and the public should be consulted-(A7)" and "Conducting scientific research-(A10)" principles, where both the importance given, and the perceived performance are low (Table 1).

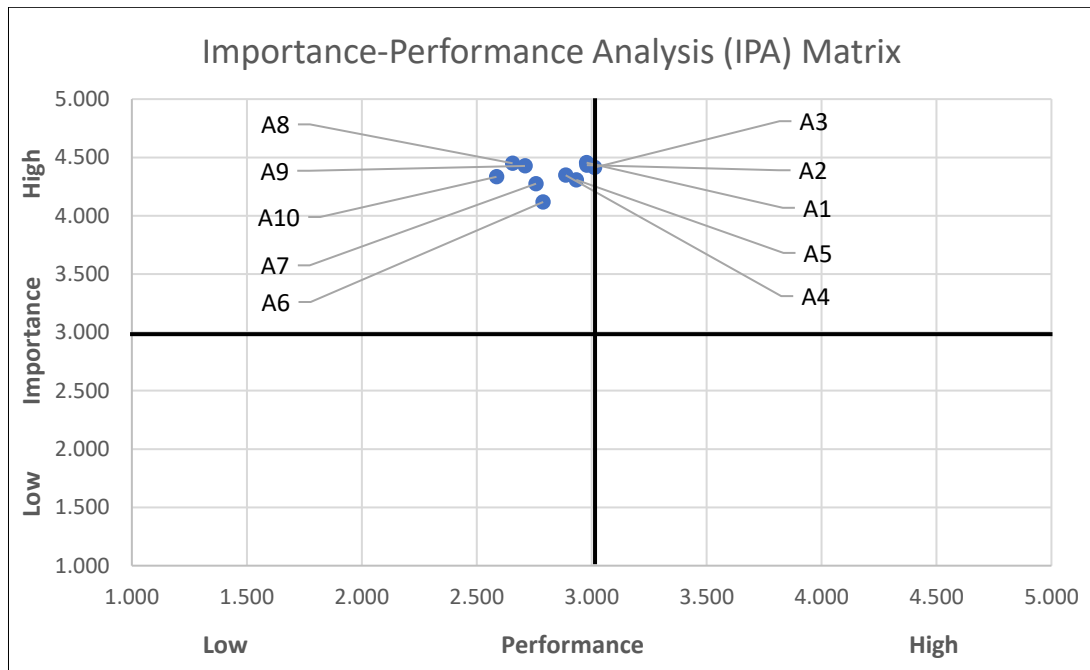


Figure 3. Scattering of expressions by the median of the scale

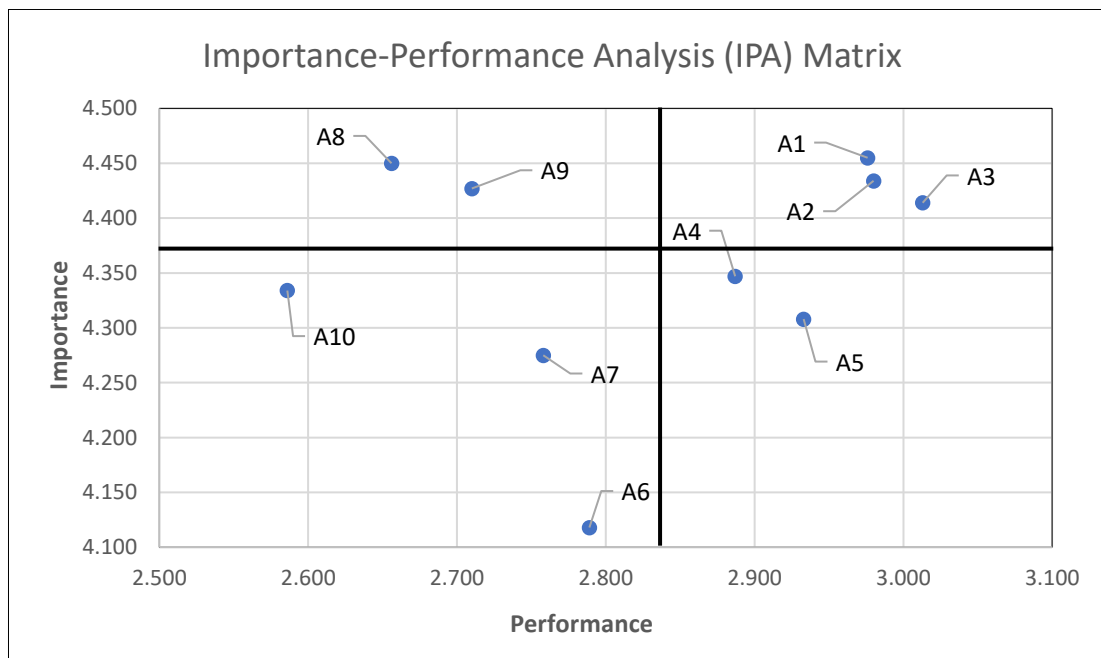


Figure 4. Scattering of expressions by the mean of the data

*Possible Overkill (low importance and high perceived performance)-Quadrant IV:* According to median of the scale, there are no expressions in the possible overkill Quadrant of matrix. However, according to mean of the data "Including in tourism planning-(A4)", and "Supporting local economies-(A5)" are in this quadrant (Table 1).

## CONCLUSION

Besides their active participation in managing processes, it is of great importance to take into consideration the opinions of destination stakeholders in order to assure successful and sustainable touristic destination management. Thus, revealing the local people's attitudes, as one of the most important stakeholders at local destinations, towards implementation of sustainable tourism principles will make significant contribution to local destination management with limited resources.

