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Kültürel Miras ve Turizm: Lefkara Örneği, Kıbrıs

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ÖZ:

Lefkara, Kıbrıs'ın güneyinde yer alan kültürel miras açısından önemli bir köydür. Lefkara köyü, adını Lefkara veya Lefkaritika olarak bilinen geleneksel dantel yapımından alır. Bu nitelikli sanat, UNESCO Somut Olmayan Dünya Mirası Listesi'ne dahil edilmesiyle Dünya çapında tanınmıştır. Bu bağlamda, Lefkara köyü günümüzde önemli bir turistik çekim noktası haline gelmiştir. Adada yaşayanların yanı sıra farklı ülkelerden birçok turist, yerel kültürü deneyimlemek için bölgeyi ziyaret etmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı kültürel miras ve turizm ilişkisini Lefkara köyü örneği üzerinden sorgulamaktır. Çalışma kapsamında, Lefkara köyü saha araştırması yoluyla gözlemlenmiş ve değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır. Bu gözlem ve değerlendirmelerden elde edilen veriler ışığında kültürel mirasın kültür turizmi açısından değerlendirilmesi için SWOT analizi yapılmıştır.

Bölgenin kültürel miras turizmi bağlamında güçlü yönleri ve fırsatları belirlenmiş, zayıf yönleri ve mevcut tehditler tartışılmıştır. Sonuç kısmında ise, bölgedeki kültürel miras turizminin gelişerek devamlılığının sağlanabilmesi adına gelecek senaryoları tartışılmış ve önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

ANAHTAR KELİMELEER: Koruma, yenileme, kültürel turizm, somut ve somut olmayan kültür mirası.

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ABSTRACT:

Lefkara village is located in the Southern part of Cyprus and it is an important district in terms of intangible and tangible cultural heritage. The village took the name from the traditional lace making (known as Lefkara or Lefkaritika). Lefkara is a traditional lace work that is recognized on the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List for protecting the intangible cultural heritage.

The village is an important tourist attraction point. Many tourists from different countries as well as local people visit the village to experience local culture. The aim of the research is to question the relationship between cultural heritage and tourism through the case of Lefkara village.

As the method of the study, the village is observed through site survey and evaluations have been done. In the light of the data obtained from this observation, a SWOT analysis was made to evaluate the cultural heritage in terms of cultural tourism.

Within the scope of the study, strengths and opportunities of Lefkara village is discussed and also, weakness and threats is defined. As a result, future scenarios for the village is discussed and strategies is proposed to for the continuity of the cultural heritage tourism in the light of the SWOT analysis.

KEYWORDS: conservation; revitalization; cultural tourism; tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

“Cultural Heritage and Tourism: Case of Lefkara, Cyprus”

INTRODUCTION

Lefkara village is located in the Southern part of Cyprus. The village is located on top of the mountains and has an organic layout with narrow streets (Figure 1). Lefkara has preserved its originality and authenticity after the revitalization works within the whole village. During the conservation works, the traditional materials have been used are in order to preserve the identity of the place.

On the other hand, it is not only tangible heritage of the place that has been conserved successfully but also the intangible heritage of the village. It is known that Lefkara traditional lace making that dates back to at least 14th century. The traditional lace is influenced by Venetians who ruled the island in 15th century, and ancient Greek and Byzantine geometric patterns. The traditional lacework is still the primary occupation of the women living in Lefkara and it is also one of the social activities for the women that they come together to create distinctive handcrafts. In 2009, Lefkara Lace/ Lefkaritika is inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List. (URL2).

Lefkara village is an important tourism attraction in terms of cultural heritage tourism. Many tourists and Cypriots from different part of the island visit the village. The village is important example of preserving intangible and tangible heritage of the cultural heritage. Being in the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List is one of the advantages of the village. The well-preserved architectural heritage of the village is one of the reasons of that takes attention of the visitors. The main goal of the study is to question cultural heritage and cultural tourism relationship through Lefkara village. As a successfully preserved cultural heritage asset, lessons learned from Lefkara will be also discussed.



