

TURKEY'S FIRST AND ONLY GEOPARK KULA-SALİHLİ UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK: A QUALITATIVE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine the tourism attractions of Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, Turkey's first and only geopark, and to reveal the types of tourism based on sustainable tourism in the region.Qualitative research method was preferred in the research. In this context, field research was conducted in Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, observation technique and interviews with local people were carried out. In the light of the findings obtained from the research, it has been revealed that Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark has cultural attractions as well as natural attractions in terms of tourism attractions. Types of tourism based on sustainable tourism in the region; ecotourism, camping-caravan tourism, youth tourism, bicycle tourism, third age tourism, health tourism, thermal tourism, cultural tourism, faith tourism, and gastronomy tourism. While promoting the region and carrying out marketing activities after this promotion, all the values of the region and its natural and cultural tourism attractions must be taken into consideration and evaluated in their entirety. In this study, some suggestions were presented to practitioners and local people in order to ensure the planned management of the Kula-Salihli Geopark and to continue its sustainability within the protection-use balance.

Keywords: Geopark, Geotourism, Ecotourism, Sustainable Tourism, Turkey, Kula-Salihli

TÜRKİYE'NİN İLK VE TEK JEOPARKI KULA-SALİHLİ UNESCO GLOBAL JEOPARKI: NİTEL BİR İNCELEME

ÖZET

Çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'nin ilk ve tek jeoparkı olan Kula-Salihli UNESCO Küresel Jeoparkı'nın turizm çekiciliklerini incelemek ve bölgede sürdürülebilir turizme dayalı turizm türlerini ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma yöntemi tercih edilmiştir. Bu kapsamda Kula-Salihli UNESCO Küresel Jeoparkı'nda saha araştırması yapılmış, gözlem tekniği ve yerel halkla görüşmeler gerçekleşmiştir. Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular ışığında; Kula-Salihli UNESCO Küresel Jeoparkı'nın turizm çekicilikleri açısından doğal çekiciliklerinin yanı sıra kültürel çekiciliklere de sahip olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bölgede sürdürülebilir turizme dayalı turizm türleri; ekoturizm, kamp-karavan turizmi, bisiklet turizmi, gençlik turizmi, üçüncü yaş turizmi, sağlık turizmi, termal turizm, kültür turizmi, inanç turizmi ve gastronomi turizmidir. Bölgenin tanıtımı ve bu tanıtım sonrasında pazarlama faaliyetleri yapılırken bölgenin tüm turizm değerleri, doğal ve kültürel turizm çekicilikleri bir bütün olarak dikkate alınmalı ve değerlendirilmelidir. Bu çalışmada Kula-Salihli Jeoparkı'nın planlı bir şekilde yönetiminin sağlanabilmesi ve koruma-kullanma dengesi içerisinde sürdürülebilirliğinin devamı için uygulamacılara ve yöre halkına yönelik bazı öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jeopark, Jeoturizm, Ekoturizm, Sürdürülebilir Turizm, Türkiye, Kula-Salihli

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INTRODUCTION

In the report titled "Our Common Future" published by the United Nations (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, sustainable development was declared to all societies with the goal of "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN, 1987). If tourism is planned correctly and waste management is regulated in accordance with the legislation, natural resources, it plays an important role in preserving culture, social and community values and a livable world and transferring it to future generations. Therefore, in addition to its ability to create added value, tourism also plays a protective role in the name of sustainability if it is planned correctly with appropriate regulations. With sustainable tourism, nature, environment, cultural heritage and local people are respected and the integrity of these assets can be preserved and transferred to future generations (Usta and Kırlar Can, 2021).

The basis of this new type of tourism concept, called Geotourism, which has started to develop in recent years, is to introduce and explain the earth to interested tourists based on these events (Güngör, 2012). The geological heritage of a region is also the cultural heritage of that region. Information about many elements such as the physical formation and development of the region, the diversity of living things that have lived and are living in the region, and the natural events experienced in the past are obtained from geological and geomorphological sources. The most important problem regarding these resources is that these areas lose their importance and disappear. The importance of geoparks emerges at the point of preserving geological, geomorphological and geographical richness. Geotourism is an important element in developing projects for the protection of geological heritage and transferring them to future generations (Diker et al., 2016). On the other hand, geotourism also contributes to the diversification of touristic products and the development of new business lines.

