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Exploring Sustainable Tourism Practices in Dark Tourism

Hüzün Turizminde Sürdürülebilir Turizm Uygulamalarının Araştırılması

Tarık YALÇINKAYA

Abstract

Aim: This study aims to explore sustainable tourism practices in the context of dark tourism, using the sustainable framework as a guide.

Method: To achieve the objectives of this study, a participant observation technique was employed during two guided tours of the Gallipoli Battlefields; one conducted in English and the other in Turkish. The study field is well-known for being a key destination for battlefield tourism, and it's a prime example of war-related attractions that fit into the category of dark tourism.

Results: According to the sustainable framework established in the literature, the data analysis identified three primary themes: economic factors, socio-cultural factors, and environmental factors. Under each of these themes, sustainable tourism practices were observed during the data collection process. The principal sustainable practices noted during the tours included the preservation and promotion of cultural and historical heritage, experiential activities such as boat rides or hiking, and contributions to the local economy by supporting local restaurants.

Conclusion: There are significant differences between English-speaking and Turkish-speaking tours. The Gallipoli Peninsula, recognised as a significant site for dark tourism in Türkiye, offers prospects for diversifying mass tourism activities through sustainable initiatives, such as the establishment of hiking trails. The Dire Directorate of Gallipoli Historic Site, the leading destination management organisation on the Gallipoli Peninsula, is expected to set up partnerships with tour companies, who will create tour itineraries centred on sustainable tourism practices in the battlefields.

Keywords

Dark Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Gallipoli, Battlefield Tourism, Sustainability

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Öz

Amaç: Bu araştırma, sürdürülebilirlik alan yazınına dikkate alarak hüzün turizminde sürdürülebilir turizm uygulamalarını keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem: Bu araştırmanın amaçlarına ulaşmak için, Gelibolu Yarımadası'nda gerçekleştirilen iki rehberli turda (biri İngilizce diğeri Türkçe olmak üzere) katılımcı gözlem tekniği aracılığıyla veri toplandı. Araştırma alanı, hüzün turizmi için önemli bir destinasyon olarak iyi bilinmektedir ve hüzün turizm şemsiyesi altında savaşla ilgili destinasyonlar için başlıca bir örnektir.

Bulgular: Sürdürülebilirlik alan yazını bağlamında yapılan veri analizi sonucunda, ana tema bulunmuştur: ekonomik faktörler, sosyo-kültürel faktörler ve çevresel faktörler. Bu temaların her biri altında, veri toplama süreci boyunca sürdürülebilir turizm uygulamaları gözlemlendi. Turlar sırasında not edilen başlıca sürdürülebilir uygulamalar arasında kültürel ve tarihi mirasın korunması ve tanıtılması, tekne gezileri veya yürüyüş güzergahlarında yapılan yürüyüşler gibi deneysel aktiviteler ve yerel restoranlarda öğle yemeği molası aracılığıyla yerel ekonomiye katkılar yer aldı.

Sonuç: Gelibolu Yarımadası'nda İngilizce ve Türkçe gerçekleştirilen turlar arasında önemli farkların olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Türkiye'de hüzün turizm için önemli bir yer olarak kabul edilen Gelibolu Yarımadası, yürüyüş parkurları gibi sürdürülebilir girişimler yoluyla kitle turizmi faaliyetlerini çeşitlendirmek için alternatifler sunmaktadır. Gelibolu Yarımadası'ndaki önde gelen destinasyon yönetim örgütü olan Çanakkale Savaşları Gelibolu Tarihi Alan Başkanlığı'nın savaş alanlarında sürdürülebilir turizm uygulamalarına odaklanan tur güzergahları oluşturacak tur şirketleriyle işbirlikleri kurması önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Hüzün Turizmi, Sürdürülebilir Turizm, Gelibolu Yarımadası, Savaş Alanları Turizmi, Sürdürülebilirlik

