



Journal of Business Management and Economic Research

2023, 7 (3): 118-140 DOI: 10.29226/TR1001.2023.336

Journal Homepage: <https://www.jobmer.org>



Developing Sustainable Tourism: An Innovative Approach for Elazığ

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Abstract

Sustainable tourism is an approach that protects natural and societal sources as well as cultural inheritance in the long term and conveys these entities to the next generation so that it improves the life quality of the host region and provides experiences of high quality to the tourists. The aim of sustainable tourism is mainly focused on protecting nature, society, social life, and economic contribution. Elazığ is one of the cities that is placed in the East Anatolian Region of Turkey and temperate climate and is a good candidate for exercising sustainable tourism. Elazığ does not only have an ancient history that was depicted in many fables and ballads or has a beautiful nature but also has looms that hosted different civilizations throughout history, the proof of which reveals itself in its local culture as well as cuisine that was inherited from those civilizations. This study aimed to find out the current condition of sustainable tourism in Elazığ and how to improve it depending on the results coming from the survey that was applied to people who reside in Elazığ. 520 people in total participated in the survey and participants were categorized as Elazığ local people, academicians, tradesmen, tourism sector. Survey results were analyzed by SPSS 22.0 software. The study reveals that there are points to be improved in the coordination and interaction of tourism-related organizations with one another, that Elazığ's unique and attractive attributes should be prioritized, and that necessary investments should be made to improve sustainable tourism in Elazığ.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism, Elazığ, Sustainable development, Attitudes, Tourism potential, Eastern anatolia region

1. Introduction

The development of tourism diversity leads tourists to engage in different tourism activities (Salnikova, 2022; Khaydarova and Joanna, 2022; Mateoc-Sirb, 2022). Tourism is one of the main sectors that contributes significantly to a country's cultural and economic aspects. Particularly through foreign tourists, tourism contributes significantly to the country's economy by generating foreign currency income and increasing international awareness of the country's historical texture and culture. Thus, it facilitates international exchange. The traditional concept of tourism, which typically revolves around the sea, sand, and sun, has evolved and diversified in response to people's changing desires and requirements. However, if tourism activities are not controlled, they can have both positive and negative implications. To sustain tourism, and pass down unique cultures and natural beauties to future generations, it is essential to progress within the framework of sustainable tourism practices (Fenitra vd., 2022). Planning is essential to achieve sustainable tourism.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the establishment of sustainable tourism is the need to prevent damage. This has given rise to alternative tourism, with rural tourism being one of its types, which not only contributes significantly to the region's economy but also fosters cultural integration. The intense demand for sea-sand-sun tourism requires the implementation of alternative tourism policies. Periodic spikes in tourism demand can lead to the depletion of resources. The inappropriate use of natural resources and the influx of visitors beyond carrying capacity cause dissatisfaction among tourists, workers, and residents. To make sustainable tourism policies successful, various kinds of alternative tourism are needed. Many areas of Turkey hold high potential for sustainable tourism.

Elazığ boasts natural beauty and a 4000-year-old history. Its historic texture, rich cuisine, and other cultural elements are appealing to tourists. Sustainable tourism holds immense importance not only globally but also in Turkey. Turkey's natural beauty, historical riches, and cultural diversity create a beneficial environment for sustainable tourism. The successful implementation of sustainable tourism in Turkey will not only contribute to the development of the country's tourism but also benefit the country in various aspects, such as preserving natural beauty and creating new economic revenue sources.

Elazığ is a city with high tourism potential. It is a fertile city for tourism due to its historical monuments, architectural structures of historical sites, natural beauty, rich culinary culture, and other aspects. For

example, Elazığ's gastronomy boasts an abundance of rich culinary traditions. According to the work of 'The Ankara Chamber of Commerce' and 'Ankara Patent Office,' Elazığ has been identified as the city with the richest cuisine, consisting of 154 varieties of food, desserts, and beverages. Elazığ's cuisine stands out not only in terms of content but also in terms of taste and presentation. Like every regional cuisine, Elazığ's culinary culture reflects its geographical, climatic, and economic conditions, providing us with insights into the city.

Elazığ is known as the 'City of the Awliyas'. Having a history of 4 thousand years and containing traces of 13 civilizations, it has been on UNESCO's 'World Cultural Heritage' tentative list. Domestic and foreign tourists coming to Elazığ, gastronomy tourism, faith tourism, thermal and health tourism, business tourism, fair and congress tourism, etc. They come with the aim of tourism types. The aim of this study is to determine the sustainable tourism potential in Elazığ by assessing the attitudes of its residents (civil servants, teachers, public sector employees, private sector employees, students, housewives, traders, tourism industry workers) towards the tourism sector in Elazığ. In particular, the following research question will be answered: *What is the attitude of the people of Elâzığ towards the sustainable tourism potential of the city?*

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sustainable Development and Sustainability

Sustainable development emerged as a concept in response to the damages caused to the environment by countries, primarily driven by the desire for sustainable economic growth in the 20th century. Although the concept traces back to the Middle Ages, it started to be used in the early 19th century, particularly in the fields of agriculture, forestry, and fishing and gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century with the rise of environmental concerns (Tıraş, 2012; Yeni, 2014).

