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## Evaluation of outdoor recreation potential of destinations in terms of paragliding: the case of Konya

### *Destinasyonların açık alan rekreasyon potansiyelinin yamaç paraşütü ekseninde değerlendirilmesi: Konya örneği*

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#### ABSTRACT

Researches made in the field of recreation in recent years show that participation in paragliding activities is increasing each passing day. By virtue of paragliding, both participants and destinations obtain very important material and spiritual gains. The purpose of this research is to reveal the potential of paragliding, which is an outdoor recreation activity, in Konya in the direction of statements made by the participants (instructor, pilot, and customer) who are actively interested in this activity. The research demonstrates the leisure time activities of the participants, their reasons for participating in paragliding, and the potential of Konya for paragliding activity. The maximum diversity sampling method was used during the determination of the study group in this study, which was carried out according to the case pattern. The working group consists of 19 people, 7 pilots, 6 customers, and 6 instructors. A semi-structured interview form was used as a data collection tool. The explanations obtained from the participants in the research, were analyzed using the open and axial coding approach. Inductive descriptive analysis and content analysis techniques were used in the process of interpreting the data. As a result of the analyses, three themes were determined as leisure time forms, reasons for participating in paragliding and the paragliding potential of Konya. The results show that cultural and outdoor recreation activities are preferred more as leisure time activities, the desire for happiness and socialization is the most efficient preference of individuals, and Konya has extremely suitable areas for these activities, especially due to its geological structure.

#### ÖZET

Son yıllarda rekreasyon alanında yapılan araştırmalar yamaç paraşütü faaliyetine katılımın her geçen gün arttığını göstermektedir. Yamaç paraşütü sayesinde hem katılımcılar hem de destinasyonlar maddi ve manevi çok önemli kazanımlar elde etmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, bir açık alan rekreasyon faaliyeti olan yamaç paraşütünün aktif olarak bu faaliyet ile ilgilenen katılımcıların (eğitmen, pilot ve müşteri) beyanları doğrultusunda Konya'daki potansiyelini ortaya koyabilmektir. Araştırma katılımcıların boş zaman değerlendirme faaliyetlerini, yamaç paraşütüne katılım nedenlerini ve Konya'nın yamaç paraşütü aktivitesi için potansiyelini açıklamaktadır. Durum desenine göre yürütülen bu araştırmada, çalışma grubu belirlenirken maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışma grubu, 7 pilot- 6 müşteri ve 6 eğitmen olmak üzere 19 kişiden oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat formu kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada katılımcılardan elde edilen açıklamalar, açık ve aksiyal kodlama yaklaşımı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Verilerinin yorumlanması sürecinde endüktif betimsel analiz ve içerik analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Analizler sonucunda, boş zaman değerlendirme şekilleri, yamaç paraşütüne katılım nedenleri ve Konya'nın yamaç paraşütü potansiyeli olmak üzere üç tema belirlenmiştir. Sonuçlar boş zaman değerlendirme faaliyeti olarak kültürel ve açık alan rekreasyon faaliyetlerinin daha çok tercih edildiğini, bireylerin tercihinde en fazla mutluluk ve sosyalleşme isteğinin etkili olduğunu ve Konya'nın özellikle jeolojik yapısı nedeni ile bu faaliyetler açısından son derece uygun alanlara sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

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## 1. Introduction

It is a fact that the idea of flying has been able to maintain its existence from the first ages of history to the present day, has found its place in the works of many civilizations, and it is a divine quality that is sometimes attributed to holiness. E.g; It is understood from the tablets of the Sumerian Civilization that while they represent divine beings, they describe them as winged and flying creatures (Sarı, 2016: 246-250; Kramer, 2002: 104-128). Afterwards, the creator god “Ra”, who existed in Egyptian Mythology, was depicted as a hawk-headed and at the same time, he got on a flying ship and struggled with the snake “Apep” flying in the sky every day (Çiftçi, 2010: 22-24). It has been repeated in Turkish Mythology that the phenomenon of flying is a divine ability in Turks. While there is various information about flying creatures in Turkish epics, the attributed holiness begins to show itself from the first epics. For example, in a chapter in the Epic of Creation, the power of flight attributed to God is described as follows:

*“The world was a sea, there was neither sky nor earth,  
Endless, vast, endless, waters were everywhere!  
God Ulgen is flying, there was no place to land,  
He was flying, searching, a solid place, a parish.” (Ögel, 2010: 432).*

It is not a talent attributed only to God in Turkish Mythology. As it is understood from the traditions and ceremonies related to the eagle cult, this bird was considered a symbol of God and the sun in pre-Islamic Turkish Culture, and took its place in rituals as a part of shamanic clothes (İnan, 1986: 46, 91-97). The idea of flying has always preserved its vitality in Turkish societies, and flight trials have been seen in different periods of history in Anatolian geography (Kılıç, 1993; Gömeç & Çelikleş, 2014; Kaçar, 1998: 297).