Introduction

Dark tourism is an alternative tourism type that has gained popularity in recent decades (Lennon, 2017; Sun and Lv, 2021; Iliev, 2021). Several dark destinations throughout the world, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau and Gallipoli Battlefields have begun to suffer from mass tourism (Halbertsma, 2018; Büyüktepe et al., 2019). This situation is paradoxical given that dark tourism has the ability to diversify tourism demand and serve as a viable alternative to sea-sun-sand or mass tourism (Kutbay and Aykaç, 2016). Battlefield tourism is viewed as a form of dark tourism (Alili, 2017; Kurnaz et al., 2013). Due to the nature of battlefields, destinations' geography and infrastructure might often impede ideal tourism activities. As a result, their bearing capacity may be lower than that of other tourism destinations, perhaps contributing to an over-tourism issue. In this regard, it is critical to diversify tourism activities in battlefields and provide sustainable tourism alternatives to mass tourism.

This study endeavours to investigate sustainable tourism practices within the realm of dark tourism, guided by a conceptual framework. To achieve the objectives of this study, a participant observation methodology was employed during two guided tours of the Gallipoli Battlefields; one conducted in English and the other in Turkish. This location is renowned as a significant site for battlefield tourism and serves as a prime illustration of war-related attractions that fall under the purview of dark tourism (Çakar, 2018). The site attracted approximately four million visitors in 2023 and is anticipated to draw an even larger influx of visitors in subsequent years (TRT Haber, 2024). However, it possesses a physical carrying capacity of merely 3,042 visitors per day, translating to 1.110,330 visits annually (Soylu, 2013), thereby presenting a considerable sustainability challenge. By strictly limiting visitor numbers, the tension between sustainability and the demand for dark tourism is likely to increase (Jureniene and Radzevicius, 2022). Hence, identifying suitable solutions is crucial for ensuring sustainability. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, and based on the literature review conducted prior to the data collection process, only a limited number of studies in the literature have addressed the issue of over-tourism in dark tourism.

This study also responds to recent calls for future studies on dark tourism. For example, Rajasekaram et al. (2022) state that further empirical investigations of diverse methods through which individuals experience dark tourism destinations are required to have a better understanding of their theoretical and practical implications. Also, by focusing on sustainable tourism practices, Mora Forero et al. (2023) suggest that in order to enhance the design and administration of dark tourism and maintain a suitable balance between the preservation of cultural heritage and the sustainable growth of these locations, future study should also keep investigating and analysing the important ideas found in the literature. Having conducted a thorough investigation of sustainable experiences in tourism within a specific lake context, Breiby et al. (2020) recommended that researchers examine the dimensions of sustainable experiences across various tourism settings. Utilising the participant observation methodology at one of the world's most research dark tourism destinations, this study addresses the aforementioned research calls. The findings are expected to have substantial practical implications for tourism practitioners to deal with over-tourism.

Literature Review

Travelling to sites of death, disaster, or the seemingly macabre, also known as dark tourism, is a growing trend in the visitor economy, which creates millions of jobs and generates billions of dollars for governments worldwide as one of the world's largest employers (Stone, 2013). Deeply rooted in the culture and heritage of the destinations, dark tourism breathes life into the history of past tragedies. This is why the numerous sites and attractions it offers allow people to engage with death in a safe and controlled environment. It also plays a crucial role in bringing past events to the present, sharing information, and evoking emotions, all while expanding the conversation around the darker side of history and humanity (Fonseca et al., 2016). Dark tourism focuses on the death of individuals and groups and is usually associated with occurrences of violent or untimely death (Collins-Kreiner, 2016). It is closely tied to emotions (Sun and Lv, 2021). Thus, it is all about visitor experiences. In addition to providing an emotional experience, many dark tourism destinations offer educational services to assist students in achieving a variety of learning objectives (Dresler, 2023). This explains why some sombre tourism sites, like Gallipoli or Auschwitz-Birkenau, have recently gained considerable popularity. Wang et al. (2021) conclude that the benefits of visiting dark tourism destinations include both cognitive (i.e., understanding the environment, basic information, tourism activities, etc.) and affective (i.e., learning about patriotism and becoming more patriotic, learning about life, etc.) components. Consequently, there is an increase in the number of dark visitors over time.