The environmental issues of the 1960s and the development of the environmental movement in the 1970s brought sustainable development to the forefront (Bozlağan, 2005; Barbosa et al., 2014). In 1980, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) jointly proposed a global conservation strategy (Perdan, 2004; Anon, 2011; Kumar, 2017). For sustainable development to be functional, it requires the balanced

consideration of economic, environmental, and social dimensions as a whole (Pezzey, 1992; Feil and Schreiber, 2017).

Although it initially emerged as a normative concept maintaining its integrity (Hediger, 2000), sustainable development is closely related not only to an ecological perspective but also to economic and social perspectives (Hediger, 2000; Klarin, 2018; Mengi and Algan, 2003). It can be interpreted as the rational management of resources to meet needs (Benaim et al., 2008) and the improvement of product quality (Klarin, 2018; Mensah, 2019).

The primary aim of sustainable development is to link environmental sensitivity with economic processes and direct social transformation (Baker, 2006). In this context, sustainable development suggests that environmentally conscious production policies are essential for development and that the economy and the environment complement each other (Toprak, 2006). The notion of sustainability was first seen in 1982 with the acceptance of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and was included in the World Charter for Nature (Yazar, 2006). According to Tunçluer (2010), sustainability can be defined as a set of activities that aim to fulfill the rights, decisions, expectations, and needs of economic, social, and environmental elements within a sustainable timeframe while showcasing their existing features. Mowforth and Munt (1998) define sustainability as the development and growth of the natural environment and resources. The concept of sustainability encompasses the repetition of similar or identical activities in an unlimited future (Sezerel, 2016). Therefore, sustainability is a process that ensures the preservation and continuity of economic, social, and ecological systems as much as possible. It reveals how plans will be and how they are currently being implemented with the strategies in place (Kılıç, 2006; Ceylan, 2010). Sustainability involves establishing rules for the continuity of all living beings on Earth. Its focus is not just to eliminate damage to natural habitats but to conserve natural resources to meet the natural living needs of future generations (Kılıç, 2006). It is also an inclusive concept that spans the future generations.

Sustainability is a multidimensional field of study that encompasses environmental, economic, and social sustainability issues. Environmental sustainability involves maintaining ecosystems, reducing waste generation, and establishing a sustainable balance of natural resources to meet the needs of living beings. Economic sustainability manifests as promoting healthy growth and development with the lowest cost and highest efficiency. Social sustainability, on the other hand, involves the creation of laws and regulations to

ensure social inclusion in areas such as health, well-being, nutrition, and education, as well as making investments that benefit society (Kılıçoğlu and Gümüşburun Ayalp, 2019).

2.2. Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism includes tourism activities that meet the needs of both residents and visitors while preserving future opportunities (Avcıkurt, 1997). The concept of sustainable tourism is related to the broader concept of "sustainable growth" and refers to its application in the context of tourism. Its objectives include preserving the quality of natural resources, increasing the welfare level of tourism destinations, welcoming conscious tourists, promoting equality in development, and contributing to and enhancing tourism's benefits for the economy and the environment.

Sustainable tourism is well defined as tourism that appreciates both the local community and the traveler, as well as their cultural heritage and the environment. From the aforementioned definitions of sustainable tourism, it can be said that sustainable tourism has little impact on the environment and local culture, and it serves as an industry that assists in creating future employment opportunities for the local community. It can reduce negative social, economic, and environmental impacts, provide greater economic benefits for the local community, improve the well-being of host communities, and enhance their employment situation. The host community can be involved in decision-making processes that affect their lives and positively impact the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The main objectives of sustainable tourism can be listed as follows (Yılmaz et al., 2015; Keskin and Örgün, 2015):

- Economic Viability: To ensure the economic sustainability of tourist destinations and businesses by increasing their occupancy rates and securing their livelihoods in the long term.
- Local Community Quality of Life: Implementing practices to increase the per capita spending of tourists and enhancing the contribution of this spending to the local community.
- Employment Opportunities and Quality: Ensuring regular payment of wages to employees, equal evaluation of all individuals regardless of gender, race, or disability, and motivating employment in tourism both financially and spiritually.

