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# Destination Management: Right or Wrong Measures

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## Abstract

Planning studies are important for the competitiveness of destinations and their actions with the principles of sustainability. Kuşadası and Didim, which have been among the most important mass tourism destinations in Turkey since 1960, have also long experienced common problems such as lack of coordination, environmental and infrastructural problems, and a lack of an integrated destination approach. Although a series of initiatives have been attempted to solve these problems—with a series of initiatives and good intentions—these initiatives have ultimately failed to achieve their outcomes. The current study aims to present the problems faced with destination management in both destinations. Specifically, it explains the whole process of destination management, including an attempt to guide and play a mediating role for stakeholders through a participatory approach. Therefore, revealing salient problems experienced in both destinations and preparing action plans for the solution of these problems are possible. The research is based on qualitative data from key stakeholders and opinion leaders. The process of data collection took almost two years, including one kick-off meeting, four workshops, and five mini-meetings. In addition, seven in-depth interviews were carried out to follow up on the outcomes. Although common problems such as lack of cooperation, coordination, budget, qualified workforce, infrastructure, and promotion have been identified, establishing a coordination platform and preparing action plans seems to remain remote. Therefore, despite all efforts, attempts at management planning may be regarded as an example of destination management failure.

**Keywords:** participatory approach, stakeholder, workshop, qualitative data

## Introduction

The tourist destination is a network of relationships between tourism actors covering a productive process (Pulido-Fernandez & Merinero-Rodriguez, 2018). Planning has a critical role in ensuring productivity. However, a lack of planning could be one of the major problems experienced in tourism destinations. Traditionally, tourism destinations grew spontaneously without planning. The consequences were damaging to nature and socio-cultural environments and also transformed economic development into a loss of both competitiveness and the opportunity to achieve a sustainable performance over time. This situation is not only about the environment of the

destination, but also the relationships of stakeholders within a tourism planning model that takes into account destination management (Diaz & Rodriguez, 2016).

Destination management is a form of management which provides the coordination of the local, political, civil, and business areas involved in fulfilling the objectives for the development of tourism. (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Successful tourism destination management needs to be followed by the application of stakeholder management activities such as stakeholder identification and mapping, stakeholder characterization through a set of attributes reflecting their perception of tourism policy and tourism impact, and taking into consideration their willingness to simultaneously cooperate on tourism development (Luštický & Musil, 2019). All these are factors important for the success of tourism planning and increased cooperation among tourism stakeholders, thus developing the tourism industry and enabling emergence of competitive strategies. Furthermore, a participatory approach is a contemporary element which contributes to destination management.

The participatory approach to tourism refers to the greater involvement of local people in the decision-making processes to create high-quality and value in the destination (Hatipoglu et al., 2016; Haywood, 2011). Lundberg (2017) emphasized the importance of local involvement regardless of residency type. Turkey hosted 45 million international visitors in 2019 with Kuşadası and Didim, being two of the leading tourism centers, hosting more than 1.5 million national and international visitors each (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies [ATTA], n.d.). Over the years, many attempts have been made to include local stakeholders from both destinations in the decision-making process (Çavuş, 2002), but the results were unsatisfactory (Akbaş, 2020; Marangoz & Karadağ, 2017). Therefore, this study aims to bring stakeholders in Kuşadası and Didim together and to prepare joint action plans through a participatory approach. Kuşadası and Didim were selected as both destinations are geographically very near each other, have similar tourist products, and most importantly, suffer the same fate as the very first destinations to have faced many of these problems. The Faculty of Tourism of Aydın Adnan Menderes University (ADU) has acted as a bridge between stakeholders to accomplish the purpose of this research. Within the scope of the study's aim, the research objectives are as follows:

- to reveal which common obstacles affect the destination management of Kuşadası and Didim
- to classify the identified obstacles
- to mediate the approval of prepared action plans by the public administration.

The study can shed light on future research in terms of contributing to the identification of current problems and finding solutions. Additionally, the method used provides insights into the literature. Furthermore, the results can also be utilized by destination managers.

This study is comprised of four sections. The first section deals with the conceptual framework related to destination management in tourism literature. In the second section, the methodology and data collection are presented. The third section presents the findings from the qualitative data collected. Finally, the fourth section consists of the discussion, implications, and conclusions of the study.

## Literature Review

In this section, a general framework is drawn by taking the obstacles related to destination management into consideration. In accordance with this purpose, the literature is discussed through six sub-topics: (a) stakeholders in the development of tourism, (b) centralized management, (c) action plans, (d) lack of coordination and cooperation, (e) community participation in the decision-making process, and (f) limited budget.

### *Stakeholders in the Development of Tourism*

Stakeholders refer to groups or individuals who may influence the success of an organizational mission or be affected by its success (Freeman, 1984). There is a relationship between the network among stakeholders in a destination and its level of development (Pulido-Fernandez & Merinero-Rodriguez, 2018). Tourism planning should involve multidimensional stakeholders cooperating to develop a shared vision (Hatipoglu et al., 2016; Presenza & Sheehan, 2013). Yuksel et al. (1999) identified central and local government officials, managers of local hotels or pensions, nearby residents, and other relevant institutions as stakeholders. Semerciöz et al. (2008) indicated that municipalities, governorates, provincial authorities, travel agencies, universities, district administrators, chambers of commerce, hotels, non-governmental organizations, and the hospitality industry are among the ten most important stakeholders with governorates, municipalities, and provincial authorities as the three most important stakeholders. As for North American CEOs, hotels and hotel associations, local governments, and regional governments are the three most salient destination management organizations (DMOs) stakeholders (Byrd et al., 2009; Chen, 2014; Hardy & Pearson, 2018; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005).

Byrd et al. (2008) stated that stakeholders do not have a direct impact on tourism development; however, the level of understanding may contribute to social and cultural interactions between all stakeholders. Erfani and Roe (2020) emphasized that the quality of the whole process is liable to criticism when participation is considered inconsistent and perceived as unfair except for limited or intermittent resources. If the members of the community are ignored or treated unequally while accessing resources, they may feel rejected and, thus, both the process and the wider community cohesion may be damaged (Erfani & Roe, 2020).

