Sharing Economy in Destinations: An Evaluation of Munirent, ShareHub, ShareNL Projects and Recommendations *

Destinasyonlarda Paylaşım Ekonomisi: Munirent, ShareHub, ShareNL Projelerinin Değerlendirilmesi ve Öneriler

ABSTRACT

The sharing economy is a sharing-based business model that enables the use of scarce resources more efficiently and sustainably. This business model, which is increasingly used, has started to attract local governments' attention and led to the emergence of sharing-based projects in touristic destinations. In this study, we have examined the Munirent, ShareHub, and ShareNL projects that have emerged in tourist destinations. We saw the potential for the development of the shared city network. We aim to raise awareness, ensure that similar applications emerge in destinations with high tourism potential, and contribute to the literature.

Keywords: Tourism, Sharing Economy, Local Governments, Destination Management, Sustainability.

ÖZET

Paylaşım ekonomisi, kıt kaynakların daha verimli ve sürdürülebilir bir şekilde kullanılmasını sağlayan, paylaşım temelli bir iş modelidir. Kullanım alanı giderek artan bu iş modeli, yerel yönetimlerin de dikkatini çekmeye başlamış, turistik destinasyonlarda paylaşım temelli projelerin ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Bu çalışmada, turistik destinasyonlarda ortaya çıkmış Munirent, ShareHub ve ShareNL projelerini basitce inceledik. Paylaşılan şehirler ağının gelişme potansiyelini gördük. Amacımız, farkındalık yaratarak benzer uygulamaların turizm potansiyeli yüksek destinasyonlarda ortaya çıkmasını sağlamak ve alanyazına katkı sağlamaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Turizm, Paylaşım Ekonomisi, Yerel Yönetimler, Destinasyon Yönetimi, Sürdürülebilirlik.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most critical problems of this century in terms of destinations is managing destinations (Fyall & Brian, 2020). Because being able to manage destinations economically, environmentally, and socially makes them more competitive on a global scale (Manente & Valeria, 2006; Bekjanov & Bunyod, 2021). In addition, as tourism destinations grow, problems such as increasing living costs, infrastructure and superstructure problems, transportation network problems, and intense unemployment will inevitably arise (Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, Jasinskas, & Simanavicius, 2021). This situation forces destinations and individuals to think and act economically, environmentally, and socially within the framework of collaborative approaches (Toposophy, 2016). Today, some local governments have started solving some of the problems that arise in destination management due to applications and projects based on the sharing economy. Local governments must preserve existing resources in destinations and spend them to solve more social problems. In this study, we have examined three projects based on the sharing economy, which local governments currently use. We aim to help touristic destinations (Turkey, etc.) that make restrictive decisions on sharing economy-based applications to develop similar projects or applications and raise awareness about more efficient use of resources (solution of social problems, etc.).

LITERATURE

The sharing economy protects future generations by sharing idle products and services with those in need. Thus, it prevents the reproduction of the same goods or services and provides an environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable life, especially in touristic destinations. Therefore, it is a caring, technological, and economic business model (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Hamari, Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2015). Based on the collaborative

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consumption approach and technology, this business model encourages sharing approaches worldwide, ensuring more sustainable use of resources. In addition, it eliminates some problems that arise in destinations and could be a more efficient use of resources. Realizing this fact, many local governments have started spending their resources more efficiently using the sharing economy. Social sharing-based projects supported by governments and local governments in many essential destinations are the most important proof of this.

In this study, we first examined the Munirent Project, which emerged in the United States in 2014. Munirent is a project used in nearly 30 states in the USA and allows public institutions and local governments to rent many construction equipment, equipment, and personnel (Munirent, 2014).
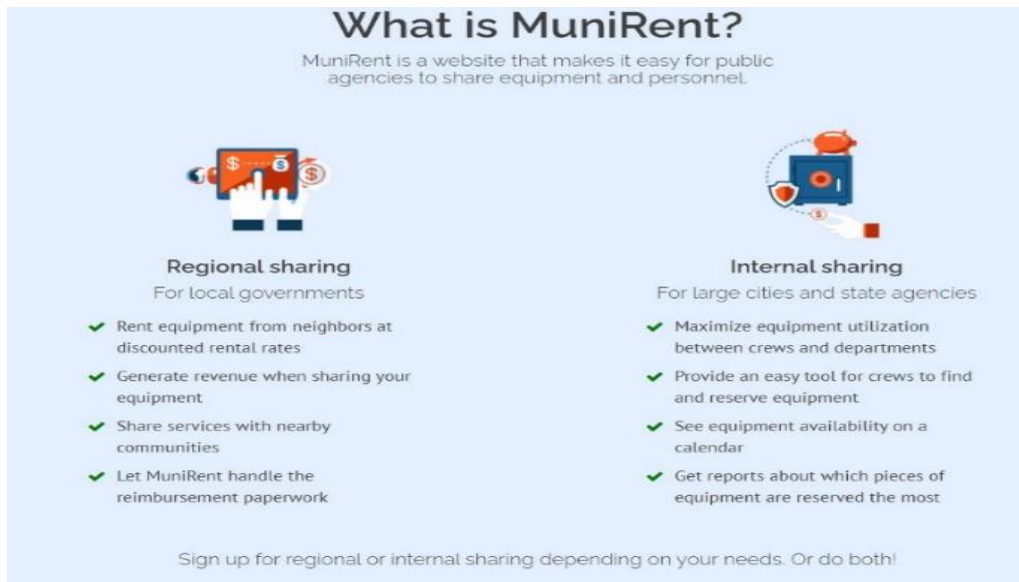