Turkey is a country where geological formations that have both visual and scientific value are abundant. It has a rich geology where two great oceans opened and closed in the last hundred million years and the traces of these oceans can be easily observed in Anatolia (Güngör, 2012). As geotourism develops, it has begun to be evaluated within the concept of Geopark, which is a new concept for the world. Geoparks are special nature conservation areas, where the same or different types of geological heritage or geosites are collectively located, which are not smaller than pedestrian walking distance, open to visitors, and whose management has been established (Koçan, 2016). In this context, the aim of the study is to examine the tourism attractions of Kula Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, Turkey's first and only geopark, and to reveal the types of tourism based on sustainable tourism in the region. Qualitative research method was preferred in the research. In this context, field research was conducted in Kula Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, observation technique and interviews with local people were carried out.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ensuring the conservation-use balance in areas opened to tourism is important for sustainability. Ecotourism, which serves the protection of sensitive ecosystems and environmental awareness through tourism with the principles of sustainability in areas where interesting natural and cultural features of nature are preserved, provides visitors with new knowledge and experiences in scientific, aesthetic, recreational, cultural and educational aspects, and is a tool that can create resources for the socio-economic development of the population living in the region. (Weaver, 1999). Ecotourism, first used by Hector Ceballos Lascurain in 1983, is defined as 'a form of tourism that includes trips to pristine or unpolluted natural areas for the specific purpose of examining, observing and experiencing the landscape, wildlife, and rural phenomena in a way that leaves as little impact on the environment as possible.' has been defined (Yıldırım and Koçan, 2008). Geotourism is a new ecotourism approach in educational and scientific tourism focuses are brought to the level of education and science for nature enthusiasts, and geotourism becomes a recreational and social activity with related activities (Gençalioğlu Kuşcu and Atilla, 2005).

Geosites are sites that provide information about the state and dynamics of the Earth (Bruno et al., 2014). According to the literature, geosites are considered as a general term that includes geological heritage site, geological monument and geological heritage object, and the concept is defined as geological objects and parts of the geological environment that remain on the open surface on land and are therefore accessible to visitors and researchers (Ruban, 2010). Tourists who have a special interest in geosites (fossils, canyons, caves, volcanoes, crater lakes) that provide new and diverse information about the formation of the world, have started to shape and popularize geotourism travels by traveling to geographies containing the mentioned formations. Curiosity about the formation of the world, as well as the effort to transfer it to the next generations, is an important part of the basis of this type of tourism (Newsome, Dowling & Leung, 2012).

Geotourism is characterized by the definition of "tourism that maintains or enhances the geographical character of a place, its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the wellbeing of its inhabitants" (Lazzari and Aloia, 2014). Hose (2012) identified the 3 J's of geotourism in his study. These are: Geohistory, geopreservation and geological interpretation. In the "3 J of Geotourism Topological Diagram" prepared by Hose (2012), the relationship between geotourism and geoconservation is revealed. They are geographical areas with defined borders that are of international importance in terms of landforms and geological features, where conservation, education and sustainable development activities are carried out and managed from a holistic perspective. Geoparks, which host many geosites, are conservation areas that aim to protect these geosites and transfer them to future generations; they are also sustainable development areas that aim at the social and cultural development of the local people. In addition to protecting geoheritage, Geoparks also aim to raise public awareness on issues such as sustainable use of natural resources, mitigating the effects of climate change and reducing risks related to natural disasters.

