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Sustainability of Cultural and Natural Heritage of Alaçati

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Abstract

Alaçati is one of the most popular destinations on the Cesme Peninsula. It was first discovered by surfers because of its safe blue gulf and regular winds. These adventure tourists also preferred the accommodations found in small traditional houses that have been converted into hotels. This study is designed to investigate the sustainability of the natural and cultural heritage of Alaçati in the future. A reasonable expectation is that sustainable development can be encouraged and enhanced by efforts to protect the uniqueness of the local culture and way of life and by developing assertive policies for environmental protection. For this purpose, a semi-structured questionnaire was employed for data collection using a face to face interview format. The 30 sample participants were representative of local small hotel operators, members of the tourism association, nongovernmental organizations, surf training centers, local business operators, and local residents. Results of the study indicate that there are a number of precautions to consider to ensure sustainability of tourism in Alaçati. Evidence supports the protection of the homes and living spaces of the local population as well as their traditional way of life and inherent hospitality. The preservation of agricultural areas growing local products and the elimination of noise and pollution are also

supported as is an evaluation of the carrying capacity of the area's small hotels.

Key-Words: Touristic destination, sustainability of cultural and natural heritage, Alaçati.

1. Introduction⁵⁷

Because of the general acceptance of the conscious use of natural resources and sustainable development concepts, the concept of sustainability has become more important across industries in recent years. In the tourism sector, areas having natural resources, desirable climate, local texture, and interesting architecture are known to be important tourist destinations. By taking these elements into consideration and evaluating them when planning for the prolongation of the destination life cycle through the diversification of tourist activities, this study proposes that it is possible to reduce the negative effects arising from expansion of the tourism sector of the economy. This approach thereby provides for economic, social, environmental, and cultural sustainability.

A society's cultural and natural heritage, along with the local residents' strong sense of belonging in the community, are marketable commodities in the tourism industry. In certain tourists destinations, as diversification of tourist activities occurs due to marketplace competition, cultural and natural heritage may frequently be exposed to irreparable damage. Conservation and maintenance policies designed to manage the level of commercialization of these values, which reflect the collective memory of the community and the unique local living spaces, should be the effort of not only the local government and businesses but also nongovernmental organizations and the community itself.

The purpose of this study is to document for future generations the cultural and natural heritage of Alaçati, one of Turkey's important tourism centers, and to ensure the sustainability of this area through the collaborative efforts and ideas of local residents, local businesses, and non governmental organizations. An additional purpose of the study is to determine whether the expansion of the tourism sector through growth and competition will have a negative impact on the

⁵⁷ *Note: Special thanks to English Language Collaborator Sharon L. STEEDLY B.S., MAEd. for academic translation.*

area's sustainability and to develop recommendations for precautionary measures to prevent or resolve such impacts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The concept of sustainability

Sustainability is defined as a participatory process that makes prudent use of all its social, cultural, scientific, natural and human resources of the community and creates a social perspective on the basis of respect (Viederman, 1994: 5). Sustainable tourism requires that tourism activities be conducted in an environmentally sound manner utilizing coordinated efforts in conserving the environmental values with economic development of tourism (Kahraman & Türkay, 2006: 97). In order to ensure a sustainable development in tourism, attraction elements of the host region should maintain the continuity of efforts to prevent damage to the biodiversity and the basic ecological processes (Demir & Çevirgen, 2006: 99). Sustainable tourism participants only carried out activities for recreation and entertainment rather than nested non-tourism activities with local elements. Types of tourism with which they interact, inquiry about the local community, traditions, and cultural and historical heritage of the destination visited are covered. It expresses that through a tourism approach, visitors have gained experience by entering into the social life, learning to live in nature, and developing a sense of protection and love of nature (Doğan, 2010: 32).