- **Social Equality:** Increasing income for the low-income population and distributing tourism revenue to the local community in a fair manner, along with improved interaction and presentation.
- **Guest Satisfaction:** Striving to satisfy all tourists by offering equal opportunities.
- **Local Control:** Creating an environment where the local community can express their opinions and ideas freely and participate in tourism activities.
- **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Respecting and preserving natural, cultural, and historical assets in the destination.
- **Suitability of Physical Structures:** Ensuring careful and authentic restoration of historical buildings and planning accommodation facilities that align with the region's architectural style.
- **Biological Diversity:** Taking care not to violate environmental areas and habitats of living beings in the region to preserve biological diversity.
- **Resource Efficiency:** Reducing the use of non-recyclable resources and promoting the use of conservation systems.
- **Environmental Cleanliness:** Avoiding practices that could cause air, water, and soil pollution and reducing waste through proper waste management.

Sustainable tourism management can only be successful when the mutual relationships between these three dimensions are acknowledged (Swarbrooke, 2002: 47). These three dimensions are gathered under the headings of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability. Environmental sustainability is one of the most crucial components of tourism, emphasizing the protection and careful preservation of resources in an area for use by future generations (Swarbrooke, 2002). Another significant environmental sustainability concern is the loss of biodiversity. When a large number of tourists visit a destination in a short period, it can disturb the ecological system and cause imbalances within the ecosystem (Malik et al., 2016).

The concept of economic sustainability implies having sufficient market demand for tourism products and services that meet the needs and desires of potential visitors. The profits from tourism can be reinvested to improve tourism products and enhance the quality of life for local tourism operators and communities. If the economic gains are lower than the operating costs, tourism destinations may fail (Travis, 2011). Gou and Zhou (2015) found that tourism activities enhance economic growth and stimulate investment. When

local businesses make significant profits from selling products and services to visitors, they continue to invest more in improving these products. Such an approach creates a sustainable economic process.

Social sustainability, on the other hand, refers to the ability of a social system, such as a country, a family, or an organization, to improve processes and regulations that not only meet the needs of current members but also support the capabilities of future generations and their quality of life. Many famous tourism destinations worldwide attract numerous tourists from foreign countries each year. When a tourism destination begins to receive tourists, it has certain social and cultural effects on the host community (Avcıkurt, 2003)

2.3. Elazığ and Sustainable Tourism

The increase in tourism activities during months other than the summer season, resulting in increased foreign currency inflow and tourism revenue, brings the option of "alternative tourism" to the agenda for investors investing in tourism (Uluslan and Batman, 2010; Oktayer et al., 2007). Alternative tourism emerged as a response to the negative impacts of mass tourism in coastal areas (Sabriye and Uğuz, 2011). This emerging form of tourism has become the most significant part of the tourism industry (Dennison and Richard, 1990). Alternative tourism means being slow, and determined, making long-term plans, being robust against potential changes, being environmentally sensitive, and being one with the environment (Altanlar, 2007). Alternative tourism aims to create a bridge between individuals and the environment by taking necessary precautions without depleting natural resources, ensuring the needs of future generations, sustaining their lives, and promoting sustainable development without depleting today's resources (Altanlar, 2007; Oruç, 2004). To provide a more prosperous environment for future generations, tourism must be made sustainable. Any unsustainable form of tourism cannot survive and leads to the region's damage and becoming uninhabitable, as well as causing the loss of cultural and natural heritage.

In this context, achieving sustainable goals depends on both environmental protection and improving the quality of life and opportunities for everyone (Perdan, 2004). When a society's attitude towards the environment is considered in conjunction with economic and social conditions and becomes stable, it becomes sustainable (Gürlük, 2010). In other words, environmental protection and prevention of erosion are integral parts of global economic and social welfare (Rai et al., 2019). In this sense, the relationship among the three dimensions underlying sustainable development is crucial and interconnected to such an

extent that the development of one cannot be considered in isolation (Casale and Pursey, 2002; Gertler, 2001). For example, without economic growth, society cannot improve itself. However, it is well known that economies achieving quantitative growth alone are not sufficient to reflect this success in the social field. In this regard, involving all stakeholders in society in qualitative growth, without which economic growth can lead to social injustice and reduce people's access to desired opportunities (Khan, 1995). If the local community can be included in tourism development processes, it can provide visitors with a more authentic experience, and it is expected that the host community will perceive tourism more positively in such cases. The main reason for this is the host community changing its attitude and relations towards tourists and striving to preserve culture and society for future generations.

3. Research Method

3.1. The Hypotheses of the Research

In this research, a cross-sectional survey design was used to determine the opinions of individuals residing in Elazığ (civil servants, teachers, public sector employees, private sector employees, students, housewives, tradesmen, and tourism industry workers) about the tourism sector in Elazığ. A survey design is a quantitative research design used to determine the attitudes, opinions, or tendencies of a sample group regarding a specific subject based on surveys or interviews (Creswell, 2017).

3.2. Population and Sample of the Research

The research population was defined as the boundaries of Elazığ province. The sample was formed by distributing and sending surveys to 520 individuals between April 27, 2022, and May 2, 2022, using a convenience sampling method, both in person and through online platforms. A total of 508 valid surveys were considered for the sample. Since the sample was not randomly selected, there may be limitations regarding its representativeness, which affects the generalizability of the results.