Recreation as a newly arising concept after the industrial revolution has been used in the sense of regaining health and regeneration (Torkildsen, 2005: 52). It is observed that the common points of researchers regarding the concept of recreation, which is defined in different ways in the literature, are the leisure time activities that are carried out in leisure time, create positive effects on the individual and society, allow the individual to improve mentally and physically, and participation is made on a voluntary basis (Demirel et al., 2021; Gulam, 2016: 157; Kılınç et al, 2021; Karaküçük et al., 2017: 6; Ardahan et al., 2016: 10-11; Hacıoğlu et al., 2017: 27; Kozak, 2017: 36; Demirel et al, 2021; Karaca & Bozoğlu; 2021). Along with the definition of recreation being so high, naturally, recreational activities have been classified in many different ways, such as place, time, number of participants, venue, and type of activity (Metin et al., 2013; Sevil et al., 2012; Karakucuk & Akgul, 2016; Ardahan. & Lapa, 2011; Kaya et al., 2021; Hazar, 2014; Suiçmez, 2000; Aksu et al., 2022; Hacıoğlu et al., 2017; Ardahan et al., 2016; Tütüncü, 2012). Among these, recreational activities according to spatial classification are examined in two different ways as outdoor and indoor recreation. Outdoor recreation activities (outdoor recreation) can be defined as leisure time activities performed in nature (on land, in the air, in water) that include

the interaction of individuals with nature (Kaya, 2020; Dirlik, 2016; Ardahan, 2017: 2). Paragliding, which is an outdoor recreational activity, was discovered in the early 1980s in the Swiss Alps after a group of pilots tried to take off by running down the slopes while looking for an answer to the question of how we can fly without jumping from the plane by emulating sail wing pilots (Anonymous, 2009). In addition to being a country with many destinations for paragliding activity, Turkey has slopes for practicing this sport in nearly all cities.

This research aims to demonstrate the potential of the paragliding activity, which is evaluated within the frame of outdoor recreation, and the potential of Konya, which has a variety of areas, in line with the statements of the instructors, pilots and individuals participating in the paragliding activity engaged in this activity.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

### 2.1. Phenomenon of Flying in History

The idea of flying has been a sacred phenomenon since the first ages of history. Many civilizations accepted and respected this phenomenon both in their works and in their lives. E.g. in the artworks of Sumerians, in which the creator gods and goddesses are depicted, the phenomenon of flying has always represented a superior power and gods and goddesses (important ones) are depicted as beings that can fly (Sarı, 2016: 246-250; Kramer, 2002: 104-149). The same case is observed in Egyptian Mythology. “Ra”, who is depicted as the creator god, is depicted as an eagle-headed god, while “Apep” (the flying snake, the enemy of God and the life created by him), which is almost equivalent to his power, is depicted as a being with the ability to fly (Çiftçi, 2010: 22-24). The phenomenon of flying has also been sanctified in Turkish history. E.g; The flying horse “Tulpar” (it is assumed to be the ancestor of Pegasus, the flying horse of Zeus) stands out in Turkish Mythology (Karakurt, 2011: 221). As it can be understood from this point, the concept of flying has always appeared in history as a phenomenon that has gained holiness by being associated with God.

Although many flight attempts were made in different periods of history, a successful flight was not performed until the 17th century. E.g; “İsmail Cevheri” of Turkish origin, whose exact date of birth is unknown, put the wing he designed himself on his arms and used the following expressions: “I did something that no one else has done in this world, I will do something that no one else has done for the hereafter,” but left himself to the void, and plunged to an untimely end (Kılıç, 1993). Due to this attempt, Cevheri is deemed as the first Turkish Aviator martyr. Unsuccessful flight attempts continued in the Turks and While II. Kılıç Arslan was visiting Eastern Rome (Istanbul) for some political talks, “Siracettin Doğulu”, who was with him, made a show at the banquet. Siracettin Doğulu, wearing a white loose-fitting dress that can swell in the wind, climbed a high column in the hippodrome square, took the necessary measurements and left himself in the void. After experiencing some gliding, he made a hard landing on the ground and died (Gömeç & Çelikleş, 2014; Turan, 1955; Choniates, 1995; Yalçın, 2008).

In the 17th century, the first successful flight attempt in world history was carried out by Hazerfen Ahmet Çelebi. However, since this flight attempt is only mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname, it also brings some doubts. It is mentioned in the travel book as follows: "For the first time, he trained on the mimbar of Okmeydanı, by opening wings to the sky eight or nine times with eagle wings at the intensity of the star wind... Then, from the top of the Galata tower, Ahmed Çelebi flew with the southwestern wind and crashed into Doğancılar Square in Üsküdar. (Celebi et al., 2008). In the artifact, it is explained that Hazerfen Ahmet Çelebi had practiced in Okmeydanı before and during these exercises, he had been done against the star (north) wind. At the same time, specifying the wind direction during the exercise and stating that the flight took place against the southwestern wind during the flight shows that Hazerfen knows the golden rule of aviation and acts accordingly. The height of the Galata tower is 35 meters from the sea (Eyice. 1996). The height of the tower is about 67 meters (Wikipedia, 2020). This shows that Ahmed Çelebi made his flight from a height of about 100 meters from the sea. When looking at the distance between Doğancılar from Galata Tower on Google map, it is seen that it is about 3 kilometers from the bird flight (Google, 2020). In this case, Hazerfan Ahmet Çelebi must have glided forward 30 meters for every meter from the height he was at for the jump. It is almost impossible to achieve such a ratio in a windless weather with a primitive device. However, it is possible to say that it is a possible flight if there is sufficient wind. The phenomenon of flying, which is one of the signs of divinity in history, became concrete by leaving the world of thought and imagination in the 20th century. With the invention of the airplane as a means of transportation in the past century, people have been able to easily realize their dream of flying.