### *Centralized Management*

As a dynamic process-oriented strategy, cooperation is very useful for managing unsteady planning areas at the local level, and this process is also essential in ensuring the coordination of tourism resources and the coordination of planning of the destination at the regional level (Jamal & Getz, 1995, 2000; Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Yuksel et al., 1999). However, the existence of a centralized structure in public administration, a lack of coordination between the parties, and a lack of information may all be obstacles to implementing participatory development approaches in developing countries (Tosun, 2000). There are various studies on the central management structure. In Macau, Wan and Pinheiro (2014) emphasized that tourism planning was mostly driven by senior government officials as it has a majorly centralized structure. The dominant role of the regional government in implementing tourism development was highlighted in a study conducted on the Santen Beach, Karangharjo Village, Banyuwangi (Wirahayu et al., 2019). Tosun and Jenkins (1996) argued that a regional planning approach and acting in coordination with other

sectors are necessary for Turkey to ensure the integration of tourism development. Since it is not possible to achieve this through a central planning approach, the use of the regional planning approach is supposed to be utilized in developing countries such as Turkey. In a study on the deficiencies of tourism planning approaches in Turkey, Tosun and Timothy (2001) stated these deficiencies were (a) excessive centralization, (b) misapplications, (c) inflexibility, (d) non-comprehensive and non-integrated plans, (e) lack of a community-based approach, (f) the resource-oriented and market driven nature of tourism development planning, (g) deficiencies in stability and in continuity of planning policies, (h) a myopic approach exhibited in creating tourism development planning targets, and (i) difficulties in the implementation of plans. Furthermore, some disagreements and problems may arise concerning flexibility. The central government, thus, should be politically, administratively, and financially decentralized to some degree (Tosun, 2000; Tosun & Jenkins, 1996).

### ***Action Plans***

In studies on the development of tourism destinations, internal activities and providing synergy with the coordination of both horizontal and vertical management are quite important. Achieving the development of the destination is possible only with rational action plans, which include the possible impacts of stakeholders on development resources (Grzanic & Saftic, 2012). Destination action plans aim to determine which activities are to be carried out by whom, how, when, and with which resources in line with the specified aims and objectives, and are of strategic importance for the development of the destination. Integrating knowledge, experience, and other resources with a creative synergy by establishing a working culture enabling the work of all stakeholders will enable reaching new opportunities, finding creative solutions, and increasing productivity—and these are characterized as achievements that stakeholders cannot achieve on their own (Vernon et al., 2005).

### ***Lack of Coordination and Cooperation***

A lack of coordination has also been indicated among the significant obstacles in relation to the development of sustainable tourism and planning (Akça, 2006; Durgun, 2007; Hatipoglu et al., 2016; Kantawateera et al., 2013; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Yuksel et al., 1999; Zengingönül et al., 2012). Such problems are triggered by the lack of a precise determination of cooperation authority areas between public and local administration (Yuksel et al., 1999). Concerns of municipalities about losing their control in the process of tourism planning and destination management cooperation were also stated by Jamal and Getz (1995). According to Ladkin and Bertramini (2002), the deficiencies in clearly defined roles, due to the involvement of many public administrations whose roles and responsibilities are intertwined, can lead to significant problems that complicate planning process. However, it is also essential for stakeholders to know each other sufficiently to create the best cooperation. Adu-Ampong (2017) indicated that clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders is the first step for collaboration; more precisely, stakeholders should know the expectations of others. For instance, in a study carried out in Coron Island, Okazaki (2008) determined the importance of stakeholders understanding the importance of interdependence and working together to reach a consensus. Yet, it is not usually possible to establish perfectly compatible cooperation. As DMOs collaborate with more stakeholders, they may again face an intolerable situation while trying to reconcile conflicting interests (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). In a study conducted in Yogyakarta, Timothy (1998) noted that although

cooperation between sectors, between administrative levels, and between same-level autonomous polities is highly supported according to the planning, this does not occur much in practice and cooperation between governmental agencies and between the private and public sectors remained especially limited.

In research carried out in Cusco (Peru), Ladkin and Bertramini (2002) pointed out the lack of coordination between the public and private sectors, stating that various factors play a preventive role in the development of cooperation in tourism planning. Specifically, upon reviewing the studies carried out in Turkey, the results indicated a lack of coordination and cooperation. For instance, Yuksel et al. (1999) stated that organizational challenges in the public sector constitute the main obstacle in implementing tourism and protection plans, coordination between the relevant public authorities, and the fact that most of the decisions are taken by a central government are all opinions generally held by stakeholders. Additionally, in several studies, deficiency in coordination among non-governmental organizations and lack of communication and coordination among stakeholders has been concluded (Akça, 2006; Durgun, 2007; Genç et al., 2014; Hatipoğlu et al., 2016; Zengingönül et al., 2012).

Yavuz et al. (2018) suggested that tangible and intangible qualities of a city could be dispersed to its target audiences by collaborating with stakeholders. Recently, Wondirad et al. (2020) paid attention to poor governance and poor-stakeholder collaboration which are ranked among the top factors responsible for the devastation of ecotourism resources in Southern Ethiopia. As for Erfani and Roe (2020), poor institutional collaboration also gave rise to more complaints concerning overdue completion of projects in commercial cases. According to research on the Central Region of Ghana, Adu-Ampong (2017) emphasized that there were low levels of collaborations between tourism establishments, not only within the public sector but also across the public-private sectors. Moreover, it is also worthy of note that some private-sector stakeholders partake in tourism related seminars and workshops organized by public-sector institutions. Nevertheless, this participation does not necessarily result in full collaboration (Adu-Ampong, 2017). As for a study conducted in Central Java, Indonesia, no common vision of the stakeholders and a lack of cooperation and coordination among tourism actors, government, and other stakeholders were shown as the problems associated with synergy in the application of smart tourism (Suherlan et al., 2018).

