

The Relationship Between Communication Skills and Tourism Perceptions of Local People: The Case of Sinop

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ABSTRACT

Local people are one of the important drivers of tourism. They have a significant role on tourist behavior for having a positive destination image and repeat visits. This situation emphasizes the importance of the communication of the local people with the tourists. Tourism perception of the local people is seen as an indicator of its contribution to tourism development. The local people's positive perception of tourism will enable tourists to be satisfied with this region and contribute to the touristic development of the region. It is thought that tourists from the local people who can develop effective communication skills and positive tourism perception will also be satisfied. In this context, the aim of the research is to determine the relationship between communication skills and tourism perception. In the scope of the research, a questionnaire was applied to 500 people residing in the city of Sinop. The data obtained were evaluated with the SPSS program and the relationship between the communication skills of the local people and their perception of tourism was tested. According to the results, a positive and negative relationship was determined between the communication skills of the local people and the sub-dimensions of tourism perceptions. Some suggestions were made according to the results of the research.

1. Introduction

With the learning of the positive economic, physical and social effects of the changes and developments in the tourism sector in the countries of the world, the importance given to the sector is increasing day-by-day (Dale & Robinson, 2001). As the global borders become flexible, the world has also shrunk, so individuals have begun to tend to travel to distant places. The main reason for this situation is the increase in usable individual earnings and ultimately the increase in the ratio allocated from individual earnings to tourism and travel, together with the rapid developments in transportation and communication technology, and the demand of individuals to visit new places they have not seen before and are curious about (İçöz, 2005: 14).

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Globalization and subsequent liberalization movements have deeply affected businesses with a social and economic structure, as in every field. As a matter of fact, communication dimensions also take their share from this development. The need for information and information of institutions has destroyed the existing taboos in organizations. As much as institutions need deep knowledge about their target audiences for their development, they need to attach importance to the role of informing in order to gain the support and safety of their audiences. At this point, it is important for institutions and target audiences to use the right form of communication with each other (Yazıt, 2020). Today, communication is the main function of administrative activities and without communication it becomes difficult to carry out other activities. Studies show that communication plays a key role in the success of institutions (Gray & Balmer, 1998; Hutton et al., 2001; Ormeño, 2007).

Tourism businesses are described as companies that have various socio-economic characteristics, interact with individuals who provide and receive services, and obtain public, sectoral and social benefits in the environment where they are located in the same direction. Tourism businesses, like other service businesses, are in an effort to properly fulfill their social duties along with their economic goals in order to provide active communication to their internal and external target groups. On the other hand, although interaction with domestic and foreign customers is considered an important factor in corporate communication activities, the techniques to be followed in the process are important in terms of communication efficiency.

In recent years, it is seen that studies examining the perceptions and attitudes of local people towards the development of tourism have increased. The positive and negative effects of tourism development at the local level encourage more studies in this area (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Ko & Steward, 2002; Langford & Howard, 1994). Tourism not only provides economic employment in a region, but also provides stability in the economy in that region and provides social development with cultural exchange after the interaction of local people and tourists (Richardson, 1991). It has been determined that there is a positive relationship between the economic benefits of tourism activities and the attitude of local people in developed and developing regions (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004).

As a result of the literature review, it is seen that the communication skills of the local people and the tourism perceptions of the local people are at a sufficient level; It has been seen that there are few studies that deal with the relationship between these two concepts. Therefore, in this study, it has been tried to reveal whether there is a relationship between the communication skills of the local people and their tourism perceptions, and if there is, how this relationship is.

2. Literature Review

The concept of tourism is defined as “travel and temporary accommodation activities carried out in order to meet the needs such as vacation, rest and entertainment as a consumer, except for the permanent location” (Kozak et al., 1997: 1). In another explanation, tourism is explained as “human action that tends to a

certain location starting from a place for recreation or duty” (Bayer, 1992: 3). Although tourism has undergone many changes over time, it has always managed to preserve its classical aspect. As a matter of fact, the demands of developed countries and the accompanying high-income communities behind the tourism industry go beyond the classical tourism perception. Thus, differentiating tourism demands have led tourist activity providers to differentiate in their product and service mix (Sezerel & Tonus, 2017: 114).

The tourism industry focuses on service delivery and influencing. The tourism sector has the potential to affect social and cultural life on a global and local scale, providing attractive working opportunities, attracting investments, providing convertible foreign currency inflows to the country (Usta, 2002: 12). The concept of communication is the transmission of information from the sender to the receiver in a way that the receiver can understand. Communication, which is related to the transfer of meanings from individual to individual and defined with metaphors such as “lifeblood, oxygen, brain, central nervous system, artery, mortar/glue, fuel that starts the engine” is a necessity in effective management (Hargie et al., 1999: 1-4).

