

## A STUDY ON EXPLORING THE TOURISM POTENTIAL OF ALTINKÖY AS A RURAL TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY AREA

Ayşe Atar Yılmaz<sup>a,\*</sup>, Seda Özdemir Akgül<sup>b</sup>, Muharrem Tuna<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Tourism Management, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Turkey  
ORCID: 0000-0002-9060-6684 / e-mail: ayse.atar@omu.edu.tr

<sup>b</sup>Department of Tourism Management, Selcuk University, Konya, Turkey  
ORCID: 0000-0003-4482-4119 / e-mail: sedaozdemir@selcuk.edu.tr

<sup>c</sup>Department of Tourism Management, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Ankara, Turkey  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5526-7122 / e-mail: muharrem.tuna@hbv.edu.tr

### KEYWORDS

Altinköy  
Open-air Village Museum  
Rural Tourism  
Leisure time  
Recreation

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyze the effect of perception of social media users on travel Influencer. This study aims to explore the tourism potential of Altındag in the light of the tourism values embraced by Altinköy which is one of both rural and recreational tourism areas, and to reveal the perspectives of local community and visitors on the rural tourism area in the region. In addition, to reveal in which leisure timeframe the visitors and staff in Altinköy are involved within the framework of the Theory of Leisure time by Dumazedier, who is one of the leisure-time theorists, is among the recreation-based purposes of the current study. The study was conducted in Altinköy located in Altındag, Ankara, which is considered to be one of the potential rural tourism areas in Turkey, a qualitative interview technique, with 103 individuals in total. The findings obtained as a result of the analyses point to important results supported by the suggestions in the conclusion section on the contribution to the development of rural tourism in the region, the promotion and branding of the region. According to research results, the staff in Altinköy are "half-free time" users according to Dumazedier's leisure time theory. On the other hand, Altinköy visitors meet the four basic characteristics highlighted in Dumazedier's leisure time theory and acts following the characteristics of "free time" user during recreational activities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is considered as a type of tourism that is dependent on natural resources, as well as closely associated with rural settlements. In other words, rural tourism refers to the attractiveness of nature or rural-based areas such as villages, farms, adventure and sports venues (Irvine & Anderson, 2004; Situmorang, Trilaksono, & Japutra, 2019). Since rural tourism refers to the attractiveness of adventure and sport venues which are considered as a part of recreational areas, it can be included in the scope of recreation, as well. Ecotourism, rural tourism, soft tourism, alternative tourism and many other similar tourism terms describe recreational tourism activities organized in environmental-rural areas (Komppula, 2014; Cucari, Wankowicz, & De Falco, 2019). Thanks to the advantages it brings along, rural tourism has been growing faster than other types of alternative tourism in Turkey. While contributing to the development of the tourism economy in the country, it promotes the existing tourism mobility by introducing such elements as promotion, attractiveness and development of the region. In addition, the development of rural tourism increases the number of well-informed tourist groups in the short term and contributes to the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage and ensures rural development in the long term (Bălan & Burghilea, 2015; Jesus & Franco, 2016; Mitchell & Shannon, 2018). From this point of view, the purpose of most of the rural tourism-based

hospitality enterprises and tourism destinations is to ensure the revisit of the tourists having visited the region in the past, to benefit from the advantages of rural tourism through attracting new tourists to the region, and to increase the preferability of the mentioned tourism destinations (Adeyinka-Ojo & Khoo-Lattimore, 2013; Adeyinka-Ojo, 2018; Northcote & Macbeth, 2006).

One of the regions promoting rural tourism is Altinköy, which has put into practice a different touristic activity plan by presenting visitors the village life of 100 years ago, and thus, has been getting flooded by visitors. Located in Altındag district of Ankara, Turkey, Altinköy reflects the village life in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, and thus, not only provides visitors with memorable experiences but also helps them enjoy their free time. Due to various resources of high value such as the way of preserving customs and traditions and historical and cultural characteristics it embodies, the preferability of Altinköy among other tourism destinations increases day by day. The purpose of the current study is to explore the tourism potential of Altinköy, Ankara, to protect the cultural values of Altinköy, to ensure the transfer of natural and

\*Corresponding Author.

Received 15.08.2021; Received in revised form 08.10.2021; Accepted 14.10.2021

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e-ISSN: 2687 - 3737 / © 2021 The Authors. Published by [Anadolu University](https://anadolu.edu.tr/).

<https://doi.org/10.48119/toleho.980360>

cultural heritage to the next generations, and to contribute to further development of rural tourism in Altinköy.