### ***Community Participation in the Decision-Making Process***

Community participation refers to the involvement of the people who will be affected by decisions taken in political and economic decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969). The participation of the poor people living in a region in decision-making processes on subjects such as sharing information, creating targets and policies where taxes are to be spent, implementing programs, and sharing resources is strategically important. Regarding destination and DMOs, community support has been shown to be one of the important key variables (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Community-based tourism provides economic, ecological, and social benefits to a large extent (Qian et al., 2016). However, without informing, consultation, and authorization elements in the community participation process, full participation is not possible (Claiborne, 2010; Marzuki & Hay, 2013). According to Claiborne (2010), local people's lack of experience, resources, authorization, and interest, which are required for successful tourism initiatives, are among the key obstacles. Timothy (1999) stated that government officials' lack of experience and local people's difficulties in understanding tourism as potential obstacles. In a study carried out in Canada, local people were

included in the whole planning process of the tourism planning project through the exchange of information and opinions. However, tourism development shifted to the control of the regional government rather than local communities and local people were inadequately trained and that, as a result, total participation in the tourism industry was limited (Spencer, 2010). According to Hatipoglu et al. (2016), although participation is something that is desired by the majority of stakeholders, when it comes to taking responsibility, central governments try to be the leader in project development and other stakeholders remain in the background. This may stem from the dominance of the state-centric perspective in Turkey. Tosun and Timothy (2001) pointed out that the causes of governmental bodies being reluctant to accept participatory development approaches may be that their roles and public representation become questionable with the authorization of citizens. Simultaneously, Yuksel et al. (1999) stated that the key decisions were taken by the authorities in Ankara (capital city) without receiving local consultancy.

There are a number of studies on community participation from different regions in the world. In a study conducted in the Yogyakarta settlement in Indonesia, sufficient community participation could not be provided in the decision-making process (Timothy, 1999). Similarly, Ladkin and Bertramini (2002) argued that according to tourism stakeholders in Cusco, the current authorities should have controlled the development of tourism, but that there was a general view which stated that the stakeholders' ideas were not taken into consideration. A study conducted in Aksu-Jabagly Natural World Heritage Site in Kazakhstan, Akbar et al. (2020) showed that fewer tourists and a lack of preferential policies supporting local residents were the obstacles hindering community participation. Eyassu et al. (2019) ranked lack of coordination among stakeholders and poor community involvement among the reasons why the local community did not take advantage of tourism in Shonke Village, Ethiopia, despite the area having great potential in terms of tourism resources. According to another study carried out in Southern Ethiopia, Wondirad et al. (2020) drew attention to inappropriate ecotourism growth due to community exclusion, the devastation of the natural resources, and conflict of interest between stakeholders. Other related studies also confirm lack of community participation for destination management (Kennett-Hensel et al., 2010; Okazaki, 2008).

If all of a community's members believe they are given enough information about the expected outcomes, are treated equally, and their concerns and aspirations are taken into consideration, they may think it is worth further involvement in the planning and decision making processes (Erfani & Roe, 2020). According to Zuo et al. (2017), a lack of information and isolation from tourism affairs may give rise not only to a lack in confidence in the local government but also to lower positive perceptions. On the other hand, community willingness is not enough by itself. For example, the community around the Santen Beach Area in Karangharjo Village, Banyuwangi, was willing to take part in tourism development; however, the community participation was far from the anticipated level due to the dominant role of the regional government (Wirahayu et al., 2019).

### ***Limited Budget***

Budget limitations allocated to tourism investments are also one of the obstacles in the tourism development of destinations (Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Spencer, 2010; Tosun, 2000). When Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) asked stakeholders to define the biggest problem, funding was selected as the most significant problem, with the second most common problem being poor cooperation and communication. In the meetings held with 84 tourism

managers and stakeholders from twenty-five destinations in Canada, Bornhorst et al. (2010) expressed DMOs specific elements of success as supplier relations, effective management, strategic planning, organizational purpose and drive, qualified personnel, and appropriate funding. Zuo et al. (2017) placed emphasis on the financial support of central government to local government to develop the infrastructure required to be a famous tourism destination. According to Adu-Ampong (2017), stakeholders admit the need for collaboration; however, they go on to act singularly. In a study which examined who would provide funding, Genç et al. (2014) stated that all participant stakeholders expressed a view that each of the stakeholders should contribute, but that the weight should still be on public administration. Consistent with this view, Spencer (2010) argued that public participation in the planning process could not guarantee the success of local tourism planning or other types of planning, and that even if participation in the planning process of local people was provided with mastery and sensitivity, the lack of some factors such as leadership, funding, expertise, or an internal political struggle would prevent progress. A study conducted in Shonke Village, Ethiopia, showed that local communities do not take sufficient advantage of socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects of tourism for various reasons such as lack of funding, limited awareness, lack of coordination among stakeholders and poor community involvement and participation in tourism development despite having great potential in terms of tourism resources (Eyassu et al., 2019).

