

## **Evaluation of Natural, Cultural and Visual Values in Terms of Alternative Tourism in the Example of Kemaliye (Erzincan/Turkey)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, world countries have realised the importance of natural, cultural and visual reserves they have, and are in attempts to make sustainable planning efforts by which these resources can be evaluated economically. Alternative tourism form is the most valid approach considered in this respect. Today, alternative tourism is also defined in various studies with the terms such as eco-tourism and soft-tourism. In this study, the focus is on the aspect of ecotourism which both protects and evaluates the ecology of an area and contributes to the economy of the native people in the area. By this approach, it was attempted to put forward the alternative tourism potentials of the district of Kemaliye and its proximity, which has socio-economical problems in both its urban and rural areas; highly precious natural, cultural and visual values; and is a member of European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR). From the results of the study, when considered the natural, socio-cultural, recreational tourism and visual reserve values of Kemaliye and its proximity entirely, it was found that the district has very important alternative tourism potentials. For the study area, 19 different alternative tourism forms were offered by considering the natural, cultural and visual values of the area and their suitability for the area was determined in percentages. The most suitable alternative tourism activities for the districts are mountaineering (88%), trekking (88%) and photo safari (86%). In the study, some suggestions about the preservation of the ecological and cultural values related to the alternative tourism practices were presented.

**Key words:** Alternative tourism, ecotourism, natural and cultural values, visual researches, Kemaliye, Turkey

### **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism is a rapidly developing sector all over the world in especially the last years. This sector, which takes place in the countries' policies especially with its economic benefits, has become an industry in which ecological environments can be used by managing both economy and ecology of the areas.

The concept of tourism is based on environment. Environment comprises all of the natural, cultural and visual reserves. Natural reserves include the water resources such as seas, rivers and lakes; areas with conservation status; forests and jungles; natural marvels and interesting natural formations. These are the most utilised, consumed and destructed reserves by the tourism industry. Cultural reserves refer to the monumental structures of past and existent civilisations; civil architectural samples; historical urban tissues; archaeological sites; past and living cultures and folklores of areas [1]. Visual reserves are the scenic resources that offer natural and cultural values together or distinctly; have visual attractions and affect humans.

### **SUSTAINABILITY AND TOURISM**

Sustainability is a term that refers to the preservation of an existing thing in its present form providing opportunities to be used in the future without destroying its originality. Sustainability in tourism is the evaluation of the reserves utilised in it with this approach.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), World Tourism Organization (WTO) and Earth Council, sustainable tourism is the form of tourism which meets the needs of visitors and the native people in a district, by considering conservation, increasing the opportunities about traditions [2].

Researchers on the conservation of nature also consider the alternative tourism to be a tool for the sustainable development. In order to make sustainable tourism, a series of planning efforts should be performed in environmental, economical and social terms [3].

Sustainability in tourism can only be realised with the management of values that constitute the base for tourism [2,3,4,5-6].

In the ecotourism developed as an alternative to mass tourism and promoted to improve by local governments all over the world, main source for the tourism is natural values [7,8,9,10-11]. It is a tourism form that supports the sustainability in tourism [9,12-13], provides peace and the improvement of sustainability [2]. According to Cai [14], alternative tourism, a sustainable form of tourism in especially the developing countries, has been expanding for the last decade.

Many authors stated that ecotourism is an important tourism form that can increase the value of the areas that haven't yet faced with deterioration [15], support the conservation, ethics and ecological perspectives [16] and contribute to economies with planning efforts [15-17]. In addition, this kind of tourism can produce solutions to the problems of mass tourism [18]. Tourism is very effective on the progression of the rural economies and offers the economical opportunities for the native people [19-20].

It was focused that ecotourism has important and direct effects on the social and local economic life [3,12,14,21,22,23,24,25-26]; can contribute to the functions of the ecosystem and the preservation of the biodiversity [27]; is a framework program that constitute the balance between preservation and development [12,28,29,30-31]; and a planned management system [32].

Ecotourism supports the synergic relationship between local people and tourism; constitutes the balance between the preservation and development; and it is an effective management supportive effort [33]. With the interaction taking place people and ecosystem [8], the relationship between the contributions of ecotourism to local people and conservation concepts was analysed experimentally [3,12-25]. Because of the ecotourism, natural reserves are evaluated with the principles of the conservation of natural resources [24,34-35]. Priskin [36] determined the natural reserve values of the area with the aim of evaluating and improving the tourism industry based on nature.

Among the conserved areas national parks are cultural inheritance areas [37-38] and these areas, having a very high potential for ecotourism, are evaluated for the conservation of traditional structure [39-40]. According to Davison and Preston [41], the compounds giving the open spaces their values are recreational, visual, water and cultural reserves. In this study it was aimed to 1) put forward the natural, cultural and visual reserves of the district and its proximity, 2) offer suggestions about the management of these reserves by determining the alternative tourism potentials that will support economy of the area, with the opinion of evaluating the reserves in the area.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study area is the district of Kemaliye and its proximity, governed by the city of Erzincan. The study area is on the north-east border of the East Anatolian geographical region of Turkey and it is located in  $39^{\circ} 15' 00''$  northern latitudes and  $38^{\circ} 30' 00''$  eastern longitudes with an altitude of 950 m (Figure 1) [42]. The surface area is  $1,007 \text{ km}^2$  [43].