Based on Dumazedier's perspective of leisure time, the following is the first research question of the study:

*RQ1: In which leisure time frame are the visitors and staff in Altinköy, which is considered to be a recreational and rural tourism area, involved within the framework of the Theory of Leisure time by Dumazedier (1960)?*

In the light of Figure 2, researchers discussed under which sub-theme the research would be carried out, and consequently, the current study which has similarities with the study by Aytuğ and Mikaeili (2017) was conducted by focusing on the theme of tourism potential. From this point of view, the second research question is the following:

*RQ2: From the visitors' and staff's point of view, does Altinköy, which is one of the recreational and rural tourism areas hosting various recreational activities, have a sufficient volume of tourism potential?*

When the studies on rural tourism in Figure 1 were reviewed no study dealing with both recreational activity and rural tourism within the scope of Dumazedier theory could be found. In addition, the current study is important because it reveals the tourism potential of a region that is both a recreational activity and a rural tourism area. The fact that it will contribute to both recreation and rural tourism literature reflects the originality of the current study.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Along with the change in consumers' understanding of travel nowadays, the 3S (sea, sun, sand)-based holiday options, which are considered under the umbrella of mass tourism, have undergone a downward transformation in recent years (Hacıoğlu and Avcıkurt, 2008). Following the announcement by the World Tourism Organization in 1995 concerning the damages of mass tourism on nature and the environment, the interest of the environmentally-aware consumer groups have begun to gravitate towards alternative tourism products and services that would minimize the harm to the environment and nature (Dursun, Demirel, Zengin, & Batman, 2017). One of the alternative types of tourism that consumers have leaned towards is rural tourism that allows activities in rural areas, minimizes the harm to the environment and nature, and provides sustainability (Amir, Ghapar, Jamal, & Ahmad, 2015; Fons, Fierro, & Patiño, 2011; Su, Wall, Wang, & Jin 2019).

The growing interest in rural areas over time has led to an increase in the number of definitions of rural tourism in the literature. However, there is no commonly-accepted definition of rural tourism and it seems quite difficult to come up with a definition of generic nature (Tchetchik, Fleischer, & Finkelshtain, 2008). World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2004) defines rural tourism as a concept that is dependent on rural life in a region which is located at a rural center and offers particular activities and cultural heritage. On the other hand, the European Union defines the concept of rural tourism as the total of activities taking place in small settlement areas in which small-size enterprises offer tourism services

in accordance with the expectations and demands of the tourists who have the desire to spend good quality of time in a way of interblended with local values provided by the rural area (European Commission, 1999). Rural tourism is also described as a type of tourism in which agrarian (agricultural and animal husbandry) practices are an economic source in the region where these practices are common (Uçar, Çeken, & Ökten, 2010).

Rural tourism brings together people, place, consumption, mixed cultures, values, expectations and experiences and offers tourists a broad recreational area to discover (Edwards, Griffin, & Hayllar, 2008). In the scope of this alternative type of tourism, tourists are provided with the opportunity to spend time in rural areas such as recreational areas, bazaars, forests and highlands. Thus, not only the underdeveloped touristic regions are promoted for rural tourism but also new strategies are adopted to order to contribute to the further development of the region as a rural tourism destination, to provide the local community with employment opportunities and to generate additional income in the region (Dursun et al., 2017).

The fact that it is a type of tourism immune to seasonality generates employment and income sources for local people, promotes a sustainable tourism approach (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008; Daugstad, 2008; Démurger et al., 2010; Tang, Bennett, Xu, & Li, 2013; Xue, Kerstetter, & Hunt, 2017), serves as an important advertising tool in the promotion of the country, embodies various and authentic recreational activities, facilitates communication through socialization, and allows active recreational activities as well as passive activities in the region can be listed as the main characteristics of rural tourism (Ahipaşaoğlu & Çeltik 2006: p. 87; Dursun et al., 2017; Hacıoğlu & Avcıkurt, 2008; Kiper, 2006: p. 35; Soykan, 2006).

Many countries in Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Germany, England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal etc.) have made notable progress in rural tourism development (Randelli, Romei, & Tortora, 2014; Soykan, 2006). Some rural tourism destinations in Turkey where recreational activities frequently take place are İzmir/Şirince, Bursa/Cumalıkızık Village, Trabzon/Uzungöl, Karabük/Safranbolu, Ankara/Beypazarı, and Fethiye/Kayaköy (Avcıkurt & Köroğlu, 2008).

As the studies before the 1980s discussing the concept of rural tourism were reviewed individually, it was observed that the concept was never examined as a concept of tourism on its own (Edwards et al., 2008). Examining the studies carried out on the concept of rural tourism since it first emerged, the following subjects stand out as the most common: nostalgia (Christou, Farmaki, & Evangelou, 2018), sustainability (Amir et al., 2015; Bravi & Gasca, 2014; Campón-Cerro, Hernández-Mogollón, & Alves, 2017; Cucari et al., 2019: p. 105; Farmaki, 2013; Fons et al., 2011; George, 2010; Su et al., 2019), marketing (Adeyinka-Ojo, Khoo-Lattimore, & Nair, 2014; Eusébio, Carneiro, Kastenholz,

Figueiredo, & da Silva, 2017; Falak, Chiun, & Wee, 2014; Zhou, 2014), tourism potential (Aytuğ & Mikaeili, 2017), the effect of local administrations (Situmorang, Trilaksono, & Japutra, 2019; Wang & Yotsumoto, 2019), regional/economic development (Bălan & Burghilea, 2015; Gao & Wu, 2017; Guzman-