## **Methods**

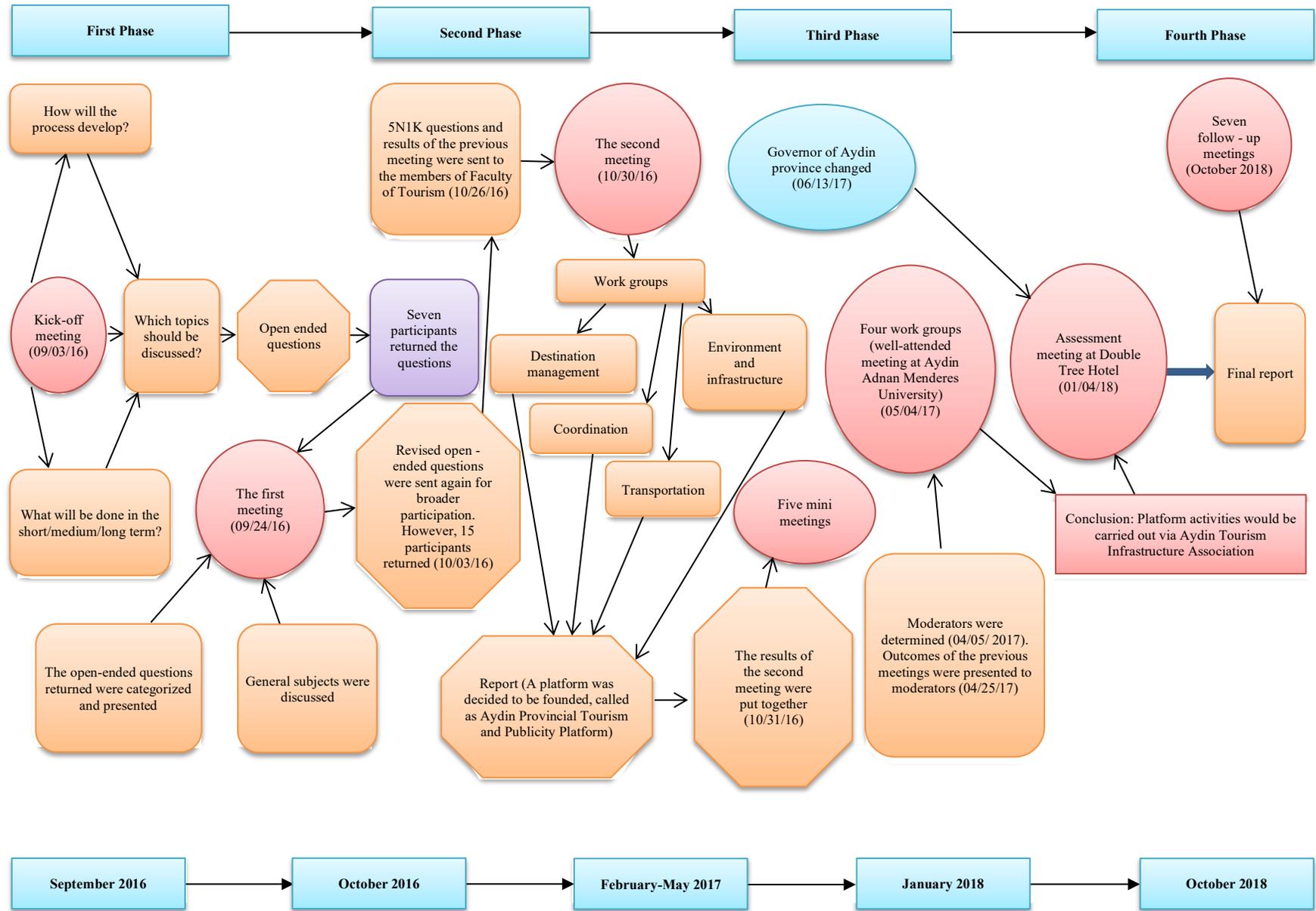
The literature review guided an analysis of the qualitative data from key stakeholders and opinion leaders to determine the problems associated with the selected destinations. The data collection process lasted for approximately two years, including one kick-off meeting, four workshops, and five meetings. Additionally, seven in-depth interviews were carried out to follow-up on the outcomes of these initiatives.

Kuşadası and Didim were selected as destinations for this study as they have the same profile destiny in the tourism industry. Kuşadası is a touristic province of Aydın, located on the Aegean Sea coast (Kuşadası Municipality, 2018). According to 2017 data, its population was 109,058 (Kusadası Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The important port of Kuşadası has increased the attractiveness of the region due to its strategic geographical location. The tourism industry in the region gained momentum starting in the 1960s; and in the 1970s, it was declared a first-degree touristic center and a pilot touristic area according to the Inter-Ministerial Council on Tourism Planning (Belen, 2012). Didim is another tourist destination in the province of Aydın. With its population of 79,464 people, Didim falls behind Kuşadası in terms of population, but as Didim was similarly affected by the tourism movements begun in the 1960s, Didim has also become one of the leading destinations.

### ***Data Collection Procedure and Analysis***

The data for this study were collected by means of four workshops and a questionnaire (in the collection of initial data), and this process lasted for two years together with the preparation studies and follow-up (See Figure 1). The study started when the Province Governor placed the Faculty of Tourism in charge of determining the common problems of Kuşadası and Didim destinations and carrying out the tasks and procedures necessary to solve these problems.

Figure 1. The Research Process



The authors of this study were actively involved, and the faculty members also contributed to all the processes of the study. However, the participants (stakeholders) were selected directly by the Aydın Governorship. All non-governmental organizations (NGOs) listed in the official protocol database, maintained by the governorship secretary, were invited to attend the workshops. In a way, this request was actually the order of the Governor. Thus, official letters were sent to all stakeholders with the signature of the Governor with the aim of ensuring a high level of participation. Therefore, this was an official duty given to the university by the governorship and the decision of selecting participants was completely determined by the Governorship. In qualitative studies, the suitability of individuals from whom data are collected for research purposes and their contribution to the research is often more important than sample size (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

In the four different workshops, a total of 215 stakeholders joined the sessions. A new governor of Aydın province was appointed on June 13, 2017. For this reason, the data collection process came to an end by January 4, 2018 in line with the new governor's demand. Under the chairmanship of the new governor, the stakeholders were brought together at a hotel in Kuşadas. However, it had the characteristics of an assessment meeting. For this reason, we made the decision not to hold a new workshop after the fourth workshop. Hence, the research team decided to end the data collection process. Finally, a follow-up study was carried out to determine what stakeholders had done in relation to destination management and to understand the effectiveness of the workshops (see Figure 1).

#### *Workshop I (September 24, 2016)*

In advance of the first workshop, an open-ended questionnaire finalized in the kick-off meeting was sent via e-mail to 34 participants. Almost everyone who was invited to the workshop participated in the meeting. The authors of this study served as moderators and kept the records of the meeting. The moderators initially presented the first findings of the open-ended questions previously completed by the participants present at the session. After the presentation, information about the method of the workshop was given. The Governor and the senior provincial bureaucracy also participated in the workshop. During the first workshop, the discussions were recorded both by notes and voice recorder. After completing the workshop, the data were interpreted as qualitative using inductive analysis. Collected data from the questionnaires were classified for the determination of prominent problems for both destinations.

