

ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM EFFECTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL AREA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL TOURISM ACTORS: BERGAMA CASE (İZMİR/TURKEY)

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Abstract

In an area where tourism endures and starts to develop, its effects on economic and social structure and its positive and negative aspects can clearly be observed. It is possible to classify these effects as economic, social-cultural and environmental-ecological effects. Within the context of positive and negative effects of tourism, substantial “visual” changes may arise in natural and cultural geographical area. Thereby; while tourism can have a “standardisation” effect on the area, it can also establish “unique tourism environments”.

Bergama is one of the most important districts for its development at cultural tourism in İzmir. Rich in its cultural attractiveness, tourism in Bergama has brought forth to some visual changes in town’s geographical area. “Functional” changes constitute the primary source of these changes. Because, any regulation and innovation realized for tourism or tourist is reflected directly on geographical landscape. For example; transportation services, historical and recreational area design, lightning, souvenir shops, accommodation, food&beverage and entertainment facilities, restoration studies etc. have created grave innovations/changes on conventional landuse.

In this report; spatial changes in Bergama as a result of tourism will be analysed in time scale taking the views of local tourism actors into consideration, reasons will be questioned and critical approaches for obtained results will be put forward. In this way, it will be also possible to determine the information and consciousness level of local tourism actors about the role of tourism for changes on their local environment.

Keywords: *Landscape, land use, tourism, spatial effect, Bergama, change*

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important service sectors developing in the 21st century is tourism. With the emergence of reasons like increase in income levels of people, technological developments in transportation and communication, desire of people to utilize the leisure time attained as a result of facilitated lives; participation in tourism is increasing persistently both in national and international levels. Coastal tourism consisted of sea, sand, sun triple still takes hold today and searches for innovation and diversity in tourism are increasing in accordance with the changing interest and demands. As a result of this, tourism developing at coastal areas in the past started to extend into internal areas with the development of new tourism trends and paved the way for alternative tourism areas in internal regions. Spatial changes take place in

internal tourism areas which have great potential in natural, historical and cultural aspects along with the development in tourism and effects of these changes to environmental and cultural structure are deepening day by day (Özdemir and Kervankıran, 2011: 2, 3).

If tourism is analyzed in the simplest system, it consists of three spatial elements: Places where tourists live (tourist originating places), places where people go for sightseeing (destination places), journeys taken between tourist originating and tourist receiving places. Tourism geography is associated with these three elements of tourism in every level of spatial scale. Each tourism event ranging from inner city tourism movement to cross continental tourism movements is included within the research field of “a spatial science”, geography. Besides, the case of tourism itself is closely connected with spatial features rather than other economic and social practices (Özgüç, 2007: 16).

Geography, a science researching geographical structure, climate conditions, natural factors and human resources of regions is closely related with tourism which is strongly connected with the area. This relationship can be explained with the inclusion of; features of tourism expansion on the area, effects of tourism on the area, specification of emerging touristic area and regions, grouping of these area and regions, carrying out measurements for the clarification of landuse capacity, taking measures for the protection of area and regions within the interest field of a geographer (Yolal, 2012: 60).

The fact that tourism is leading to some environmental, economic, social and demographic problems and these problems effect the area (exhaustion, distortion, modification, pollution etc.) directly or indirectly drives tourism geographers to examine these problems. In this case, initially attractive places prompting tourism movements in an area are analyzed and present use of these attractive places is revealed. After this case-finding, researches are finalised with recognition of tourism problems overlooking their source, identification of those related with geographical area and submission of proposals in spatial dimension on solution generating level (Ataberk, 2011: 594).

While the use of expression “area” refers to an accommodation unit like city and village or places like vicinity, region, country, continent, even mountain, basin, coast etc., the use of expression “touristic area” refers to “touristic city, touristic center, tourism region, tourism area in any geographical unit etc.” All of these areas are classified as destination in tourism literature (Yolal, 2012: 64).

Tourism creates changes in natural and cultural landscape with cultural expansion as a massive movement and thereby touristic globalization is brutally observed in “spatial” dimension, especially in coastal destinations (Yolal, 2012: 68).