Berry & Ladkin's (1997), study, one of the first studies on the concept of sustainability, measured the perception of the concept of sustainable tourism for small businesses at the regional level. Erdogan (2000), studied the use of cultural resources and sustainable tourism. Lew, Hall & Williams in 2008, In "A Companion to Tourism," their book focused on tourism and sustainability. Can (2008), studied sustainable tourism and tourism diversity, Culture and Tourism Conservation and Development regions, with Mersin-Tarsus as the sample focus. On the other hand, Özcan (2008), included Konya as an example in the context of sustainable urban conservation in his study; Duran (2009), studied the issue of the sustainable social and cultural identity. Somuncu & Yiğit (2009) evaluated tourism from the perspective of sustainability in the World Heritage Area, Goreme National Park and Cappadocia Rocky Sites. Kervankıran (2011), carried out evaluation of the main natural, historical and cultural resources

of Afyonkarahisar, in terms of sustainable tourism. Keskin (2012), included the concept of a sustainable city in his study. Erdogan & Albustanlıoğlu (2013) in their study, examined environmental attitudes of sustainable tourism development, in terms of travel agencies.

2.1.1. Cultural and natural heritage

According to the dictionary of the Turkish Language Association (TDK), the definition of the concept of culture (“crop” in Turkish, “hars” in ancient languages) is as follows: “Created in the historical and social development process, used in creating them with all the material and moral values and transmitting to the next generations, is the whole of the means indicating measure of the human domination of the natural and social environment”. Whatever state and property value and artefact that is transferred from generation to generation of a country, community or region and believed it necessary to protect for future generations, retained, is called as “cultural heritage”. Far-reaching cultural heritage which is divided into two; tangible heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Constructions need to be protected to be transferred to future generations, artefacts held in historical sites and monuments can be defined as tangible cultural heritage. Archaeological, architectural, scientific and technological artifacts are exemplified as them. Formed as a result of natural causes and the man-made of nature, landscape which is cultural nature or the natural beauty is natural heritage, is a part of the tangible cultural heritage (Can, 2009: 1).

“Intangible cultural heritage means that communities, groups and individuals, in some cases, which they have identified as part of their cultural heritage, practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, means-tools related to them and cultural venue. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, depending on communities and groups are in interaction with their environment, nature and history, is recreated in a constant manner, and this gives them the sense of identity and continuity” (UNESCO, 2003: 2).

Cultural heritage that constitute the memory of individuals and societies, in this context, can be reputed as various combinations, including all monuments, museums, art collections, archives and libraries and this definition can be extended further (Greffé, 2004: 302). Cultural heritage, therefore, is an increasingly broad category.

rythat embraces a diverse collection of phenomena. It is partlybecause of its wealth and greatness that heritage isin context regarded as so important to many people’s sense of belonging and cultural identity (Tweed & Shuterland, 2007: 63). Cultural heritage, is a whole that results in the process of accumulation oflong knowledge, experience and maturity in the context of perceived necessities in the history of a nation.This cultural heritage is made up of all the material and moral values and all the means and cases forming these values are transferred from one generation to another (Çınar &Aydın, 2000: 1).

2.1.2. Boutique hotel management and Alaçatı

Boutique hotels, as it stated in item 43, by T.R. Ministry of Culture and Tourism; offer originality in terms of structural features, architectural design, furnishing, decoration and use of materials; provide personalized service with regard to businesses and service, in a superior standard and high quality with experienced or trained personel, and are at least ten-room hotels that have qualifications as follows: (T.R. Ministry of Culture and Tourism)

- a) Modern reproductions, with furniture and materials such as featuredantique, furnishing and decoration,
- b) Comfortable rooms have qualifications stated for a five-star hotel rooms,
- c) Sufficient to the capacity: lounge hall, breakfast saloon, lounge,
- d) Board room,
- e) A la carte restaurant,
- f) The air-conditioning system in general locations
- g) 24-hour room service
- h) Laundry and dry cleaning service,
- j) Parking service,
- k) At least one daily newspaper, that is selected by the customer, service to the rooms,

"Boutique Hotel", also known as "Small Hotel" in addition to the other definition will also exhibit the following:

- Operated by the owner,
- The person that is operating can be reached at any time,
- Chatting, eating, drinking as if at home
- Being "different”

- Feeling guested in the home of a man, a friend ,
- Having design and style,
- Being specific and original,
- Not imitation of a place,
- Appealing to the heart and soul of in-house guests,
- Clean and complying with the measures of hygiene,
- Interesting and attractive,
- Facilities that try not to evoke the atmosphere of a hotel (Small Hotels, 2016).