## 2.2. Paragliding as a Recreational Activity

Paragliding, which is one of the outdoor recreation activities, is the cheapest air sport without the need for any engine or electronic device (Chang, 2012; Highfill & Franks, 2019; Huang, 2020). In order to understand how the paragliding activity emerged and what phases it went through, it is necessary to examine the history of aviation in general terms.

The first flight trials (with motor vehicles) in the history of the world take their place in the literature as the successful flight of the Wright brothers in 1903. In the 1940s, the Wright Brothers, who were the pioneers of modern aviation, also pioneered another aviation event with a kind of kite they made from a few pieces of curtain fabric, in addition to their successful flights. Then, in 1948, simple sail wings emerged. Of course, as today, the sail wings were not taken off a slope, but with the help of a boat or a vehicle. In the 1960s, self-inflating glide parachutes began to be considered. In 1968, articles began to be published on the ability to take off by running. But until the 1980s, it was not possible to take off from the slopes by running. First, a group of pilots in the French and Swiss Alps, emulating the glider pilots, tried to take off by running from the slopes, and they did so successfully. Thus, paragliding began to become widespread. Subsequently, education and training programs began to be organized (Meyer, 2009; Feletti et al., 2017; Newcome, 2014; McCullough, 2015; Anonymous, 2009).

Paragliding activity, which is one of the outdoor recreation activities, has found a place for itself as a sportive recreation activity that has been carried out individually since 1988 in Turkey in parallel with the developments in the world. This activity could only be included in the activities of the Turkish Aeronautical Association (TAA) in 1995, due to the difficulties that TAA fell into for a period of time. Although TAA could not integrate this activity into its structure at the same time with the World, it has signed a first in the world with a move that can be considered a very big breakthrough and said "1. He organized the "World Air Games" and in this organization he arranged the "1st World Paragliding Championship, took serious steps towards the spread and development of this activity in Turkey and in the world, and continues to provide free trainings (such as Model-Airplane, Parachute, Paragliding, Sailing Wing, Glider) (THK, 2020; Anonymous, 2009).

Some research on paragliding attracts attention to the relationship between this activity and Flow Theory (Ayazlar, 2015). Flow Theory: It is used to explain the situations where the individual loses himself in the moment during any activity and gives his whole self to the activity in which he is interested. The basic condition for the individual to be in the flow is not to have any concerns about gaining any profit. In this way, the individual will be happy by satisfied by his activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Another research area that has been frequently emphasized in the literature in recent years is the concept of eco-recreation (Karaküçük, 2016). In our world where environmental problems are increasing day by day, it is extremely important to consider ecological factors in every field. From this point of view, the phenomenon of Paragliding, which is one of the outdoor recreation activities, can also be evaluated within the scope of eco-recreation. As a matter of fact, it has been revealed as a result of various studies that individuals participating in this activity in nature try to keep ecological elements in the foreground (Costa & Chalip, 2005; Ismayanti, 2021).

## 2.3. Konya and Paragliding

Konya has hosted many civilizations as a settlement from the Neolithic Age to the present day. Thus, the city contains many works of art created by different societies with different construction techniques (Konyakültür, 2016). Konya, one of the first settlement areas in history, is an important destination for the leisure time industry due to its natural beauties and cultural values (Ehsani & Yazıcı, 2016; Güneş et al., 2019; Koçyiğit & Yıldız, 2014). Various events and festivals are held in the city every year, and thousands of people participate in these activities. Examples of these are Seb-i Arus Mevlana Commemoration Events, Nasreddin Hodja Festival, White Cherry Festival and Konya International Mystical Music Festival (Konyakültür, 2016). Due to its rich historical and cultural elements, Konya, which has various activities and leisure time opportunities, also comes to the fore with its religious identity. The most important factor in the city's having this identity is that Muhammed Celaleddin Rumi (Mevlana) lived here and that it was the center of the Mevlevi Order, which was founded on his views and mystical thoughts. In addition, Konya hosted the 4th Congress of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, organized

by the Committee of Ministers of Culture and Tourism in 2016. It was chosen as the “Islamic World Tourism Capital” at the Tourism Coordination Committee Meeting (Öngören, 2004; Büyüksalvarcı et al., 2016).

Besides being the city with the largest area of Turkey, Konya is built on a flat plain. For this reason, it is quite suitable for some of the outdoor recreation activities. Outdoor recreation activities are the general name given to leisure time activities on land, air and water (Highfill & Franks, 2019; Margaryan & Fredman, 2017; Kaplan & Ardahan, 2013). Aerial activities (such as paragliding, sail wing, free jump, paramotor, motor glider), which are one of the outdoor recreation activities, primarily need a nice take-off area and a safe landing area. In order to perform the paragliding activity, an accessible slope and landing area is needed first. Konya is one of the rare regions that have more than enough of these opportunities. Especially in Akşehir and Beyşehir districts, there are hills and departure areas that are very suitable for paragliding. In addition, international paragliding competitions are held in these regions from time to time (Kültürportali, 2020).

The fact that the infrastructure and transportation facilities of Akşehir District are developed and the Sultan Mountains are close to the city center reveal the importance of the destination in terms of paragliding. This area, which has 550 and 670 meters of take-off runways, is extremely suitable for flying, but it provides the opportunity to take off in all directions except for the south wind. In addition, the geological structure of the Sultan Mountains in the form of a mountain range is extremely suitable for flight parallel to the hill, called sail flight (Akşehir, 2020). Another feature of Akşehir is that the probability of encountering any occurrences (unexpected negative situations that may be encountered during the flight) after take-off is very low. The reason for this is that there is no natural or artificial obstacle in front of the hill and it has a flat plain.