It is thought that the use of the right form of communication between institutions and target audiences will bring success. At this point, we can consider communication forms under four headings. The first of these is the bureaucratic communication format, a form of communication that acts entirely according to the preferences of the institution. Based on the perception that the institution is self-sufficient, it cannot be said that the views of the target audience and the public are considered important. On the other hand, unlike today, it considers corporate communication as an option rather than a necessity. The way of communication with an authoritarian air of communication does not find a response today (Akyürek, 2005). Second, manipulative communication format. This approach tries to manipulate the audience rather than getting information. While preferring a two-way communication network like the democratic approach, the effort to influence the opinion of the other party is dominant. It is completely devoid of impartiality and clarity (Akyürek, 2005). Third, democratic communication format focuses on completely open, continuous, strong and objective forms of communication. Contrary to the disproportionate approach, it has a two-way communication network. While democratic communication requests information from the other party, it also offers information to the other party. Basically, communication is maintained within the framework of receiving and informing. Thus, mutual interaction is ensured (Akyürek, 2005). The fourth is the disproportionate communication format. The disproportionate form of corporate communication includes many applications. Although this approach includes many communication applications, it lacks a broad perspective. As a matter of fact, although the institution made an in-depth examination of a situation, it was deprived of examining the individuals who made the communication. Otherwise, it also includes researches on incomplete communication focused on a one-way point of view. Businesses that are

not considered economically strong generally prefer this communication approach (Akyürek, 2005).

It is seen that there is no definite consensus in the studies on the perception and attitudes of the local people towards tourism. It is understood that the perceptions and attitudes of the local people about tourism change depending on the variables such as the level of development of the region, the demographic characteristics they have, and the fact that their livelihood is completely based on tourism. It is seen that the perceptions of the local people towards tourism are positive in some variables and negative in others (Akova, 2006: 5-6). In order to understand the behavior of local people, Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) developed the "theory of reasoned behavior". According to this theory, the local people's support of tourism with a positive attitude creates positive behaviors (Altintas, 2010: 22).

The personality traits of the local people living in a destination and their positive or negative perceptions of the effects of tourism constitute the perception of tourism. These perceived effects will enable individuals to develop attitudes later on and their behaviors to be negative or positive as a result of these attitudes (Carmichael, 2000: 604). Tourism can have both positive and negative effects on the economy, physical environment and socio-culture. The positive effects of tourism on the economy can reduce the negative effects of local people on other issues in perception (Türker Özaltın & Türker, 2014: 82). It is important that the effects of tourism are perceived positively by the local people. In this way, local people voluntarily support many works done by central and local governments for the development of tourism. The negative perception of the effects of tourism by the local people may cause a lack of support in important decisions and studies related to tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010). It is thought that if the local people do not get enough support in the studies for the development of tourism, the desired change and development of the destination will not be possible (Filiz & Yılmaz, 2017).

3. Methodology

The research was carried out with a quantitative approach. In the study, primary data was used together with secondary data. Questionnaire technique was used for primary data. Since the research subject includes the relationship between tourism perception and communication skills, the relational survey model was used in the research. In addition to the data obtained, T-test and ANOVA analysis were used to measure whether the demographic levels of the respondents as well as those who participated in the survey showed a significant difference within the framework of the obtained dimensions.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the contribution of tourism activities, which have an important economic potential for Sinop, to the region by the local people and their relationship with their communication skills. Another aim of the research is to examine the relationship between the perception of the level of communication skills of the local people towards tourism and perception towards tourism. Another aim is to determine the views of the local people about the

economy, sociological and cultural structure of tourism, its effects, problems and solutions to Sinop destinations.

If the number of individuals in the research population is 500 or more, a sample size of 217 is considered sufficient with a reliability of 0.95 (Sekaran, 1992). The population of the research is the local people living in Sinop. As a sampling method; Probabilistic sampling was used. Since each sample should have an equal probability of being included in the sample, the selection was made according to the random sampling method. In this study, a questionnaire was applied to 495 people.