Figure 1. General view of the Lefkara village (Photo: Author, 2019)

1. Cultural Heritage Tourism

Cultural heritage is one of the most crucial tourism resources (Timothy, 2014). As Smith (2016) discusses, heritage tourism can be accepted as a branch of cultural tourism and it is one of the most important types of tourism (Timothy and Boyd, 2006).

Cultural heritage assets may attract different communities due to the significant heritage values. They are the witnesses of the past that become attractions to be visited as a tourism resource. Tourism sector experts look to the cultural heritage as a crucial tourism resource that should be improved (Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009). Cultural heritage tourism ensures preservation of cultural heritage and to develop the quality of life for residences and tourists. The main goal in cultural heritage tourism is to preserve heritage and culture while sharing it with visitors and ensuring economic incomes (Lusetyowati, 2015).

Visitors have the most important role in cultural heritage tourism (Santa and Tiatco, 2019). The connection of the visitor with cultural heritage are one of the factors that affect the quality of heritage tourism experiences (Poria et al, 2003). However, the number of visitors should be in control in order not to harm the heritage sites. Both over-use and under-use of the heritage sites has potential to be a threat to the continuity of cultural heritage as a tourism product. Over-use has potential to damage of the tangible and intangible values. On the other hand, under-use can cause in the lack of support for needed preservation work (McKercher and Ho, 2006).

The original form of a cultural tourism assets should be preserved and it should not be developed only for satisfying the needs of the tourists (Ho and McKercher, 2004). In 'ICOMOS Charter (1999) - International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance', it is discussed that heritage tourism and preservation activities should benefit the related community. Tourism promotion program should preserve the natural and cultural heritage characteristics.

Cultural heritage can be divided into two as the tangible and the intangible. Historic cities, landscapes, buildings, sculptures, etc. can be accepted as tangible cultural heritage (Urry, 1990). However, non-physical values such as folklore, beliefs, traditions, language, knowledge, etc. can be accepted as intangible cultural heritage. Cultural heritage tourism includes as experiences of tangible and intangible evidences (Park, 2014). The potential of the cultural heritage as tool for tourism is a good opportunity for economic and social development (Debeş, 2011).

2. Methodology

As the method of the study, observations through site survey were completed. "Participated observation" technique is used as the method and site has been visited in different periods between 2018-2019. Also, interviews were conducted with 50 local people and 50 visitors. Semi-structured interviews were organized under these main criteria as seen below:

- Accessibility of the village
- Cultural heritage values of the district
- Significance of the site
- Conservation studies in the district
- Promotional activities in the village
- Socio-cultural activities in the village
- Potential of the district to be used as tool for cultural tourism
- Cultural tourism activities
- Number of tourist visiting village per day
- Strategic planning for the future

In the light of the data obtained from the observations, a SWOT analysis was made to evaluate the cultural heritage in terms of cultural tourism. During this process, notes were taken by the researcher based on the behaviour and discourse of the region and visitors in line with the problems. In the SWOT analysis, weaknesses, threats and negative factors are determined, while opportunities and strengths and positive approaches are revealed. With the data to be obtained with the SWOT analysis, the evaluation of the cultural heritage in terms of cultural tourism, promotion of the cultural heritage, marketing and determination of the deficiencies is determined.

3. Lefkara Village In Cyprus

3.1 Historical Background And Description Of The Site

Lefkara village is located in the Larnaca district, on the hillside of the Troodos mountain. The village is divided into two administrative districts as Kato (Lower) Lefkara and Pano (Upper) Lefkara and it has one of the oldest municipalities that established in 1883.

Lefkara has been inhabited for centuries without interruption. The area around the settlement has been inhabited since Neolithic age as evidenced by the archaeological findings. Elsewhere, tombs were found dating back to Hellenistic period and as well as a small settlement dating to the Roman and Pre-Byzantine years.

The village had a mixed population that consists of a majority of Greek Cypriots and a minority of Turkish Cypriots (Table 1). According to the 1946 census the population was 3003 totally (2,530 Greek Cypriots and 473 Turkish Cypriots). When the island divided into two parts as North and South, around 400 Turkish Cypriots were being resettled to the village of Agios Theodoros/Çayırova.