#### *Workshop II (October 30, 2016)*

The workshop was carried out within the framework of the four themes determined at the end of the preliminary preparations. The participants to partake in each theme were determined by purposive sampling according to the characteristic of the institutions they served. Nine participants took a place in each of the working groups prepared for each theme. Also, one moderator and one reporter were assigned to each of the working groups. The authors of this study undertook the coordination of the tasks. The second workshop was carried out in three sessions: morning, afternoon, and closing. In the first session, the participants discussed the study themes in general. In the afternoon session, the issues which could not be agreed upon were re-discussed and detailing of the action plans continued. The last session was a closing session during which all participants discussed the presentations of their working groups together. The governor and senior provincial

administration also attended this session, and the closing session was directed by the Governor himself. In the closing session, the representatives selected from each of the four working groups presented their work to all participants. After the presentation of each working group, the Governor and other senior bureaucrats asked questions to the representatives of the groups, gave criticism, and also gave feedback on the ideas for eliminating the deficiencies.

The authors of this study continued to record all the discussions using both notes and by audio recordings. All data were examined separately by the authors and then analyzed to prepare a single report by reading it again and again until reaching a consensus. The subjects previously discussed in the working groups were cross-checked against these records held by the reporters. Following the second workshop, sub-meetings were held in five different sessions in Aydın, Kuşadası, and Didim. These meetings, directed by the Governor, resulted in an agreement that the second workshop outcomes were not sufficient and a new workshop should be organized. The third workshop was decided to be held on May 4, 2017 (see Figure 1).

#### *Workshop III (May 4, 2017)*

The workshop was held in cooperation with the South Aegean Development Agency representative, the office of the private secretary of the Governorship, and the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism. A broader and more comprehensive invitee list was prepared by purposive sampling. The invitees were selected from representatives directly or indirectly interacting with the tourism industry in Aydın province. A total of 198 potential participants or organizations (i.e., district governorships, municipalities, universities, provincial directorates, museums, head of archaeological excavations, associations, professional chambers, travel agencies and hotels, cooperatives, associations and mukhtar offices) were invited by the office of the private secretary of the Governorship via an official letter. A total of 109 participants were involved in this workshop. The invitation letter first reviewed the purpose, scope, significance, and content of the third workshop. Then, the invitees were asked to determine which of the working groups was appropriate for them to attend; and for the creation of the action plan, they were requested to come to the meeting prepared. In this workshop, the method applied in the second workshop was followed. The sessions took place in three stages. In the first session, by stressing the importance of creating a healthier and more feasible action plan for their working subjects, the moderators emphasized to the participants the need to establish discussions within this framework. The second session attempted to describe the ideas and suggestions discussed in the first session with more specificity. The last session was devoted to the presentations of the working groups. During the closing session, the governor and the senior provincial administration evaluated the presentations separately and provided feedback. The data of the workshop were also analyzed separately by the authors, and content analyses were continued until a consensus was reached.

#### *Workshop IV (October 4, 2018)*

The General Evaluation Meeting of the Tourism Sector of Aydın Province was held under the leadership of the Kuşadası district governorship in a hotel on January 4, 2018. This meeting was organized for the purpose of performing a general evaluation of the results of the three workshops and five subcommittee meetings held to create the short and medium-term action plans for Kuşadası and Didim destinations in 2016, and to review the tourism activities conducted in Aydın province in general, and specifically in Kuşadası and Didim districts. Another aim of the meeting

was to inform the newly appointed governor about potential and available resources and discuss the necessary practices to better disperse tourism activities throughout the province. The participants of the fourth workshop consisted of other workshop participants and newly appointed bureaucrats. A total of 27 participants took part in this workshop. The moderator made a general evaluation of the results of previous efforts and explained the 2018 tourism season. Following this, each participant shared their views on the problems and subjects in the field of their duty. When the subjects overlapped with the fields of duties of different organizations, the representatives of these institutions addressed these subjects/problems from their institutions' point of view.

These discussions were useful for the newly appointed governor to get a grasp of the issues. During the meeting, a reporter recorded all the issues discussed. The meeting took place in two sessions, morning and afternoon, and lasted for about six hours in total. The results of a content analysis of the meeting recordings for each of these prominent subjects and the suggested solutions are discussed next in the results section.

## Results

In this section, the results of the workshops to create action plans for both destinations are explained and evaluated phase by phase.

### *Phase 1 (Workshop I)*

The initial goal was to determine the main problems in light of the information received from the 34 attendees and institutions. Before the workshop, under the moderatorship of ADU, a preliminary questionnaire was distributed to receive the participants' opinions and ideas about the problems and suggested solutions. Frequency analysis was performed according to the feedback received from seven participants from different institutions. Table 1 shows the importance of the problems; first-degree significant problems were listed as follows: coordination (78.6%), environment and infrastructure (63.6%), the lack of strategy for source markets (53.8%), the lack of an integrated destination approach (50%), and promotion problems (50%). Participants scored the prominent problems within second-degree significant issues as qualified labor force with 50% and product diversification with 50%. Also, the participants focused on the lack of inventory in tourism data, deficiencies of legislation, seasonality problems, and promotion problems all within third-degree importance.

**Table 1.** Participant Rating of the Stated Problems

First Degree Problems	Second Degree Problems	Third Degree Problems
Coordination (78.6%)	Qualified labor force (50%)	Lack of inventory (Database) (50%)
Environment and infrastructure (63.6%)	Product diversification inadequacy (50%)	Legislation inadequacy, gap in legislation (46.2%)
Lack of strategy for target markets (53.8%)	Lack of strategy for target markets (46.2%)	Seasonality (21.4%)
Lack of an integrated Destination approach (50%)	Legislation inadequacy, gap in legislation (46.2%)	Lack of promotion (21.4%)
Lack of promotion (50%)		

Furthermore, the participants answered a question about which period and which institutions should solve the problems specified in the questionnaire. They stated that coordination, security, and promotion problems should be solved immediately and the coordination problem should be

solved by district municipalities (especially Aydın Metropolitan Municipality), by the University, and by NGOs. All the participants reached a consensus to establish a coordination center for the solution of the coordination problem. Although determining the legal infrastructure to be used to establish this center was a potent issue on the agenda, it could not be sufficiently developed at this meeting. The participants also discussed problems other than the coordination center. One of the vital issues in terms of both destinations was the environment and infrastructure. In this regard, participants emphasized that the Metropolitan and District municipalities should be responsible. Another issue discussed was the development of strategies for tourist generating markets in terms of creating touristic demand. While the participants complained about the lack of necessary strategies in this respect, they suggested that strategies should be developed by examining the characteristics of the target markets first. Furthermore, sector representatives should play an active role. Regarding the integrated destination approach, Kuşadası and Didim districts were the prominent tourist destinations of Aydın province in general and the areas in other regions of the province were pushed into the background. The participants argued that to solve this problem, the Chamber of Commerce and the Coordination Center could be assigned to the leadership of the Governorship. Among the second-degree priority issues, a qualified labor force problem was ranked first. The problem of qualified labor force should be solved under the responsibility of the Chamber of commerce and vocational high schools under the leadership of the Faculty of Tourism. It was also decided that for the problem of product diversification, the University and the Governorship, and in the issue of creating the inventory of tourist data, the University together with the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism should take responsibility.