Parra, Quintana-García, Benavides- Velasco, & Vila-Oblitas, 2015; Rid, Ezeudji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014; Snieška, Barkauskienė, & Barkauskas, 2014), stakeholder cooperation (Jesus & Franco, 2016), micro-macro environmental factors (Barkauskas, Barkauskienė, & Jasinskas, 2015; Gao & Wu, 2017; Kelliher, Reinl, Johnson, & Joppe, 2018; Paresishvili, Kvaratskhelia, & Mirzaeva, 2017), rural transformation (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Gilbert & Hancock, 2006; Gotham, 2007; Li, Ryan, & Cave, 2016), innovation-technology (Cosma, Paun, Bota, & Fleseriu, 2014; Zhang, Yu, Wang, & Gao, 2018), local community perspective (Christou & Sharpley, 2019; Falak et al., 2014; Prabhakaran, Nair, & Ramachandran, 2014; Zheng, Ritchie, Benckendorff, & Bao, 2019), the relationship between rural tourism and mass tourism (Hernández et al., 2016), and visitor perception and satisfaction (Campón-Cerro et al., 2017; Christou & Sharpley, 2019). Sub-themes of the studies carried out on the concept of rural tourism are presented in Figure 1 below.

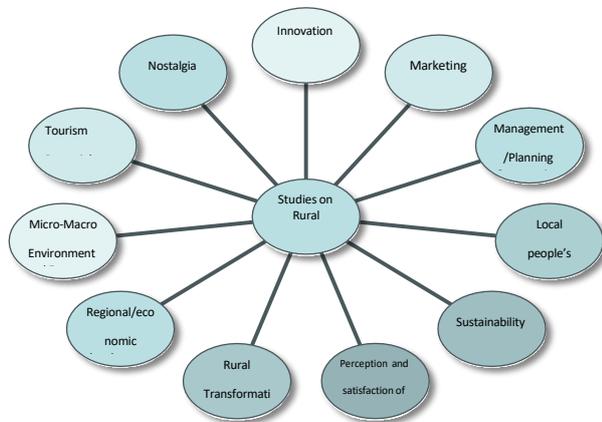


Figure 1: Sub-themes of the studies on rural tourism. Reference: The figure was compiled by the researchers

Dumazedier (1960a) defines leisure time as a period, in which individuals take advantage with the motivation of entertainment, relaxation, social acquisition or self-development. Dumazedier claims that certain characteristics must be present to call a period leisure time, and divides individuals into two groups according to their way of using time: free-time user and half-free time user. According to Dumazedier, an activity should reflect four main characteristics (free, non-utilitarian, pleasure-oriented and individual) to be classified as a leisure activity. He claims that any activity where these four main characteristics do not exist together cannot be described as leisure time. Although Dumazedier set these four characteristics as a condition to call a period of time as leisure/free time, there are certain types of activities that cannot be put under any category in the scope of these characteristics. For instance, an activity can be realized not only for pleasure but also for deriving benefit, which highlights the complexity of the situation. On the other hand, Dumazedier uses the term “half-free time” to define such cases with complex nature. In other words, if an activity includes both one of the characteristics of leisure time, (e.g. pleasure), and other features (e.g. utilitarianism), the time frame in which such activities are enjoyed is referred to as

“half-free time” or “half-leisure time” by Dumazedier.

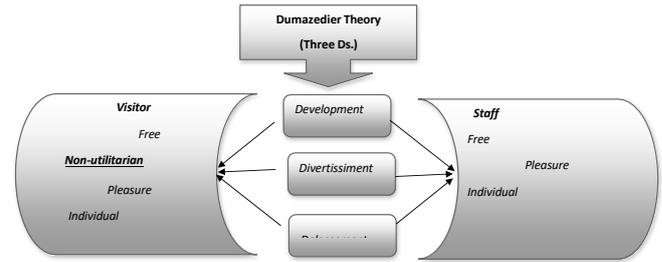


Figure 2: Leisure-time model with toward of Dumazedier theory Reference: The figure was compiled by the researchers

In addition, in his book “Toward a society of leisure” (1967), Dumazedier stresses that leisure time should involve spiritual, mental and physical development and lays down the functions of leisure time under the title of “Three Ds”, namely, *Désœuvrement*, *Divertissement*, and *Development*. Since the functions in questions can represent both types of respondents (visitor/personnel) in the current study, the researchers incorporated these functions into the integrated model of Dumazedier’s Leisure Time Theory (Figure 2).



Figure 3: Map of Altinköy which is one of the recreational places in Ankara/Turkey

One of the rural tourism destinations hosting recreational activities is Open-air Village Museum in Altinköy, Ankara, which is subject to the current study. The open-air museum along with its attractions such as forests, parks, lakes, chapel and tower offers an experience of unique and old village life and draws the attention of many visitors with different tourist typologies. Altinköy Open-air Village Museum stands out as the first open-air village museum in Turkey. The presence of traditional ‘çanti’ houses within the boundaries of this open-air museum which are among cultural heritage properties in Turkey and the fact that each house in the museum area is attributed with a specific theme have enhanced the recreational and cultural diversity in the region (Figure 3).

