

FROM IZMIR TO MARRAKECH – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM THROUGH SLOW TOURISM AND GASTRONOMY

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Abstract

The paper aims to present the existing situation in the countries of Turkey and Morocco, in particular in Izmir and Marrakech on how these cities have managed to promote their touristic offer by highlighting the local gastronomy and slow tourism, two components that are integrated by sustainable tourism. The paper presents some of the similarities and differences between the ways the two cities come to meet the needs of the tourists with regard to the local gastronomy, slow tourism and sustainable tourism. Based on the findings, the paper presents a successful model combining slow tourism, gastronomic tourism and sustainable tourism that could successfully be applied in other regions or countries.

Keywords:

Sustainable tourism, slow tourism, gastronomy, cittaslow

JEL classification: Z32, L83, Q01

Introduction

As the popularization of sustainable tourism increases, the need of analysing and presenting a successful concept on this matter was materialized. The main objective of this article is to present and compare a recipe that raised the interest of tourists towards sustainable and slow tourism. In the following pages, a comparison between the touristic potential and slow tourism offer of Marrakech and Izmir will present a mirroring of how slow tourism and gastronomic tourism can positively influence and be part of sustainable tourism.

1 The perspectives of sustainable tourism in Izmir and Marrakech

As can be seen in Table 1, these two regions have a lot in common but the most exciting fact is that both of them are day by day more interested about the tourism field and also about its sustainable development.

In both these regions the development of tourism had a significant impact over the economic system, social-politic environment and also cultural structures. This is challenging for the authorities and led towards showing more importance to sustainable tourism development.

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Table no 1: Comparison between the touristic potential of Izmir and Marrakech

	<i>Izmir Province</i>	<i>Marrakech-Safi Region</i>
Capital	Izmir	Marrakech
Continent	Asia	Africa
Country	Turkey	Morocco
Localization	Western Turkey, on the Aegean Coast	Western Morocco, with the coastline on the Atlantic Ocean
Area	11,973 km ²	39,167 km ²
Population	4,279,677	4,520,569
Main tourist attractions	İzmir Clock Tower, Kadifekale, Asansör, Konak Square, Agora Open Air Museum, Atatürk Museum, İzmir Archaeological Museum, Hisar Mosque, The Ancient City of Ephesus (The Grand Theatre of Ephesus), Temple of Artemis, House of Virgin Mary, Efes Archaeological Museum, Seferihisar (first slow city in Turkey), Sığacık Port, Çeşme, Alaçatı Port, Bergama (Pergamon)-UNESCO Cultural Heritage, Acropolis, Temple of Athena, Birgi Cakiraga Mansion	Jemaa el-Fnaa Square, Majorelle Garden, Bahia Palace, Koutoubia Mosque, Menara gardens, El Badi Palace, Medina of Marrakesh, Marrakech Museum, Agdal Gardens, Yves Saint Laurent Museum, Medersa Ben Youssef, Dar Si Said Museum of Moroccan Arts and Crafts, Marrakesh Museum, Tizi-n'Test Pass, Toubkal National Park, Oasiria, Fantasia dinner show at Chez Ali, Mhamid, Atlas Mountains, Nikki Beach, The Saadian Tombs, The Ourika Valley
Types of tourism practiced	Cultural tourism (Ephesus, Pergamon, Izmir), adventure tourism (kitesurfing, windsurf sailing, parasailing, off road), sport tourism (trekking, hiking), seaside tourism (enjoy the beaches from the Aegean Coast – Cesme, Dikili, Foca, Gumuldur, Karaburun, Seferihisar, Selcuk), business tourism (Izmir International Fair Center or the conference halls in hotels), golf tourism (golf clubs or resorts), culinary tourism (Cesme, Urla, Foca, Selcuk), rural tourism (Kaynaklar, Doğancılar, Belenbaşı, Kırıklar) mountain tourism (Torbalı, Madra Mountain and Yunt Mountain, Gölcük Lake on Gölcük), medical tourism (especially Izmir hospitals), wine tourism (Usca, Urlice)	Cultural tourism (Jemaa el-Fnaa Square, Bahia Palace, Koutoubia Mosque, Menara gardens, Majorelle Garden, El Badi Palace, Medina of Marrakesh, Marrakech Museum), adventure tourism (off road, safari), sport tourism (hiking, quad biking, ski), seaside tourism (Nikki Beach, Essaouria Beach, Oualidia Beach, Taghazout Beach), business tourism, golf tourism (golf clubs or resorts), culinary tourism (locals houses and restaurants; for example, Chez Ali restaurant), rural tourism (Asni, Chichaoua, Tamansourt, Ourika Valley, Setti Fatma), mountain tourism (Atlas Mountains-Asni, Imlil , Amizmiz Mountain Village), desert tourism (Oasis Palmeraie, Merzouga)

Source: by authors

For example, Turkey made the first step in this direction in 2008 when through "The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development" the paper "Promoting a Sustainable Tourism-National Study for Turkey" by Prof. Cevat Tosun was elaborated (Tosun, 2008). Another important event took place in 2009 when Seferihisar (located in Izmir province, in the Aegean Coast) was declared the first cittaslow (promoter of slow tourism) town of Turkey (Go to Turkey Tourism, s.a). Also, on January 25, 2016, the Ministry of Tourism organized in Rabbat the first edition of the Moroccan Day for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism. The main theme was: "All actors of a responsible tourism".