Another destination in Konya for paragliding activity is the paragliding area in Beyşehir district. This field is located very close to the city center (6 kilometers) just like in Akşehir. Another feature of the destination is that it is suitable for flights over Beyşehir Lake and offers a unique nature view to the individuals participating in the activity. While the take-off runway of this area is 1620 meters, the landing area has a height of 1120 meters (Beyşehir, 2020).

### 3. Methodology

It is seen that researches in the field of paragliding mostly focus on accidents, injuries and risks. From this point of view, examining the paragliding potential of a particular destination and the opinions of the participants in this activity reveals the importance of this research. Since the aim of the research is to reveal the outdoor recreation potential of Konya within the scope of paragliding, the case study technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was preferred. Ethics committee approval for the interview form used in the research was obtained by the Social and Human Sciences, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee of T.C. Selçuk University with the decision number E.61973 dated 18.08.2020.

#### 3.1. Working Group

In the research, it is desired to present the opinions of all parties (pilot, instructor and customer) paragliding in Konya as a recreational activity. In this regard, interviews were held with a total of 19 participants, including 6 customers (flying with an experienced pilot), 7 pilots (flying personally) and 6 instructors. While determining the study group, the maximum variation sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in the research (Patton, 2014: 236). While ensuring maximum diversity, attention was paid to interviewing as many equal numbers of pilots, trainers and customers as possible.

#### 3.2. Data Collection Tools and Processes

Within the scope of the research, a semi-structured interview form was used to examine the reasons underlying the answers given by the participants in depth and to ask additional questions related to the process. A pool of 12 questions was created by interviewing 2 different instructors working in the Central Anatolia region with at least 10 years of experience on the subject and a researcher continuing their academic studies in the field. A faculty member who has experience in qualitative research and another faculty member who has experience in paragliding were asked to analyze and criticize the questions in line with the purpose of the research and the philosophy/logic of qualitative research. As a result of the expert evaluation, it was reported that 3 questions were guiding and these 3 questions were left out of the scope by the researchers. The question pool was re-formed, the process was repeated, and a consensus was reached on 9 questions, covering the purpose of the research, in line with the opinions of two experts. After the expert opinion, 3 pilot interviews were held with a customer-pilot and trainer who have similar characteristics with the participants in the study group, in “Takkeli Dağ/Selçuklu” (2 people) and “Yakamanastır/Beyşehir” (1 person), each of 12-16 minutes. It was understood that there was no problem in the interview form created. The questions in the interview form are generally as follows;

- Can you tell us about your leisure time activities?
- Can you tell us about your participation purposes in paragliding activity?
- Can you evaluate the potential of Konya for paragliding activity?

The semi-structured interview form created was collected face-to-face in Konya’s Yakamanastır/Beyşehir paragliding hill and Takkeli Dağ/Selçuklu location by a researcher who had previous knowledge of the area and was a paragliding pilot. A total of 19 interviews were obtained in 26 days, both day and night. The researcher made more than one flight with the pilots and trainers in order to relax the participants during the interviews and to make them see the researcher as a part of the group, and attended the 2-day camps at the request of some trainers (K18, K10). A total of 9 interviews (2 Instructors, 7 Pilots) were held around the fire created for cooking in an extremely quiet environment between 21.00 and 24.00 in the evening during the camp activity. Other interviews (10 interviews) were conducted during the rest breaks (when the wind was unfavorable for flight) at the paragliding take-off

and landing areas. Before starting the interviews, explanations were made about the purpose of the research and what it would be used for, and it was announced to all participants that the interviews would be recorded on a voice recorder (telephone) because of the verifiable information. The participants agreed to have their conversations recorded because they trusted the researcher and found the explanations sufficient. The average of 19 interviews was 13 minutes. While the longest interview was 18 minutes, the shortest interview lasted 9 minutes.

### 3.3. Analysis of Data

Inductive descriptive analysis and content analysis techniques were used in the interpretation of the interview outputs. The reason for using descriptive analyzes is that they can include direct quotations in order to make the information obtained from the participants come alive in the eyes of the readers. In the Content Analysis phase, in order to be able to code the data obtained from the interviews, all transcripts were transferred to the "Microsoft Office Word 2019" package program and written down and transferred to the "Maxqda 2020" package program to be used for coding. By following the open and axial coding process in the program, coding was done as *invivo* (sentence phrases). In order to ensure code security, all deciphers were read thoroughly twice by two researchers and a consensus was reached on the accuracy of the codes. Codes that are similar to each other formed the categories and these categories were combined to form the themes.

### 3.4. Credibility, Transferability, Verifiability

All audio recordings obtained during the interviews are kept in the computer environment, and the documents in which the interviews are transferred are kept. In addition, a faculty member was assisted to check whether any mistakes were made

during the transcription process of the audio recordings, and all the data were coded through the program. The generated codes and outputs are stored separately by 3 researchers to be shared with the authorities in case of necessity.

## 4. Results

Considering the demographic characteristics of the participants, interviews were conducted with 12 male and 7 female participants, 4 between 18-25 years old, 5 between 26-35 years old, 4 between 36-45 years old, 3 between 46-65 years old 1 participant is seen. When the educational status of the group is examined, it is seen that it mainly consists of university graduates.

According to the results obtained from the analysis of the data, 3 main themes were reached. These themes are respectively "Forms of Leisure time", "Reasons to Participate in Paragliding" and "Paragliding Potential of Konya".