Geoparks as a new nature conservation concept started with the establishment of the European Geoparks Network in 2000. UNESCO started working on geoparks in 2001, and the Global Geopark Network came together in Paris in 2004. In 2015, at the 38th General Conference of UNESCO, the status of geoparks changed and it was decided that they would become a UNESCO Program with international registration possible. The International Geosciences and Geoparks Program (IGGP) Regulation was adopted and the concept of UNESCO Global Geopark was formed. Currently, there are 177 geoparks from 46 countries in the UNESCO Global Geopark Network as of April 2022. While there are no geoparks in the

United States, China ranks first in the number of geoparks. Turkey's first and only geopark is Kula – Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark (Aytaç & Bozdağ, 2017). UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGp) are single, unified geographical areas where areas and landscapes of international geological importance are managed through a holistic concept of conservation, education and sustainable development. Bottom-up approaches to combining conservation with sustainable development by involving local communities are becoming increasingly popular. According to 2025 data, there are a total of 213 UNESCO Global Geoparks from 48 countries (UNESCO, 2025).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It has been observed that the basic assumptions of the positivist science paradigm regarding the nature of spiritual/cultural reality have been significantly criticized in the social and human science circles in the last century (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 1999). In the field of social sciences, especially in recent years, there has been an increasing number of studies using the labor-intensive qualitative research approach. Therefore, the sub-patterns within the qualitative method have different purposes, different data collection strategies and different analysis techniques in the context of describing people, society and culture (Creswell, 2013). In this context, qualitative research method was preferred in the study. In this context, field research was conducted in Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, observation technique and interviews with local people were carried out.

Field Study Preparation Document Scanning

During the field study preparation process, including the pilot study, information about the subject of the study was discussed. Source scanning should be done in written and visual archives. In addition, literary works and diaries can be scanned. Based on data collected through visual and written documents; political change, a chronological order can be made regarding daily life and historical background. In addition, the field visited for the purpose of the pilot study was conducted through archive scanning at the location where it will be conducted. Photographs that serve as visual documents are identified and classified. With these documents, the research topic focuses on creating data for the analysis of social change.

Preliminary Study

Pilot study is to obtain general information about the research area and subject and then it is applied in order to make generalizations by comparing the location and physical structure.

1. Determination of the boundaries of the place where the pilot study will be conducted

2. Determining the method to be used in evaluating the data

3. Pilot application: direct observation and interview

4. During the preliminary study period, rearrangement of the study according to significant changes (Spradley, 1980).

Field Study

Fieldwork is the study of the space in which human societies and cultures take place. Anthropological fieldwork is modified by the following characteristics: The researcher remains in the field for a long time. While observing the society, he observes. He tries to see the inner appearance of the native people. As a social scientist, he aims to measure and preserve a perspective free from value judgments. For the biology of the human organism, society is a ready-made laboratory for the social scientist, which is the cells. Participation and observation are the most important parts of his education. The fieldworker is similar to natural history to some extent. He does not take as much observation as possible. In fact, he does not take all his observations without checking whether they are relevant and appropriate. The preparations for initiation ceremonies, marriage and death ceremonies are followed for six or more months and the circulation stages. At the same time, while the preparations for these stages continue in the department, he makes observations, trying not to miss a second of the ongoing daily life (Powdermaker, 1962).



Ethnography

The ethnographic field study involves immersing yourself in a user's environment over an extended period. It's invaluable when cultural context matters. It is widely accepted by researchers that field notes and textualization are crucial in ethnographic fieldwork. Given the above narratives, it is not surprising that field notes are difficult to think about and write: the process of taking field notes is a strange, complex, and difficult one. Field notes, which are simultaneously part of the "doing" of fieldwork and the "writing" of ethnography, are shaped by two processes: the turning away from academic discourse and toward engaging in conversations in foreign settings, and the turning back toward academic discourse. Field notes, as a form of communication that is primarily self-addressed, differ from both face-to-face and ephemeral sociality; notes are informed by indirect but enduring exchanges in the field (Lederman, 1990: 72). Field notes are the primary data produced by ethnography, which are then expanded, strengthened, and analyzed by the researcher. In writing field notes, the observer acts by recording what is experienced with all five senses.

