

Chapter 11

Next Generation Tourism Entrepreneurs in Rural Turkey: New Modes of Integration Between Tourism and Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates a new tendency of local tourism entrepreneurs, who are identified as next generation entrepreneurs in this study in destinations wherein tourism has already become the main economic activity. This tendency represents the efforts of integrating the agricultural production with tourism activities by being (a) the owner of a tourism capacity and being either the owner or the organizer of an agricultural production; and (b) establishing complementary relations between tourism and agriculture. Findings show that integration between tourism and agriculture has already produced a multiplicity of integration modes including different levels of marketing, and has had a series of distinctive features which do not only depend on geographical characteristics of destinations but also on socio-economic and socio-spatial features of rural settlements including the tourist characteristics. Findings also show that an actual integration seems to be an endeavor of the entrepreneur which depends on functional solidarity between tourism and agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

Aim, Conceptual Framework and Spatial Context

Tourism has always had a crucial role in economic development of rural settlements especially in the period after the 1980s and, owing to the fact; it has always been considered one of the main components of economic development not only by the local economic strategies, but also by the national and international rural development policies. Many researchers of rural development shed light on certain vulnerabilities of rural economies which can be classified under a multiplicity of variables including decreasing real income rates of farmers whose main economic activity is agricultural production, farm financial crisis, influences of fluctuating urban economies, economic stagnancy in rural areas, declining production efficiencies owing not only to demographic challenges such as rural aging but also to climate change as well, influences of family structure changes of agricultural producers and even labor force bottlenecks and so on (Sears & Reid, 1992; Edgell & Harbaugh, 1993; Luloff et al., 1994; Wilson et al., 2001; Hwang et al., 2012; Çalışır-Hovardaoğlu, 2014; Hovardaoğlu & Çalışır-Hovardaoğlu, 2019). According to these researchers, tourism sector has always been the leading alternative economic sector for some of the rural areas wherein certain natural, cultural and historical characteristics could be transformed into the amenities of rural tourism.

In most cases, tourism sector has mostly become the main economic activity even by smothering the agricultural characteristics of rural settlements. Successful rural development experiences through rural tourism paved the way for increases especially in local small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) in rural areas. However, the transformation of an agricultural producer to a tourism entrepreneur has not been a contradiction-free, smooth transition, even though in rural areas wherein tourism has rapidly become the leading economic activity. Tucker (2010), for instance, identifies the challenging nature of transformation from traditional peasants into tourism entrepreneurs. In many cases, especially in Turkey, successful rapid economic accumulation examples paved a way for increase in local SMTEs in which the entrepreneurs have mostly been former agricultural producers. In general, they tended to direct their efforts, capital and labor force, which has mostly been the family members, from agricultural production into their local tourism enterprises. In other words, majority of these local small and medium sized tourism entrepreneurs have mostly given up on agricultural production.

However, increasing numbers of SMTEs in most rural areas indispensably caused declines in profit rates of them and market bottlenecks especially in terms of auxiliary services. Many of the contemporary rural development policies and strategies aim not only to create or trigger tourism capacities for rural development, but also to deal with the problems of tourism development in rural areas within a multi-dimensional manner considering tourism sector in a holistic way. These strategies do not only suggest economic development related policies but also attempt to construct sustainable and continuous ways for development such as resource management, institutionalized and professionalized auxiliary services and accessibility for them, natural, historical and cultural heritage conservation and so on. The first examples of rural tourism based development experiences, however, seem to have suffered from lack of support of these complementary planning strategies, and thus their development trajectories have mostly been directed both by market conditions and local efforts and capacities.

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