### 4.1. Treating the Leisure Time

In the interviews with the participants, the question "What kind of activities do you spend your leisure time with?" was posed. The answers received were coded as "nivo" and the categories were reached. By combining the categories, the theme of "Forms of Leisure Time" was generated (Figure 1).

In line with the answers obtained from the participants, outdoor recreation activities and cultural activities were determined as the most frequent leisure time activities. Participants who have been teaching for many years K4 (Instructor) declared the following about leisure time activities:

*"... to be honest, I still don't quite know how to spend my leisure time. I consider the most valuable thing for me; this is undoubtedly paragliding. But because this is my job and I want to*

**Table 1.** Demographic Features

Nickname	Gender	Status	Age	Education
K1	Male	Instructor	58	University
K2	Female	Instructor	49	High school
K3	Male	Instructor	47	University
K4	Male	Instructor	41	University
K5	Female	Customer	24	University
K6	Male	Pilot	26	University
K7	Male	Customer	24	High school
K8	Male	Customer	41	University
K9	Female	Customer	19	University
K10	Female	Instructor	26	University
K11	Male	Pilot	25	University
K12	Female	Pilot	26	University
K13	Male	Pilot	27	University
K14	Male	Pilot	44	University
K15	Male	Pilot	32	University
K16	Male	Customer	57	University
K17	Male	Pilot	71	University
K18	Female	Instructor	39	University
K19	Female	Customer	31	University

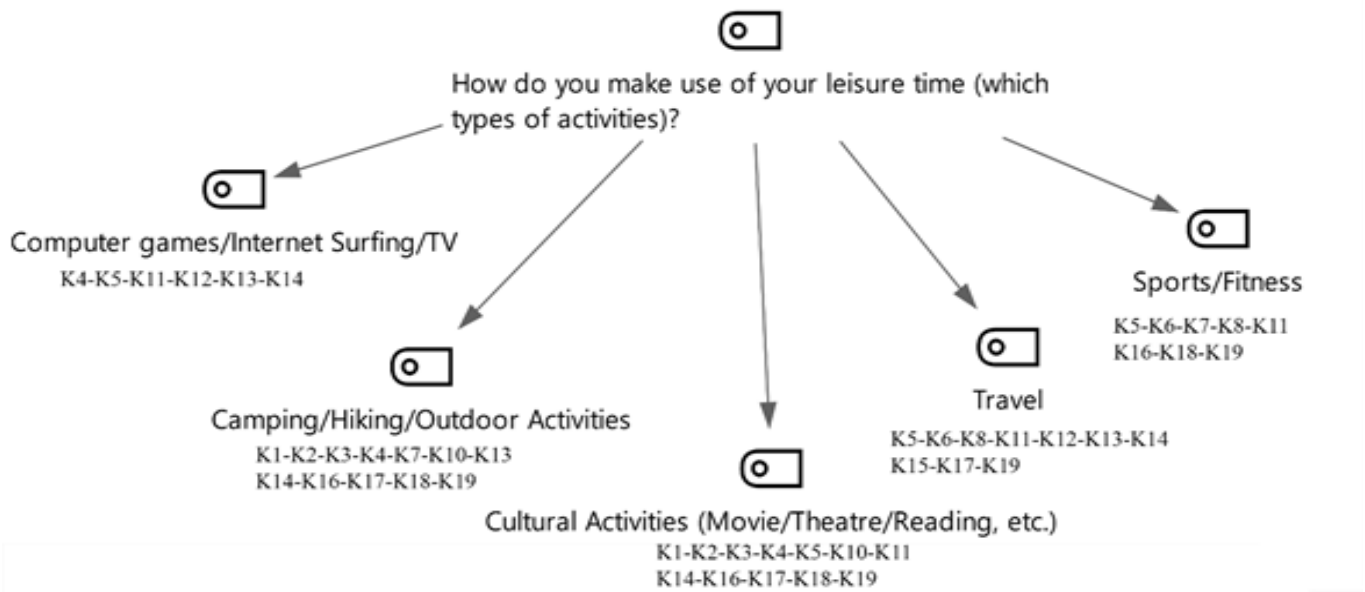


Figure 1. Treating the Leisure Time

be the best at my job, I spend my leisure time by hiking outdoors, participating in camps and most importantly doing research on my field... There was one of my students who read a section on recreation, he told me about the history of the phenomenon of flying. After listening to him, something sprouted against our own history. I understood why I love nature so much and why I couldn't break away from nature, even if people who live with nature for a while wanted it, they couldn't turn to another life." (Camping/Hiking/Outdoor Activities – Cultural Activities).

K5 (customer) who participated in paragliding for the first time as a customer used the following expressions as leisure time activities:

"...I like to spend my free time mainly traveling, of course, if I have at least 2-3 days of free time, I mostly spend time on platforms such as YouTube/Instagram in my limited free time during the day... We started Zumba with my friend, now I regularly participate in Zumba 3 days a week... After trying it for the first time today, I decided that I want to spend my free time doing paragliding, probably I will always do this sport from now on." (Computer/Internet/TV– Travel – Sports/Fitness).

K11 (Pilot) who has been dealing with this activity for 1-2 years as an amateur in his own words made the following statements about leisure time activities.

"...to be honest, I didn't know much about nature before I started paragliding. But I started to learn something by attending the trainings and going to the camps. I was getting excited like a child, as I learned, then I decided that I needed to learn more about nature. I watched nature documentaries from places like YouTube, bought books, talked to people, although I still talk, so you see, paragliding made me a natural man and still continues to do it..." (Cultural Activities).