Battlefield tourism, encompassing the visitation of historical sites associated with battles and conflicts, constitutes a significant element of dark tourism (Dunkley et al., 2011). Similar to most forms of dark tourism, battlefields evoke profound emotions (Prideaux, 2007). Furthermore, battlefield tourism provides innovative and immersive experiences resulting from community involvement, diverse touristic offerings, and themed events (Noivo et al., 2022). Given that some individuals regard battlefields as sacred sites, battlefield tourism can serve as a form of pilgrimage (Winter, 2009). In Australia and New Zealand, for instance, travelling to Gallipoli is perceived as a pilgrimage (Hyde and Harman, 2011). Destinations within battlefield tourism attract tourists due to their rich wartime history; however, the expansion of dark tourism should be managed responsibly to enhance visitor satisfaction in a sustainable manner (Chang, 2024). Unregulated increases in visitor numbers may lead to dissatisfaction among dark tourists. This, according to Barakazi (2023), contributes to unsustainable tourism approaches, negatively impacting site management.

The socio-economic and cultural sustainability of a community visiting disaster-related sites by both tourists and residents will play a crucial role in supporting the community's overall resilience wellbeing (Prayag et al., 2021). For the sustainability of dark tourism to be ensured, local communities should be included in tourism planning and decision-making processes. Residents are empowered by this involvement, guaranteeing their opinions are heard when creating and promoting dark tourism. A more sustainable tourist strategy that acknowledges regional attitudes and cultural surroundings may result from such involvement (Wang et al., 2019; Moral-Moral, 2024). In addition, sustainable dark tourism development should take a comprehensive approach to strike a balance between economic growth and cultural preservation. Incorporating environmentally friendly infrastructure and efficient waste management techniques can help reduce environmental impacts and promote environmental conservation. In order to truly reflect the community's beliefs and history, cultural safeguarding entails

collaborating with them to create tourism narratives. Additionally, by focusing on under-represented groups, economic inclusion guarantees that the financial gains from tourism are shared fairly among all community members. Using a comprehensive approach encourages sustainability in dark tourism while cultural and economic objectives are respected (Aleshinloye et al, 2025). Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that stakeholder collaboration constitutes a vital element for ethical site management, ensuring that tourism practices are respectful and sustainable (Assylkhanova et al., 2025).

Although there's a limited number of studies on the issue of over-tourism in dark tourism destinations, it's a pressing concern that requires our urgent attention and action. The future of some of these destinations is at risk, and we need to act quickly and decisively to preserve them and meet the needs of future visitors. One such destination is the Gallipoli Peninsula, which sees thousands of visitors to its battlefields and cemeteries every year. In 2004, the number of visitors to Gallipoli increased to 1.2 million, indicating a growing interest in the history of the area (Ziino, 2006). As of today, visitor numbers have reached 4 million (TRT Haber, 2024). The congestion of ferry queues and the inadequacy of restroom facilities pose significant challenges during the peak season (Büyüktepe et al., 2019). The Gallipoli Battlefields experience a significant influx of visitors during specific days and weeks throughout the year. This influx results in environmental issues, including environmental pollution, noise pollution, and increased traffic density. Additionally, the integrity of the site is compromised due to the actions of inconsiderate visitors. It is advisable to distribute visitor access more evenly throughout the year and to impose restrictions on individuals who damage the site's values (Dağlı and Yaşar, 2025). Given the significant dependence of the Turkish tourism industry on mass tourism, battlefield tourism in Çanakkale may serve to diversify the offerings within Turkish tourism (Kutbay and Aykaç, 2016), which seems necessary due to its limited infrastructure (Çakar, 2017). Rather than harnessing this potential, the Gallipoli Peninsula has become another tourist destination catering to mass tourism. In order to diversify mass tourism, the implementation of sustainable tourism practices is deemed essential. In this context, the present study examines sustainable tourism practices in light of the research questions outlined below:

1. *What are the sustainable tourism practices in dark tourism?*
2. *What are the distinctions between English-speaking and Turkish-speaking tours at the Gallipoli Battlefields in the context of sustainability?*

The research was carried out in accordance with the sustainable tourism criteria established by Baloch et al. (2023: 5920) as outlined below:

- a. Caring, protecting, and conserving the environment, natural capital, biodiversity, and wildlife.
- b. Delivering socio-economic welfare for the people living in and around tourists' destinations.
- c. Identifying, rehabilitating, conserving, and promoting cultural and historical heritage for visitors learning experiences.
- d. Bringing tourists and local groups together for shared benefits.
- e. Creating wide-ranging and reachable opportunities for tourists.