The most critical point of the action plan was determining which institutions would manage the budget. The participants stated that the Governorship, the Metropolitan Municipality, and other Municipalities should provide the highest support for the budget. This budget could also be met from the autonomous budgets of the institutions which more encounter the relevant problem. As a result of this first workshop, the common problems of both destinations and the priorities of these problems were determined in general. Therefore, we argue that the first two research objectives were achieved. On the other hand, another significant result that emerged was the demand for the establishment of a Tourism Promotion Platform.

### *Phase 2 (Workshop II)*

Forty-five different representatives from the stakeholders participated in the second workshop. At the workshop, organized under the management of the Faculty of Tourism, the main problems related to the action plans were gathered and evaluated under the titles of the need to organize for coordination, the need to manage the destination within an environmental plan, the need to develop a beach management system, and the need to ensure regular mass access to the attraction centers in the region. The idea of establishing an organization model for the coordination was one of the primary tasks. The destination management would not be sustainable if the coordination unit could not be established. By managing the region with the destination management perspective, the intended environmental plan and beach management could be handled with a holistic approach. To provide public transportation to the attraction centers, the idea of planning double-decker tourist buses organized regularly between Söke-Pamukkale and Selçuk-Didim and providing regular public transportation to the points of touristic interest by ensuring hop on-hop off routes came to the forefront. The legal status of the coordination unit to be established was addressed, and whether it would be a tourism association, foundation, platform, or company was discussed.

Additionally, participants emphasized that this coordination unit should have a regular income. Moreover, Tourism Law No. 2634 was determined to be inadequate in managing tourism and needed to be updated. Also, social media management had great importance, participation only in tourism fairs was not enough, and more demand needed to be created for the destination. Apart from these, receiving a daily fee of \$1 from guests, as a city tax per night, was on the agenda, but, as it was thought not to be legally possible, this opinion was put to the side. Different opinions emerged for the name of the coordination center. After discussion, participants decided to name it the Tourism Development and Promotion Platform. The Governorship of Aydın, Municipality, Chamber of Commerce, Hoteliers Union, Association of Travel Agencies, Chamber of Guides and ADU, and other NGOs should take part in the platform to be established. Another decision to come out of this workshop was to carry out studies on the subjects of handling beach management, protecting and incorporating natural areas into national parks, preventing signage pollution, creating a marine protected area, storing construction wastes, and providing mass transportation to historical and touristic places. Most importantly, establishing a coordination platform was the main idea to come out from the workshop.

### *Phase 3 (Workshop III)*

The third workshop session was held at University Congress Center on May 4, 2017. Four working groups were formed under the themes of marine tourism, historic cities and natural places, local products, and alternative tourism according to the results obtained in Workshop II. The participants were asked to make recommendations about their subjects and to suggestions for how these recommendations could be realized. The results obtained from each theme follows:

In the *marine tourism* group, the subjects of diving tourism, transportation, bureaucracy, and promotion were discussed. Diving tourism supported artificial reef areas and keeping away from fishing activities, giving importance to these infrastructure activities for diving tourism. Organizing diving tourism and water sports activities and supporting diving schools were also brought to the agenda. In *transportation*, ideas such as providing ferry services from the Didim and Kuşadası, for those who want to make a trip to the Greek Islands, and attracting visitors by cleaning the Menderes basin were evaluated. In *bureaucracy*, the issues of increasing the number of blue flag beaches, informing the public about the prohibition of hunting, and beginning education at the new Maritime Faculty to train qualified personnel in the sector were mentioned. In the category of *promotion*, the aim of popularizing geolocation applications in Didim and ensuring more effective use of social media were evaluated. In the *historic cities* working group, the problems were categorized as general problems, education, promotion, new routes, and conservation and restoration projects. Within the scope of the general problems, the improvement of transportation opportunities and roads to ancient cities, positioning reception centers at the entrances of historical sites, improvement of information signboards, forming ancient city consciousness in the local people, ensuring an adequate number of toilets especially in historical places, and cleaning the environment before the beginning of the season came to the agenda. As for educational problems, the opinions of ensuring that students visit ancient cities especially in the region with the accompaniment of guides, thus increasing their awareness of cultural development and conservation, including these subjects in the curriculum, and raising teachers' awareness in this respect were emphasized. In the local products working group, the establishment of local producer markets and authentic family restaurants were suggested. For promotion activities, it was planned to focus on local products, such as olive oil and figs, and to carry out

studies related to geographical marking. Using the figure of Efe, a symbol of the Aydın region, in all promotional activities was also recommended.

Alternative tourism activities were examined under four categories: health, sports, ecotourism, and congress tourism. In the discussion about health tourism, enabling thermal facilities, hospitals, and other health organizations to carry out services for tourism purposes, determining the health tourism inventory, and promoting it at national and international fairs were expressed. In sports tourism, the focus was on the determination of the inventory of the region's sports tourism. A consensus was agreed that sports such as cycling, paragliding, sailing, windsurfing, kite surfing, and underwater sports should be supported. The ecotourism discussion emphasized making villages with the potential to be ready for ecological tourism, organizing the Latmos region as a geo-park and safari area, bird observation towers, and other tourist infrastructure needs in the Büyük Menderes National Park and Lake Bafa. Finally, for congress tourism, the importance of creating the demand for congress tourism by working especially closely with the medical, energy, and information sectors and promoting it at fairs was emphasized.