Display of the village life by local people wearing local clothes in harmony with the traditions of the country, the museum of village toys, the children’s activity house where childhood games of the past can be played, the sustainability of some disappearing jobs (blacksmith, whitesmith, weaver,

Hammersmith, baker, village guard, etc.), various branches of art that would leave a smile on the lips when remembered (tile-making, silk weaving, rosary and knife making, ringstone processing, horn comb and end-flute making, mosaic, felt and spinning-ball making, etc.) can be listed as some examples of the various recreational activities offered to visitors in Altinkoy Open Air Museum (Table 1).

Table 1: Recreational areas to visit in Altinköy Open-air museum

Kına Mansion	Elementary School
Windmills and Watermills	Village Bakery
Workshops	Metal and Tin-Processing Shops
Suspension Bridge	Laundry place
Village Coffeeshouse	Stone Oven
Ova Mosque	Summer Range
Village Grocery Store	Traditional Village Houses (Çantı Houses)
Souvenir Shop	Gate of Altinköy

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. The Study Site

A field study was conducted between August and November, 2018 in Altinköy/Turkey and nearby recreational areas with the purpose of revealing the tourism potential of the region, and relevant stakeholders (local community, visitors, personnel working in the area), who were selected via convenience sampling method which is one of the sub-groups of non-probabilistic sampling, were interviewed. Considering the fact that the individuals interviewed within the scope of the current study may not have sufficient knowledge about the concepts of recreational area and rural tourism, the qualitative interview technique was preferred. Before being interviewed face-to-face, the participants were given basic information about the terms that they were not familiar with, and then the researchers proceeded with the interview process.

#### 3.2. Data Collection and Analyses

Semi-structured interview as a frequently used technique in the scope of qualitative research methods was adopted in the current study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The data were obtained through a semi-structured interview form. The convenience sampling method, a type of non-probabilistic sampling, was used. By applying this qualitative technique (non-probabilistic sampling), a panorama of the existing phenomena can be obtained. The analyses of the subjects covered in qualitative research are revealed with all their details and features (Marshall, 1996; Nastasi, 1998; Robinson, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

The research sample consists of 103 (53 visitor, 50 staff) individuals in total including the staff working in the field of recreational rural tourism and the visitors visiting the region, who were selected via non-probabilistic sampling method.

The sample covers male and female respondents within the age range of 18-50. Interviews were held in August-November 2018. According to Dumazedier,

an activity should reflect four main characteristics (free, non-utilitarian, pleasure-oriented and individual) to be classified as a leisure activity. These characteristics represent both types of participants (visitors/staff) included in the study. Dumazedier states that a time when these four features do not coexist cannot be considered as leisure time. The staff who visit Altinköy realize the four basic features in Dumazedier's leisure time theory during their recreational activities and act in accordance with the definition of leisure during recreational activities. The leisure time periods of the visitors and staff of Altinköy were evaluated in light of the leisure time theory developed by Dumazedier (1960).

Table 2: Findings on Visitors in Research Sample

Visitor		
Gender	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Woman	38	71
Man	15	29
Education		
Primary School	3	6
High School	5	9
Associate Degree	--	--
Bachelor's Degree	43	81
Master's Degree	1	2
PhD	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3: Demographic Findings on Staff in Altinköy

Staff		
Gender	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Woman	40	80
Man	10	20
Education		
Primary School	25	50
High School	11	22
Associate Degree	3	6
Bachelor's Degree	11	22
Master's Degree	--	--
PhD	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

The sample covers male and female respondents within the age range of 18-50. Interviews were held in August-November 2018. According to Dumazedier, an activity should reflect four main characteristics (free, non-utilitarian, pleasure-oriented and individual) to be classified as a leisure activity. These characteristics represent both types of participants (visitors/staff) included in the study. Dumazedier states that a time when these four features do not coexist cannot be considered as leisure time. The staff who visit Altinköy realize the four basic features in Dumazedier's leisure time theory during their recreational activities and act in accordance with the

definition of leisure during recreational activities. The leisure time periods of the visitors and staff of Altınköy were evaluated in light of the leisure time theory developed by Dumazedier (1960).

The research questions in the interview form were created with the data obtained from the literature review. In addition to the basic questions, in accordance with the nature of the semi-structured interview, at the points deemed necessary by the researcher, some follow-up questions were also asked to provide details on the subject, depending on the course of the interview, and thus, more detailed data were obtained. In the development process of the semi-structured interview form, the form was presented to expert's opinion and the experts were asked to express their opinions and recommendations with specific remarks as "Appropriate", "Not appropriate" and "Revisions recommended". Clear and comprehensible instructions and items were acquired in accordance with the opinions and recommendations by the experts. The questions were shown to two academics to get expert opinion on their clarity and suitability. It was considered more appropriate to combine questions that had the same or similar answers. Throughout this process, reliability of the questions was tested via Miles and Huberman (1994)'s formula [ $\text{Reliability} = \text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement})$ ], and the items with a coefficient of fit fixed at 0.70 and above were included into interview form. The value of the coefficient of fit indicates that interview questions can be used at high reliability.