Methodology

This research explored sustainable tourism practices in the Gallipoli Battlefields. The population of the study is composed of guided tours on the peninsula. To achieve the objective of the study, the case study technique was utilised. Case studies present numerous advantages over alternative methodologies, including the operationalization and measurement of qualitative variables (construct validity), the heuristic identification of new variables or hypotheses, the investigation of potential causal mechanisms within specific cases or contexts, the historical elucidation of cases, and the integration of intricate relations such as equifinality and path dependency into typological theories (Bennett, 2004). According to the classification proposed by Stake (1995), this study is characterised as exploratory in nature. Data was collected utilising a participatory observation method, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between audience groups, as well as the interactions between the activities of the event and the attendees (Mackellar, 2013). The methodology of this research addresses the call for future investigations articulated by Podoshen et al. (2015), who assert that subsequent researchers should contemplate utilising the participant observation method in order to enhance their comprehension of dark tourism, extending beyond mere quantitative

approaches and interviews. In this study, two different observation processes were carried out. Table 1 outlines the details.

Table 1. Observations

	Tour 1	Tour 2
Date	May 12, 2025	May 16, 2025
Language	English	Turkish
Type Vehicle	Three Mini Vans	One Tour Bus
Number of visitors	25	50
Timing	09.00-16.30	08.00-19.00

Data collection was carried out with the assistance of an observation form as well as note-taking and photographs. The form was constructed in alignment with the selected framework by Baloch et al. (2023: 5920), and in accordance with the principles outlined by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008: 136-147). The researcher conducted observations anonymously, thereby allowing for the examination of the process in its most natural form. At the conclusion of the tour, visitors were apprised of the observation process to ensure adherence to the ethical principles as suggested by Kozak (2014).

With the aid of his field notes and photographs, a content analysis was conducted. During the data analysis, the process proposed by Gürbüz and Şahin (2014: 435) was adapted. Initially, the collected data was reviewed multiple times and systematically coded and categorised. Following the deductive coding process outlined by Fife and Gossner (2024), I applied the theoretical framework proposed by Baloch et al. (2023: 5920). Subsequently, connections among the categories were established. In the concluding phase, explanations and comments were provided. As suggested by Cousin (2005), the processes of data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently.

Tour 1

The researcher took part in an extensive tour held on May 12, 2025, within the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Sector, where ANZAC soldiers were actively involved in the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. Three vans operated in unison, intentionally under capacity to prioritise the comfort of the visitors. Alongside local professional tour guides, three historians possessing extensive knowledge of the geography and the Gallipoli Campaign accompanied the tour. Tourists were conveyed from the hotel where they had lodged the prior night. After reaching the peninsula, the group first boarded a boat and arrived at ANZAC Cove by sea. Subsequently, a visit was made to an ANZAC cemetery. Following that, the group ascended one of the hills via a pathway established by the Directorate of the Gallipoli Historic Site, designed specifically for tourists who wish to traverse the battlefields. Throughout the boat ride, cemetery visit, and subsequent walk, visitors were provided with comprehensive information about the campaign. The group had a lunch break after the walk. In the afternoon, a visit was conducted to Lone Pine Memorial, followed by a walk from the second ridge to the third ridge, emulating the actions of the first landed ANZAC soldiers on April 25, 1915. The tour commenced at 9:30 a.m and concluded at 4:30 p.m. The researcher was actively involved in all aspects of the tour. Three vans operated in unison, intentionally under capacity to prioritise the comfort of the visitors. Alongside local professional tour guides, three historians possessing extensive knowledge of the geography and the Gallipoli Campaign accompanied the tour. The initial destination of the tour was deliberately positioned at a significant distance from the potential starting points of the Turkish tour buses to ensure that visitors are not adversely affected by the negative consequences of mass tourism. After reaching the peninsula, the group first boarded a boat and arrived at ANZAC Cove by sea. Subsequently, a visit was made to an ANZAC cemetery. Following that, the group ascended one of the hills via a pathway established by the Directorate of the Gallipoli Historic Site, designed specifically for tourists who wish to traverse the battlefields. Throughout the boat ride, cemetery visit, and subsequent walk, visitors were provided with comprehensive information about the campaign. The group had a lunch break after the walk. In the afternoon, a visit was conducted to Lone Pine Memorial, followed by a walk from the second ridge to the third ridge, emulating the actions of the first landed ANZAC soldiers on April 25, 1915. The tour commenced at 9:30 a.m and concluded at 4:30 p.m. The researcher was actively involved in all aspects of the tour.