#### *Phase 4 (Workshop IV)*

The fourth workshop session was held in a hotel in Kuşadası on January 4, 2018. On one hand, the necessary measures for overcoming the bottleneck experienced since 2016 were discussed at this workshop; on the other hand, the newly appointed Governor was informed about the current situation. The participants reached the consensus that the Efes Congress Center, which was idle due to its high rent rate, should be used in national and international activities by gaining a functional quality. Another issue was the discussions about which alternative products should be available throughout the Aydın province to lighten the carrying capacity of the touristic product. As a result of the discussions, cruise, congress, and gastronomy tourism was recommended. Furthermore, package tours should be organized to allow guests to experience local food and beverages regarding gastronomy tourism and to do nature tourism (trekking). For this purpose, the Metropolitan Municipality took steps in this direction by activating village markets in Çakırbeyli and Historical Konaklı. Also, developing the trekking routes in Latmos, improving the resting places and toilets in this area, and giving the walking route maps to guides were discussed. Participants agreed to the idea of creating a Tourism Development and Promotion Platform, the establishment of which was decided at the second workshop, to ensure coordination between institutions into a legal entity under the present Aydın Tourism Infrastructure Service Association. Another issue was promotion of destination. Attendees emphasized that social media should be used effectively and that bloggers, agency owners, writers, and well-known people from Europe should be hosted in Kuşadası. Promotional activities expressed that hoteliers, agents, and guide associations in the region should act in coordination. It was also suggested that the thirty-dollar incentive, which is given to cruise ships with a capacity of 750 persons and more, should be shifted to ships which are anchoring at the port for at least eight hours, thus taking into account the time the ships will spend in the port. This was considered as a part of promotion efforts to encourage ship owners so that they direct the demand toward Kuşadası. It was also discussed that the Dental Health Center of ADU Kuşadası Campus would be put into practice within the scope of health tourism. Additionally, steps should be taken to increase tourism in Kuşadası to twelve months by integrating thermal resources with health tourism; along with the ability of hotels to serve year round if geothermal energy is brought to Kuşadası.

The demand for qualified staff in hotels also came to the forefront as a problem. Participants emphasized that enterprises were trying to solve this problem by employing people from Kazakhstan and Cambodia. The opinion that maintaining state support was a requirement to ensuring the employment of qualified staff in tourism came to the agenda. Another issue discussed was the realization of vision projects which would be integrated with cruise tourism. Also, some argued that there were image and branding problems in Kuşadası, and therefore the target group should be properly determined. As a result of the fourth workshop, a consensus about the measures to be taken regarding preparation for the new season was reached, and by giving information to the newly appointed Governor about the problems in question, his awareness of these problems was ensured. However, as in the previous three workshops, the agreed-upon issues could not be converted into short-medium-long-term action plans in written form.

### *Follow-up*

A total of seven follow-up in-depth interviews with Kuşadası District Governorship, Aydın Governorship, South Aegean Development Agency, Aydın Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, Kuşadası Chamber of Commerce, Kuşadası branch of the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, and Kusadası Association of Hotel Investors were held in October 2018 by taking into account the areas of responsibility in relation to the problems and solutions offered in the resulting declarations of all workshops (see Figure 1). As a result, no action took place in the period between January 4, 2018, and October 2018. Additionally, the coordination platform, the establishment of which was decided upon in the first workshop to solve the coordination problem, could not be put into operation. This made it possible to demonstrate the lack of coordination in both destinations.

### **Discussion**

As the result of this study, the stakeholders determined the prominent problems in the selected destinations. The main problems were (a) lack of coordination, (b) environmental and infrastructural problems, and (c) lack of integrated destination approach for promotion (see Table 1).

One of the important outcomes of the workshops was the understanding that solutions to the problems should be realized by inter-agency coordination. This result is consistent with previous studies (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Akça, 2006; Bello et al., 2016; Durgun, 2007; Erfani & Roe, 2020; Eyassu et al., 2019; Hatipoglu et al., 2016; Kantawateera et al., 2013; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2020; Suherlan et al., 2018; Wan & Pinheiro, 2014; Yuksel et al., 1999; Zengingönül et al., 2012) which emphasize the lack of coordination and cooperation as among the important obstacles in sustainable tourism development and planning. For coordination issues, although a consensus was reached on the establishment of a platform in the workshops, the follow up session revealed that no action had been taken. From this point of view, these results overlap in general with the results of other studies (Bornhorst et al., 2010; Freeman 1984; Genç et al., 2014; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Marzuki & Hay, 2013; Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Semerciöz et al., 2008; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). However, in the current study, although the stakeholders argued that this was one of the important points which needed to be achieved, the participants of the workshops seemed to be reluctant to do so. The majority of the participants indicated that the environment and infrastructure were also problems. These results demonstrate similarities with the results of other studies which draw attention to the same problems (Çetinkaya, 2014; Durgun, 2007; Kantawateera et al., 2013;

Özgen, 2010; Şarkaya-İçellioğlu, 2014; Yılmaz, 2008). Bornhorst et al. (2010) argued that qualified staff should be among the factors determining the success of destination management. In the first workshop, fifty percent of the participants indicated that the lack of qualified labor force was among the second-degree problems in tourism. Furthermore, in the third and fourth workshops, the participants emphasized that the lack of qualified staff was among the crucial problems. In this context, the results are consistent with the previous studies (Acar et al., 2017; Bello et al., 2016; Durgun, 2007; Kiper & Arslan, 2007; Özşahin, 2015; Şarkaya-İçellioğlu, 2014).

As a result of the first workshop, fifty percent of the participants indicated the lack of promotion in destination planning and marketing as being among the problems faced by both destinations. In the second, third, and fourth workshops, the emphasis on using social media more effectively in terms of developing promotion activities was emphasized. The results support the outcomes from SWOT studies performed in different regions of Turkey (Acar et al., 2017; Çetinkaya, 2014; Durgun, 2007; Gökçe, 2006; Kiper & Arslan, 2007; Ongun & Gövdere, 2014; Özgen, 2010; Özşahin, 2015; Şarkaya-İçellioğlu, 2014; Yılmaz, 2008; Zengingönül et al., 2012). The promotion and marketing problem is thus not only a problem concerning Aydın in particular, it is also among the problems concerning Turkey in general.