2. RESEARCH FIELD AND ITS RELATION WITH TOURISM

Bergama is placed on Bakırçay Basin, north of İzmir province and Aegean Part of Aegean Region. It is surrounded with Ayvalık, Burhaniye and İvrindi districts of Balıkesir province in the north; Kınık (İzmir) and Soma (Manisa) districts in the east; Manisa central district and Aliağa (İzmir) district in the south and Dikili (İzmir) district in the west (Figure 1). Bergama district is 110 km away from İzmir city center, 60 km from Ayvalık, 27 km from Dikili and 17 km from Kınık (Baykal, Emekli 2013: 61).

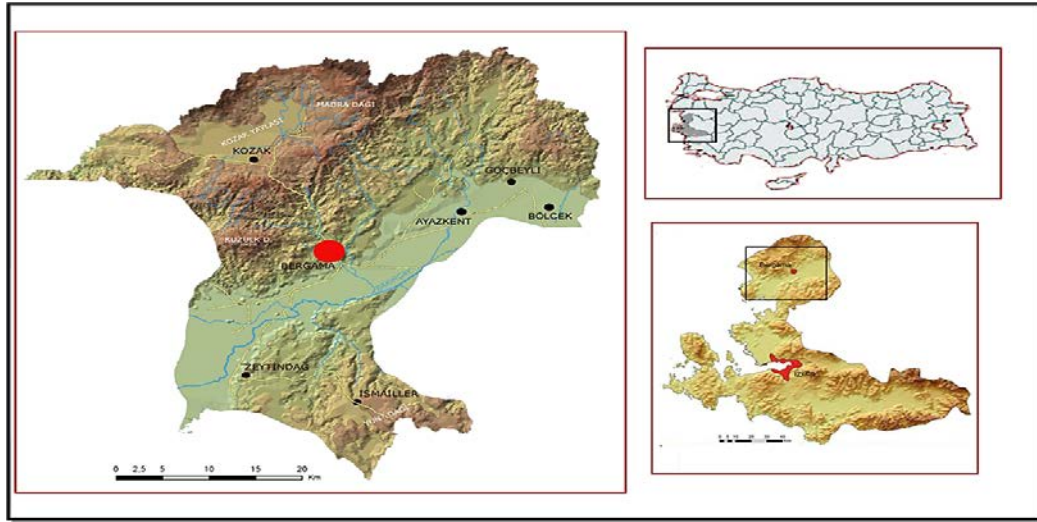


Figure 1. Geographical Position of Bergama (Sönmez, 2008: 6).

Natural environment features like hydrography, flora, climate, topography and area reserves, constitute the attractiveness of a region. Diverse structure of natural attractive sides of Bergama affects tourism activities strongly (Ege Üniversitesi Bergama Meslek Yüksekokulu, 2012: 50). Evaluating morphological features of Bergama and its surrounding region from tourism view, Kozak Plateau (Figure 2) situated in the central zone of Madra Mountain, in the northwest of Bergama, stands unique. The plateau, covered with an extensive stone pine forest is an intriguing environment of beauty with its picturesque views, archaeological values, canyons, geological formations, water resources, and rural cultural values.



Figure 2. Overview of Kozak Plateau.

Bergama opens up to Aegean Sea in a short area (approximately 5 km). As these coasts are situated within delta area of Bakırçay, they are partly observed in wetland and quicksand forms. There is a sandy beach in Kazıkbağları (Zeytinbağı) vicinity (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Coast of Kazıkbağları.

Bergama is extremely rich in its rivers, underwater sources and thermal waters. The most important river is Bakırçay. Kestel Dam, Yortanlı Dam, and Madra Dam (on Ayvalık district boundary) are all situated in Bergama. Primary water sources of the district (Cleopatra Beauty Spa, Mahmudiye Spa) have healthy waters having healing effect against many disorders; however there is no facility on any of them (Ataberk, 2011: 595).