3.3. Data Collection

The instrument used in this research is, Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale along with a part including items related to personal information about the participants. The Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale was developed by Choi and Sirakaya (2014). The scale is a Likert-type scale measured on a 5-point rating scale. Choi and Sirakaya identified that the scale has 7 sub-dimensions through factor analysis. These dimensions

include environmental sustainability, social cost dimension, economic benefit, full participation in tourism-related decisions, long-term planning dimension, visitor satisfaction, and community-centered economy. They found the reliability of the scale in sub-dimensions to be between 0.64 and 0.89 through internal consistency analysis. In this research, the overall reliability of the scale was found to be high with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.907. The scale consists of a total of 43 questions.

3.4. Statistical Analysis of the Data

The data obtained from the research were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 statistical software. Frequency and percentage analyses were used to determine the characteristics of the participants in the study and mean and standard deviation statistics were used to examine the scale. Kurtosis and Skewness values were examined to determine whether the data showed a normal distribution.

Table 1. Kurtosis and Skewness Values of Variables

Variable Name	N	Kurtosis	Skewness
Overall Sustainable Tourism	508	0.845	-1.023
Environmental Sustainability	508	0.654	-0.954
Social Cost of Tourism	508	1.123	0.921
Economic Benefit of Tourism	508	0.748	-0.789
Full Participation in Tourism Decisions by the Public	508	1.477	-0.621
Long-term Planning in Tourism	508	0.412	-1.054
Visitor Satisfaction	508	0.847	-1.375
Community-Centered Economy in Tourism	508	0.854	-1.264

In the relevant literature, the kurtosis and skewness values of variables within the range of +1.5 to -1.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013) or +2.0 to -2.0 (George and Mallery, 2010) are considered to indicate a normal distribution. In this study, it was determined that the variables showed a normal distribution based on the kurtosis and skewness values presented in Table 1.

Parametric methods were used in the data analysis. To investigate the differences in scale levels based on the determinative characteristics of the participants, t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and post hoc (Tukey, LSD) analyses were performed.

Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d and Eta squared (η^2) coefficients. The effect size indicates whether there is a substantial difference between the groups. Cohen's value of 0.2 is considered small, 0.5

is medium, and 0.8 is large effect size. Eta squared values of 0.01, 0.06, and 0.14 are considered small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Büyüköztürk ve Demirel, 2018).

The scores on the scale dimensions were interpreted within the range of 1 to 5. To calculate the range interval, the formula $\text{Range} = \text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value} / \text{Number of Degrees}$ was used. This interval has a width of 4 points. It was divided into five equal intervals, and the boundary values were determined as follows: 1.00-1.79: very low, 1.80-2.59: low, 2.60-3.39: moderate, 3.40-4.19: high, and 4.20-5.00: very high. The findings were interpreted accordingly (Sümbüloğlu ve Sümbüloğlu, 1993:9).

3.5. Limitations

In order to measure the tourism potential and sustainability in Elazig as the research population, the determination of the residents of Elazig and the use of only the survey technique as a method can be considered as the main limitation of this research.

4. Findings and Results

The table provides a summary of the descriptive characteristics of the participants based on various demographic variables.

Table 2. Distribution of Participants According to Descriptive Characteristics

Groups	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	197	38.8
Male	311	61.2
Marital Status		
Married	346	68.1
Single	162	31.9
Age		
18-30	103	20.3
31-45	253	49.8
Over 45	152	29.9
Education Level		
High School and Below	138	27.2
University	274	53.9
Postgraduate	96	18.9

Income Source from Tourism		
Yes	67	13.2
No	441	86.8
Occupation		
Public Employees	205	40.4
Public Sector Related to Tourism	25	4.9
Private Sector Related to Tourism	52	10.2
Self-Employed and Other Private Sector	77	15.2
Students, Housewives, and Non-Working Individuals	59	11.6
Municipal Employees	90	17.7
Employment Status in the Tourism Sector		
Directly Employed in the Tourism Sector	47	9.3
Indirectly Employed in the Tourism Sector	40	7.9
Not Employed in the Tourism Sector	421	82.9
Duration of Residence in Elazığ		
1-3 Years	30	5.9
4-6 Years	32	6.3
7-10 Years	22	4.3
More than 10 Years	424	83.5

Male participants outnumber female participants. Married participants outnumber single participants based on marital status. Among the respondents by occupation, the lowest percentage, 4.9%, belongs to those related to the public sector in tourism, while the highest percentage, 17.7%, belongs to municipal employees. The lower participation of those related to the public sector in tourism is due to the significantly lower number of Culture and Tourism Ministry employees in Elazığ compared to municipal employees. The majority of participants are long-term residents of Elazığ and represent the local population of Elazığ.