Content analysis was performed on the obtained data. QSR NVivo 10, the computer-based qualitative analysis program, was used to facilitate encoding of the data. This program represents an inductive coding process that focuses on identifying key concepts, ideas, or justifications that are clearly expressed in the data, rather than categorizing them using pre-existing codes or questions (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). Sentences are written one below the other. The similar statements were grouped together. Themes were created for the grouped statements. Other researchers working in the same field were consulted about the statement groups and the themes to ensure reliability. The first phase of coding begins by identifying the wide range of temporary themes of all three authors on research questions. In this process, the researchers were asked to include the metaphors and motives of the interviewees in one of the draft themes/categories that they had already listed, or to create a new theme. The simultaneous coding efforts of all three authors ensured the consistency in the coding process (often referred to as inter-code reliability). No inconsistencies were spotted along the coding

process, and the process was finalized by the creation of a codebook that includes common definitions for each code (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken 2002). After the finalization of the coding process by the researchers, the findings were concluded based on the analysis and interpretation of the data. The findings were analyzed and interpreted separately in terms of the staff and visitors in Altınköy.

#### 4. FINDINGS

The interpretations of the data obtained in the interviews with the staff in Altınköy and the visitors who both living in Ankara and coming from outside Ankara to explore the tourism potential of Altınköy are presented separately. Of the 53 visitors, 29% were male and 71% were female. As regards the educational status of the visitors, 81% of them had university degrees, 9% were high school graduates, 6% were primary school graduates and 2% had master's and doctorate degrees.

It is observed that 74% of the respondents visited Altınköy for the first time, 6% for two times, 7% for three times, 2% for four times, and 11% for five times or more. It was observed that the majority of the visitors participating in the research, which is carried out regardless of occupation, are students (30%), retirees (23%) and teachers (19%).

As a response to the question "Do you think that the number of tourism enterprises and food and beverage facilities in Altınköy is sufficient?", 15% of the respondents responded that the number was sufficient, 33% indicated that the number was insufficient and should be increased, 43% mentioned that the facilities fall short of providing services on the weekends, and 9% recommended enhancing the variety of menu selection rather than increasing the number of facilities.

As a response to the question "Which factor has made you revisit Altınköy?", the majority of the visitors listed the factors as "natural environment", "nostalgic structure", "the presence of green areas", while the rest of the respondents listed "village life", "museums", "having a pleasant time", "fresh air", "curiosity", "entertaining and comfortable", and "low entrance fee" as the factors. With regard to the question "What motivates you to prefer Altınköy?", the visitors selected the following statements evenly (17 respondents per item): "It has a different concept", "It has a relaxing effect", and "It is intertwined with nature". The expressions mentioned the least by the visitors as a response to this question are "Traditional houses", "nostalgic structure" and "breakfast". The expression "Its nature" as an answer to the question "Which characteristics of Altınköy did you like most?" reveals the fact that the most

liked feature of Altinköy is its nature formed in a unique and authentic way.

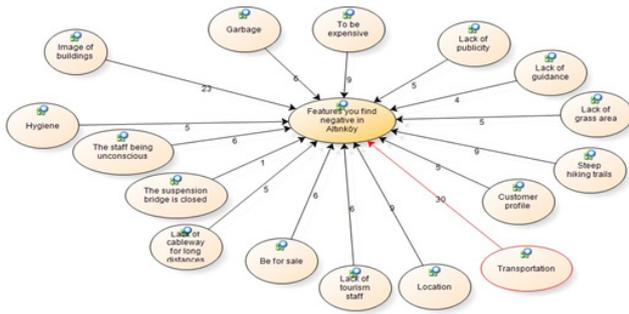


Figure 4: Findings on the characteristics disliked by visitors in Altinköy

In Figure 4, the vast majority of the visitors responded with “Transportation” to the question “What are the disadvantageous parts of Altinköy?” while a small group of visitors pointed out the dysfunctioning of the suspension bridge as a negative aspect of Altinköy. In addition, they reported that the high-rise buildings located outside Altinköy was another problem in the region. Concerning the question “Does Altinköy meet the necessary conditions of accessibility and transportation infrastructure?”, the vast majority of the visitors responded with “The number of buses should be increased to ease the transportation”, while another majority indicated “Infrastructure must be developed and new routes to Altinköy should be determined”. The rest of the respondents indicated that the traveling to Altinköy by bus was difficult.

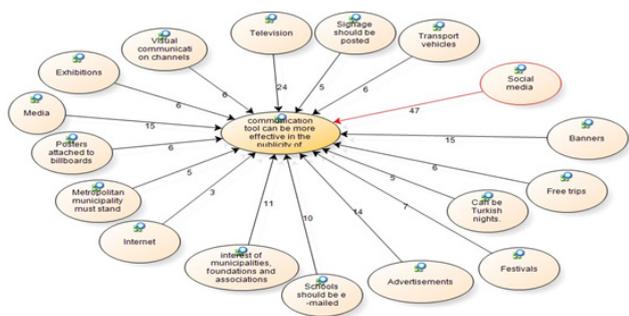


Figure 5: Findings on effective communication tools for the Publicity of Altinköy (Visitor Views)

In Figure 5, concerning the question “Which communication tool do you think would be more effective for the publicity of Altinköy?”, majority of the visitors responded with “social media”, and this recommendation was followed respectively by “Television”, “Media”, “Poster/Banner”, and “Advertisements”. The remaining statements included “Internet” and “The importance of publicity by municipality should be recognized.”