Questionnaire form of the research consists of three parts. Tourism perception scale was used from Güneş (2014), and these scale expressions composed of Hong Long, (2012), Andereck and Vogt, (2012), Oviedo-Garcia et al., (2007), Long and Kayat (2011), Altintas, (2010), Yoon et al. (2001), Chen and Chen (2010), Goltzardi et al. (2012), Dyer et al. (2006), Johnson and Flow (1993), Oviedo-Garcia et al. (2007), Vargas Sanchez et al. (2009), Ritchie and Inkari (2006), Lankford and Howard (1994). The scale of communication skills in tourism was taken from the study of Ceylan (2020). The first part includes demographic data aimed at obtaining information such as age, gender, marital status of the participants. Questions were designed according to 5-point Likert type (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree or disagree, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree).

The analysis of the data obtained in the research was carried out through SPSS (PASW 22). In this direction, first of all, the individual characteristics of the participants were presented with their frequency and percentage distributions. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett Sphericity tests were conducted to understand whether the data collected within the scope of the research were suitable for factor analysis. In addition, the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the expressions in the scales are included in the sub-dimensions. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between tourism perceptions and communication skill levels of local people. In the following part of the study, the findings obtained in line with the analysis of the data are included.

4. Results and Discussion

According to Table 1, 42.4% of the participants are men and 57.6% are women. Looking at the age range, 7.9% are younger than 20 years old, 40.2% are 20-29 years old, 28.3% are 30-39 years old, 14.1% are 40-49 years old, 9.5% are 50 years or older. When their marital status is examined, 47.7% are married and 52.3% are single.

Table 1. The sociodemographic characteristics of the participants

		n	%			n	%
Gender	Women	210	42,4	Age	20 years under	39	7,9
	Men	285	57,6		20-29 years	199	40,2
	Total	495	100,0		30-39 years	140	28,3
Marriage status	Married	236	47,7		40-49 years	70	14,1
	Single	259	52,3		50 years and above	47	9,5
	Total	495	100		Total	495	100

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 2 shows the averages of the participants' communication skills expressions. According to Table 2, "When meeting with tourists, I purposely do things that will make them comfortable." has the highest mean (3.63). The sentence "I feel uncomfortable when I communicate with someone of the opposite sex" has the lowest mean (2.45). The general average of the communication skills scale is 3.10.

Table 2. Descriptive findings related to communication skills

	Ort.	S.S.
Communication skills	3,10	,210
I find it difficult to convey my thoughts to tourists.	2,50	1,118
When meeting with tourists, I deliberately do things to put them at ease.	3,63	,864
I pay attention to whether the tourist is open to suggestions.	3,62	,874
When talking to tourists, I can establish effective eye communication.	3,46	,976
I try to understand the feelings of the tourist by putting myself in the place of the tourist in front of me.	3,44	,973
I can focus my attention on the tourist's area of interest.	3,41	1,014
I take enough time to listen to what the tourists want to tell.	3,39	1,068
I do not like the criticism of tourists.	2,58	1,062
I feel understood by the tourists I communicate with.	3,44	,988
I get impatient and interrupt when tourists are talking.	2,59	1,029
I feel bored while listening to tourists.	2,74	1,075
I can make exits that will disrupt my relations with tourists.	2,77	1,154
I listen to suggestions from tourists.	3,33	1,258
I convey my criticism without hurting the tourists.	3,41	1,008
It is difficult for me to apologize to tourists.	2,48	,987
While listening, I take care not to interrupt the tourists.	3,55	,979
I ask questions to better understand the tourist I am listening to.	3,53	1,052
I feel uncomfortable when I communicate with someone of the opposite sex.	2,45	1,034
I think I don't have to listen to tourists.	2,57	1,022
I can adjust my tone of voice according to the nature of the subject	3,58	1,010
I feel uncomfortable when I am interrupted when talking to tourists.	2,56	,999
I welcome every tourist with positive expectations.	3,38	1,037
I try to understand the tourist's problem more than his attitude.	3,29	1,024
I think that I am indifferent towards tourists.	2,75	1,179

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 3 shows the averages of the participants' perceptions of tourism. According to Table 3, "Tourism is one of the most important sectors in supporting the local economy." has the highest mean (3.63). "Tourism causes the destruction of the cultural values of the local people." has the lowest mean (3.12).