Alaçatı, which is a natural heritage area with very favorable bays for amateur surfers and surfing training, is also a field of cultural heritage which has well conserved examples of Ottoman-Greek houses with stone architecture, based in the 19th century. Alacati, one of the popular touristic destinations of Turkey, is intensely focused on sea, sand and sun tourism. It is comparable with other destinations in aspects of cultural and architectural heritage, aspects that could be better protected. (Yılmaz, 2006: 55-59). The main tourist attraction factors (pull factors) of Alaçatı are windsurfing, preserved nature and architecture, boutique hotels, Alaçatı bazaar, local foods, narrow streets, stone houses, the front door window flowers, and gum trees. Sustainability of the Alaçatı destination depends on maintaining these elements of attraction, and transferring these elements to future generations. In this context, the sustainability of cultural and natural heritage of Alaçatı, is not only the responsibility of local governments but also of all tourism stakeholders in the destination. Suffocating atmosphere of metropolitan areas inclines people to desire the rich and unexplored aspects of natural, historical and cultural places. The Alacati destination allows people to escape from tiring, stressful city life, enabling them to spend their holidays in a peaceful environment.

Turkey Small Hotels Association President, Mehmet Celik, emphasizes the difference of small hotel management in Alaçatı as follows: According to Çelik (2016), the small hotel owner should take care of the business. He/she should take care of the customer from welcoming the customer to chatting and drinking coffee. People prefer small hotels because of the calm atmosphere they project. Offering a high quality of everything, being comfortable and not excessively marketing services attracts the tourists. When compared to the standard breakfast in other hotels, breakfast in small hotels is always commendable.

Alaçatı Tourism Association President, Celal Bayraktaroğlu, Alaçatı which is a very rapidly developing center, expresses as follows: According to Bayraktaroğlu (2016) When you look at today as compared with five years ago, Alaçatı has almost a five-fold difference. Alaçatı has gained so much value as a resort. Alaçatı has come into prominence with romantic streets, gourmet restaurants, boutique hotels, designer boutiques, antique shops, art galleries, and artists. Walking on the streets freely without traffic offers the chance to experience the local culture. But as the expansion increased, so did the crowd along the street. The sound of loud music has even reached to disturbing levels in many places.

2.1.3. Conducted researches

The Ottoman and Greek stone houses which are the original architectural constructions of Alaçatı, are used in boutique hotel management and are almost abstracted from ownership by local people and therefore, from the cultures that constitute the identity of the settlement there. The commercialization of the original settlement is the main point of this study. In this context, especially, in relation to tourism literature, rather than the literature of sustainability of the destination or sustainable tourism, the basic focus is the literature of cultural and natural heritage. Çınar & Aydın (2000), examined two historic mansions in Konya in their studies. They suggested that the architecture there represents the city identity, and therefore, in the context of sustainability, restoration of this architecture and the conservation and use of it in accordance with their culture and identity representation of the structures reflects the city identity. Gürbüz (2004) in his study, discussed the conservation of cultural heritage for sustainable tourism in the example of Safranbolu.

