

## Evaluation of Perspectives on Ecotourism of Bursa Uludağ University Agricultural Faculty Students

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### ABSTRACT

Ecotourism has emerged as the necessity of sustainable tourism and it is a formation that considers the welfare of the people living in rural areas. It is important to transfer the natural, cultural and historical legacies inherited from the past to the next generations. The contribution of the income distribution and the economy of the country is also an important fact. For this reason, all ecotourism activities should be implemented in accordance with the principles attached and a positive perception should be conveyed to the people. The aim of this study is to reveal the perspectives of university students on ecotourism, to determine their demographic characteristics and to give an idea about how to proceed. The students in the research area reported that their community was not sufficient for ecotourism. In addition, students' level of awareness on this subject was found to be low. In order to raise awareness of young people and all individuals on this issue, student communities should be strengthened and joint projects should be realized with the university.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Ecotourist, Perception of Ecotourism, Bursa, Uludag University

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism, which contributes significantly to national and international prestige and contributes to the economy of our country, is a sector that makes significant contributions to development in social and economic fields (Karaman 1996, Akay and Zengin, 2012). In addition to providing the opportunity to use the unique values of countries with its activities, tourism provides employment, contribution to equal income distribution and positive effects on development of rural areas (Yücel, 2002). For the first time at the Rio Environment Summit in the 1990s, criteria for a sustainable environment and the world were set. These criteria are summarized as adapting to tourism and improving the methods of benefiting from the environment without damaging the environment and ensuring that all indigenous people benefit from tourism activities without destroying their culture. In the process to date, the concept of ecotourism has emerged and these principles have started to be adopted under ecotourism (Blamey 1997, Blamey 2001, Anonim 2010, Anonim 2019a).

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) found various definitions in its study called Ecotourism and Sustainability in 2002 and found that these were combined on some basic characteristics (Yücel, 2002). Again in May 2002, in Quebec, Canada, World Ecotourism Summit was held with the participation of 1100 delegates from 133 countries and a common definition adopted by all countries. According to this, ecotourism is "an approach or attitude that ensures the sustainability of the Earth's natural resources, while at the same time supporting the economic development of local people, while preserving and protecting their social and cultural integrity" as defined (Çakılıoğlu 2002, Anonymous 2012a, Anonymous, 2013).

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has defined ecotourism as the type of tourism which has the least impact on the natural environment in the wilderness environment and in the meantime provides economic benefits to local communities.

The main characteristics of UNEP for ecotourism are:

- Is based on nature
- Helps to preserve biodiversity
- Supports the well-being of local communities
- Organizes activities under the responsibility of both local people and tourists to minimize environmental and socio-cultural impacts
- Obligates to minimize the use of non-renewable resources
- Predicts increasing local property and employment opportunities for the local community

In order to recognize the global importance of ecotourism, the United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. The year of 2011, the 'International Year of Forests' was declared to emphasize the importance of sustainable management and protection of forests in order to achieve the UN's sustainable development and Millennium Development Goals. Ecotourism, which emerged as a reaction to the destructive effect of mass tourism, and with the search for diversity, today provides millions of dollars to the economy as a rapidly developing sub-sector of the tourism industry (Kuter and Ünal 2009, Anonymous 2012b).

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This study was conducted to reveal the ecotourism opportunities of Bursa and to measure the point of view of Bursa Uludag University Faculty of Agriculture students.

### Tourism Properties of Bursa

Bursa which is located in the northwest of the Anatolian peninsula, Southern Marmara Region, is the fourth largest city of Turkey.. Bursa, the largest city in the Marmara region after Istanbul, is the agricultural, industrial, commercial, tourism and educational-cultural center of the South Marmara. Bursa, which had been the capital of the Ottoman Empire for a while, is not only a historical city with a population of 2.9 million, but also an industrial and tourism center that receives immigration and expands its borders rapidly. In the city center, automobile, textile, food, marble, clothing, machinery, furniture and weaving industry branches have been developed and olive, fruit and vegetable production are the main agricultural activities of the region (Anonymous 2019e, Atasoy *et al.* 2008)

Bursa's name comes from the name of Prusias, King of Bithynia in the II century B.C. Bursa, which was founded on the northern skirts of Uludag, developed as a slope city during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods, and started to expand towards the fertile plain in the north during the Republic period and especially after 1970 and today it looks like a metropolitan city which is integrated with Mudanya, Görükle, Gemlik, Kestel and İnegöl provinces (Atalay and Mortan, 2006).