Direct Observation

Direct observation provides detailed information about the frequency, duration, and intensity of activity episodes that occur during the observation period. This method surpasses most methods in its ability to capture the type and context of physical activity, including where and with whom it occurs. Direct observation can be tailored to fit the needs of a particular research question and the behavioral and contextual variables of particular interest. Its strengths are that observational procedures are flexible and allow researchers to record factors related to physical activity. Observation can be used as a process or outcome measure, making it valuable to researchers and interventionists or practitioners. Its limitations are that this method is quite cumbersome, labor-intensive, and expensive for observers. Observers must be well trained. Data coding is cumbersome if paper and pencil are used. Observation can only be conducted in controlled settings and therefore can only measure physical activity in one area at a time. The presence of an observer can produce a reactivity effect that leads to a change in usual behavior. Repeated measurements can reduce the potential effect of reactivity (Trost, 2007)

Participating Observation

The purpose of choosing the participatory observation technique is; the determined subject as a social unit is to be able to portray all the elements from their perspective by considering them as a whole (Erickson, 1984). In this study, the participant observation technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The participant observation data covered a period of three nights and four days in March 2025 by the researcher in the role of the author.

Interview

Semi-structured data collection technique used in research method. Interviews, people's opinions on the subject are compiled in interviews is to be evaluated. Headings with data obtained from the comments of the interviewees what is most ingrained in memories, different perspectives from generations it can be determined whether. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 people from the local community. Since the research is a qualitative study, the method of 'purposive sampling' was followed throughout the study in order to examine in depth the situations thought to have rich information on a limited number of people (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 1999). In this respect, the 13 volunteer participants who participated in the study constitute the population living in the region.

After Field Study Organizing Data

With the completion of the transcriptions, the topic and topics determined at the beginning of the research by determining the coding method of words, concepts and expressions that will answer the purpose in depth, is marked. The seven stages of the interview technique defined by Kvale (1994) are thematization, design, interview, transcription, analysis, confirmation and reporting. Afterwards, the data obtained as a result of transcription was

examined and the data related to the research topic was extracted and the data reduction process was carried out. The data to be analyzed was then named and coded. In the next stage, thanks to these summaries and codings, main categories and themes were determined by taking into account the literature on the subject.

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews. These data were analysed using content analysis techniques. In the analysis phase, the data were coded, and themes, categories, and relationships were identified and interpreted considering the research questions (Huberman & Miles, 2016). A commonly used qualitative data analysis software was employed to facilitate the coding and analysis process. The steps involved in the qualitative analysis included: Coding: Identifying segments of text relevant to the research questions. Categorizing: Grouping codes into broader themes and categories. Interpreting: Analysing themes to derive insights aligned with the research objectives

RESULTS

It is located in the Aegean Region, in the central part of the Gediz Graben and in the western part of the Inner Western Anatolian Plateaus, in the Kula District of Manisa Province. The total area of the geopark is 2320 km². "Kula Geopark and its surroundings, located in a region where tensile tectonics are active, have geologically and tectonically complex and geomorphologically rich landforms. The region where the geopark is located contains evidence of the earth's history of more than 200 million years, from Paleozoic metamorphic rocks (schist, gneiss) to prehistoric volcanic eruptions, and in this respect, hosts a very rich geodiversity. "Kula Geopark is one of the youngest volcanic areas in Turkey and is also the first and only UNESCO-labeled geopark of Turkey and the Turkish Republics". The process of declaring a Geopark took place over a period of 10 years. In March 2013, it became Turkey's first Global Geopark Candidate and received the title of "Global Geopark". It started to be protected by UNESCO in 2015 (Aytaç and Demir, 2019).



Figure 2. Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark as a Research Site

Source: Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, 2025

Turkey is geologically rich under the influence of the Alpine-Himalayan belt on which it is located. It is home to the traces of the active and variable processes it went through in different periods (Gürler and Timur, 2007). Turkey is at the crossroads of three major continents. It is an indication that it is rich in terms of geopark potential for an indicator.