Table 3. Descriptive findings related to tourism perception

	Ort.	S.S.
Perceived positive effects of tourism	3,55	,748
Tourism contributes to the cultural development of local people.	3,31	1,241
Tourism improves the quality of life of local people.	3,47	1,029
Tourism provides economic gain to local people.	3,62	1,018
Tourism is one of the most important sectors in supporting the local economy.	3,70	1,001
Tourism contributes to the protection and development of the natural environment.	3,62	,993
Tourism improves environmental quality for future generations.	3,56	1,033
Perceived negative effects of tourism	3,18	,687
Tourism negatively affects the attitudes and behaviors of local people.	3,19	1,111
Tourism causes the destruction of the cultural values of the local people.	3,12	1,014
Tourism causes social problems such as crime, prostitution, drugs and gambling.	3,15	1,021
Tourism increases the prices of products and services in the region.	3,19	1,019
Tourism creates problems such as overcrowding, noise and traffic problems.	3,14	1,063
Tourism development causes environmental pollution (garbage, waste, air and water).	3,21	1,083
Tourism causes the cost of living in the region.	3,25	1,080
Personal benefit from tourism development	3,37	,791
I also benefit from the tourism development in the region in general.	3,31	1,110
Tourism development has a positive impact on my business.	3,43	,962
If there is no tourism in the region, my work will decrease a lot.	3,38	1,048
Local community satisfaction with tourism	3,50	,763
I am satisfied with the public services that have developed with tourism.	3,37	1,106
I am satisfied with the environmental change and development that tourism has created.	3,47	1,017
I am satisfied with the economic developments that tourism has provided to our region.	3,62	,973
I am satisfied with the social opportunities and opportunities that tourism provides to our region.	3,54	1,069
Attitude towards tourism development support	3,52	,734
Tourism should continue to be an important part of our society.	3,48	1,068
Tourism investments in the region should continue to increase.	3,51	,989
Efforts should be made for further development of tourism in the region.	3,47	,923
I support tourism development in the region.	3,63	1,063

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 4 shows the relationship between communication skills and perception towards tourism. The level of the relationship between the variables is weak if the correlation coefficient is between 0-0.29; medium if it is between 0.30-0.64; strong if it is between 0.65-0.84. If it is between 0.85-1, is very strong (Ural & Kılıç, 2006: 244). With personal benefit from tourism development 0.202, with local people satisfaction with tourism development 0.199. A positive statistically significant correlation of 0.205 was found with the attitude towards tourism development support

($p=0.000<0.05$). According to the table, there is a moderate relationship between the positive effects of tourism perceived by the local people and their communication skills. Based on the results of the analysis, it is seen that the level of awareness towards tourism increases as communication skills increase.

Table 4. Correlation between communication skills and tourism perception

		Perceived positive effects of tourism	Perceived negative effects of tourism	Personal benefit from tourism development	Local community satisfaction with tourism	Attitude towards tourism development support
Communication skills	Pearson correlation	,300**	,149**	,202**	,199**	,205**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,001	,000	,000	,000
	N	495	495	495	495	495

Source: Authors' elaboration

5. Conclusion

Sinop is a unique place with its thousands of years of history, rich culture and living civil architecture. is the destination. With its important mosques and madrasahs belonging to Islam, churches belonging to Christianity, natural areas suitable for eco-tourism, Turkey is the only country in terms of cultural tourism. It has a popularity that makes a name for itself not only in Turkey but also in the world. In addition to the recognition of these values by the tourism industry and visitors, the adoption by the local people will increase the importance of the mentioned issues.

In the study, the perceptions of the local people residing in the province of Sinop towards tourism were examined. When the arithmetic averages of the expressions are examined, it is seen that their perceptions about tourism are high. However, when the communication skill levels of the participants were examined, it was determined that their communication skills were above the average. The relationship between the perception of the local people towards tourism and their communication skill levels was examined. When the results of the research are examined, a relationship has been determined between the tourism perception sub-dimensions, tourism perceived positive effects, tourism perceived negative effects, personal benefit from tourism development, local people's satisfaction with tourism development, and attitude towards tourism development support. As a result of the research, it has been determined that the level of communication skills of the local people is at a medium level. In order to increase this level, systematic and planned studies can be carried out for the managers and employees of all touristic enterprises operating in the tourism sector in the destination. Educational studies should form the center of these studies. Because communication skills are skills that can be learned and developed through education. First of all, under the leadership of the local administration regarding the acceptance that communication skills are not at

the desired level, providing a comprehensive, planned and intensive communication training to the local people working in the tourism sector will make great contributions to both tourist satisfaction and job satisfaction of those working in the tourism sector.

It is seen that the support of the people of Sinop to tourism is related to social issues such as the friendship and hospitality of the local people. However, it is known that communication skills are also important in their support for tourism. It will be very useful to measure the level of communication skills of the local people at regular intervals in order to shed light on future studies on this subject and to see the results of the efforts in this regard.

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