Tour 2

On May 16, 2025, the tour bus carrying tourists who had spent the night travelling arrived at the port in Çanakkale at approximately 7:30 a.m. Subsequent to the ferry ride, the tour commenced. During the tour, there were nine e principal stops, inclusive of the lunch break (ANZAC Cove, 57Th Regiment Cemetery, Chunuk Bair, Rumeli Mecidiye Bastion, the Village of Alçıtepe (for Lunch), the Monument of Martyrs, V Beach, Alçıtepe 1915 Hilal-i Ahmer (Red Crescent) Hospital, and a bazaar (Aynalı Çarşı). The final destination is not situated on the peninsula; thus, the group was required to take the ferry back to the city centre to arrive at the bazaar. The itinerary mirrored that which is adhered to by numerous Turkish tour buses visiting the Gallipoli Peninsula throughout the year. Due to the peak season, there was a substantial crowd at the stops. The tour ended around 7 p.m.

Findings

Based on the analysis of the data and the sustainable tourism framework (Blancas et al., 2010; et al; Roney, 2011; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019), three themes were identified: Environment Factors, Socio-Cultural Factor, Economic Factors. In comparing the two tours observed during the data collection process, significant distinctions emerged between the English-speaking tour (Tour 1) and the Turkish-speaking tour (Tour 2), as demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings of the Study

	Dimension of Sustainability (Blancas et al., 2010; et al; Roney, 2011; Lozano-Oyola et al., 2019)	Baloc et al.'s (2023) Framework for Sustainable Tourism	Sustainable Tourism Practices in Tour 1	Sustainable Tourism Practices in Tour 2
a	Environment Factors	Caring, protecting, and conserving the environment, natural capital, biodiversity, and wildlife.	*Attracting and hosting conscious/non-smoking tourists * No exceeding capacity	
b	Economic Factors	Delivering socio-economic welfare for the people living in and around tourists' destinations.	*Scheduling a guided tour inclusive of accommodations *Renting a boat *Lunch at a local restaurant	*Lunch at a local restaurant *Purchasing souvenirs
c	Socio-cultural Factors	Identifying, rehabilitating, conserving, and promoting cultural and historical heritage for visitors learning experiences.	*Projects such as hiking routes *Existence of a destination management organisation (The Directorate of Gallipoli Peninsula) * Existence of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission	*Existence of a destination management organisation (The Directorate of Gallipoli Peninsula) * Existence of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission
d		Bringing tourists and local groups together for shared benefits.	*Encouraging tourists to meet at a local café *Existence of local tour guides in addition to British historians	
e		Creating wide-ranging and reachable opportunities for tourists.	*Hiking routes *Boat ride	

Environmental Factors

One of the three main themes is Environmental Factors. Under the main theme of Environmental Factors, three constituent themes were identified: Conscious Tourist, Bearing Capacity, Preserving the Memorials and Cemeteries

Conscious Tourist

In Tour 1, all individuals demonstrated a keen interest in the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915, posed follow-up questions subsequent to the guides' or experts' narratives. They were non-smokers, caring for the local environment, and possessed a profound understanding of their presence in a sacred location, thus exhibiting their respect for the battlefields. Some visitors had previously visited, resulting in varying levels of knowledge about the campaign. Overall, the individuals seemed pleased with the organisation, as well as the newly improved facilities and updates to the Gallipoli Peninsula.