The main touristic features of Bursa and its environments are summarized in Table 1 (Anonymous 2019b, c, d, Gürdal, 2001):

**Table 1.** Touristic characteristics of Bursa.

Natural Tourism		Historical-Cultural Tourism Attraction	
Great İnkaya Plane Tree	Orhan Mosque Plane Tree	The village of Cumalıkızık	Ulucami, Green Tomb and Mosque, I. and II. Murat Mosque, Yıldırım Bayezid Mosque
Botanical Park and Recreation Area	Culture Park and Recreation Area	Koza Khan, Emir Khan, Rice and Silk Khan	Osmangazi Tomb and Tophane Park
Atatürk forest and recreation area	Misi village and recreation area	Atatürk Museum, Bursa City Museum, Turkish-Islamic Art Museum, Archeology Museum	Bursa Art Gallery
Uludag National Park	Glacial lakes of Uludag	Kükürtlü and Koca Mustafa Paşa Hot Springs	New and Old Hot Springs
Aras and Kürekli cascades	Uluabat and İznik Lake	Bursa Covered Bazaar	Tomb of Emir Sultan
Kirazlıyayla and Kadiyayla	Sarialanyayla	Karagöz-Hacivat Monument	Tomb of Süleyman Çelebi

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The prerequisite for qualifying research as scientific is to use the appropriate method for the purpose of the research or to produce information by following the principles of the research methods (Güven, 2006). Therefore, face to face survey method was chosen in this study.

In this research, the results obtained from face to face interviews with the students of Bursa Uludag University Faculty of Agriculture were evaluated. In February 2019, face to face interviews was conducted with 100 volunteer students. Total of 2282 students attend the Faculty of Agriculture in the 2018/2019 academic year. The sample size was calculated to be 92 using the following formula with a 10% error margin using the simple random sampling method (Cohen, 1988). The sample size was increased by approximately 10% against the negative effects of the survey and 100 people were surveyed.

$$(Z^2 \times (1-p) / e^2) / (1 + z^2 \times p(1-p) / e^2 N)$$

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was composed of questions to determine the age, gender, and educational status of the participants. In the second part, questions about determining the students' perspectives on ecotourism were given. SPSS 22.0 statistical package program was used in the evaluation and analysis of the data collected through the survey. With the help of this program, frequency distribution, percentages and averages were calculated and the results were interpreted (Düzgüneş *et al.* 1983, Güneş and Arıkan 1988, Vural, 2012).

## RESULTS

In Bursa, one of Turkey's important industrial centers, automobile and spare parts; woolen, cotton, silk and artificial silk weaving; frozen fruits and vegetables, canned food, tomato paste, fruit juice sectors occupy an important place. There are also numerous organizations to store, protect and market various products produced in the province. The products obtained in Bursa, which has been an important plant production area since the past, are marketed in Turkey and abroad. The relationship between agriculture and industry in the province is highly developed. Food industries such as canned food, fruit juice, frozen food, oil, tomato paste are based on agricultural production in the province. Almost all kinds of crops are grown in the fertile soil of the province (Anonymous, 2019).