While natural resources have an important place in the assessment of tourism potential of a vicinity, other attractive tourism elements supporting the natural resources like historical and cultural values, also share the same importance. It is acknowledged that Bergama has been an area of settlement since Prehistorical Eras. Bergama was one of the most gorgeous culture and art centers of Hellenistic Period. Zeus Altar, the Sanctuary of Athena, Library, Big Palace, Theatre and City Wall were constructed in this period. *Bergama Acropolis* (Figure 4) is situated in the place of ruins from antique *Pergamon* city as the most important source of cultural attractiveness today.



Figure 4. Bergama Acropolis.

Bergama was also a central city in Roma Period. With the construction of *Hadrian and Trajan* (Figure 5) temples, Bergama maintained being the center of pontiff. *Serapeum Temple* of Roma Period, the biggest structure of Bergama is named as “*Red Court*” by the people due to use of redbrick in its construction.



Figure 5. Temple of Trajan (Acropolis).

Holy place of *Asklepieion* (Figure 6) experienced its golden age in the 2nd century after the birth of Islam, respectable doctors like *Saturos* and *Galenos* gave lectures. Various methods of psychotherapy and physiotherapy still in use today were generally practiced in Asklepieion.



Figure 6. Columnar Pathway (Asklepieion).

It is claimed that one of the seven churches of Christianity in Byzantine period was located inside the Red Court (Figure 7) in Bergama.



Figure 7. Temple of Serapeum (Red Court)

Turkish-Islamic artefacts of Seljuklu and Ottoman periods stand tall in Bergama (*Ulu Mosque, Kurşunlu Mosque* (Figure 8), *Çukurhan, Taşhan, Tabaklar Bathhouse, Küplü Bathhouse, Bergama Covered Bazaar* etc).



Figure 8. Kurşunlu Mosque.

Allianoi is supposed to be a small thermal center situated in the northwest of Bergama, in the center of Yortanlı Dam Lake, in the vicinity of Paşa Spa. *Allianoi*, started to submerge after the closing of dam gates on 31 December 2010.

There are ruins of some antique dwelling places in the Kozak Plateau (*Perperene, Okçular Castle* in Okçular village (Figure 9), ruins of a small church in Kozak-Kıranlı village).



Figure 9. Ruins of Okçular Castle (Kozak Plateau).

Artefacts, tombs, scriptures, relieves and sculptures discovered in the excavations in Acropolis, Asklepion and Red Court are exhibited in *Bergama Museum* the grounds of which were laid in 1933 (Figure 10). It is possible to see artefacts of Turkish-Islamic art (carpet, rug, fabric weaving and handcraft, weaving stands, weaving tools, sparrow hawk, shrewish clip, tambourine, double reed pipe etc.) in the *Ethnography Hall* of the museum.



Figure 10. Bergama Museum.

International Bergama Kermis (Figure 11) has been held since 1938 and local dances and entertainments, concerts, forum, symposium and panels, interviews with authors, film screenings, various exhibitions and activities are all included within the Kermis (Ataberk, 2011: 596).



Figure 11. International Bergama Festival.

These historical and cultural structures situated at Bergama, sharply manifests the richness of Bergama as a city of culture. There are 936 heritages on the World Natural and Cultural Heritage List prepared in accordance with the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Natural and Cultural Heritage recognized by UNESCO in 1972 together with the heritages recognized in 2010 World Heritage Committee. 725 of these heritages are cultural, 183 natural and 28 hybrid (natural and cultural) heritages. Turkey has 10 heritages in this list, 8 cultural and 2 hybrid. There is a Provisional List which includes the heritages, candidate process of which is not completed but envisaged to be proposed for this list, in addition to the heritages on the World Heritage List. There are 1509 heritages of 162 countries inscribed on the World Heritage Provisional List. In this list, the first version of which was submitted in 1994, Turkey has 26 heritages 24 of which are cultural and 2 hybrid according to the last update in 2011. Bergama is also included in these cultural heritages (Figure 12) (Ege Üniversitesi Bergama Meslek Yüksekokulu, 2012: 61).