Kula has attracted people's attention since ancient times due to the black volcanic soil on which it is located and was called "Katakekaumene", meaning "Burned Region". The name of the region Yanık here is given by the famous historian given by Strabon (Akdeniz, 2008). Kula Geopark, one of the youngest volcanic fields in Turkey, is a natural, geological, cultural and archaeological site. It is the most important area of the country in terms of geotourism due to its riches.Volcanic cones and craters in Kula Geopark, fairy chimneys, historical Kula houses, column basalts, lava flows and leaches, Yunusemre Tomb, Gökeyüp pottery, volcanic caves and tunnels and prehistoric fossil footprints can be counted among the attractions of the region (Usta and Kırlar Can, 2021).

Participants	Age	Gender	Occupation	Interview location	Duration of Interview (minutes)
Interview-1P	27	Male	Teacher	Kula	33
Interview-2P	45	Male	Tradesman	Kula	40
Interview-3P	35	Male	Waiter	Kula	36
Interview-4P	33	Male	Waiter	Kula	30
Interview-5P	42	Female	Housewife	Kula	45
Interview-6P	47	Female	Housewife	Kula	45
Interview-7P	22	Male	Student	Kula	30
Interview-8P	19	Male	Student	Kula	35
Interview-9P	21	Male	Student	Salihli	32
Interview-10P	19	Male	Student	Salihli	35
Interview-11P	41	Male	Banker	Salihli	21
Interview-12P	43	Male	Security Guard	Salihli	40
Interview-13P	35	Male	Receptionist	Salihli	30

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Interviewed Participants

Source: Elaborated by the author.

Semi-structured interviews were held with 13 local people in the Kula-Salihli Region, which was determined as the research area. 2 women and 11 men participated in the study, which was based on volunteering. The youngest participant in the study in terms of age group is 19 years old (Interview-8P). Participants differ in terms of professional group. Interview times are between 30 minutes and 45 minutes. The interview questions are as follows;

- 1) Do you know Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark? (Yes/No)
- 2) Have you visited Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark? (Yes/No)
- 3) What are your thoughts about Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark?
- 4) Does Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark contribute to the region? How?

According to the findings obtained from the interviews, the participants have visited the Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark at least once and have information about the geopark. The local people are basically of the opinion that further promotion of the region will further develop the region economically. It was revealed that the participants of the study visited Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark at least once.

It has been noted that there are also women entrepreneurs in the region along with gastronomy and handicrafts. (Interview-5P, Interview-6P)

However, a personnel problem arose in the healthy population in the Salihli-Kula Region. Stating that there is a current need for personnel lost due to the restrictions imposed on the sector during the pandemic period, but it cannot be met (Interview-3P, Interview-4P, Interview-13P).

Stating that the geopark has an economic impact on the region, the participants stated that the mansions have been restored and opened their doors to tourism (Interview-3, Interview-11P).

On the other hand, they have noted that some traditional crafts have become popular with tourism (Interview-2P).

Together with the geopark, they have stated that there has been an increase in the number of festivals and the number of tours to the region (Interview-7P, Interview-8P, Interview-9P, Interview-10P, Interview-11P, Interview-12P).



Figure 3. Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark

Source: Elaborated by the author.

The region's volcanic structure, hot springs and "sea of rocks" formed by lava have become a research center for scientists as well as a tourist attraction. However, recent research shows that the region should attract attention not only with its historical riches but also with its underground geothermal and volcanic activities.

According to the findings obtained in the research, the tourism attractions of the Salihli-Kula region were examined under two headings, natural and cultural attractions, and are presented in Table 2. While natural attractions consist of geological landforms and geosites, cultural attractions; Traditional handicrafts, traditional architectural features, gastronomy are shown as ruins from prehistoric times.

Tourism Attractions			
Natural Attractions	Cultural Attractions		
Geological Landforms	Traditional handicrafts (felt making, carpet making, shoe making, jug making, casserole making, blacksmithing, copper making, tin making, saddle making, saddlery, quilt making, leather making, weaving, roasted chickpea making and halva making)		
Natural Geosites	Gastronomy (local cuisine)		
Cultural Geosites	Traditional architectural structure (Historical Kula houses, Kenan Evren Ethnography Museum, Turkish house, streets, arastas, guilds, churches, mosques, tombs, inns, baths, fountains, bridges)		
Geoarchaeological Geosites	Prehistoric footprints in cultural and historical terms		

Table 2. Tourism Attractions of Kula-Salihli Region

Source: Elaborated by the author.