K17 (pilot) determined as the eldest (age) of the interview group stated the following as leisure time activities:

"What we do in our leisure time determines who I am..."

First of all, I must state that what you call leisure time activities is recreation. I could not do these activities due to my profession, but for the last 1 year I have been flying by myself with paragliding..." (Travel-Cultural Activities-Camping/Hiking/Outdoor Activities).

#### 4.2. Reasons to Participate in Paragliding

In line with the information obtained from the participants, the reasons for participating in paragliding revealed 7 categories (Figure 2). When these categories are examined, it is seen that the most frequently given answer is "happiness".

K6 (pilot) declaring that he has been dealing with this activity for 2 years states the reasons for participation as follows:

"...when I started paragliding, my aim was to be in nature together with people. When we said two-three-four, this happiness continued to the same extent each time. Now I had found the job I wanted to do, and with the guidance of the trainers, I decided that I wanted to both maintain my happiness and earn money from this job. So, I will probably be doing this as a profession next season..." (Socialization-Happiness-Career/Profession).

While K17 (pilot) as the eldest of the interview group, and who was respected by the other participants is declaring the reason for participating in paragliding, he made inferences among the other participants and stated the following:

"... as people get older, people want to see, taste, and feel different things. I can honestly say that paragliding was the thing that was different for me. I remember my first flight was a 20-meter hill, it took about 7-8 seconds in total. But the happiness that 7-8 second flight gave me was at least twice as much as my happiness in the last 20 years. Of course, that wasn't the only reason I joined, we also go to the camps thanks to paragliding, there are very nice environments there, pilots of all ages come, we play backgammon, we tell stories to each other, we socialize, you know. This question you asked me, I am asking the pilots I

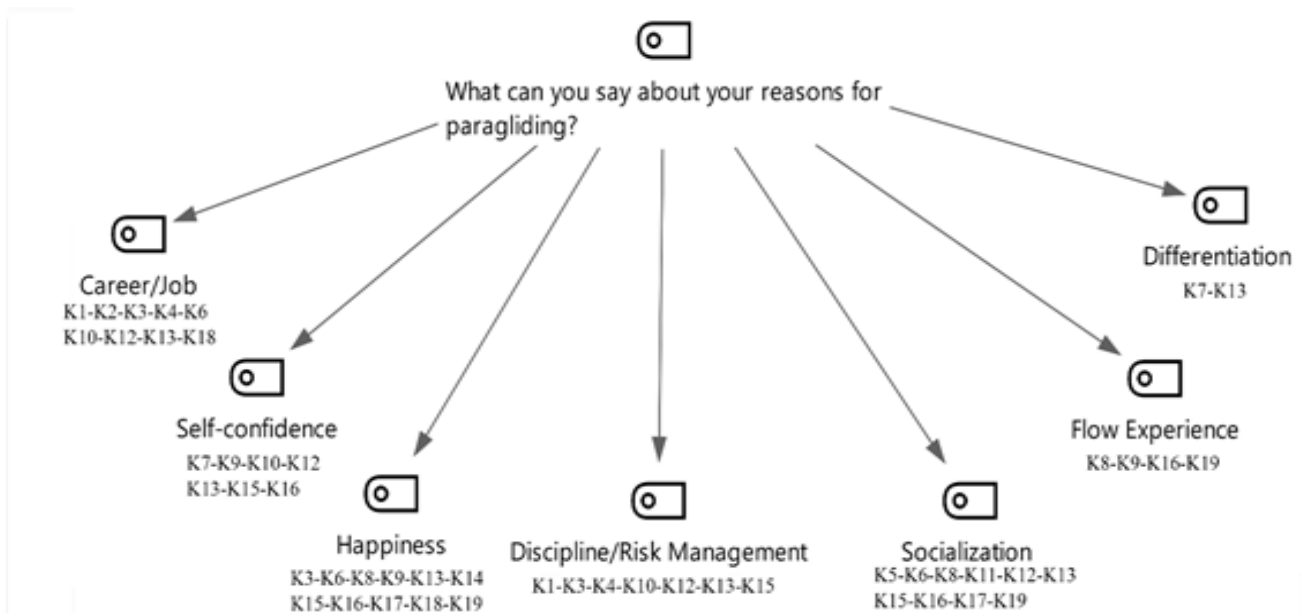


Figure 2. Reasons to Participate in Paragliding

have met for 1 year. Young people like you mostly do it for career, but middle-aged people do it because they are really happy...” (Happiness-Socialization).

K8 (customer) made a statement similar to the statement of K17, and ensured the formation of a new category. The participant’s statement is as follows:

“... I have been doing paragliding regularly (3 times a season) since 2019. Actually, it will be a classic answer, but I am really happy when I join. There is also a situation like this, I can’t think or think about the past, the future, or anything else until you get up from the slope and land on the ground. As the fella says as getting lost in the moment, I am in such a situation...” (Happiness-Flow Experience).

K10 (instructor) stating that he is a new instructor yet focuses on 2 factors as the reason for participation.

“... Since I have just started teaching, my primary reason for participation is to gain a career. But when I’m not in training, I also make flights. The main reason for these flights, or rather, the motivating factor for me is that I want to be ready for any situation that may occur...” (Career/Profession-Discipline/Risk Management).