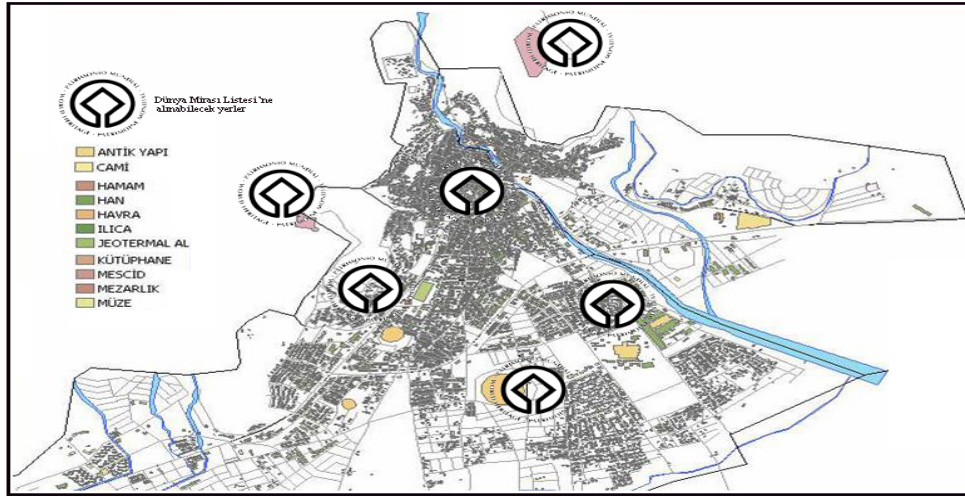


Figure 12. Reflection of Bergama Cultural Heritage Areas Proposed for World Cultural Heritage List (Emekli, 2009: 111).

Initial tourism movements in Bergama district developed undoubtedly in accordance with the historical and cultural richness of the vicinity. There was a substantial increase in the number of tourists coming to our country in the 1980s and diversification of tourism and searches for alternative tourism came to the agenda. Throughout this development Bergama, rich in its history and culture became a halting place for tourists heading to İstanbul-Antalya tours.

Worldwide-known structures like Asklepieion, Acropolis, Red Court, Bergama Museum and buildings like mosques, hostleries, bathhouses and bridges from Seljuklu and Ottoman periods laid the groundwork for development of tourism long time ago; however intended success couldn't be achieved. It can be clearly stated that tourism in Bergama is not in a desirable position considering present situation in terms of touristic indicators. Especially number of tourists coming to Bergama, accommodation capacity, number of overnight stays and occupancy rates of facilities bring the problems of tourism in Bergama into view.

Approximately 350.000-400.000 people visit museum and ruins in Bergama each year and most of these people leave the district without staying. This situation became the fate of cultural tourism in our country. Touristic potential of Bergama isn't limited with these mentioned points. Customs and traditions of Bergama, its international kermis, handicrafts (Kozak and Yunt weavings), rural cultural values, thermal sources, and plateaus are intriguing enough to draw the attention of tourists (Emekli, 2011: 486).

3. OBJECTIVE AND METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

While economic and socio-cultural effects of tourism are observed in the recent years, spatial changes are also observed in the town center and its immediate places of visit in Bergama district, one of the key cultural tourism destinations of Turkey. In this research, it is aimed to obtain the views of local tourism actors living in the district center about spatial changes. Thereby observation, information and consciousness levels of tourism actors about changes will be clarified by taking their views through eleven questions. Obtained results will not only shed light to the effects of tourism on area in Bergama but also contribute to interchange of views between local tourism actors.

“Interview Technique”, an open-ended, investigation centred technique which is included within qualitative research methods was utilized in the research. The objective of the interview is to deeply investigate the feelings, point of view and perspective of the

interviewer. For this reason, interview technique is especially utilized in cases in which personal views gain importance (Baş ve Akturan, 2008: 111).

Interviews were carried out with local tourism actors in Bergama district center. Local tourism actors are consisted of owners and/or directors of tourism facilities, members of administrative board of tourism associations, high level officials of public and local administration. Mentioned interviews were conducted with these people in face to face interview technique on April 2013 with the utilization of semi-structured interview form. Interviews were completed by note taking throughout the interview as video or tape recorder was not allowed.