Figure 1: Munirent.

Munirent, whose technology is based on the idea of "creating collaborative governments," works to reduce costs and increase equipment and personnel efficiency by bringing together local governments and equipment owners. Once a local government and/or government agency is included in the Munirent platform, they can use any equipment shared by their owners. The equipment shared and rented on this platform is rented together with the person if necessary, which prevents the equipment and person from being charged separately (Ganapati & Reddick, 2018). Considering the shrinking budgets of local governments and the economic crises that countries have to deal with, the efficient use of the existing fleet, equipment, or personnel is one of the main problems of destination management. At this point, Munirent facilitates the reduction of costs by sharing the purchased equipment, vehicles, or personnel among other local governments and ensures the transfer of existing resources to solve social problems (Munirent, 2014). For this reason, the number of states participating in the project is increasing daily.

Figure 2: ShareHub.

The second project we examined within the scope of the study was the ShareHub project. ShareHub, which was launched in Seoul, South Korea, in 2012, draws attention as one of the best examples of resource sharing in destinations, with its motto "shared city" (ShareHub, 2012). With the ShareHub project, 77 different products, services, experiences, and skills, from cars to bicycles, from books to houses, are shared with those in need. For this, it is sufficient to become a project member on the website and specify the products or services you want to share. The ShareHub project is vital in creating new income opportunities, increasing social income, protecting non-renewable resources, and preventing environmental pollution by reducing unnecessary waste and also adopting a management style that economically respects the local people by sharing many things out of use (ShareHub, 2012).

Figure 3: ShareNL.

Finally, we examined the ShareNL Project. ShareNL was implemented in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in 2013. It is a project that has emerged to bring together more than 70 of the world's leading sharing economy applications and local governments (ShareNL, 2013). With the ShareNL project, governments, local governments, individuals, briefly all stakeholders in the sharing culture, are supported to participate in sharing and exchange activities, and it is aimed to create a shared value for the sharing economy in a collaborative way. For this reason, using essential applications of the sharing economy, such as Airbnb and Uber, is encouraged within the project's scope. In addition, the project undertakes the main task of overcoming some economic and urban challenges by improving the sharing of knowledge and experience between individuals in Amsterdam and instilling a culture of sharing in all members of the society (ShareNL, 2013).

All these sharing-based applications and projects that have emerged and continue to emerge in touristic destinations show how effective sharing economy platforms can be, if desired, in cities and regions, especially in touristic destinations, as an effect of sharing culture. Hence, the Sharing Cities Alliance, headquartered in Amsterdam and established in New York in 2017, has started its efforts to offer future generations the best possible quality of life. Such formations, triggered by the sharing culture, provide social cohesion by creating social interaction, and the rapidly increasing number of sharing economy applications within the framework of the sharing economy encourages new micro-entrepreneurs. In parallel, destinations' employment opportunities and digital literacy levels increase (Pawlicz, 2018). In addition, sharing economies make destinations more inclusive and, by uniting, groups that may never interact (e.g., software developers and hosts), offer the opportunity to overcome many long-term economic and social challenges of touristic destinations together with all stakeholders.