Uslu & Kiper (2006) in their studies, investigated the effects of tourism on the cultural heritage in Beyşehir, one of the settlements that maintained the original architecture and culture of Ankara. They stated that the sustainability of cultural heritage areas were being endangered due to the intensity at which Beyşehir is starting to become a popular touristic destination. They suggested other recreational activities in the area of tourism with the use of different sources close to the settlement area for the sustainability of cultural heritage. Also in the study, they emphasized other factors of tourism, in the context of the cultural heritage and tourism policies, and the inclusion of the local people in decision-making processes. Chew (2009) in his study, investigated use of tourism attraction and mar-

keting of the Bun Festival which is organized traditionally in Hong Kong and the effects of this commercialization on cultural sustainability of the festival. He stated that unique cultural technology, information and cultural producers are being lost. He stressed the need to further advance cultural policies for sustainability of the cultural heritage.

Çetin (2010) in his study on Cumalıkızık, examined the role between labor, economic income, and the protection of cultural areas that tourism created and raised awareness of the turning of these cultural values into commercial commodities through tourism. The study also mentioned that Cumalıkızık's local people were not having enough of a share of tourism incomes. It was emphasized that women were found to be positive to cultural heritage and tourism. Local people were stated as not having sufficient information about the sustainability and preservation of cultural heritage and access to congresses, symposia and so on. Organized events that will be held in Cumalıkızık, will be useful for both cultural heritage and tourism. Lau (2010) explored how the concept of sustainability can be applied to the development of tourism in cultural heritage areas in Turkey. The successful promotion of heritage awareness through the cooperation of sustainable tourism practitioners and managers of heritage elements on educational and social projects are among the research findings. Tourism in Turkey, the writer revealed, is becoming a market of high quality with specialized tour operators creating the necessity of establishing stronger relationships between experts and the tourism sector. Sami (2011) in this study which related to historical, cultural and natural areas of Diyarbakır, examined Diyarbakır walls, original stone architecture, and Hevsel gardens. The researcher cited the identity loss that the city experienced during the urbanization process, with cultural degeneration, as a result of the destruction of cultural sites that constituted the historical identity of the city of Diyarbakır.

Okuyucu & Somuncu (2012) in their study, aimed to determine the perceptions and attitudes of the local people who live in Osmaneli district, regarding the preservation of cultural heritage and the use of the district for tourism. In the findings, the local people turned out to have a positive opinion regarding the protection and development of cultural heritage, and were willing to participate in tourism activities. Tören, Kozak & Demiral (2012), in their study about the protection of cultural heritage assets in Eskisehir and the transference of these assets to future generations, they examined the role of public

institutions in the protection processes. They identified the necessity of requiring legal arrangements to prevent inter-institutional conflicts about detection, restoration, and protection of cultural heritage assets, due to legal loopholes and inconcisely defined missions in the context of process and operation. Experts working in the unit identified insufficient financial support and the necessity to resolve conflicts in order to carry out operations under better conditions. In addition, in their study, the researchers stated that there should be appointed at least one expert from the disciplines concerned with cultural heritage to better ensure provision of sustainability.

Alkan (2015) in her study, investigated the sustainability of touristic attractions of Alaçatı. Environment and architecture constructions that local authorities, tourism businesses and the local people emphasize as the most important natural and cultural resources, have been the points to consider. The researchers stated that economic sustainability in this destination could be maintained by ensuring the balance between conservation and use, and conservation of the values deemed to be important by the local people. The authentic nature created by the stone houses being converted into small hotels was found to be especially appealing to tourists. Subsequently built houses and constructions based on the architectural features of the old stone houses, enabled the protection of local texture and architectural structure in this destination.

3. Method

The study employs a qualitative design to more fully document and analyze the rich and deep descriptions that resulted from the evaluation of the cultural and natural heritage inherent in the Alaçatı site, and in the ideas of the local people, enterprises, local authorities, and nongovernmental organizations. The interview format was chosen from the qualitative research methods. Striking and genuine responses were received during the interview process resulting in the researchers discovering the ideas of the local people and business enterprises regarding the factors that will especially affect them concerning sustaining the original architecture and cultural values of the region.