According to the findings obtained from the interviews; In addition to having a geopark, the Kula-Salihli Region has been the settlement of different communities since ancient times and has also hosted many important names in Turkish history (such as Yunus Emre). In addition to its history, culture and gastronomy, it is also an attractive tourist destination with its natural areas and hot water springs.

Tourism types based on sustainable tourism for the Kula-Salihli Region can be listed as follows;

- Ecotourism
- Camping-Caravan Tourism
- Bicycle tourism
- Thermal Tourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Religious Tourism
- Gastronomy Tourism
- Youth Tourism
- Third age tourism
- Health Tourism

Especially Kurşunlu Mosque, which was built in the 15th century and has preserved its outline until today, Çarşı Mosque and Süleyman Şah Tomb, Tabduk Emre and Yunus Emre Tomb are the best examples of religious buildings. Kula historical houses are now included in the protected area. These houses have brought all the characteristics of Turkish life and the most established forms of traditional architecture to the present day, without carrying the influence of any other age. Folk literature is also very rich in Kula. There are many proverbs, idioms, lullabies, nursery rhymes, riddles, fairy tales and stories. In Kula, importance is given to preparing food for winter. It has a rich food culture, the main dishes of weddings are keskek and water pastry. Today, when handicrafts and crafts began unforgettably, these arts are trying to preserve their existence under difficult conditions in Kula. Saddle making, felt making, copper making, saddlery, blacksmithing, shoe making, quilt making, weaving, roasted chickpea making and halva making are done in the district, especially Kula Halitan is world famous. The folk dance of Kula region is called "zeybek". Heavy zeybeks (men's zeybeks) are played with drum-zuma or clarinet accompaniment (Erdoğan, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Turkey has a high diversity of intangible and concrete cultural heritage. In this study, Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, Turkey's first and only geopark, was researched in terms of tourism diversity and the types of tourism that could be done in accordance with the sustainable tourism concept were explained (Ersoy, 2004). When we divide the rich cultural heritage elements of the region into tangible cultural heritage elements and intangible cultural heritage elements, while friendship, blacksmithing, songs and folk songs are examples of intangible cultural heritage elements, pit fountains, historical ruins and mosques are also included in the concrete cultural heritage elements. Kula is a district that has the first and only geopark of the Republic of Turkey, the 58th in Europe and the 99th in the world. The most important feature that distinguishes this geopark from other geological areas in Turkey is that it has the youngest volcanics in Turkey (Körbalta, 2018).

Geoparks are regions with definite borders that are accepted as cultural heritage due to the scientific and educational value of geological and geomorphological formations that have important natural and cultural values and need to be protected. Some of the 73 geosites determined by the Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, where the study was carried out, are natural sites, some are cultural sites, and some are archaeological sites. Kula Divlit Volcano Cone, Kula Fairy Chimneys, Tabak Creek Giant Boilers, Marmara Lake, Adala Canyon, Çakırca Basalt Columns are some of the examples of natural sites. Historical Kula Houses, Yunus Emre, Tabduk Emre Tomb, Gökeyüp Pottery, Gölde (İncesu) Village Architecture are some of the examples of cultural sites. If we give examples of archaeological sites in the region: Sardes Ancient City and Gymnasium, Temple of Artemis, Prehistoric Rock Paintings, Bin Tepeler Thermai Thessos Thermal Springs and Rock Sculptures are some of the best examples (Güngör, 2012; Usta and Kirlar Can, 2023). In the determination of activities, it is important to include activities that will allow for artistic and sporting activities in order to:

- internalize the geopark area,
- make its gains permanent,
- support the local economy,
- have an original quality specific to the area, and
- promote the geopark.