METHOD

In this study, we discussed three projects based on the sharing economy, supported by local governments, to solve economic, environmental, and social problems in essential destinations of the world. The typical features of the projects we have discussed are that local governments, public institutions, and organizations benefit from and even support the sharing economy to solve problems such as excessive consumption, environmental pollution, and lack of resources in destinations. In this direction, we examined the web pages of the projects and revealed their functioning. Subsequently, in countries that have taken restrictive decisions regarding the sharing economy, we have drawn the attention of local governments, especially in touristic destinations, and offered solutions for the emergence of similar projects to solve the problems that arise in destinations. The study will contribute to the literature at a fundamental level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In recent years, studies on the sharing economy have shown that the concept is not only used as an alternative to individualistic consumption but also by public institutions and organizations, local governments, NGOs, etc., in destinations. It has attracted the attention of many segments and has started to play an active role in eliminating some economic, social, and environmental problems that arise in destinations (ShareHub, 2012; ShareNL, 2013; Munirent, 2014). In terms of touristic destinations, the sharing economy increases the supply of touristic products (accommodation, transportation, guidance, i.e), especially during periods of high demand, and allows the resources to be channeled to the solution of other social problems or health, education and infrastructure works within the framework of the social state understanding, instead of allocating them to hotel or facility construction. We think that many sharing-based projects that have emerged with the support of local governments are the most crucial indicator of this. However, to cope with problems such as careless use of resources, excessive consumption, and environmental pollution and to make destinations more sustainable, some obstacles (legal difficulties, taxation, etc.) in front of the sharing economy should be removed first. For this, we have developed several recommendations by looking at the existing projects and practices that are already implemented in destinations.

First, what should not be forgotten when it comes to the sharing economy in cities or destinations is that all factors and stakeholders must be taken into account to develop the right strategies for the destination. In addition, since tourism contains many social, economic, and environmental elements, implementing each project often concerns more than one government institution or tourism stakeholder. This situation constitutes a significant obstacle in front of possible projects or applications. For example, the fact that local people share their homes or vehicles with tourists as a solution to accommodation or traffic problems in destinations legally brings ministries, local governments, and public institutions/organizations into conflict. As a matter of fact, when we look at the existing projects that are implemented and well-functioning in the destinations, It is seen that the basis of success is not the decision separations but, on the contrary, decision unions of local governments, government institutions, NGOs, local people, suppliers (internet service provider, etc.), business communities, investors, tourists and ultimately the well-functioning platforms of the sharing economy (ShareHub, 2012; ShareNL, 2013; Munirent, 2014; Toposophy, 2016).

The basis of the sharing economy is the desire and motivation to share. Individuals who do not have the tendency or motivation to share will not take action to use sharing economy applications. At this point, analyzing the sharing economy's environmental, social, and economic effects in terms of the region and explaining its benefits to the local people can create awareness and motivation in individuals to support sharing economy platforms. Of course, only some sharing economy applications or platforms will be suitable for some regions. Therefore, it will be necessary to reveal the sharing economy practices suitable for the destination's current policies and objectives. For example, it would be logical for destinations with traffic problems during peak periods to develop applications to eliminate this problem or support sharing economy applications that are already working well, as in the ShareNL project. However, from time to time, obstacles such as the attitude of the tradespeople, taxation, trust, and pricing, which are in front of the sharing economy, make it challenging to develop sharing economy applications for destinations (Toposophy, 2016). At this point, local governments and legislators should work together to eliminate these problems.

The projects we examined within the scope of the study were revealed in destinations with a high level of technology literacy. Since the sharing economy is a business model that emerged with web 2.0, local people are expected to have sufficient technological literacy to maximize the benefit of this economy in destinations (Belk, 2014; Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014). The sharing economy will not provide sufficient benefits in destinations where technology literacy is low. Thus, before the projects are put forward, the technology literacy of the local people living in the destination should be researched and increased if necessary.

CONCLUSION

The sharing economy has become a popular trend in the tourism industry, and many destinations are implementing various sharing economy projects to improve the visitor experience and boost economic growth. These projects can range from community-based initiatives such as peer-to-peer accommodation and transportation services to larger-scale projects such as the development of co-working spaces and sustainable tourism initiatives. Munirent, ShareHub, and ShareNL are examples of sharing economy platforms implemented in different destinations worldwide. Each platform has its unique features and focuses on various aspects of the sharing economy. We have shown that these projects positively impact tourists and local communities and support local governments, local businesses, and economies while providing more affordable and authentic tourism experiences and services to tourists and residents. However, it is noted that the success of these projects will depend on factors such as the

destination's suitability for the projects, the level of support from local stakeholders, and the ability to market and promote the project effectively. However, we should point out that these platforms also come with particular challenges, such as legal issues, data privacy, competition with traditional industries, and the security and maintenance of shared assets. Overall, Munirent, ShareHub, and ShareNL are innovative solutions that have the potential to significantly improve the tourism experience and local services for both tourists and locals. Although, to increase the benefits to be obtained from this economic model in destinations, it is crucial to further research and evaluate the sharing economy projects in destinations and to implement similar projects.

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