3.1 Sampling

The interview process was conducted with 30 individuals representative of the local people, directors of nongovernmental organizations, as well as private sector and public sector individuals who are

decision makers and have a say in the tourism business in Alaçatı. Interviews were employed in the months of September and November of 2013. Data was collected utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews with participants lasted for 5-10 minutes. The questions asked were directly about the topic and purpose of the study. Interview questions were prepared based on the rich knowledge acquired from the literature review, researches about the topic, and discussions. During the interview, if the researcher asked extra questions, the people who are being interviewed should receive those (Mil, 2007: 93).

3.2. Measure

Content analysis was applied to data collected from questionnaires. The basic purpose of content analysis is to ascertain the relationships and conceptions that explain the gathered data. Systematically, the gathered data is first conceptualized, then the conceptions that emerge are edited logically, and with that, the themes which explain the data best are identified (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2012: 324-325). Content analysis is a method which is used for classification and comparison of records or documents of the interviews and observations. There are three important functions in conducting content analysis: to be neutral by performing research processes according to certain rules and procedures; to be systematic by performing these rules and procedures consistently; and to relate findings to theoretical knowledge (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu & Yıldırım, 2012: 324-325).

3.3. Data Analysis

During the analysis process of this research, the records were first compiled in a written format, documenting the number of times each viewpoint was repeated and the percentage distribution of these viewpoints was indicated. The ideas and viewpoints of experts that were interviewed were interpreted and compiled in a report form. For the validity of the research, the interview that was tape recorded was transcribed in written form using a computer. Similar data was grouped and was brought together under established categories to designate themes. The same data was regrouped, categories were created and common main themes were designated by an independent different expert who contributed to the research. A high rate of similarity was seen between the themes which were determined by

the experts in texts. These findings highly contribute to reliability of the research.

4. Findings and Discussion

Touristic attractions of Alaçatı are studied in the research and indicated responses are shown in Table 1. As is shown in the table, participants stated the sources of attractions found in Alaçatı, in order, are wind surfing, protected nature and architecture, boutique hotels, Alaçatı local market, local food, narrow streets, stone houses, hospitality, clean fresh air, Alaçatı brand, window flowers in front of the doors, convenience of transportation and herb festival.

Finding 1: Wind Surfing

P1, P2, P3, P4, P7 (surf training centers, local business executives and beach club operators)coded participants stated their views about wind surfing as;

“Alaçatı provides opportunity for amateur surfers by shallow sea of its bay, sandy bottom of the sea and it provides ideal opportunity for professional surfers as well by being windy every season, by having regular wind direction and by its open sea. Alaçatı doesn’t have any negativity as deep sea flow, rocky areas and sharks which create dangers to surfers. As a suitable place for surfing Alaçatı, after New Zealand, Australia and France it is the third best place in the world for surfing.”

Finding 2: Local Food

All of the participants (Alaçatı local people) described the natural factors that make Alaçatı attractive and crops grown in Alaçatı as;

“lavender fields, village bread, white onion, raki-fish-melon, olives, lemonade, gumwood, natural agricultural products, Alaçatı stone, pollen, gummy cookies, gummy Turkish coffee, gummy jam, herbal foods, Alaçatı fava bean, celery, artichoke, okra, cibes, basil, colorful and fragrant flowers gathered from nature sold in the market, juicy lemons, green almonds, herby pastry, thyme, fields of anise and gherkin”.

Table 1: Pull factors of Alaçatı destination

Table 2: Push factors of Alaçatı destination

Finding 3: Alaçatı Local Market (Bazaar)

P5, P8, P13 (Alaçatı local people) coded participants stated their views on Alaçatı local market as;

“Alaçatı local market (bazaar) is the only place where we can be with tourists, local market (bazaar) provides us open air, nice and clean a place where we enjoy local food sold here.”