The people living within the borders of the Geopark or in its immediate vicinity, institutions and organizations responsible for the area, visitors, local, national and international organizations interested in the Geopark, research institutions, local governments and other interested parties constitute the interest groups of the Kula- Salihli Geopark. The visitor profile consists of people from different age and profession groups such as children, elderly, women, students, academicians, and these rates can be determined with certainty by the records to be made in the field. While the profiles of the visitor groups determine the variety of activities in the Geopark, the activities to be diversified can change the user profile again.

It has been observed that there is no study or awareness in the research area about the protection and management of natural and cultural elements within the framework of sustainability. The fact that natural elements are protected areas is a reason supporting this situation. Private investments along with state support are required to utilize the geotourism potential in the district. As suggestions; it is necessary to support improvements in accommodation, to meet the personnel needed by the tourism sector, to highlight cultural tourism, ecotourism and gastronomy tourism as well as geotourism, and to increase promotional activities. Finally, it is very important to put forward a plan for the sustainable tourism

development of the district. Sustainability approach is an important concept that should be taken into consideration in terms of management and planning of tourism areas. In order to transfer the resources to future generations, conservation and use criteria must be addressed within the framework of sustainability during tourism development in the district.

In the region where many types of tourism are carried out in accordance with the concept of sustainable tourism; It is necessary to review the environmental, economic and social impacts. The region has both natural and cultural tourism attractions. Protective measures must be taken to protect these attractions and to take their place in the tourism scene in the long term. In all studies to be carried out within the scope of sustainable tourism, local people, civil society and local administration must act together.

The creation of points in the area where people's essential needs will be met (such as nutrition, rest, toilets) can also be evaluated within this scope. During the evaluation phase, privileged groups in society (such as the elderly, the disabled, and children) should not be forgotten, and special spatial arrangements should be made for these groups to ensure equal opportunities, and security measures should be taken to ensure life and property safety. Wheelchairs used in the Tottori Sakyu Geopark in Japan to allow the disabled to easily walk on the sand are good examples of how this need is met. The determination of electric bicycle routes and the use of electric bicycles in the Naturtejo Geopark in Portugal enables both privileged groups to use the area more and visitors to walk on long trails more comfortably.

In order for a geopark to develop, local culture must be highlighted and the local economy must be developed. Within the scope of local culture, archaeological values (archaeological ruins, tumuli, ancient roads, castles, tomb monuments, religious places, mounds, etc.), historical values (history of the region where the area is located from prehistoric times to the present day), ethnographic values (traditions, customs, traditional architecture, etc. belonging to local life within the geopark) and recreational values (such as existing trekking lines, panoramic tour paths, observation terraces, sports activities carried out in the area, etc.) are the components that reflect the local culture. Economic activities that will support local development by considering all this cultural wealth together with resource values are also important. Activities such as selling local products, training local guides, providing training in handicrafts, organizing festivals, determining regional tour routes with tourism companies, including visitors in local life (such as agricultural activities, weddings), and encouraging guesthouses can have supportive effects on the local economy.

From the food menus offered in the Geopark to the design of the spaces created, the existence of geopark-specific productions will play a major role in the formation and promotion of the identity of the area. The "Geokokteyl" drink, which is a mixture of mineral waters and developed in the Vulkaneifel Geopark in Germany, dinosaur breads in the Hateg Country Dinosaurs Geopark in Romania, ammonite chocolate and ammonite bread produced in the Réserve Géologique de Haute in France can be given as examples of these, while the geobakeries, geo-restaurants, spa and health centers developed in the Naturtejo Geopark in Portugal can be given as examples of locally developed commercial formations (Körbalta, 2018).

The limitation of the research is that it was conducted in Kula-Salihli UNESCO Global Geopark, which is the first and only in Turkey. The findings obtained belong only to this region. The study participants live in this region.

For future studies, geoparks differ in terms of their features. Geoparks can be examined on a country basis. Comparisons can be made across geoparks with different features. Qualitative research method was used in this study. In the next study, different findings can be obtained by using the quantitative research method.

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