The findings on demographical characteristics

of staff in Altinköy are presented in this study. According to the findings on 50 staff members who were involved in the research, 20% of them are male and 80% are female. When their educational status was examined, it was found that 50% graduated from primary school, 22% from high school and university, and 6% from associate degree programs. As can be seen in Table 7, the vast majority of the staff in Altinköy are chefs (14%), service staff (12%), and kitchen staff (10%).

80% of the staff in Altinköy responded “insufficient on the weekend”, whereas 11% responded “Not enough” and 9% responded “Enough” to the question “Is the number of visitors in Altinköy enough?” In the interviews, the respondents indicated that Altinköy is not frequently visited on weekdays, and the number of visitors on the weekend remains below the expected rate.

As a response to the question “Do you think that the number of tourism enterprises and food & beverage facilities in Altinköy is sufficient?”, 76% of the respondents said that the number is sufficient, 18% indicated that the number is insufficient and should be increased, and 6% mentioned that the facilities fall short of providing services on the weekends. Therefore, the visitors and staff have opposing opinions regarding the sufficiency of tourism/food & beverage facilities in Altinköy.

To the question “What do you think that motivates people to visit Altinköy?”, majority of the staff responded with “It has a nostalgic structure”. “It has a different concept”, “Its nature”, and “Clean-air”. About the question “What do you think are the reasons why people do not visit Altinköy?”, the majority responded with “Lack of publicity” and “Transportation difficulties”. In addition, “Parking problem” and “Entrance Fee” are among the responses of staff to the question on the reasons why people do not visit Altinköy.

In light of the answers to the question “What do you think are the current problems in Altinköy?”, it was concluded that the biggest problem in Altinköy is related to transportation services. It is observed that publicity, infrastructure, and lack of security are the other problems in Altinköy.

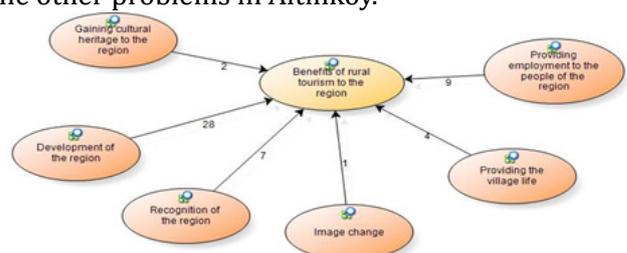


Figure 6: Findings on benefits of rural tourism to

Altindag (Staff Views)

In Figure 6, with regard to the question “What are the benefits of rural tourism to Altindag?”, the majority of the staff responded that Altinköy provides benefits to the region it is located in. Other responses to the question are respectively as follows: “Employing the people in the region”, “Recognition of the region”, “Supporting the village life”, and “Positive image change”. The majority of the responses by the staff in Altinköy to the question “What can/should be done for the publicity of Altinköy?” includes the following recommendations: “Social media use for the publicity of Altinköy”, “Region-specific posters/banners”, and “Active use of media and broadcast channels”.

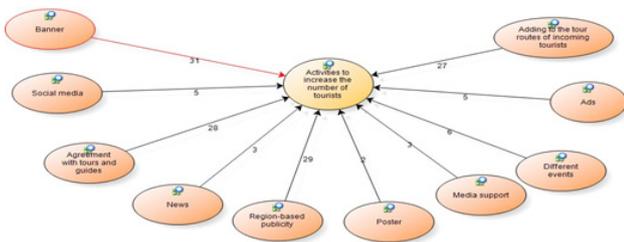


Figure 7: Findings on the Activities to Increase the Number of Tourists in Altinköy (Staff View)

In Figure 7, about the question “What kind of activities are carried out to increase the number of visitors? What do you suggest? ”, the vast majority of the staff responded “Region-specific posters and banners should be used”, “Region-based publicity should be organized and the number of publicity actions should be increased”, “Altinköy should be supported by tours and travel guides”, and “Altinköy should be included in tour routes of tourists visiting Ankara”. In addition, the recommendations by staff in Altinköy to increase the number of visitors include region-specific advertisement, news, social media use for the publicity of Altinköy and several festivals.

**5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1. Conclusions**

The current study aims to explore the tourism potential of Altındağ in the light of the tourism values embraced by Altinköy, which is a rural and recreational tourism area, and to reveal the perspectives of the local community and visitors on this area. In addition, revealing the leisure timeframe, within the framework of the Theory of Leisure time by Dumazedier, of the visitors and staff in Altinköy is among the recreation-based purposes of the current study.