In Tour 2, a few of the tourists exhibited a pronounced interest in the tour. The tour guide encountered a minimal number of inquiries; a portion of the participants engaged in smoking during the designated break periods, demonstrating a lack of awareness regarding the tour, the environment, and the historical context.

Bearing Capacity

In Tour 1, three vans were operated concurrently, intentionally with a reduced number of passengers on board to prioritise visitors' comfort instead of putting all visitors in a big tour bus. This was also deemed a precautionary measure against surpassing the weight capacity of the Gallipoli peninsula.

In Tour 2, the tour bus attained full capacity, resulting in no available seating. This situation led to an extended duration for tourists to disembark from the bus amidst traffic conditions.

Preserving the Memorials and Cemeteries

In Tour 1, a visit was made to an ANZAC cemetery, during which several personal narratives were shared. This visit significantly enhanced their comprehension of the extensive measures taken to protect the cemeteries and the battleground area by both the Directorate of Gallipoli Historic Site and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. This serves as an illustration of the commitment to caring for and protecting both the environment and cemeteries which constitute two of the foundational pillars in the framework established by Baloch et al. (2023). Subsequent to the lunch break, the Memorial of Lone Pine was visited, during which guides and experts provided additional insights regarding the Battle of Lone Pine. The memorial was discovered to be thoroughly protected and well-maintained.

During Tour 2, both ANZAC Cove and the Turkish memorials were visited. As observed in Tour 1, both appeared to be well-maintained.

Socio-Cultural Factors

One of the three main themes is Socio-Cultural Factors. Under the main theme of Socio-Cultural Factors, three constituent themes were identified: Preserving and Promoting Cultural and Historical Heritage, Interaction of Tourists with Locals; Wide-ranging and Reachable Opportunities

Preserving and Promoting Cultural and Historical Heritage

The Directorate of Gallipoli Historic Site, the leading institution in the region, is undertaking numerous projects to preserve the cultural and historical heritage of the battlefields. Projects such as the establishment of hiking routes or the Gallipoli Historic Underwater Park exemplify how the directorate diligently works to preserve and promote heritage values. Concerning the British cemetery, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for the preservation and maintenance of the British cemeteries and memorials.

In Tour 1, hiking routes were employed and a boat ride was organized. However, in Tour 2, there were no hiking or boat activities included in the schedule. Throughout both tours, one could observe that the Directorate of the Gallipoli Historic Site and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are committed to maintaining and preserving the cultural and historical heritage of their respective areas.

Interaction of Tourists with Locals

In Tour 1, Following a comprehensive day tour, visitors are encouraged to convene in the evening at a local café, where they may engage in social interactions with one another as well as with local residents. Also, it was infrequent; however, when local residents attempted to engage in conversation in English, they exhibited friendliness and made a concerted effort to interact. This is considered an initiative to facilitate social interactions between tourists and local residents within the framework of Baloch et al. (2023). The presence of local tour guides provided visitors with insights from a Turkish perspective, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive approach to the campaign. This exemplifies the concept of “bringing tourists and local groups together for shared benefits” as outlined in the framework of Baloch et al. (2023).

In Tour 2, no interaction activities between tourists and locals were observed, with the exception of lunch and the purchase of souvenirs.

Wide-ranging and Reachable Opportunities

In Tour 1, arriving at ANZAC Cove by sea and providing a detailed introduction to the geography afforded them a unique understanding of the first days of the campaign. In other words, they emulated the actions of the first landed ANZAC soldiers, allowing visitors to have a unique, emotionally, and cognitively engaging experience (See Image 1).



Image 1. Hiking

This was a great opportunity for visitors learning experiences as proposed by Baloch et al.'s (2023) framework. Subsequent to the boat ride, visitors traversed the Arıburnu Hiking Route, which is regarded as one of the significant projects accomplished by the Directorate of Gallipoli Historic Site (Gallipoli Historic Site, 2025). The hiking experience provided visitors with an enhanced understanding of the campaign, the environment, and the geography (See Image 2).