Table 3. Descriptive Values of Overall Scale and Its Dimensions

Category	N	Average	SD	Min.	Max.	Alpha
Overall Scale	508	3.915	0.416	1.000	5.000	0.907
Environmental Sustainability	508	4.721	0.453	1.000	5.000	0.908
Social Cost of Tourism	508	2.282	0.848	1.000	5.000	0.863
Economic Benefits of Tourism	508	4.025	0.776	1.000	5.000	0.886
Full Participation of the Public in Tourism Decisions	508	3.643	0.682	1.000	5.000	0.786

Long-Term Planning in Tourism	508	4.423	0.586	1.000	5.000	0.867
Visitor Satisfaction	508	4.237	0.659	1.000	5.000	0.784
Community-Based Economy	508	4.237	0.760	1.000	5.000	0.822

The average scores for participants in the "sustainable tourism overall" are high at 3.915 ± 0.416 (Min=1; Max=5), "environmental sustainability" is very high at 4.721 ± 0.453 (Min=1; Max=5), "social cost of tourism" is weak at 2.282 ± 0.848 (Min=1; Max=5), "economic benefits of tourism" is high at 4.025 ± 0.776 (Min=1; Max=5), "full participation of the public in tourism-related decisions" is high at 3.643 ± 0.682 (Min=1; Max=5), "long-term planning in tourism" is very high at 4.423 ± 0.586 (Min=1; Max=5), "visitor satisfaction" is very high at 4.237 ± 0.659 (Min=1; Max=5), and "community-centered economy" is very high at 4.237 ± 0.760 (Min=1; Max=5).

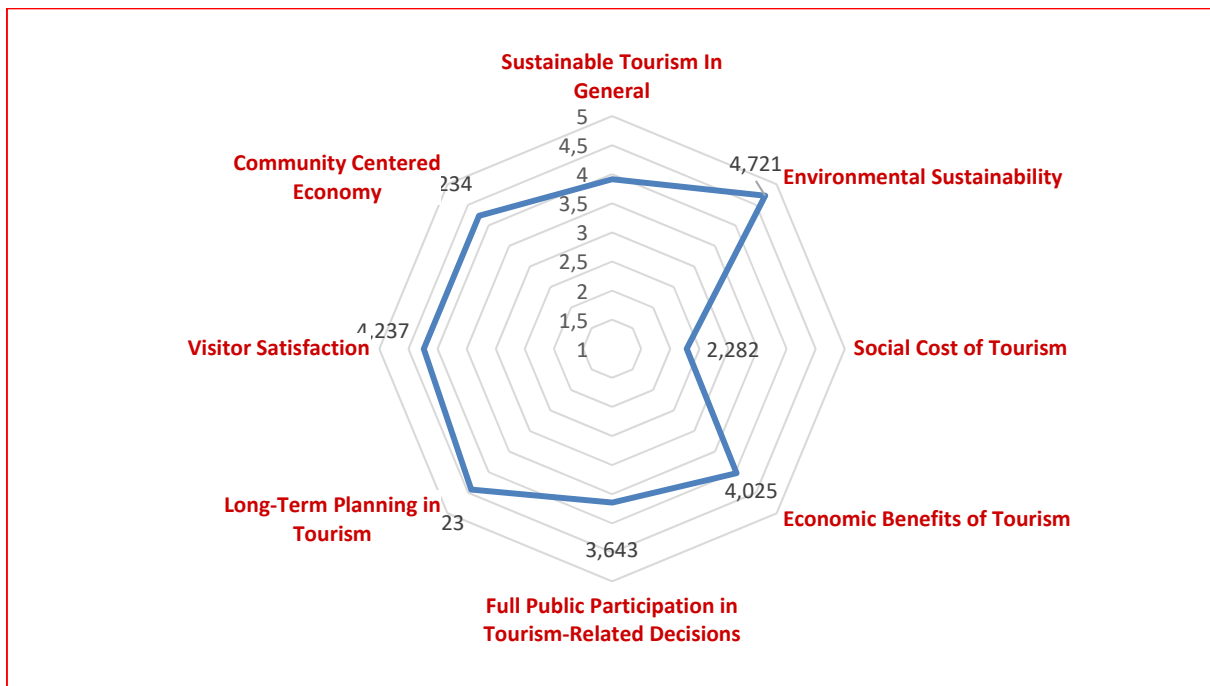


Figure 1. Diagram Related to Sustainable Tourism Scores

Sustainable Tourism in General (3,915), Environmental Sustainability (4,721), Social Cost of Tourism (2,282), Economic Benefits of Tourism (4,025), Full Public Participation in Tourism-Related Decisions (3,643), Long-Term Planning in Tourism (4,423), Visitor Satisfaction (4,237), Community Centered Economy (4,237).