It is crucial to implement policies that contribute to rural development and involve relevant stakeholders

to ensure sustainability in tourism (Cawley & Gillmor, 2008: p. 329). Visitors and staff in Altinköy, which is considered to be both a recreational and rural tourism area and included in the current research, were analyzed in two aspects within the scope of the Leisure Time Theory developed by Dumazedier (1960).

The working people in Altinköy involved in the research, not only derive pleasure but also make financial gains from the individual recreational activities performed during the process of providing information to the visitors and tutoring on the preferred activities. This condition renders the staff in Altinköy “half-free time” user according to Dumazedier’s leisure time theory. On the other hand, Altinköy visitors meet the four basic characteristics highlighted in Dumazedier’s leisure time theory and acts following the characteristics of “free time” user during recreational activities.

In summary, it is concluded that the concept is based on a subjective criterion which can be regarded as ‘the meaning of activity for the person’. In other words, whether a recreational activity is a leisure activity or not is characterized by the person’s perspective on the recreational activity (Neulinger, 1981; Carr, 2017; Kelly, 2019).

According to the results, 80% of the staff in Altinköy analyzed within the scope of the current study indicated that the number of visitors on weekdays was insufficient. What underlies this result could be the fact that the enterprises cannot ensure the required occupancy and reach the desired profit rate.

- The desired occupancy rate can be reached by increasing the volume of promotion activities on Altinköy, which is also considered as a recreational activity area.
- Based on the opinion that the number of visitors is insufficient on weekdays, the insufficient number of visitors along weekdays can be prevented via making an agreement with tour companies and travel guides on promoting the region.

76% of the staff in Altinköy responded “Sufficient” to the question ‘Do you think that the number of tourism enterprises and food & beverage facilities in Altinköy is sufficient?’ whereas 33% of the visitors put forward a counter-view and responded that the number is insufficient and should be increased, and 43% indicated that the number is insufficient on the weekends. From the visitor’s point of view, the reason underlying the insufficiency could be that the enterprises fall short of meeting the expectations (fast service, diversity of menu content, expected quality, insufficient personnel). From the staff’s point of view, on the other hand, the fact that the

presence of new enterprises in the region would bring along the competition and have an impact on financial profits would have stimulated the staff to express a positive view on the number of facilities.

- To eliminate the dissatisfaction of visitors, enterprises may come up with solutions to improve the current situation through fast service-delivery, diverse menu content, and adequate physical conditions (seating area, number of personnel, restrooms)

In the light of the conclusions based on the findings, the most frequently expressed statements by the staff and visitors in Altinköy concerning the reasons motivating individuals to prefer and visit Altinköy are as follows: "having a different concept", "having a nostalgic structure", "having a relaxing impact", "nature" and "clean air".

The research results have revealed not only the fact the factors motivating individuals to prefer/visit Altinköy are "nature-based" but also that Altinköy has an image of the natural environment. Based on this point of view, green areas can be expanded and new natural recreational areas can be set up to sustain the natural environment image and maintain and further increase the preferability of Altinköy, which is defined as both a recreational and rural tourism area. Ashley (2000), Macdonald & Jolliffe (2003: p. 309), Reeder & Brown (2005) and Winters, Corral, & Mora (2013: p. 179) concluded that the effective and rational use of abundant natural resources in the region, as well as the protection, improvement and strengthening of the natural environment, facilitated by rural tourism awareness. Especially, the natural values in the region such as wildlife, landscape, originality, flora and fauna and culture attract tourists. As such, these results support those of the current study.

Based on the research findings, Altinköy as a recreational and rural tourism area has an attractive structure due to its nature, greenery and different concept. Despite its attractive nature, the fact that inaccessibility of Altinköy is perceived as a negative point by visitors, and as the reason underlying the region's not being visited by the staff reveals that this issue is considered as a serious problem by both sides. Consistent with the other findings in the study, another conclusion drawn from the interviews with the staff in Altinköy put forward that the transportation problem is the biggest obstacle in Altinköy. Visitors' responses to the questions on the accessibility of Altinköy point out that transportation infrastructure and accessibility of Altinköy should be improved. In addition, visitors mentioned that high-rise buildings located outside Altinköy is another problem in the region.

- To eliminate the negative environmental

appearance highlighted by the visitors, afforestation practices can be adopted in a way to render invisible the high-rise buildings outside the boundaries of Altinköy. Thus, visitors' perception of the "natural environment" associated with Altinköy will be reinforced.

- Considering the problem of lack of transportation infrastructure, which is considered as a problem both by the visitors and the staff, the transportation infrastructure and the routes to Altinköy should be improved and maintained. To increase the preferability of Altinköy, practices and efforts to ease transportation can be adopted. For busy visit-days, a free shuttle service can also be provided at specific locations. This practice can be expected to have a positive impact on the number of visitors and contribute to the perception and familiarity of Altinköy as a recreational activity area. According to Douglas et al. (2001: 165), rural tourism also contributes to problems such as transportation and inadequacy of promotion, which are stated as the problem of rural areas, and to the development of infrastructure and superstructure opportunities at the attraction.