Image 2. Boat Ride

This route was an opportunity created by the Directorate. As the last activity, another hike was performed. In this instance, akin to the first one, the traces of the first ANZAC soldiers who landed were retraced, as visitors traversed from the second ridge to the third ridge (There were three ridges that converge at Chunuk Bair, which is the highest point in the region and serves as the objective of the landings). All these activities, in contrast to mass tourism endeavours, are regarded as having augmented the visitors' understanding of the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915 and providing a unique experience that is both emotional and cognitive.

In Tour 2, Alçitepe 1915 Hilal-i Ahmer (Red Crescent) Hospital was visited. The hospital museum and the recently constructed visualisation area for trenches have enabled local tourists to gain a clearer understanding of the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915.

Economic Factors

One of the three main themes is Economic Factors. Under the main theme of Economic, two constituent themes were identified: Contribution to Tourism Stakeholders, Diversifying Tourism Revenue.

Economic Income to Tourism Sector

In Tour 1, the lunch break was conducted at a local restaurant, providing visitors with the opportunity to sample regional cuisine, which made economic contribution to local restaurants. Moreover, they employed three local professional tour guides, and the tour program was arranged to include accommodation, which contributed positively to the local tourism sector.

In Tour 2, a designated lunch break was allocated within the village of Alçitepe. Furthermore, a tour guide was employed for the entirety of the tour, and local tourists purchased a significant number of souvenirs throughout the experience. Collectively, these activities contributed to the economic benefit of the local restaurants.

Diversifying Tourism Revenue

In Tour 1, initiatives such as the rental of boats (See Image 2) and the encouragement of tourists to convene at a local café have made additional contributions to the local economy, facilitating the diversification of tourism revenue among the local populace.

During Tour 2, the restaurant designated for lunch and the bazaar, which is visited last, are situated within highly frequented locations that accommodate hundreds of tour buses on a daily basis. Consequently, there is a lack of diversification in tourism revenue, despite its contributions to the local economy.

Discussion

Dark tourism, as articulated by Lennon and Foley in 1996, pertains to contemporary mass tourism directed towards locations associated with disasters, homicide, and large-scale mortality (Hartmann et al., 2018). This concept resonates with research findings which indicate that numerous guided tours, most particularly those conducted in Turkish, play a significant role in facilitating mass tourism at the Gallipoli Battlefield. While Tour 1 was predominantly characterised as experience-based, Tour 2 was perceived as a contributing element of mass tourism on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Only one practice was identified in Tour 2 that contributed to the local economy and was not observed in Tour 1. It was observed that Turkish visitors purchased a substantial quantity of souvenirs. Aside from this, Tour 1 incorporates many more tourism practices that are based on sustainability. Tourists visit the Gallipoli battlefields to gain insight into the experiences of soldiers during those years. Consequently, activities based on experience are given greater significance (Kızıllırmak et al., 2015), as noted in Tour 1 during the boat ride or hiking practices, whereas this was not observed in Tour 2. Incorporating a boat ride along with two hiking activities into the itinerary is regarded as having enhanced the overall level of visitor experience, which is regarded as a contribution to diversifying the mass tourism on the Gallipoli Peninsula. This finding also aligns with the assertion made by Chang (2024) that the expansion of dark tourism ought to be managed responsibly in order to enhance visitor satisfaction in a sustainable manner. It should be noted that none of these accomplishments could have been achieved without the initiatives from the Directorate of the Gallipoli Historic Site such as hiking projects. It serves as the foremost institution responsible for identifying, conserving, and promoting cultural and historical heritage for the benefit of visitors' learning experiences.

The Gallipoli battlefields signify the most frequently visited battleground in Türkiye. These battlefields, which include memorials and cemeteries, are meticulously maintained (Topsakal and Ekici, 2014), aligning with the findings of this study. This commendable feedback is attributable to the diligent efforts of the Directorate of the Gallipoli Historic Site and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. There are ongoing efforts to enhance tour boat tourism in the Eceabat region of Çanakkale (Sözen, 2007), which supports the findings of Tour 1 but not those of Tour 2. The Gallipoli Battlefields is a peninsula where there should be an increased availability of boating opportunities during the tours.