Table 4. Comparison of Sustainable Tourism Scores Across Gender

Group	N	AV	SS	T	SD	P
Overall Sustainable Tourism						
Female	197	3.898	0.363	-0.739	506	0.460
Male	311	3.926	0.447		0.211	
Environmental Sustainability						
Female	197	4.751	0.367	1.171	506	0.500
Male	311	4.702	0.500		0.211	
Social Cost of Tourism						
Female	197	2.294	0.818	0.249	506	0.803
Male	311	2.275	0.868		0.211	
Economic Benefits of Tourism						
Female	197	4.021	0.693	-0.079	506	0.934
Male	311	4.027	0.825		0.211	
Full Participation in Tourism-Related Decisions						
Female	197	3.591	0.657	-1.366	506	0.173
Male	311	3.676	0.696		0.211	
Long-Term Planning in Tourism						
Female	197	4.368	0.591	-1.688	506	0.092
Male	311	4.458	0.581		0.211	
Visitor Satisfaction						
Female	197	4.193	0.603	-1.207	506	0.228
Male	311	4.265	0.692		0.211	
Community-Centered Economy						
Female	197	4.161	0.676	-1.798	506	0.073
Male	311	4.285	0.806		0.211	

Independent Samples T-Test

The scores of participants in general sustainable tourism, environmental sustainability, social cost of tourism, economic benefits of tourism, full participation of the public in tourism-related decisions, long-term planning in tourism, visitor satisfaction, and community-centered economy do not show a significant difference based on gender ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Comparison of Sustainable Tourism Scores across Age Groups

Group	N	Av	SS	F	p	Difference
Overall Sustainable Tourism						
18-30	103	3.916	0.370	0.001	0.999	
31-45	253	3.915	0.384			
45 and over	152	3.914	0.492			
Environmental Sustainability						
18-30	103	4.731	0.332	0.318	0.728	
31-45	253	4.705	0.426			
45 and over	152	4.741	0.559			
Social Cost of Tourism						
18-30	103	2.387	0.849	1.013	0.364	
31-45	253	2.262	0.871			
45 and over	152	2.244	0.809			
Economic Benefits of Tourism						
18-30	103	4.021	0.759	0.161	0.851	
31-45	253	4.009	0.773			
45 and over	152	4.054	0.796			
Full Participation in Tourism-Related Decisions						
18-30	103	3.711	0.667	1.350	0.260	
31-45	253	3.657	0.668			
45 and over	152	3.574	0.711			
Long-Term Planning in Tourism						
18-30	103	4.381	0.579	0.327	0.721	
31-45	253	4.436	0.537			
45 and over	152	4.429	0.665			
Visitor Satisfaction						
18-30	103	4.233	0.595	0.029	0.972	
31-45	253	4.244	0.638			
45 and over	152	4.229	0.735			
Community-Centered Economy						
18-30	103	4.029	0.767	4.992	0.007	2>1
31-45	253	4.301	0.680			3>1
45 and over	152	4.271	0.856			

The table provided gives information about the differentiation of sustainable tourism scores based on participants' age groups. According to the results, there is a significant difference in community-centered

economy scores based on age groups ($F(2, 505) = 4.992$; $p = 0.007 < 0.05$; $\eta^2 = 0.019$). The reason for the difference is that participants aged 31-45 have higher community-centered economy scores ($\bar{x}=4.301$) compared to those aged 18-30 ($\bar{x}=4.029$), and participants aged 45 and above have higher community-centered economy scores ($\bar{x}=4.271$) compared to those aged 18-30 ($\bar{x}=4.029$).

On the other hand, there is no significant difference in the overall sustainable tourism, environmental sustainability, social cost of tourism, economic benefits of tourism, full participation of the public in tourism-related decisions, long-term planning in tourism, and visitor satisfaction scores based on age groups ($p > 0.05$).

Table 6. Comparison of Sustainable Tourism Scores Across Education Level

Group	N	Av	SS	F	P	Difference
Overall Sustainable Tourism						
Secondary Education and Below	138	3.873	0.494	2.504	0.083	
University	274	3.909	0.405			
Graduate	96	3.994	0.301			
Environmental Sustainability						
Secondary Education and Below	138	4.618	0.547	8.196	0.000	2>1 3>1 3>2
University	274	4.726	0.439			
Graduate	96	4.858	0.277			
Social Cost of Tourism						
Secondary Education and Below	138	2.483	0.814	5.563	0.004	1>2 1>3
University	274	2.222	0.875			
Graduate	96	2.165	0.777			
Economic Benefits of Tourism						
Secondary Education and Below	138	3.939	0.837	1.279	0.279	
University	274	4.068	0.757			
Graduate	96	4.022	0.734			
Full Participation in Tourism-Related Decisions						
Secondary Education and Below	138	3.652	0.699	2.521	0.081	
University	274	3.593	0.704			
Graduate	96	3.773	0.571			
Long-Term Planning in Tourism						
Secondary Education and Below	138	4.271	0.654	8.573	0.000	2>1 3>1
University	274	4.443	0.556			