Bursa, which is one of the most important centers after Istanbul in terms of tourism potential, draws attention with to the richness of its historical monuments. There are unique works of early Christianity and Ottoman period in Bursa and İznik districts. Uludag Ski Center, the winter tourism center of Turkey is 40 minutes away from Bursa and has all the facilities of winter tourism. Marmara Sea coasts are all favored holiday destinations in Turkey for many years. The Uludag skirts offer magical beauties to those who travel with their special vehicles and jeep safari. There are also natural beauties, cascades, caves and authentic Ottoman villages in Bursa. In addition, Bursa thermal springs are health centers which have been used since the Roman period. Bursa is one of the richest biodiversity cities of in our country. Therefore, it is a suitable area in many kinds of nature tourism-ecotourism (Camping caravan tourism, photo safari, wildlife (fauna) watching, botanical tourism, bicycle tourism, angling, cave tourism, plateau tourism, hiking, bird watching, etc.) (Akpınar *et al.* 2010). In Bursa, which is one of the important cities in many respects, the views of university students on the subject were evaluated. Demographic data of the students who participated in the study are shown in Table 2. 57% of the students who participated in the survey were male and 43% were female. The rate of married people is 5% and the rate of single people is 95%.

**Table 2.** Demographic characteristics of the students surveyed.

	Percent (%)	Average	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
<b>Gender</b>		1,43	,498	,050
Male	57			
Female	43			
<b>Marital Status</b>		1,95	,219	,022
The Married	5			
Single	95			
<b>Age</b>		1,20	,471	,047
18-24	83			
25-30	14			
31+	3			
<b>Income Status</b>		1,91	,698	,070
0-500	29			
501-1000	51			
1001+	20			
<b>Class</b>		2,67	1,240	,124
1. Class	24			
2. Class	21			
3. Class	24			
4. Class	26			
Master	5			
<b>Total</b>	<b>%100</b>			

It was found that 83% of the students were in the 18-24 age group, 14% of the students were between 25-30 years and 3% of the students were over 30 years of age. Their income status distribution; The highest income was between 501-1000 TL with 51%, between 0-500 TL with 29%, and The proportion of those with 1001TL or more income is 20% with 20%. Class ratios were 24% for the first year, 21% for the second year, 24% for the third year, 26% for the fourth year, and 5% for graduate students.

The findings obtained from the ten closed-ended questions asked in the questionnaire were summarized in evaluated tables.

**Table 3.** What is the purpose of ecotourism activities?

<b>Occasion</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
For sustainable tourism activities	11
For rural development	12
For the preservation and transportation of historical and social values	13
All of them	64

Table 3 summarizes the answers when asked about the purpose of ecotourism activities. In the answers given by the students, the rate of those who say sustainable tourism activities is 11%, those who say rural development is 12%, those who maintain historical and social values are 13% and those who agree to all of them are 64%.

**Table 4.** Do you think you have enough information about ecotourism activities?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Yes	89
No	11

Table 4 summarizes the answers to the question about having or not having enough information about the activities. 89% of the students answered “yes” and 11% answered “no”. Students generally think that they have sufficient knowledge about ecotourism activities.

**Table 5.** What do you think about how can be accessed more information?

<b>Occasion</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Radio and Television introductions	20
Social media promotions	71
Local media promotions	9

Table 5 summarizes the options given to the question of how to access more information. 71% of the students stated that they can be reached through social media, 20% by radio and television, and 9% by local media.

**Table 6.** Which ecotourism activities do you participate in?

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Frequency (Person)</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Frequency (Person)</b>
Highland Tourism	18	Camping-Caravan	11
Hunting Tourism	14	Angling	12
Photo Safari	8	Paragliding	3
Mountaineering	15	Equestrian and Trekking	8
Water sports	15	Bike	56
Cave Tourism	10	All of them	3
Bird Watching	10		

Table 6 shows the answers given to the questions about the activities in which the students participate. Accordingly, the majority of students are interested in cycling tourism, followed by plateau tourism, water sports and hunting tourism respectively.

**Table 7.** Do you think that the ecotourism activities in Bursa are sufficient?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Yes	25
No	75

In Table 7, the answers to the question about the adequacy of ecotourism activities in Bursa are shown as options. 75% of the students answered this question as “no” and 25% answered “yes”. Accordingly, the majority of students do not find the activities sufficient.