The Gallipoli Peninsula, recognised as a significant site for dark tourism in Türkiye, offers prospects for diversifying mass tourism activities through sustainable initiatives, such as the establishment of hiking trails. These projects are executed by the Directorate of the Gallipoli Historic Site, a prominent destination management organization within the peninsula. It is anticipated to establish collaborations with tour companies, which will formulate tour plans focused on sustainable tourism practices in the battlefields. Furthermore, Soylu (2013) calculated the physical carrying capacity to be approximately 1.11 million visitors annually, in contrast to the 4 million visitors recorded in 2023 (TRT Haber, 2024). This leads to practical issues on the peninsula (Büyüktepe et al., 2019); Therefore, it is recommended that an online reservation system be established for the tour buses travelling to the Gallipoli Peninsula. In this context, tour companies must make their reservations in the system prior to advertising their tours to the Gallipoli Battlefields, thereby preventing capacity exceedance. Numerous educational institutions and schools are organising tours to the Gallipoli Battlefields, which aligns with Dresler's (2023) assertion that many dark tourism destinations offer educational services to help students learn objectives. Once these tours are scheduled for weekends including Fridays, they become an integral component of mass tourism. Therefore, it is advisable to encourage planning of these tours on weekdays. As an aspect of this encouragement, various incentives may be presented, or a new legal framework may be established. To provide a more sustainable approach to battlefield tours, tour programs should encompass accommodation.

Limitations and Future Research

Each research study has its limitations, and this particular study is no exception. First, this study was conducted with the assistance of the participant observation technique as proposed by Podoshen et al. (2015) to enhance the understanding of dark tourism. Future research could be conducted through other qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews. Second, this research was carried out in Gallipoli Battlefields, one of the most significant dark tourism destinations in Türkiye. However, future studies may collect data from other dark tourism destinations, thus providing an opportunity to compare and generalise the findings.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence concerning sustainable tourism practices within the domain of dark tourism, focusing on the Gallipoli Battlefields, one of the most significant dark tourism destinations in Türkiye. Significant practical differences regarding sustainability were identified between tours conducted in Turkish-speaking and English-speaking contexts on the peninsula. Given the substantial volume of Turkish visitors annually to the Gallipoli Peninsula, there is an urgent need to implement more sustainable strategies. The results presented herein may serve as a foundation for decision-makers to implement more sustainable practices in Turkish-speaking tours by benchmarking against English-speaking counterparts.

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ÖZET

Bu çalışma, sürdürülebilir hüzün turizminde sürdürülebilir turizm uygulamalarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada belirlenen amaca ulaşmak adına Gelibolu Yarımadası'ndaki savaş alanlarına düzenlenen iki rehberli turda (bir İngilizce, bir Türkçe) katılımcı gözlem süreci yürütülmüştür. Gelibolu Yarımadası, hüzün turizmi ve savaş alanı turizmi için önemli bir destinasyondur. Literatürde özetlenen sürdürülebilirlik çerçevesine dayanarak, veri analizi üç ana temayı ortaya çıkarmıştır: Ekonomik, sosyo-kültürel ve çevresel faktörler. Veri toplama sırasında her bir tema altında en az bir sürdürülebilir uygulama gözlemlenmiştir. Temel sürdürülebilir uygulamaları arasında kültürel ve tarihi mirasın korunması ve tanıtılması, tekne gezileri veya yürüyüş gibi deneyimsel aktivitelere katılım ve yerel restoranları tercih ederek yerel ekonominin desteklenmesi yer almaktadır. Ziyaretçilerin elde ettiği turizm deneyimleri, İngilizce ve Türkçe konuşan ziyaretçiler arasında önemli ölçüde farklılık göstermektedir. Türkiye'de önemli bir hüzün turizmi destinasyonu olan Gelibolu Yarımadası, sahip olduğu yürüyüş parkurları gibi sürdürülebilir turizm uygulamaları için bir potansiyele sahiptir ve kitle turizmini çeşitlendirme fırsatları sunmaktadır. Bölgedeki birincil destinasyon yönetim otoritesi olan Çanakkale Savaşları Gelibolu Tarihi Alan Başkanlığı'nın savaş alanlarında sürdürülebilir turizm uygulamalarına odaklanan güzergahlar geliştirmek için tur operatörleriyle iş birliği yapması önerilmektedir.