Graduate	96	4.582	0.517			3>2
Visitor Satisfaction						
Secondary Education and Below	138	4.145	0.657	3.249	0.040	3>1
University	274	4.238	0.692			
Graduate	96	4.367	0.537			
Community-Centered Economy						
Secondary Education and Below	138	4.111	0.816	7.050	0.001	3>1
University	274	4.216	0.771			3>2
Graduate	96	4.479	0.577			

As participants' education levels increase, their perceptions of environmental sustainability, long-term planning, and community-centered economy become more positive. However, as education level increases, there is a decrease in perceptions related to social cost. This suggests that in Elazığ, tourism is perceived to have a low level of social cost.

Table 7. Comparison of Sustainable Tourism Scores Across Occupation

Group	N	Av	SS	F	P	Difference
Overall Sustainable Tourism						
Public Employees	205	3.966	0.373	2.078	0.067	
Public Sector Related to Tourism	25	3.754	0.668		0.001	1>2
Private Sector Related to Tourism	52	3.947	0.342			1>4
Tradespeople and Other Private Sector	77	3.867	0.383			1>6
Students, Housewives, and Non-Working Individuals	59	3.935	0.363			
Municipal Employees	90	3.853	0.499			
Environmental Sustainability						
Public Employees	205	4.815	0.353	4.171	0.001	1>2
Public Sector Related to Tourism	25	4.533	0.817		0.000	1>4
Private Sector Related to Tourism	52	4.692	0.417			1>6
Tradespeople and Other Private Sector	77	4.595	0.460			
Students, Housewives, and Non-Working Individuals	59	4.736	0.318			
Municipal Employees	90	4.675	0.559			
Social Cost of Tourism						
Public Employees	205	2.230	0.906	0.941	0.454	
Public Sector Related to Tourism	25	2.055	0.792		0.001	
Private Sector Related to Tourism	52	2.284	0.858			

Tradespeople and Other Private Sector	77	2.300	0.813			
Students, Housewives, and Non-Working Individuals	59	2.400	0.735			
Municipal Employees	90	2.369	0.819			
Economic Benefits of Tourism						
Public Employees	205	4.020	0.752	1.081	0.370	
Public Sector Related to Tourism	25	3.880	0.987		0.000	
Private Sector Related to Tourism	52	4.115	0.758			
Tradespeople and Other Private Sector	77	3.985	0.779			
Students, Housewives, and Non-Working Individuals	59	4.191	0.578			
Municipal Employees	90	3.948	0.876			
Full Participation in Tourism-Related Decisions						
Public Employees	205	3.624	0.737	1.526	0.180	
Public Sector Related to Tourism	25	3.480	0.684		0.000	
Private Sector Related to Tourism	52	3.798	0.610			
Tradespeople and Other Private Sector	77	3.653	0.610			
Students, Housewives, and Non-Working Individuals	59	3.763	0.592			
Municipal Employees	90	3.				

Participants' perceptions of environmental sustainability significantly differ based on their professions ($F(5, 502) = 4.171$; $p = 0.001 < 0.05$; $\eta^2 = 0.040$). The reason for this difference is that public employees have higher scores in environmental sustainability ($\bar{x}=4.815$) compared to those working in the tourism-related public sector ($\bar{x}=4.533$). Additionally, public employees have higher scores in environmental sustainability ($\bar{x}=4.815$) compared to those working in the tradespeople and other private sectors ($\bar{x}=4.595$), as well as higher scores than municipal employees ($\bar{x}=4.675$).

However, participants' overall sustainable tourism, social cost of tourism, economic benefits of tourism, full participation in tourism-related decisions, and visitor satisfaction scores do not show significant differences based on their professions ($p > 0.05$).

Table 8. Differentiation of Sustainable Tourism Scores According to Working Status in the Tourism Sector

Group	N	AV	SD	F	p
Sustainable Tourism General					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	3.860	0.683	0.462	0.630
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	3.929	0.354	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	3.920	0.382	-	-
Environmental Sustainability					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	4.584	0.828	2.541	0.080
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	4.697	0.429	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	4.739	0.391	-	-
Social Cost of Tourism					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	2.136	0.859	0.770	0.463
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	2.300	0.897	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	2.297	0.843	-	-
Economic Benefit of Tourism					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	3.957	1.054	0.563	0.570
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	4.132	0.741	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	4.022	0.743	-	-
Public Participation in Tourism Decision Making					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	3.766	0.840	1.102	0.333
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	3.556	0.649	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	3.638	0.665	-	-
Long-term Planning in Tourism					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	4.420	0.842	0.003	0.997
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	4.429	0.542	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	4.423	0.556	-	-
Visitor Satisfaction					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	4.277	0.847	0.317	0.729
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	4.300	0.578	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	4.227	0.643	-	-
Community-based Economy					
Working Directly in the Tourism Sector	47	4.207	0.930	0.043	0.958
Working Indirectly in the Tourism Sector	40	4.231	0.758	-	-
Not Working in the Tourism Sector	421	4.241	0.741	-	-