Finding 4: Protected Nature and Architecture

P10, P12, P15 and P20 (boutique hotel operators and investors) coded participants stated their views as;

“Walking through the street of Alaçatı, its clean air, natural buildings, stone houses and flowers hanging from the windows impress. While walking through the narrow streets it is as if I am looking at a painting.”

The factors that destroy the sustainability of cultural and natural heritage of Alaçatı were studied and the responses indicated are shown in Table 2. Participants stated the factors that hinder Alaçatı from being a sustainable destination as destruction of the locality, reduction(narrowing) of the living space of the local people, exceeding carrying capacity, destruction of the cultivated areas, the problem of qualified personnel, infrastructure, traffic chaos and noise created by the entertainment venues.

Finding 5: Destruction of Locality

P9, P11, P13 and P14 (Alaçatı local people) coded participants stated their own topic views as;

“Formerly there was a Bosnian coffee house. We would go to there and talk to friends but now we can't even read the names of coffee houses and we can't get in. The name of the places that we would go every day is changed. One cup of the tea became 5 liras!”

Finding 6: Narrowing of Living Space of the Local People

P16, P17 and P18 (Alaçatı local people) coded participants stated their views about the destruction of cultivated areas and narrowing of the living spaces of the local people as;

“Alaçatı was a poor place but the prices were accordingly low. In the earlier stages they offered good money to our humble house. Many paid a good amount of money, local people became rich but deterritorialized. Those who lost their houses built the new ones away from Alaçatı. They left the friends and neighbors behind. Day by day Alaçatı was full of people from İstanbul. Huge stone houses occupied the lands for the fields of melon, gherkin, anise and tobacco. Huge houses with many rooms were built. Our old and humble houses became boutique hotels.”

Finding 7: Exceeding the Carrying Capacity

About the problem of exceeding the carrying capacity, P21, P23 and P25 (investors and councilors) coded participants argue that operations and regulations to stop it pretend to work but actually total capacity is exceeded by a large amount.

“Construction of the ordinary hotels which have many rooms and don’t have any original architectural aspects is increasing and local authorities can’t control it. There should be legislative regulations for the construction of the buildings to bear original architectural aspects of the touristic region.”

P27 and P30 (boutique hotel operators and local business executives) stressed the need for the legislative regulation to prevent unfair competition in business and stated their views as;

“As those who bought the original, local, historical houses by forcing the bureaucratic procedures, turned them in to boutique hotels were about to make a profit, the other small hotels which don’t have original architectural aspects and have many rooms created unfair Competition and changed the customer profile. There has been no limit to the restaurants, bars and hotels to be opened.”

The Problems that the Local Authorities Confront in Boutique Hotel Business

Finding 8: Positioning Of the Boutique Hotel

P1 and P4 (tourism association members and non-governmental organizations) coded participants stated their views as;

“The criteria for choosing the best positioning for a boutique hotel is not clear. What is the importance of the street where there is a boutique hotel and restaurant? Is it okay to pedestrianize the streets? Does the area closed to the traffic contribute to tourism?”

Finding 9: Boutique Hotel Service

P6 and P11 (local business executives and beach club operators) coded participants stated their views as;

“There is no point (criteria) regarding the service regulation in boutique hotel management. Should the food and beverage service be three times a day, what kind of a service should be offered for the kids? Could Cittaslow and slow food be convenient for boutique hotel customers?”

Finding 10: The Conceptions of Boutique Hotel and Small Hotel

P19 and P20 (investors and councilors) coded participants stated their views as;

“There hasn’t been a differentiation for boutique hotel concept in municipalism. The code of the qualifications in boutique hotels should be designated? Is a reinforced concrete building described as boutique hotel, or should a boutique hotel be a stone structure? Can a hostel be turned into a boutique hotel? How should the capacity be determined in boutique hotels? Can the boutique hotels be opened everywhere? What kind of certification should be needed?”

