

CHILD FRIENDLY TOURISM: WHY AND HOW?

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Abtsract

Tourism is a phenomenon that contributes to world peace through developing mutual understanding, sharing and collaboration among countries. Tourism can be considered as an experience chain founded on human relations. Interaction among the people in this experience chain, satisfaction level of services provided and memoirs that remain behind determine the following destination selections. Children are an important factor among these determinants. Various research results indicate that children influence families' destination selection as well as facility choices.

Children are our future and it is only natural that countries protecting children's rights and providing a healthy environment which enables development of creative ideas are among the wealthy G20 countries. The main actors that will generate and maintain above mentioned healthy environment are the state that will undertake the necessary arrangements within the framework of UN CRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) and the municipal authority the state will designate (Protection of Rights, Article 4).

Societies that show healthy progress in all aspects play an effective role in the country's internal serenity, have good relations with other countries and indicate an effective performance in being attractive tourism destinations. Turkey is ranked 16th among the G20 countries in terms of its economic magnitude. However, migration due to the civil war at our southern border and the lack of stability, Turkey is ranked among the 3 worst countries in terms of employment. According to the Growth Index Report by WEF (World Economic Forum), employment has gone down to 45 %, due to inequality in income and wealth distribution; despite the strong economical growth. A recent report by Turkish Statistics Institute (TÜİK) indicates that unemployment among people over 15 years of age has increased by 124,000 and reached 3.500.000 persons (Cumhuriyet, 23.3.2018).

Although children can be influential in their families' vacation decisions in healthy communities, they are used as tools of exploitation in some other countries. In Turkey also, numerous children are forced to work under unsuitable working conditions instead of going to school, seek their future in garbage dumps, ask for a few pennies running between vehicles; women with babies beg among the cars in traffic. Within the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Social Security, Article 28), a strong economical system with improved working conditions is necessary to satisfy physical needs, education, play and si-

milar fundamental rights of children; protection of children from all types of exploitation and forceful acts.

Abuse of children in trafficking and sex tourism as evidenced in some South East Asian and North African countries are crimes and in no way be an indicator of development. Articles 32, 33, 34 and 35 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child cover responsibilities of the government regarding protection of children from harmful and exploitative work, drug abuse, sexual exploitation, abduction, sale and trafficking. Forcing children to heavy work conditions instead of schooling, child abuse, and child brides are open wounds in our country as well. In fact, behind the marketing of children and youngsters to tourists, the presence of a cultural environment which tolerates this can be thought of.

This is a reflection of a male dominant culture that normalizes the use of women as mere sex objects, and it is reflected in these criminal acts. In such circumstances, abuse of children and youngsters for sex is considered normal. These criminal acts towards children do not present a healthy community image to tourists coming or planning about coming to Turkey; pulling down several values in the tourism chain to negative. Research indicates that tourists, who observe various forms of child abuse during their visit to the destination, either reduce their travel time and/or exclude those destinations from their future travel plans.

Refugees coming to Turkey because of war are a burden on the economy. On the other hand, in order to be able to offer pleasant experiences to tourists and their children and have them to come back again, the following must be targeted:

- Unemployment reduced to a reasonable level
- Clean streets where there are no beggars and where people can feel safe,
- Use of wood and similar natural materials instead of synthetic ones
- An ecologically clean environment
- Playgrounds and parks solely for children
- Areas closed to vehicular traffic
- High quality facilities in terms of infrastructure, creative and developmental animation activities,
- Developing our children as a product of a society healthy in all
- Respects.

At the present Amsterdam, Kopenhagen, London, Munich, Rome and Salzburg are among the top examples of child friendly cities. In order to create a child friendly tourism country, it is necessary to develop child friendly cities and regions within the context of a responsible tourism perspective through the political will and the collaboration among the government, tourism sector and the tourism businesses. Considering the effect of the interaction with local people on the total holiday experience along the whole tourism experience chain, it is also vital that our people become aware of the importance of child brides and child friendly tourism for the economy.

In this way, we can strengthen our economy, prepare promising futures for the children and contribute to the world peace which is an important mission of tourism.