K13 (pilot) declaring that there are many reasons for participation stated his reasons as follows:

“...probably whoever you asked this question said it was happiness. I think they are right, but I think happiness is a result, not a reason for participation. That’s why I can say the following about myself: the reason why I joined this activity in the first place was because I wanted to have a distinctive feature from other people. Then I did some research, talked to some teachers, they said that I need to have discipline and self-confidence, only then can I be successful in this field. I said to myself that it’s just a job for me... After the first flight, I thought that it was really very enjoyable, I was not satisfied with the job I was doing. In short, the reason why I participate in this sport is to increase my

happiness-career-self-confidence and because it is a disciplined effort.” (Differentiation-Happiness-Self-Confidence-Career-Discipline).

### 4.3. Paragliding Potential of Konya

During the interviews with the participants, they were asked what they thought about Konya in order to reveal its potential. In general, all participants declared that they have potential. All the responses received were converted into codes, and the codes formed 6 categories. These categories were combined to form the theme of “Paragliding Potential of Konya” (Figure 3).

K1 (instructor) declaring that he is one of the first pilots and trainers of Turkey stated the following about Konya and paragliding:

“... I can say that I first started this sport in 1996. It was a very new field back then. Even I’m the 56th paragliding pilot of the country... I think there are many things to consider when evaluating the potential of a city. First of all, although I am not from Konya, we come to Konya at least 2 times each season with the pilots. I know that this city has potential as I have already been refereeing in many organizations in Konya. As you know, TAA organizes many events here, so I can say that the cleanliness of the departure areas is very good. There is also a landscape option. When the pilots I brought here for the first time see the Beyşehir lake, they first get a shock and immediately want to put on their teams and fly. Of course, another option is that it is close to the center. We also fly to many destinations in Ankara, unfortunately all areas except Ayaş are far from the city center. Also, naturally, Konya’s take-off and landing areas are very beautiful, they enable the perfect take-offs, which I think is an important potential...” (Convenience of Take-off and Landing Areas-Proximity to City Center-Ease of Transportation-View-Cleanliness).

K2 (instructor) declaring that he has been an instructor in the field of paragliding for 5 years evaluated the phenomenon of potential from a multidimensional perspective as follows:

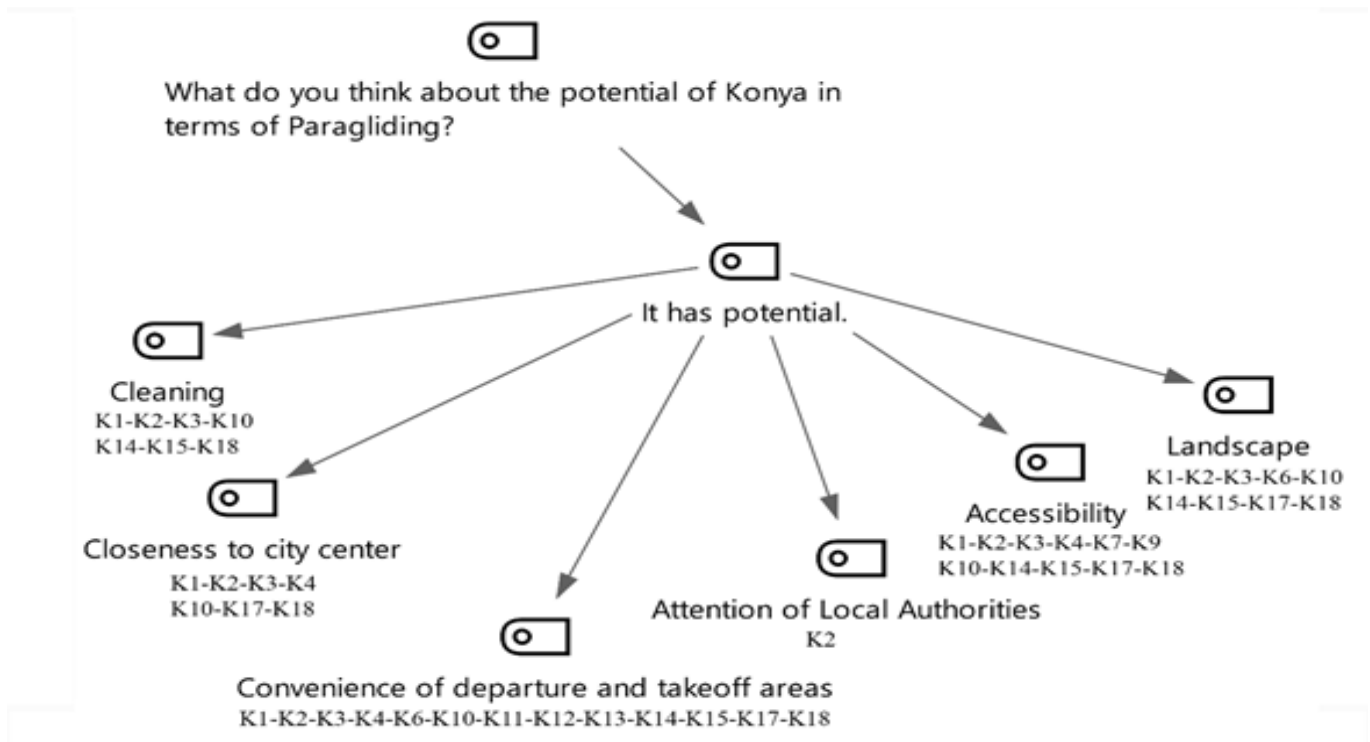


Figure 3. Paragliding Potential of Konya

“I have been in this business for a long time in my own way. I think Konya is one of the most beautiful points in this country in terms of paragliding. As for the reason, the takeoff areas are naturally very beautiful. As you know, Konya is a settlement on a flat plain. My colleagues know very well the importance of this plain for paragliding. When flying on a flat plain, you are very unlikely to face with emergencies. Once there are no obstacles in front of you, you can easily determine where to land. Power lines, roads, woodlands are always a danger for us. You will not encounter this situation in Konya. I go to areas such as Pamukkale-Izmir-Tekirdağ with my students so that they can fly under all conditions, and the issues we are most uncomfortable with is to access to the hill, distance to shopping areas and cleaning. When we evaluate Konya from this point of view, the distance of this hill from the city center is 6 kilometers, so even if we run out of water, we can pick it up and come back in 10 minutes. Another point is that we can reach the hill by car. In this way, we can go to many more sorties. There’s also the landscape. Okey, maybe this is not Babadağ, but you see, we have a huge lake. How many places in Central Anatolia can pilots see such a view?... Finally, perhaps the most important feature of Konya is that municipalities give importance to paragliding...” (Convenience of Take-off and Landing Areas-Proximity to City Center-Ease of Transportation-View-Cleaning-Local Administrations’ Interest).

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The findings are that the leisure time activities of individuals engaged in paragliding activities focus on outdoor recreation activities and cultural activities. There may be two reasons for this situation. The first is that some changes occur in individuals as a result of participation in activities carried

out in nature. Høyem (2020) explains this situation as outdoor recreation activities temporarily increase the interaction with nature, but this interaction can pave the way for a permanent relationship over time. As a matter of fact, what K4 said during the interviews within the scope of the research confirms this information. The second is that participation in outdoor recreation activities may result from the desire to integrate with nature. Ardahan & Lapa (2011) concluded in their research that the biggest factor in the participation of individuals in outdoor recreation activities is the desire to integrate with nature. K11’s statement within the scope of this research also explains the reason for his desire to integrate with nature.

When the reasons for participation in Paragliding were examined, it was concluded that the biggest reason for participation was happiness and socialization. Many studies in the literature emphasize that participation in recreational activities makes the individual happy (Karakuş, 2008: 99; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Diener, 1984). Statement of K8 “...I don’t think or can’t think about the past, the future, or anything else until I took off from the slope and land on the ground...” supports the previous studies in the literature within the scope of Flow Theory and explains how the flow takes place. For example, Ayazlar (2015), in a study on Flow Theory and paragliding, concluded that paragliding can drag the individual into the flow, change their perception of time and have positive effects on the individual’s life satisfaction. As a matter of fact, as K8 stated, the expression “happiness is not a reason for participation but a result” explains that the happiness obtained as a result of participating in these activities is obtained based on many situations. Participation of individuals in outdoor recreation activities can pave the way for some individual and social consequences in their lives. This situation reveals that



individuals and societies can socialize through sports/recreation (Koca, 2020). The explanations made by K17 explain how this situation happened. Another important result of the research is that the majority of the participants who answered “profession/career” as the reason for participating in the paragliding activity also stated that they wanted to perform this activity in order to take risks and be successful in risk management. This is due to the fact that individuals who want to carry out this activity as a profession want to be ready for events that have not yet happened due to their need for high achievement (Koh, 1996: 15-16; Champoux, 1996; Hansemark, 2000: 633-634). The key point for pilots to successfully manage crisis situations during paragliding activity is risk management. The statement made by K10 reveals this situation along with its reasons.

Another result obtained in line with the opinions of the participants is the paragliding potential of Konya. It is emphasized by the participants that Konya has extremely suitable areas for this activity, especially due to its geological structure. The factors that the participants who participate in the paragliding activity and perform this activity in a professional sense primarily desire and that directly affect their destination preferences are the transportation opportunities to the destination and the infrastructure services of the region. Konya is one of the cities that hosts many national and international paragliding competitions (Kültürportali, 2016; Akşehir, 2020; Beyşehir, 2020). In line with the information obtained from the three groups (Instructor-Pilot-Customer), it can be deduced that the most important issue that reveals the potential of a region in terms of paragliding is the comfort of the take-off and landing areas. As a matter of fact, the statements of K1 and K2 also explain this situation.

As a result, leisure time activities of individuals participating in paragliding activities are primarily carried out within the framework of outdoor recreation. It is seen that the most important reason for the participants to prefer paragliding as a recreational activity is the experience of happiness and flow related to happiness, and it is seen that Konya has an extremely important potential in terms of this activity.

Conducting research on paragliding activity in different regions is extremely important in terms of revealing the reasons for participation in this activity and the potential of the region. This research was carried out using qualitative methodology. Therefore, it cannot be generalized to a universe. Preferring mixed methods in future research will enable both to understand the reasons why the participants participate in this activity and to generalize the results obtained to the population. In addition, taking into account the suggestions of the participants in researches to understand the potential of the region, what the current potentials are and to eliminate the deficiencies, may contribute to the increase of participation in open field activities and thus to the spread of paragliding activities.

### Ethics Statement

For the method used in this study, permission was obtained from Selçuk University Ethics Committee with the decision dated 18/08/2020 and numbered E.61973. In case of detection

of a contrary situation, TO&RE Journal has no responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the author(s) of the study.

### Author Contribution Statement

1. Author's contribution rate is 40%, 2. Author's contribution rate is 35%, 3. Author's contribution rate is 25%.

### Authors Statement:

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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