Wan and Pinheiro (2014) found very few laws and regulations to allow flexible planning in Macau, and the laws already in force were developed between 1986-1987 and were outdated. In fact, in these workshops, the participants emphasized that Tourism Law No. 2634 was inadequate to meet the current needs of tourism and that this law should be renewed. According to Hatipoğlu et al. (2016), although participation in tourism planning is a desirable situation by stakeholders, when it comes to taking responsibility for the projects undertaken, the leadership role in the development of the project is allocated to the centralized administration. In the fourth workshop, an important decision was made that establishing the platform should be carried out by the Aydın Tourism Infrastructure Association, and should be supported by Kuşadası Municipality; however, by the follow-up, this association had not yet been established. Insufficient resources are one of the possible reasons. Previous studies have indicated that insufficient funding allocated to tourism investments is among the obstacles to the development of tourism in destinations (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Bello et al., 2016; Eyassu et al., 2019; Ladkin & Bertramini, 2002; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Spencer, 2010; Tosun, 2000). Hence, although it had been decided to establish a platform to ensure coordination, this issue remains uncertain as it was not clear which institution would meet the necessary budget. Another possible explanation is that when things started to get better, the issues started to lose their importance—and stakeholders focused on their daily operations.

Although the lack of coordination is an important issue in solving the problems, unplanned movement continued despite all the well-intentioned efforts. Tosun and Jenkins (1996) suggested that no consistent policy has been implemented to ensure sustainability in tourism in Turkey. The change of administrative staff in the relevant ministry due to new appointments was demonstrated as a reason for the lack of a consistent policy. However, the lack of a well-structured regional development policy makes the situation worse. In fact, after the three workshops held in 2016 and 2017, the governor of Aydın province changed. Therefore, the last workshop held on January 4, 2018, was mainly in the form of a briefing to the newly appointed governor on the outputs of previous workshops. And the change of governor caused the works to be suspended.

A similar problem occurred in another resort destination. Between 1987 and 1992, Bermuda experienced a significant decrease in the number of tourists. A *tourism planning committee* was established to overcome the reasons behind this decrease. The first part of these planning studies was to determine the reasons for these decreasing tourist numbers and then to develop suggestions for solving these problems. The local people who were dealing with tourism activities in Bermuda were included in the planning process, all stakeholders were interviewed, and various analyses were conducted as a result of this initiative. Establishing an organization under the name of the Tourism Education Council to coordinate the training of local people and employees on tourism, giving importance to the development of a new tourism product, and providing governmental support to strategic planning and products were among the emerging suggestions. However, these suggestions could not be realized quickly by the government. On the other hand, with the revival of Bermuda tourism, the pressure on the government regarding the recommendations of the Tourism Planning Committee decreased (Yilmaz, 2014).

In the present study, the workshops started in September 2016 coincided with a period of political problems underway in Turkey. A severe decrease in the number of tourists was experienced throughout Turkey due to the bombing attacks which occurred in the first quarter of 2016 and due to the coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Stakeholders who participated in the workshops held during this period removed the platform activities from their agendas with the revival of the tourism season the following two years. The results of the study support the opinion of Timothy (1999) that although administrators at the provincial level come together with regional management, private sector organizations, and business owners from time to time to solve problems on the subject of tourism planning, these consultations remain fundamentally symbolic.

## Conclusion and Implementations

The current study aimed to determine and classify common obstacles affecting destination management in the Kuşadası and Didim and transform the solution of these problems into action plans with a participatory approach via mediating role of a university. This mediating role involved playing an active role in both organizing and reporting the whole process. In light of this experience, which took place over a period of more than two years, such an initiative could be an example to other resort destinations facing similar challenges and future research. Overall, upon examining the literature on destination management, this study can contribute to the literature, especially concerning the planning of destination management. In this context, the results demonstrate similarities with previous studies, and in general, contain essential information about how destination management should be done or how it should not be done. Therefore, the present research has made several contributions to the literature from a theoretical point of view.

First, the study was conducted with the help of a university in the region, which is also a contribution to the literature. The study was carried out over a period of more than two years with patience and dedication. Also, the follow-up has contributed to a better understanding of the results. The follow-up is important because it is necessary to test the validity of the obtained results. Second, this study will make a contribution to future research in terms of the methods used. Third, despite all the efforts, it was not possible to obtain the expected results in this study. This case can be thus regarded as an example of failure, which, in turn, serves as a guide for future researchers to take relevant measures when designing their research. Considering the failure, there are some points that researchers should take note of in future research. This study revealed that the lack of

coordination was an important factor in this failure. Coordination is difficult to achieve. Researchers should know from the beginning which kind of difficulties they may face in the process of conducting any study. The willingness of the participants selected is an important factor for researchers to consider when designing a research. This study also contains crucial information regarding predicting the problems which might be encountered by all destinations within their future life cycles and the difficulties which could be encountered in the solution stages. From this point of view, this study could help destination management practitioners to anticipate possible issues and to prepare a proper destination management plan by taking appropriate measures.

Based on the findings, practical implications can be derived. First, the salient problems revealed from this study are becoming increasingly crucial in their own context. Thus, to better cope with a complex structure of destination based problems, the stakeholders should first be sincere and productive regardless of the short term approach toward issues. Second, as a result of the follow-up, when things started to improve, everything was forgotten or given less importance. Therefore, it is important to act with a proactive, professional, and long-term approach. Third, a lack of coordination is a serious problem causing the inability to be result-oriented despite good-faith efforts. Destination management is expected to be aware of the communication problems and to take the necessary steps by analyzing risks causing coordination failure. However, focusing only on the management of two resort destinations and not demonstrating a generalizable feature to all destinations due to the preference of qualitative methods could be indicated among the limitations of the study. For future studies, using quantitative methods and selecting sample groups by different methods may be suggested. Moreover, studies which would provide an opportunity to make comparisons between different destinations can be carried out. The fact that the participants were not able to completely express their opinions in front of the Governor due to the dominant power of the central government was another limitation. Therefore, it would be appropriate to take measures to reduce the pressure of official authority.

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