4. FINDINGS

11 questions were asked to local tourism actors and verbal answers were demanded. Views of local tourism actors will be analyzed on question basis and comments will be extended to these views.

4.1. What is the importance and position of Bergama for tourism in İzmir?

Local tourism actors emphasized that position of Bergama for tourism in İzmir is critically important in many respects. They stated that Bergama is an indispensable part of İzmir cultural tourism and “İzmir Cultural Tour” without Bergama would be incomplete. They expressed that Bergama has a grave importance in belief tourism as it is home to one of the 7 churches of christianity alongside its cultural tourism aspect. These actors are also aware of the fact that one of the most important ecotourism areas of İzmir is Kozak Plateau. However as a result of many factors (Bergama is 100 km far away from İzmir, museum and ruins are not visited so often, visitors don’t accommodate etc.) they believe that Bergama cannot receive its deserved share from tourism in İzmir and tourism cannot contribute to socio-economic life of local people. According to these answers, we understand that local tourism actors have sufficient knowledge about tourism features of İzmir and Bergama and they are capable of making comparisons.

4.2. What is culture tourism? Is Bergama a suitable place for culture tourism?

History of vicinity, experience of socio-cultural and traditional values by visitors, living styles of different culture and societies, learning of cuisine and entertainment cultures, spending time in cultural environment are common points of the definitions put forward by local tourism actors about culture tourism. According to the local tourism actors, historic fabric, cuisine culture and rich traditional handcrafts of Bergama are quite suitable for culture tourism. Additionally the resistance of the district’s historical and social fabric against modernization and standardization oppressions especially intrigues foreign visitors. As a matter of fact one person out of every five people in foreign culture groups absolutely demands for a Bergama tour.

- Taking these answers into account, it is clear that consciousness level of local tourism actors about culture tourism is high.

4.3. Which tourism facilities do local and foreign tourists visiting Bergama prefer generally?

Local tourism actors stated that foreign visitors coming to Bergama with arranged tours have their lunches at restaurants that tour operators agree with after visiting the museum and ruins, they leave from Bergama after shopping at souvenir shops. They stressed that some individual foreign visitors visit the district for one day and some visitors stay at the district for a short period of time (1-2 days), accommodate and establish a close contact with the local people and make substantial shopping. Mentioned tourism actors also stated that visitors coming with groups have their lunch at touristic restaurants and individual visitors head to restaurants serving local tastes in the town center and minority of them accommodate.

- In light of these answers we understand that local tourism actors have good knowledge about tourists.

4.4. How are the tourism facilities clustered in Bergama town center and its nearby vicinity? Can you define their places by grouping? Are these places appropriate?

Local tourism actors described that touristic restaurants and accommodation facilities are clustered in the entrance of town center by İzmir road in Bergama. These actors also underlined that in recent years boutique hotels and authentic cafes have been opened in the vicinity of Kale neighbourhood and Temple of Serapeum (Red Court) on the mountainside of Acropolis. In view of the local tourism actors, clustered areas are appropriate and number of facilities can be increased as long as this doesn't damage the historic fabric. Another different view suggests that there is no other clustering other than the facilities located in the vicinity of the Temple of Serapeum. Location choice of the ones situated in the vicinity of the Temple of Serapeum is appropriate as they are situated in the touristic and historic interest zone. However, local tourism actors think that service standard and product quality will not be sufficient enough in case of development in tourism of Bergama and increase in the number of visitors.

- Extended responses and views are accurate. According to this, local tourism actors are well aware of district center. Additionally, it can be suggested that clustering of tourism facilities in Bergama is not an organized clustering but a clustering of its own course. In light of experienced process, entrance of the district (İzmir road) will preserve its importance and nearby Küçukkaya village will be included in the future clustering. Kale neighbourhood (old town) will possibly be a touristic destination in which boutique hotels and small scale facilities can stand, with appropriate planning.

4.5. Where are the tourism motivated building and artefact restoration studies conducted in Bergama? How do these studies affect the appearance of the district and its nearby vicinity?

Local tourism actors implied that civil architecture and monumental building restorations (Figure 13, 14, 15) in Bergama are wholly intensified in historic town center and neighbourhoods. They believe that historic town fabric will endure thanks to the studies.