The visitors mentioned that the most appropriate communication tool to increase publicity of Altinköy is social media. This suggestion is followed by "television", "mass media" and "posters/banners".

- Because social media is the most effective communication tool for the publicity of Altinköy, visitors can be motivated to be online on social media during their visit. The visitors can be encouraged (via awards, discounts etc.) to share location, pictures and videos of Altinköy on the social media.

The responses of staff in Altinköy point out that rural tourism in Altinköy supports employment in Altındag, promotes the region, sustains village life and provides cultural heritage. Holland, Burian, & Dixey (2003) and Winters et al. (2013) also obtained similar results in their studies. According to these results, employment in rural areas (Macdonald & Jolliffe, 2003), additional income and personal income are positively affected by rural tourism activities. It also helps to revive the handicrafts, customs, traditions and cultural identities of the local people. Similarly, according to Leco, Pérez, Hernández, & Campón (2013), all kinds of purchased services such as the sale of handicrafts, the presentation of local dishes, leisure activities, transportation, and shopping support the local economy, the income of the people living in the region, and create direct, indirect and induced effects.

Concerning the recommendations on the publicity of Altinköy, the staff proposed the following options, in decreasing order of importance: "Use of social media to promote Altinköy", "Region-specific

posters/banners”, and “Active use of media”. The staff’s recommendations on increasing the number of tourists in Altınköy are as follows: “Region-specific posters and banners should be used”, “Altınköy-based advertisements should be organized and increased in numbers”, “Altınköy should be supported by travel guides and agencies”, and “Altınköy should be included in the travel routes of tourists visiting Ankara”

- In the light of the recommendations from visitors and staff in Altınköy, a powerful social media effect in relation to the publicity of Altınköy can be provided through close cooperation between visitors and staff.

- Region-specific posters and banners can be disseminated to the entire city to reinforce the effectiveness of publicity.

- Bilateral meetings between the municipality and the travel guides/agencies can be held to find a common ground on including Altınköy into travel routes of tourists.

## 5.2. Theoretical implications

Since the current study merges rural tourism and recreation, it contributes to the theory as well as the practical framework; therefore, it has great importance. The fact that the rural tourism potential which has been emphasized especially for the last ten years, is investigated and discussed based on the concept of recreation and in the light of the theory of leisure time reinforces the originality of the current study. Besides, there are a limited number of studies that combine the tourism potential of rural tourism with the concept of recreation. Researchers can contribute to the theoretical background by way of investigating other recreational areas in their studies focusing on small regions as in this study, and of revealing the degree of familiarity of the region in question. In this research, the data were collected from employees and visitors living in and outside Ankara and have sufficient credibility to add to the theoretical background. The current research expands the knowledge on tourism potential in rural areas.

## 5.3. Practical implications

For small regions in Turkey and abroad which operate or are to operate in the future in a similar form to Altınköy, the disadvantages highlighted in the research findings that may emerge in the regions with similar characteristics with Altınköy may be taken into notice and these disadvantages may be eliminated at the construction stage of new areas. The current study paves the way for other studies to be conducted on similar small regions.

Especially the availability of transportation facilities is a critical factor for both first-time and repeat visitor perceptions. Thus, local governments should give priority to the services of providing ease of transportation and diversification. Considering that local transportation is an important driving force for visitors coming to Altınköy for the first time, investments should be made in local transportation. Similar rural areas should strengthen their transportation infrastructure based on the research findings. In addition, local governments that manage local attraction centers should plan their promotional activities by taking into account the recommendations of visitors and staff who come to the region.

## 5.4. Limitations and future research

The study is limited to Altınköy, which is one of the rural tourism areas in Turkey. Therefore, giving weight to the studies bearing similar characteristics to the current one and bringing new perspectives on the subject matter through the comparison of the studies will make a significant contribution to the existing literature. In addition, including a theoretical foundation as in this study is important to increase the quality of future research.

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**Ayşe Atar**, is an Assistant Professor Dr., graduated from Gazi University, Department of Tourism Management. She is currently working as a Faculty Member on Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University. At the same time, she continues her second doctorate in recreation management at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University. She focuses on hospitality, human resources management, strategic management, recreation management, innovation and entrepreneurship.

ORCID: 0000-0002-9060-6684



**Seda Ozdemir Akgul**, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Tourism Management in Faculty of Tourism at Selcuk University. She received her Bachelor's degree at Istanbul University and Master's degree in Tourism Management from Gazi University, Turkey. She holds a doctorate from the Department of Tourism Management at

Gazi University and Selcuk University, Turkey. Her research interests revolve around consumer behavior in travel and tourism, destination marketing and management; particularly in the areas of special interest tourism, smart tourism, tourist experiences and sustainable tourism. The majority of her research involves the use of qualitative data analysis.

ORCID: 0000-0003-4482-4119



**Muharrem TUNA**, is a professor at the Department of Tourism Management, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, Turkey. His areas of research interest are organizational psychology, human resource management, and green innovation. His researches have been published in *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* and *The Service Industries Journal*.

ORCID: 0000-0001-5526-7122