As seen in Table 1, Lefkara had a mixed population but the Greek Cypriots were the majority. There was a sharp decline in the population in 1960 for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Currently, the village is mainly inhabited by Greek Cypriots. According to the last Cypriot census of 2021, the total population was 978 (URL 1).

In 1970s the village is started to take attraction of the visitors and tourism began to develop. Traditional architecture and lacework attracted tourists to the district. In 1978, many conservation and rehabilitation works took place by the Department of Antiquities. The village preserved its architectural heritage and also its authenticity.

The residence belonging Patsalos family converted to a folklore museum. The museum represents visitors the traditional lifestyle in the past in Lefkara. The residence has faced many restoration works and opened to the visitors. The museum includes the furniture and lifestyle of a family, local costumes and examples of the Lefkara laceworks (Figure 2).

Table 1. Population of the village through history (Source: URL 1, Adapted by Author, 2021)

YEARS	TURKISH CYPRIOTS	GREEK CYPRIOTS	OTHERS	TOTAL
1831*	53	379	-	432
1891	219	1916	-	2135
1901	270	2055	-	2325
1911	306	2299	-	2605
1921	351	2525	-	2876
1931	375	2584	-	2959
1946	473	2530	-	3003
1960	361	1714	-	2075
1973	31	1330	-	1361
1976	-	1356**	-	1356
1982	-	1289**	-	1289
2001	-	1039**	-	1039
2011	-	905	-	905
2021	-	978	-	978

* In 1831 census only males were counted.
 ** De jure population (Including other nationals)

The village is located around 40 km away from Larnaca city center and around 49 km away from Limassol city center. The accessibility to the village is very limited by public transportation but easy with private vehicles. There are many car-parking places in the entrance of the village. It is possible to par there since the streets are too narrow for cars. Many streets in Lefkara are rehabilitated by using traditional materials. Handicrafts and gastronomy is the main cultural tourism activities of the village (Table 2).

Table 2. Description of the site

Criteria	Features
Location	-Located on the foothills of the Troodos mountain -Around 40 km away from Larnaca city center and around 49 km away from Limassol city center
Accessibility	-By bus (limited) -By vehicular traffic
Parking facilities	-Small parking areas around the village
Natural features	-Landscape
Cultural heritage features	-Rehabilitated streets -Traditional houses -Folklore museum (renovated from historic house) -Lefkara lace work
Cultural tourism activities	-Handicraft -Gastronomy

3.2 Conservation And Architectural Heritage

Many traditional dwellings have been listed and rehabilitated by the Department of Antiquities and the Department of Housing and Urbanism since 1978 (Figure 3). One of the most important dwellings, Patsalos residence has been converted into a local museum.



Figure 3. Traditional stone texture (Photo: Author, 2019)

Rehabilitation works were successful in terms of preserving the originality and authenticity of the village. As seen in Figure 3, traditional stone is used during restoration works both on the streets and building facades, which helped preserving the authenticity of the district.

Lefkara also has a mosque that was built in the 20th century with the help of Turkish Cypriots. An Ottoman mosque exists in the place of today's mosque but was destroyed in the 1890s. The mosque reflects the traditional rural architecture of Cyprus and there is a minaret attached to the north-eastern corner (Bağışkan 2005).