According to the given statement, the scores for sustainable tourism in general, environmental sustainability, social cost of tourism, economic benefit of tourism, public participation in tourism decision-

making, long-term planning in tourism, visitor satisfaction, and community-based economy do not show a significant difference based on the working status in the tourism sector ($p > 0.05$).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The development, principles, and purpose of sustainable tourism, which is closely related to alternative tourism, have been examined in this thesis, and it is believed that the purpose of this study has been achieved. The necessary principles and tools for achieving sustainable tourism are included. According to the responses of the participants in the survey, most of them have positive thoughts about environmental sustainability. Although there is a significant portion of the respondents with positive thoughts about environmental sustainability, there is also a segment with negative thoughts. These negative thoughts shed light on the areas that need improvement in Elazığ. Achieving sustainability requires encompassing all natural resources and individuals with environmental responsibility. Without a majority, sustainability cannot be achieved. This situation indicates that measures need to be taken within the framework of environmental sustainability. Based on the participants' responses regarding social cost, they believe that tourism in Elazığ is low. This suggests that Elazığ is not attracting enough tourists. The reason for this is the underutilization of tourism potential and the lack of effective promotion and marketing of tourism areas. To increase tourism in Elazığ, activities promoting local products and goods should be increased, as this will facilitate the marketing and promotion of local products.

A significant number of participants indicate that at least half of the food and materials used in the tourism sector should be sourced locally, and at least half of the tourism employees should be recruited from Elazığ. During interviews conducted while distributing the surveys, participants expressed that all goods and services used in tourism establishments, including the workforce, should be sourced entirely from Elazığ, provided that no additional workforce is required from elsewhere. This indicates that they believe tourism should make a full contribution to Elazığ and that tourism is significant for the region. While tourism is essential for the economic development of Elazığ, it should not be solely focused on economic benefits. The approach should also consider passing sustainable tourism practices to future generations and preserving natural resources. To achieve this, the most critical factor is to consider the needs of society and future generations. The research conducted to evaluate Elazığ's potential for sustainable tourism shows that the interest of the local community and other stakeholders in tourism activities is high, and they wish to be

involved in strategic planning related to tourism. This positive outlook of the local community and stakeholders will foster positive communication between stakeholders and tourists. The perception and support of the local community play a vital role in sustainable tourism activities. Insufficient knowledge of the local community and other stakeholders about tourism can harm the tourism potential of the region and hinder the realization of this high potential that Elazığ possesses. Therefore, it is essential to provide sustainable tourism education to the local community and other stakeholders and ensure their involvement in strategic decisions. As long as the local community and other stakeholders benefit economically from the region they live in, they will preserve the unique natural and cultural assets of the area and contribute to tourism.

Elazığ has a high tourism potential with its historical, cultural, and natural beauties. Numerous areas with natural formations can greatly impress tourists. However, the lack of utilization and neglect of these areas result in them providing services below their potential capacity. The main reasons for the underutilization of this high potential are the inadequacy of strategic plans, lack of continuity in implementation, inability to develop new products and markets, and deficiencies in marketing communication. Elazığ has a rich history of 4000 years, hosting various cultures, and still carries traces of these cultures. To sustain this deep-rooted culture, cultural tourism efforts can be undertaken. Collaborative efforts among relevant institutions, along with assistance from knowledgeable academics and individuals in this field, would be beneficial. The first settlement area in Elazığ, known as 'Harput,' is renowned as the city of saints. Harput is home to numerous important tombs of saints and attracts both residents and visitors from different cities. It encompasses both religious tourism and cultural tourism as the first settlement site and a place that has witnessed the presence of various cultures. Additionally, Harput's architectural structure is one of the areas worth seeing. However, some areas are left neglected and damaged. To preserve these areas and restore them for tourists, relevant institutions should protect the historical sites and ensure they are restored in a way that preserves the culture.

Cultural tourism would eliminate the seasonality of tourism, ensuring benefits from tourism throughout the year. This would increase local employment, prevent rural population decline, and enable the tourism sector and stakeholders to benefit significantly. Effective tourism management and sustainability require strong collaboration among stakeholders. Tourism activities in rural areas have a crucial impact on their

development, providing employment to the local population and minimizing their migration to more developed cities. To develop sustainable tourism in Elazığ, strategic plans should be formed primarily with the participation of the stakeholders. More investment should be made in tourism, neglected areas that serve as Elazığ's attractions should be opened and promoted to the local community and visitors. An inventory of the tourism diversity in Elazığ should be compiled to support investors interested in investing in the area and contribute to Elazığ's development.

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