The Moroccan Ministry of Tourism related that the focus of this edition was on the development of sustainable tourism in the African continent. This event was highly marked by two main elements: the signing of Moroccan Charter for Sustainable Tourism in its new version and the delivery of Morocco Awards for Sustainable Tourism in its 6th edition (Moroccan Ministry of Tourism, 2016).

2 Culinary Tourism – the most “tasty” part of Sustainable Tourism

The best example of respecting the sustainable tourism principles both in Izmir and Marrakech is the careful development of the culinary tourism. Izmir is worldwide known for the culinary experiences that it can offer. From all of the towns and villages nearby, that can offer the specific dishes, Seferihisar is the one that is a referencing model for practicing sustainable culinary tourism in Izmir region.

First of all, Seferihisar is the first cittaslow member in Turkey and is known for its calmer and healthier lifestyle. This was approved by the cittaslow board who decided that Seferihisar meets more than 60 of the criteria set forth for slow cities. Cittaslow is a concept that encourages slow tourism, especially slow food. The main criteria are: using clean energy, maintaining places of historical and cultural value and local products, preserving local tastes, supporting the Slow Food philosophy (Cittaslow International, 2016a).

There is a whole history behind every dish that arrives on the tables either in restaurants or in the locals homes. In 2011 the authorities initiated the Seed Swap Program which protects the local seeds. Therefore, 40 types of seeds were planted and also 70.000 seedlings were distributed to farmers in 2015 (Cittaslow International, 2016b).

In order to protect the advantages of the local producers, Seferihisar Municipality created the Unions of Mandarin and Olive Producers through which they developed some direct sales channels (Cittaslow International, 2016b).

The renewable energy resources such as wind, solar and geothermal power are helping Seferihisar to develop the economic and tourist activities. They also have the well-known tangerines (exported to Romania and Poland), olives (about 1000 years old trees), grapes, citruses, Karakılçık wheat and other products (Cittaslow International, 2016b).

Traditional homemade food and handicrafts made by local women can also be found in the Seferihisar municipal public market. In Sigacık Village is the little port of Seferihisar. Here the tourists can find many restaurants where traditional food is being served. Some of the served dishes are: tomato paste, grilled fish, eggs, grilled eggplant, artichoke, beyaz peynir (white cheese), haydari (yogurt with herbs), patlıcan salatası (eggplant salad), kavun (sliced ripe melon), Turkish delight (mandarin flavor) and jams with different flavours (fig, orange, carrot).

According to the Moroccan Foreign Exchange Office, tourism plays a major role in Morocco. They state the fact that during the last two decades, this industry has helped the growth of economic and social sectors, particularly by generating income and creating jobs.

The French newspaper *Le Parisien*'s ranked Morocco in 2015 as fourth in a list with ten top destinations for responsible and sustainable tourism. They stated that Morocco's Atlas Mountains can offer great responsible tourism experiences. The uniqueness of the region comes from factors like the sustainable accommodation (guest houses, eco-lodges and others), the traditional food, the local products (like the ones in Ourika Valley) or music (Morocco World News, 2015).

In 2018 *La Razon*, a Spanish newspaper awarded Morocco in the third "Gastro y Cia" for being the best international gastronomic destination. This award is a tribute to Moroccan cuisine, for its well-known quality and slow-cooked dishes. The representatives of The Moroccan National Office of Tourism stated that the prize is recognition of the richness of their traditional cuisine (known for the colours, flavours). (Morocco World News, 2018)

The Moroccan cuisine is similar to the Mediterranean but mainly defined by some Arab and Berber origins with Jewish influences. The dishes usually contain different vegetables, chickpeas, semolina, olive oil and many types of meat, salt, pepper, saffron and ginger. The most known dishes in Marrakech are couscous, tajine, pastille (a sweet-salted pie stuffed with almonds and meat - chicken, pigeon, fish or seafood). There are also some famous desserts as pastries, in which main ingredients are almonds, orange blossom, cinnamon, mint, honey (Gazelle horn, Makroud, Baghrir, Sellou and others). The most refreshing in Marrakech gastronomy is the traditional mint tea (it also contains some exotic flavours) which can be served in each restaurant. If you choose to try it in a local house you will also observe that it is "the drink of hospitality" and it is made by the head of the family and it is impolite to refuse it (Villanova, 2019).

Conclusions

Sustainable tourism is an industry committed to making a low negative impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate future work places for local people. The sustainable tourism aims to ensure that the tourism development is a positive experience for local people, tourism companies, and tourists themselves. Here we have a successful recipe of what slow tourism combined with gastronomic tourism and sustainable tourism can offer. The two destinations, Izmir and Marrakech are an example for many other regions worldwide. They encourage enjoying the simple joys of life such as a tasty meal, not to be in a rush, but to really taste and enjoy the food and all the other experiences. In the times that we live in now, always on the rush, always trying to do as many things as possible in a short time, always being hunted by dead-lines, let's take a moment to enjoy a dish, a drink, a walk, by promoting this kind of tourism, Izmir and Marrakech managed to gain the top positions in any ranking related to slow tourism. This is actually what differentiates them from other well-known destinations.

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