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

As individual tourism movements have been preferred to mass tourism movements with the changes in tourism trends, the tourism demand has been directed to authentic destinations. Alaçatı is one of these destinations, and the aim of this study is to preserve the cultural and natural heritage of Alaçatı to the next generations. The findings of the study of sustainability of the heritage of Alaçatı within the opinions of the local people, private sector institutions, local authorities and nongovernmental organizations can be summarized as:

Participants think that the most important attraction of the Alaçatı region is windsurfing (fair wind, surfing beaches). Wind surfing is thought to be the most important factor by which Alaçatı is known and for which it is in demand by the foreign and local tourists. With increasing individual reservations of local and foreign tourist who want to experience local culture, the demand for the local food has also increased and the boutique hotels started to offer local foods of Alaçatı (presentation of the local herbs of Alaçatı for breakfast). The presentation of the local food in a traditional way to those who stay in boutique hotels and would like to experience the local tastes promotes repeat visits to the region.

It is also stated that the foreign tourists from Chios Island just visit the town to shop in Alaçatı local market (bazaar) which is in the spotlight. Although it is not known as a really green town and is not closer to these, the reason that Alaçatı became a highly demanded destination can be explained by the visionary enterprisers who advertised the town and invested in Alaçatı. It can be said that by restoring the old stone houses and converting them into small and stylish (boutique) hotels, the destination image of Alaçatı was created and became a brand name. In the stone house small hotels, tourists feel themselves to be at home in such a peaceful and friendly atmosphere. Because the owners welcomed their guest and treat them with special care from their arrival to their departure. Recently, there is evidence that this may be changing somewhat. With the designation of “small hotel” as having 25 rooms, the homelike feeling has been decreased, and so Alaçatı is faced with losing its authentic identity.

As it is stressed in the findings of the study the local people of Alaçatı who are not high-income families cannot afford the restoration of the old houses which requires a high financial burden and expertise. Because of this, they sell the houses to the people from Istanbul who are high-income people. If this cannot be stopped, it will increasingly result in the inability to meet the expectation of the tourists, such as the connection with the local life, local culture and hospitality of the local people. Socio-cultural life of locals should be protected and sustained. It is possible to keep people residing in their original and authentic houses. Otherwise, without the locals, Alaçatı may lose its identity and the future of the Alaçatı brand may be endangered.

Participants also stated their discomfort about the problem of the garbage not being collected until the very late hours. In the 10th De-

velopment Plan (2014) among the actions towards a sustainable tourism approach emphasized that “for the management of the domestic waste and garbage the dissemination of the efficient waste management system in tourism regions is important”.

There were approximately 100 thousand people from all parts of country attending the Alaçatı herb festival which was organized by the Çeşme municipality this year between 7-10th of April. “Radika” themed festival was different from previous ones as local food stands had been on the streets for four days (Yeniasır, 2016). These kinds of extraordinary festivals should be maintained at national and international levels. In the 10th development plan (2014) there is a statement among the actions towards the abatement of the erosion of the natural capital as; “determining the criterions of the constructions by the regional committees which provide a development that the using and preservation balance are considered especially in the rural areas and placing importance on the financial incentive/support to the SMEs”. So it can be said that the practice may hinder the Allocate Herb Festival to receive these incentives and supports.

In my review of the research and consequent analysis and conclusion, I recognize the need in the region for a well formulated strategic plan for the Alacati area, if it is to avoid rampant generic commercialization and loss of the local attributes that make it a sought after destination for tourists. It is important for the local community to work together to formulate a plan and to disseminate and then implement the plan, in order to create a cohesive path forward. The questions developed by the local interviewees during this study form a good base for strategic planning discussions leading to goals. These goals will then provide the direction for development of a strong plan. Such a plan will strengthen the sustainability of the area ecologically and economically, providing lifestyle benefits to the local residents.

With a strong plan in place and with the local community working together, it is possible to preserve and protect the cultural and natural heritage of this beautiful region. It is impossible to recapture these once they are gone.

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