**Table 8.** If no, why? Answers to that.

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Due to the lack of adequate infrastructure	11
Due to insufficient evaluation of resources and values	19
Due to inadequate promotional activities	21
Because of people's ignorance	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>

Table 8 shows the options for the question asked why it is not sufficient. Accordingly, the answers of the students are found close to each other. In general, people are thought to be inadequate due to lack of information.

**Table 9.** Do you think that ecotourism contributes to Turkey's economy?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Yes	94
No	6

Table 9 shows the options for the question asked about economic contribution. 94% of the students answered "yes" and 6% answered "no". Most of the students think that ecotourism contributes to the economy.

**Table 10.** Do you think that ecotourism contributes to rural development?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Yes	91
No	9

Table 10 shows the options for the question asked about rural development. 91% of the students answered "yes" and 9% answered "no". Accordingly, the majority of students think that ecotourism has an impact on rural development.

**Table 11.** Do you think that performing ecotourism activities depends only on economic power?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Yes	17
No	83

Table 11 shows the options for the question about economic power. 17% of the students answered "yes" and 83% answered "no". Accordingly, the majority of students think that carrying out activities is not solely dependent on economic power.

**Table 12.** Does your university have ecotourism activities?

<b>Options</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Yes	76
No	24

Table 12 shows the options of the question asked about the activities of the university. 72% of the students answered "yes" and 24% answered "no". Accordingly, the majority of students know that the university has **ecotourism** activities.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ecotourism has developed rapidly around the world in the last two decades and has gained an important place in the economy of many developing countries (Yılmaz 2008). In addition, ecotourism has been evaluated with its positive contributions to the balance of conservation-use and its environmental and socio-cultural impacts and has been described as a type of tourism focused on sensitive natural and cultural environments. In order to ensure sustainability in ecotourism, environmental, social and economic impacts of ecotourism activities should be known and taken into consideration during planning.

As a matter of fact, , Polat and Önder (2006) emphasized the importance of this situation in their study titled "Evaluation of Landscape Characteristics of Karapınar District and its Vicinity in Terms of Ecotourism Uses". Ecotourism is an important tourism activity in terms of protecting our natural and cultural assets and increasing regional tourism revenues. In order to achieve proper development, good ecotourism planning should be made, ecotourism areas should be introduced, regulated and supervised. However, we do not yet have a national

plan on ecotourism. This situation results in the expansion of tourism in a distorted manner, which is generally disconnected from the people and which causes environmental degradation. It is impossible to call tourism as ecotourism without taking into account the principles of ecotourism and the tourists who participate in these tourism activities (Polat and Leader, 2006)

There are many ecotourism activities in Bursa. It is necessary to bring these activities together in order for the students to grow up as a generation that is peaceful, loves green, and protects the environment. According to the results of the research, although the students had prior knowledge about the ecotourism activities in Bursa, it was understood that the majority of them did not participate in them. It was also observed that they want to participate in these activities and to diversify their participation. They stated that there were inadequate publicity and infrastructure as reasons for not participating. In order to increase these promotions, they mostly want to use social media channels. It was observed that they participate in cycling tourism extensively and they are also interested in ecotourism activities such as mountaineering and water sports.

It was seen that the students complained about the insufficient number of their communities at the university for ecotourism. It was understood that they did not know enough about the communities in the university. Only participation in the cycling and mountaineering community is greater. It was determined that they do not have sufficient information about all the remaining activities. More communities, more publicity, events and incentives are expected from the university. The importance of ecotourism in terms of its contribution to rural development, economy, sustainability and transfer to future generations is an indisputable fact. It is also imperative to adopt these values, which are becoming increasingly important.

Environmental protection and socio-cultural and economic development should be considered as a whole in sustainable tourism which brings conscious planning and implementation with ecotourism. It is necessary to adhere to the principles of ecotourism in order to ensure continuity in ecotourism.

The results of this study on university students showed that students have prior knowledge about ecotourism activities. However, they do not fully understand the details of these activities. For this purpose, students should be informed sufficiently and serious steps should be taken in this regard for our future. In order to increase the value of activities, promotions and information should be increased and supported with encouraging details. Solutions should be produced in accordance with the principles of ecotourism and discussed in all aspects.

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