The goal of the current study was to contribute to sustainable tourism literature by examining the attitudes of local people towards sustainable tourism principles. Accordingly, the results of the current study reveal the importance given to sustainable tourism principles by the local people living in Demre district and the perceptions of these stakeholders regarding the performance shown to these principles in the local destination. In evaluation of the perspective that the local people, as a targeted population in the study, have on sustainable tourism principles, it is of great importance to determine the attitudes of different segments so that useful managerial implications could be derived. For this reason, t-Test and ANOVA Test were conducted to determine the differences in the perspectives of the participants on sustainable tourism principles according to their socio-demographic characteristics. Data on social-demographic characteristics, collected through the survey, were analyzed with Frequency Analysis, t-Test, ANOVA test, while for examination of local people's attitudes towards sustainable tourism principles importance-performance analysis (IPA) was used. The data obtained as a result of the t-test and ANOVA test, applied to some socio-demographic elements, are expected to contribute to the decision-making processes of local governments and tourism management organizations towards sustainable tourism development.

As stated in the findings section of this research, according to the median of the scale, despite the high importance levels of the local people regarding sustainability, it was determined that the perceived performance shown by the public authority towards the sustainable tourism principles

are rather low. It is gratifying that the local people living in Demre destination have high awareness and consciousness of sustainable tourism principles (Figure 3). However, in a detailed analysis based on the mean of the data, it is understood that the sustainable tourism principles such as "Sustainable use of resources", "Reduction of excessive consumption and waste", and "Protection of biological diversity" are among the principles that should be protected. It was also determined that "Training the personnel", and "Responsible tourism marketing" are the principles that should be focused on. However, it is understood that the principles of "Involving the local people in the decision-making process", "Consulting the stakeholders and the public" and "Conducting scientific research" are in the low priority category. The principles of "Including tourism planning" and "Supporting local economies" were determined to be in the possible overkill section (Figure 4).

Two graphs of scattering expressions of sustainable tourism principles were used in the importance-performance analysis. By using the median of the scale in the first chart, it is aimed to reveal the importance given by the local people to the sustainable tourism principles and the perceived performance levels for the same. These obtained data are important in terms of providing non-governmental organizations, local and national managers with an overview of the local people's knowledge and awareness about sustainable tourism principles in the destination. In the second graph, the results obtained by using the average value of the data contribute to the rational decision-making processes of the responsible and authorized authorities with limited resources in sustainable destination management, as well as in more detailed planning and strategy development and implementation processes.

For the public authority to improve their low perceived performance regarding sustainable tourism principles, it is recommended that the local people should be seen as one of the most important stakeholders in decision-making processes and practices, and that sustainable tourism activities at destination should be carried out in coordination with local people. In this context, it is suggested that the public authority should implement a sustainable destination management model, taking into account the local people as one of the main stakeholders, as well as the unique characteristics and dimensions of the destination.

According to authors' search, there is no study in the related literature that reveals the local people's perspective on sustainable tourism with the importance-performance analysis. However, many studies reveal

the relationship between local people and sustainable tourism. The results of several of these studies are discussed. According to Biçici (2013), local people generally participate in sustainable tourism development dimensions at high rates. As an indicator of the developed awareness of environmental protection among the public, the dimension in which the local people participate the most is environmental sustainability. Koçoğlu et al. (2020) stated that the local people attach great importance to paying attention to environmental issues when it comes to sustainable tourism development and that they are aware of the social costs that inevitably arise. In the study conducted by Sert (2019), it was shown that the thoughts of the local people towards tourism effects can be grouped under economic, social, and environmental dimensions. It was also emphasized that understanding, monitoring, and managing the impact of tourism on the host community is vital, as its success is highly dependent on the support of local people.

Gani et al. (2012) emphasized that the active participation of local people is vital in ensuring sustainability in tourism. Therefore, active participation of local people in managerial processes in tourism and recreation planning ought to be encouraged. Khalid et al. (2019), demonstrated an important correlation between the empowerment of local people and sustainable tourism development initiatives. In this context, the high level of community empowerment enables the local people to establish sustainable tourism development through their support for tourism in the local area. Thus, it can be concluded that it is important to evaluate the local people's perception on importance and performance regarding the elements of sustainable tourism development.

When the findings of this empirical study are examined, it is seen that it has administrative and practical consequences for both local governments and national decision-makers. Developing strategies that will raise awareness about sustainable tourism and taking into account the socio-demographic characteristics of the local people (education, occupation, etc.) are of great importance. For example, as the education level of the participants increased, their awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism principles increased, too. On the other hand, farmers give less importance to them than other professions. Considering these results, it is suggested to develop awareness-raising strategies on sustainability in tourism, which takes into account the psycho-social demographic characteristics of all local people, especially by local and national administrators. Secondly, it is suggested to develop supportive strategies by local and national authorities who appreciate and encourage

local people who attach high importance to sustainable tourism principles. Third, it is suggested to develop complementary strategies that enable local people to participate, as one of the stakeholders, in tourism sustainability activities and decision-making processes. Finally, in the context of cost and benefit analysis of sustainable tourism, it is suggested to develop strategies that create synergy and enable all stakeholders, especially locals, to gain benefits from the tangible advantages of tourism.

Besides contributions, there are also some limitations in the current study. Data were collected within the short time range and in a specific geographical area. Therefore, the results obtained may not always be generalized. In future studies, explanatory factor analysis, importance-performance analysis, and/or other methods in the context of sustainable tourism development can be used by including sub-indicators of sustainable tourism principles, which are continuously developed by the World Tourism Organization. Besides conducting studies in different destinations, comparative studies can be carried out with other stakeholders separately or combined, in order to examine their perceptions on how to ensure the sustainability of the tourism sector.

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