Figure 1. The location of Kemaliye in Turkey

The district is located on a very steep slope formed by Munzur limestone ( $15^{\circ}$ - $30^{\circ}$ ). For this, the land area suitable for agriculture is limited. Most of the soil is V or VII class. Areas in these classes often suit for the recreation and tourism purposes [44].

In the district of Kemaliye, where a yearly decreasing population trend is seen, economy depends on agriculture and livestock. People who cannot live on these two occupations choose to immigrate to different areas. If the natural, cultural and visual values the district has are evaluated in the respect of alternative tourism, the district can be developed economically with these reserves. Basic materials of the study are all the natural, cultural and visual values forming the landscape characteristics of the district and its proximity.

With the surface surveys on the field, the areas having visual values and alternative tourism potentials were determined. Photographs taken during the surveys were used in the visual quality analysis. In the study, four distinct methods were used. The method of the determination of alternative tourism potentials is the main method used in the study and the analysis of the natural, socio-cultural and recreational tourism reserve values; analysis of the visual reserve values and sociological survey study are the supportive methods for the basic method.

In the study, natural, cultural and visual reserves were investigated. These reserves are the basis for recreational potentials of the study area. For this, the investigations about the study area were designed in four stages;

**Analysis of the natural, socio-cultural and recreational tourism reserve values:** At the first stage of the study, natural, socio-cultural and recreational tourism reserves were studied. Information obtained is considered as the reserve values supporting the recreational tourism. In the determination of the natural and cultural reserve values, geological, soil, topographical, hydrographical and transportation maps with various scales were studied.

For the natural reserve values, climate, geological features, water resources, surface structures, soil properties, natural vegetation and animal diversity were taken into consideration. For the socio-cultural and recreational tourism

values, historical development, historical structure, canyon and caves, accessibility, population, socio-economical structure, urban tissue, existing recreational areas, villages, festivals and accommodation facilities of the area were surveyed.

**Assessment of the visual reserve values:** At the second stage of the study, in order to detect the visual reserve values, accepted as an important compound of the alternative tourism potential, visual quality assessment method was used considering the related studies in the literature [45,46,47,48,49,50,51-52].

Visual quality assessment was performed by a questionnaire conducted to five different groups after the classification of the photographs according to preference diversity for them and means were found.

Landscape views of the district and its proximity were evaluated in seven categories considering the natural and cultural basis of the area. Consequently, one of these views belonging to these groups was considered as the most quality view in each category.

**Sociologic survey (questionnaires conducted to district people and visitors):** At the third stage of the study, a questionnaire was completed to detect the socio-cultural data and evaluation of the people about the topic. Totally 200 questionnaire forms were completed by 125 native people and 75 visitors.

**Determination of the tourism potential:** With this method, the most suitable alternative tourism forms for the area and natural and cultural factors affecting the tourism activities were determined. Numerical results of the weighed suitability values for suitable alternative tourism activities that can be performed in the area were determined and their suitability conditions were presented.

There are natural and cultural factors affecting the applicability of the alternative tourism forms. Coefficients for these natural and cultural factors were determined by evaluating the views of the expert landscape architects on recreational tourism planning concept. These experts defined the coefficients giving the scores between 1 and 5 to the natural and cultural factors. Means of the scores they defined were detected as coefficients.

## RESULTS

Water reserves, geological structures, fauna and flora in the study area are rare not only in its region but in Turkey. There are cultural treasures, such as traditional houses, urban tissue and historical remains, in the region formed by Turks, Armenians and Romans living together for centuries. Visual reserves formed by cultural and natural values are worth seeing. Natural, cultural and visual values and alternative tourism potentials of the study area are presented below.

### Natural and cultural reserve values of the study area

Natural reserve values in the study area are very important resources for the alternative tourism. Although its surroundings have continental climatic features, the district centre and its proximity have Mediterranean climatic features in and on the valley bottom [53]. Differences in the climatic features area caused from its proximity to the dam lake of Keban and different altitudes (950m).

Fauna; study area is richer in the animal diversity than its surrounding. Animals that emigrated to south from northern countries in the glacial periods and to northern countries in interglacial periods sheltered in the Kemaliye Valley and afterwards they found suitable areas at suitable elevations for themselves [53]. Wild mount goats (*Capra aegagrus aegagrus* Erxbelen),



Figure 2. Natural and cultural reserve values of the study area (Original)

which live on the borders of Elazığ, Tunceli and Erzincan and must be conserved for biodiversity, live in the study area [54].