- These views prove that local tourism actors have a positive approach towards restoration studies.



Figure 13. Restoration of an Old House in Kale Neighbourhood (Boutique Hotel).

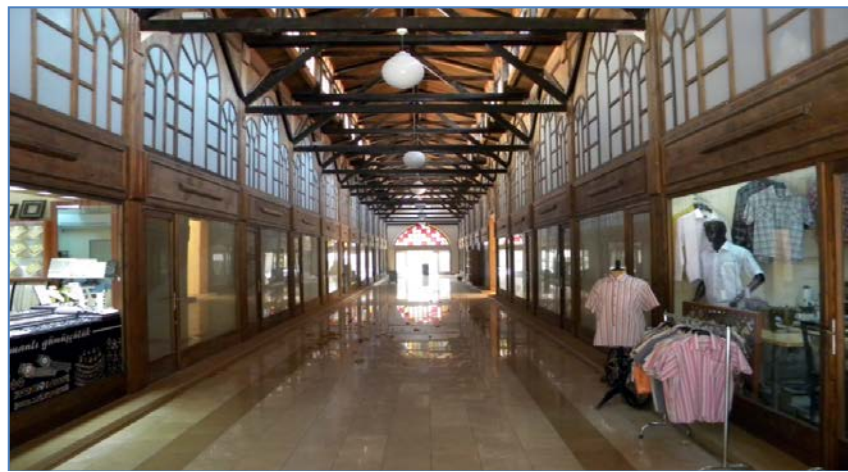


Figure 14. Restored Covered Bazaar.



Figure 15. Restored Küplü Bathhouse and Küplü Mosque

4.6. Where are the studies of historical area, neighbourhood and recreational areas conducted in Bergama? How do these studies affect appearance of the town and its nearby vicinity?

According to local tourism actors, studies of historical area and neighbourhood in Bergama are conducted in Kale neighbourhood integrated with the mountainsight of Acropolis which

is one of the monumental symbols of the town, Big Area, Small Area, Gazipaşa Elementary School (Figure 16), Girls Art School and houses of private ownership.



Figure 16. Restored Gazipaşa Elementary School.

Also walking trail, band for disabled, view terrace and lightning studies are continuing in ruins of Acropolis and Asklepieion. Protection studies for Selinos Stream which divides the town into two sides were conducted. Recreational area studies are carried out by local administrations on İzmir road along which tourism facilities are located. Performed studies are colouring up and adding richness to social and cultural lives of both tourists and local people.

- These information and views prove that local tourism actors are following the spatial renovations in their town and their consciousness level is upgrading. Restoration and environmental regulation studies are really enhancing the appearance of the town and fortifies its fabric. Cleopatra Beauty Spa, situated in the entrance of the town (Figure 17) is regulated as a recreational area by the municipality and it has been opened to the access of local people and tourists.



Figure 17. Bergama Municipality Social Facility of Cleopatra Beauty Spa.

4.7. What are the touristic infrastructure studies in Bergama and where are these studies carried out? How do these studies affect the appearance of the town and its nearby vicinity?

Local tourism actors draw attention to the fact that touristic infrastructure studies are mostly realized in Acropolis and Asklepieion. They also added that there is a touristic signboard and

guidance service, a tourism consultation office at Cumhuriyet Square is opened in each tourism season by Bergama Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, local tourism actors also indicated that they are aware of advertisement and promotion activities which are part of touristic infrastructure, are going on within the context of UNESCO World Heritage List application process pursued by the Municipality of Bergama.

All of these statements demonstrate that local tourism actors are monitoring every study conducted in their town closely. Truly, there are positive infrastructure studies and service in the town. Opening of a tourism office by Bergama Chamber of Commerce serves as an example to this suggestion. Construction of a telfer line (Figure 18) with the aim of providing shorter, easier and more comfortable transportation to Acropolis is another important study in means of tourism infrastructure.



Figure 18. Bergama Telfer Line.

4.8. What are the changes caused by culture tourism and its related activities from past to present? Criticize these facts by grouping them in positive-negative aspects.