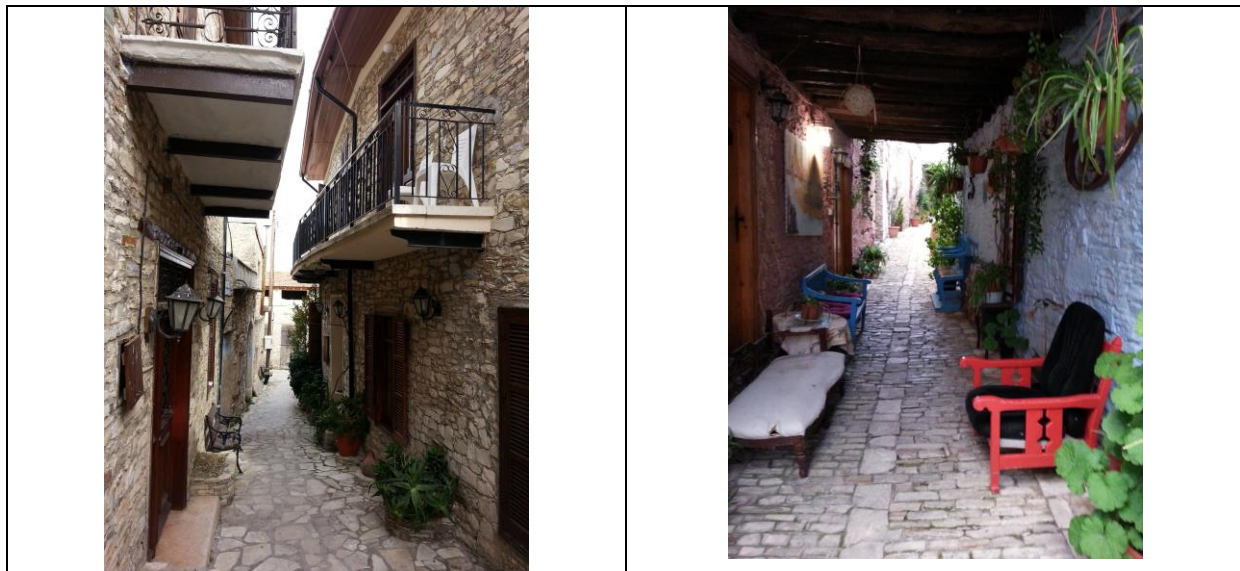


Figure 4. Narrow streets of Lefkara (Photo: Author, 2019)

The use of open/semi-open spaces and public/private domains is unique in the district. Local people are using streets, which is a public space, as semi-private spaces by placing some furniture or plants and spending time in those spaces (Figure 4).

The migration of the population of Lefkara between 1930s and 1970s resulted in the abandonment of many buildings in the village. There are many buildings that are still abandoned today. Although most of the traditional buildings preserved by respecting the originality of the cultural heritage, there are few cases that the use of new materials has changed façades and interiors of traditional dwellings (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Change of façade and architectural elements. (Photo: Author, 2019)

4. Findings and Discussions

As the method of the study, SWOT analysis has been done in the light of the observation through site survey (Table 3). According to the results, Lefkara village is a unique context with rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage that is in UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List. Conservation and rehabilitation works have been done by government and the cultural heritage of the district well preserved.

S	W	O	T
Accessibility	Weak promotions	Developing trends in cultural tourism	Exceeding tourist capacity of the district
Rich in tangible and intangible cultural heritage	Decrease in population	Friendly behaviour of the local people	Bringing tourist profit purposes to the fore
Awareness in the cultural tourism in the district	Lost interest of the young residences in the village	Interest of the tourist to the district	Displeasure of local people due to many tourists
Being unique in terms of cultural heritage	Lack of activities in the district for the local people	Local shops selling traditional Lefkara lace works	Lost interest of the young residences in the village
Successful conservation and rehabilitation works by the government	Location far from city center	Local restaurants selling traditional food	Threat to lose its authenticity due to the decreasing number of local people in the village
Preserved its authenticity and architectural heritage		Positive effect of the cultural heritage to the district.	Lack of strategic planning as long term and short term strategies
Having a Local Ethnological Museum for visitors			Lack of promotional and marketing activities
Being in UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List			Change of façade and architectural elements

There is a developing trend in the world in cultural heritage tourism and there is an awareness regarding with this trend in the village by the local people that can be accepted as one of the strength and opportunities. The local people are very friendly to the visitors, which is very important in terms of conservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Tourists from different parts of the world visit Lefkara in order to experience intangible and tangible cultural heritage of the village. There are many local shops that sell traditional souvenirs with Lefkara lace work. Also, there are restaurants around the village that selling traditional food.