Flora; Kemaliye and its proximity own a very diverse plant reserve due to the climatic conditions, soil, geomorphologic properties and water reserves. Biological reserves enriched with three important events, which are immigrations in glacial and interglacial periods, agriculture and landscape planning [53]. In the study area 308 plant species were determined [55], 61 of which are endemic and 8 are rare.

In the formation of the physical structures, streams played a very important role. Stream network is formed by the river Karasu as main artery and Küçükdere, Kadıgözü Stream, Sütluçeşme Stream, Hasan stream, Koçan stream and Pegir-Ariki stream connecting perpendicularly with it. Interesting geologic and geomorphologic structures of the study area increase the natural richness. Karanlık canyon and caves in Kemaliye are important for the alternative tourism in the district. The canyon, named differently as Karasu Canyon, shelters various animal species and pulls attractions for its visual characters. There are many caves, most of which are inaccessible, in the area. The number of accessible ones is 22 and they are precious for the cave tourism.

The district of Kemaliye is of a traditional settlement feature that carries the historic cultural traces in its structure. These traces can be seen either in whole town or on its architecture. Traditional Kemaliye houses, which own these details in their architectural structures, are unique examples of the harmony between natural landscape reserves (water resources, surface structure etc.) and architectural structures. However, Kemaliye houses are the real representatives of the housing group which was formed in Anatolia in Turkish Age. Kemaliye is on the border point between the “Region of Unique Anatolian Synthesis” and “Cross Region” [56].

Taşyolu has an important role in the transportation system of Kemaliye and it is also an important recreational reserve. This transportation line presents the most important natural reserves (e.g. canyons, caves, natural plant and animal diversities) in the area to the users. Cultural wealth of the area is reflected by historical structures present in the centre and villages of the district, such as mosques, tombs and churches.

#### Visual reserve values of the area

Assessment of the landscape in visual term is evaluated in the scope of psycho-physical approaches. Quality in visual term is a concept having relativity in its definition and a scene or an object in the sight of a person is assessed according to the quality criteria of the same person. Visual reserves attract and fascinate people and sense them the natural and cultural values.

The aim of visual quality assessment carried out for the area is to determine the visual values of the landscape views in Kemaliye in the scope of psycho-physical landscape choice model by asking the choices of people seeing the scenes. With the visual quality assessment three scene types which were given the highest scores were determined. The highest scores were received by Urban Scenes 3 (US3) (Visual Quality Point-VQP=5.9400), followed by Geological Structure Scene-5 (GSS5) (VQP=5.9200) and Natural Scenes-3 (NS3) (VQP=5.9133). From these results, it was stated that urban tissue, geological structure and natural reserves are also of visual value. From this point of view, it can be said that the most quality area in visual respect is urban area of Kemaliye in the study area. All these reserves in the area are of potential for the alternative tourism. Considering the reserves and alternative tourism activities performed presently in the study area, suitable alternative tourism activities suggested for the area were determined (Table 2).

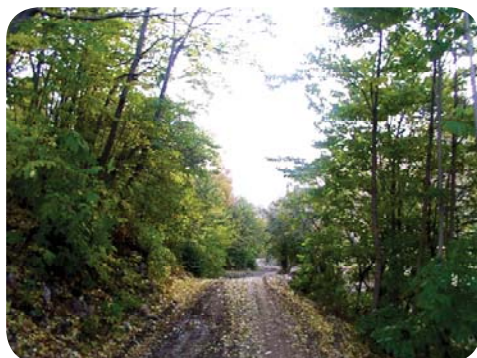


Figure 3. Visual values of the study area (Original)



should gain sensibility for the natural cultural values; legal basis for the conservation and utilisation should be constituted; people in the area should participate in the decision making process for the proposed tourism forms and have economic benefits from this attempt.

In the frame of a planning attempt, basic problems of the area should be discussed and in this plan; (1) existing reserves should be inventoried and evaluated by conserving (2) present problems blocking the development of the tourism in the area should be solved and future problems to appear with the development of tourism in the area should be predetermined and cares for them should be taken and (3) in order to make natural, cultural and visual reserves sustainable, the proposed activities for the area should be realised by considering the physical, ecological and social load capacity of the area. Sun and Walsh [57], in their study on the environmental effects of tourism, focused on the effects of tourism on vegetation and soil structure and stated that these effects may be biologic and physical. Sowman [58] stated in the study on coastal areas that in order to provide sustainability in tourism physical, ecological and social load capacity of an area should be determined. According to Yu et al. [36], sustainability in tourism are provided with the constitution of long-term suitable land use policies.

Alternative tourism has the key role for peace and improvement of the sustainability [2]. To make peace prevalent in the region and to use the reserves in sustainable way, tourism forms adopting sustainability as principle should be practised in the area. From the results obtained in the study it may be concluded that the study area must be evaluated for the alternative tourism by planning and managing it. With a conscious management and tourism activities, natural, cultural; visual reserves of the area will be recognised; reserves will receive their deserved values and be transformed to the next generations and people in the area with economic problems will get rid of them.

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