According to local tourism actors there is no contribution of culture tourism and its related activities reflected on townspeople. Various services and renovations (Figure 19) have been established in accordance with the needs of tourists; boutique hotels and authentic cafes have been opened and tourism types other than culture tourism were also ranked among advertisement studies.

- Extended views are consistent with the answers given to questions 4, 5, 6. This fact indicates that local tourism actors are monitoring tourism activities well and interpret them truly.



4.9 What are the changes (environment pollution, visual and sound pollution, traffic congestion etc.) caused by the tourists from past to present? Criticize these facts by grouping them in positive-negative aspects.

In view of local tourism actors, tourists haven't caused any negative environmental effect in town center. However, there are problems faced in ruins due to transportation infrastructure. In order to prevent partial congestion in town center it should be sustained that tourist buses coming to Bergama, park at a determined area and tourists stroll in the town on foot or drive around with a small car.

- Given answers are evidence for positive approach of local tourism actors towards tourists.

4.10 Do you consider all studies of restoration, improvement and regulation carried out by public and local administrations of Bergama for the development of culture tourism enough? What steps would you take if you had the chance?

While local tourism actors consider restoration and regulation studies conducted by public and local administrations insufficient, they believe that these studies will mount up. Creating tourism diversity, increasing recreational studies and thereby escalating accommodation rates in Bergama are the points that matter for the local tourism actors. They look for central government support to any study of improvement in Bergama. They also bring forward that many historical building owners turn a blind eye to transition of their buildings into ruins, they don't protect their buildings although they have the necessary economic power, incorporate these buildings into tourism and they even call for a high price from investors intending to revive their buildings. According to the local tourism actors this unconscious approach is a blow to economy and tourism of Bergama. Accommodation investments should certainly be increased both in qualitative and quantitative means for diversification of tourism in Bergama and increase in the number of accommodating tourists.

- As it can be understood from the answers, local tourism actors can consider the services in the town critically and come up with appropriate and consistent views about the necessary steps to be taken.

4.11. Do you believe that tourism activity in Bergama will develop if the town takes place in UNESCO World Heritage List? Do you consider the relevant studies enough?

Local tourism actors welcome the UNESCO World Heritage List accession studies led by the Municipality of Bergama and think that the number of tourists coming to the district, accommodation periods, occupancy rates of the facilities and tourism investments will increase with the inclusion of Bergama in the ultimate list. They share the common view that recent protection-motivated construction plan within this objective has a protective nature towards historical and cultural structure of the town.

- Given answers show that local tourism actors are monitoring UNESCO process closely and they are aware of the studies.

5. CONCLUSION

Bergama is one of the oldest towns of Anatolia which played a crucial role for approximately 2500 years of history and its historical-cultural values. This rich accumulation is heritage of Hellenistic Period, Roma Period, Byzantine Period and Turkish Period artefacts. Bergama is an indispensable visit point for cultural tourism of İzmir. For this reason many local and foreign visitors come to Bergama every year and see common cultural heritages of humanity. Notwithstanding all unique and multilateral cultural sources and high level of competitiveness, Bergama hasn't reached the intended level in terms of the number of tourists in cultural tourism, visiting rates of museum and ruins, and accommodation periods.

Building restorations, street and neighbourhood improvement studies, recreational area regulations and tourism infrastructure studies are carried out to develop tourism in Bergama. Significant part of these studies is performed by public and local administrations, non-governmental organizations, and some of them are conducted by private entrepreneurs. All of these services mean "urban renewal" and therefore day by day capacity of tourism to change the area is being felt more.

Bergama cannot utilize fully from tourism in economic aspects as a result of culture tourism on one-day basis and lack of accommodation by tourists due to insufficiency of qualitative touristic bed capacity. The view that inclusion of Bergama in the UNESCO World Heritage List would be a milestone for tourism in the district is adopted in Bergama. It is expected that with increased tourism investments, awareness of local people about tourism will increase, town fabric of Bergama will be fortified by taking protection-utilization balance of town center into consideration and the town will become more of a touristic center than present day after the inclusion of Bergama in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

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