One of the weaknesses of the village is the decrease in population; especially young people lost their interest and started to move to the city centers. One of the reasons that young people are leaving the village is the location of the village far from the city center. Also, another reason is the lack of activities in the district for the local people. This can be a threat to the intangible cultural heritage since the village can lose its authenticity due to the decreasing number of local people in the village. In this respect, local people should be encouraged to live in the village.

Exceeding tourist capacity of the district and bringing tourist profit purposes to the fore can be also a threat to the cultural heritage. The key in cultural heritage tourism is to balance local people and visitor needs and expectations.

According to the results, it is achieved that Lefkara village has potential to be used as a cultural tourism resource. There are many strengths and opportunities that can contribute not only to the promotion of the village but also help to attract more visitors to the whole island.

5. Strategies For Cultural Heritage Tourism In Lefkara, Cyprus

In the light of SWOT analysis following strategies is proposed for cultural heritage tourism and the future of the district:

-Heritage values of the village should be defined as the first step. The movable and immovable heritage should be conserved.

-Potentials of the village should be identified (economic, socio-cultural and environmental).

-Cultural activities should be organized in the village for both locals and tourists/visitors. Locals should be educated regarding with cultural heritage through seminars and workshops. Also, Lefkara lace workshops can be organized for tourists/visitors. These kind of activities will provide promotion of the cultural heritage and economic development of the district.

-Sportive activities can also be organized in and around the village such as trekking, cycling, etc.

-Leisure activities can also be developed such as restaurant, café, photographic activities, guided village tours, etc.)

-The touristic activities should be monitored and supported by local authorities and NGOs. The number of locals and visitors should be balanced in the district.

-Lack of public transportation is one of the major issues of cultural heritage tourism. In this respect, the public transportation infrastructure should be developed to make the village more accessible to the visitors.

-Immigration from the village to the city is one the threats for the conservation of cultural heritage. Economic conditions for the locals should be developed by providing new job opportunities.

-Incompatible reuse of architectural heritage, new interventions should be appropriate. Should be monitored by local authorities.

-Strategic planning as long-term and short-term strategies should be prepared for the future conservation and tourism strategies of the village. Promotional and marketing activities should be organized for the promotion of the village.

-Proper tourism development and management plans should be developed that focuses authenticity and cultural heritage of the district.

CONCLUSION

Cultural heritage is a unique and valuable asset that reflects the lifestyle of civilizations and conveys information about the period in which they live. Communities need to preserve, conserve and restore such values. In this context, it is necessary to preserve the cultural heritage by developing it. Cultural heritage should be studied and evaluated through cultural heritage tourism.

Lefkara is a very important place not only in terms of national tourism but also in terms of international tourism as well. In this respect, it should be aimed to identify and support the strengths of Lefkara village and provide benefits by developing opportunities. On the other hand, the issues that threaten the cultural heritage should be identified and solved immediately. As a result of the analysis, it is concluded that the cultural heritage should be more attractive to the visitors. More studies need to be developed for the future of the Lefkara village.

First of all, a strategic master plan should be created with the participation locals and non-governmental organizations. Community participation is an important key in cultural heritage tourism. It is revealed that strategic planning is frequently used in cultural heritage since it creates standards and quality within the scope of sustainable tourism. Long-term and short-term strategies should be proposed for the development of sustainable tourism, involving all the stakeholders and community in the process.

Lefkara should be more attractive as a touristic product by making more promotion in the regional and national press. Touristic products with cultural heritage characteristics may promote the region more effectively and provide an advantage in terms of attractiveness. Successful cultural tourism activities may ensure increase in the number of visitors and the residences in the district. In order to achieve this, weakness and threats as indicated in the SWOT analysis requires alternative and immediate solutions. Through analysis, it is achieved that world heritage site has potentials to be used as cultural tourism resource since the advantages are more than the potential risks.

In recent years, there has been an increase in scientific research on the subject of cultural heritage tourism in the literature. The increase in research on the subject will also be beneficial in terms of literature. Also, the study will create awareness on the cultural heritage tourism and can help to develop ideas for future studies.

Compliance with Ethical Standard

Conflict of Interests: The authors declare that for this article they have no actual, potential or perceived conflict of interests.

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

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