

EVALUATION OF SATISFACTION WITH THE YOMRA COASTLINE IN TRABZON

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Abstract

This study explores user satisfaction with the coastal promenade in Yomra, Trabzon, completed in 2021, and how tourist presence affects that satisfaction. Survey data indicate that most users are local residents who are generally pleased with the new coastal area. However, the presence of tourists—particularly from culturally different backgrounds—lowers overall satisfaction. Yomra has become a major destination for Arab tourism over the past 20 years, contributing to rapid development but also creating challenges in the shared use of public spaces. The findings highlight the importance of coastal areas in the city-coast relationship, while also showing that cultural differences among users can weaken this connection. As a result, coastal planning should not only focus on user needs and participatory approaches but also consider the cultural and social dynamics of tourism to ensure inclusive and sustainable public space management.

Keywords: Coastal Areas, Coastal Use, Satisfaction, Tourism, Yomra.

TRABZON, YOMRA SAHİLİ MEMNUNİYETİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

Özet

Bu çalışmada 2021 yılında yapımı tamamlanan Trabzon ilinin, Yomra ilçesine ait sahil yürüyüş alanının kullanıcı memnuniyetini ve turistlerin sahil memnuniyetine olan etkisini incelemektedir. Anket bulguları, Yomra sahili kullanıcıların çoğunluğunun çevre mahallelerden olduğunu, yeni kıyı alanını kullanmaktan memnun olduklarını fakat sahili kullanan turistlerin memnuniyeti düşürdüğünü göstermektedir. Yomra özellikle son 20 yıldır Arap turizminin en önemli noktalarından birisidir. Bu durum bölgenin hızla gelişmesini sağlamasının yanında kamusal alanların ortak kullanımında sosyal ve kültürel farklılıklar nedeniyle çeşitli sorunlara da yol açmaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlar bir sahil kullanımının kent-kıyı ilişkisi açısından önemli olduğunu fakat benzer kültürden yoğun turist alan alanların bu kıyı kullanımından olumsuz etkilenerek ilişkilerinin zayıfladığını göstermektedir. Yani kıyı alanlarının planlanmasında kullanıcı ve katılımcı odaklı planlamanın yanında bir bölgenin turizm planlamasının da buna göre yapılması gerekliliği ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kıyı Alanları, Kıyı Kullanımları, Memnuniyet, Turizm, Yomra.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, coastal areas have attracted dense settlements and tourism activities due to their access to natural resources, proximity to trade routes, ease of transportation, and climatic and aesthetic advantages. In the course of contemporary urbanisation, the diminution of natural areas and the mounting inadequacy to satisfy escalating human demands have accentuated the cultural, social and recreational functions of coastal zones (Cesur & Çeken, 2021; Al Ansari, 2009; Erkök, 2009).

In regions such as Trabzon, where the topography is characterised by mountainous terrain that runs parallel to the coast, the narrow strip of land that is available for habitation is constrained in terms of spatial capacity. This situation has the effect of intensifying settlement pressure on coastal zones and concentrating much of the transportation infrastructure within this narrow corridor. Such pressure has been demonstrated to exert a detrimental effect on the recreational, social and cultural potential of the coast, thereby weakening the urban-coastal relationship. This is particularly evident in Trabzon, where the Black Sea Coastal Highway Project has had a significant impact on citizens' physical and visual access to the sea (Kocadağlı, 2022; Odacı & Özdemir Işık, 2023; Fıçıcı, 2024). In response to this issue, local and central governments have attempted to create new recreational coastal areas through land reclamation.

The present study evaluates user satisfaction with the Yomra Coastal Walkway, which was developed within this context and opened to the public in 2021. In recent years, the area has undergone significant transformation, evolving into a coastal space that is now heavily utilised not only by local residents but also by foreign tourists. However, the increasing presence of tourists, particularly from Gulf countries, has given rise to the question of how this trend affects the satisfaction of local users who seek a stronger connection to the coastal space.

The primary research question guiding this study is concerned with the extent to which the functionality, accessibility, and satisfaction of this coastal area meet the needs of its users. The study also examines how the growing presence of tourists from the Gulf region has influenced user composition and how this shift is reflected in satisfaction levels, usage intensity, and spatial preferences.

In this context, the study employs a quantitative research method – namely, a survey technique – to analyse the socio-demographic characteristics, usage purposes, satisfaction levels, and perceptions of individuals utilising the coastal area. The objective of the present study is to ascertain the correlation between the sense of belonging and satisfaction of the local population towards the coastal zone and the increasing density of tourism, as evidenced by the data obtained.

1.1. Tourism and Coastal Areas in Trabzon

Situated on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, the province of Trabzon has become a significant destination for regional tourism due to its natural landscape values, topographic diversity, climatic characteristics, and rich historical background. The city's notable geographical features, including its plateaus, waterfalls, lakes, and coastline, contribute to its potential for nature-based tourism, thereby facilitating year-round tourism, both domestically and internationally. The coastal strip of Trabzon has evolved into a multifunctional public space, serving not only the daily recreational needs of the urban population but also accommodating tourism-oriented uses. However, it is important to note that coastal areas are increasingly facing challenges that lead to a decline in user satisfaction. These challenges include growing construction pressure, unplanned interventions, and weak social interaction (Özdemir Işık & Demirel, 2015; Demir & Demirel, 2016; Uzunali & Acar, 2020).

Trabzon's recent rise in popularity among Arab tourists, particularly those from the Gulf countries, can be attributed to its natural beauty, cool climate, wetlands, and coastline. The economic implications of the rising trend of Arab tourism worldwide are of particular significance for both Turkey and Trabzon. It has been determined that Arab tourists, who have been observed to spend approximately four times more than other foreign visitors, contribute to the region's development (see Eastern Black Sea Development Agency, 2015; Cesur & Çeken, 2021; Mert, 2022). A particularly high concentration of Arab tourists has been noted in the Yomra district of Trabzon. This influx, particularly during the summer months, results in a significant increase

in tourism-related economic activity, thereby benefitting local businesses and shopping centres. However, it has also been demonstrated that this phenomenon can result in public spaces operating beyond their intended capacity.

The increase in the number of tourists, particularly those from the Gulf region, has resulted in a shift in the user profile of numerous public spaces, most notably coastal areas. This shift has resulted in two main consequences. Firstly, the physical inadequacy of these spaces has become apparent. Secondly, weakened social relations and a diminished sense of belonging among users have been observed (Akdoğan & Soyhanoglu, 2025).

The area's popularity is attributable to its proximity to the city centre, its natural shoreline, and its developing accommodation infrastructure. This has resulted in a high level of patronage from both the local population and Arab tourists. In the preceding 15 years, the district has undergone substantial development in order to satisfy the demands of this particular form of tourism. Specifically, the Yomra Coastal Walkway, which was completed and opened to the public in 2021, has become one of the most visited sites by tourists (Trabzon Governorship, 2025). However, the significant presence of Arab tourists has precipitated alterations in the satisfaction levels of the local population, particularly with regard to aesthetic perception, safety, and privacy expectations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Materials

The district of Yomra is located in the Eastern Black Sea Region of the Black Sea Region, to the east of Trabzon city centre. The region is bordered by the Black Sea to the north, Trabzon to the west, Arsin to the east, and the Gümüşhane and Maçka districts to the south. Yomra serves as a paradigmatic illustration of a coastal settlement, situated within a narrow strip of land between the sea and inland areas. The settlement developed on a plain formed by alluvium carried by the Yomra Stream, and this natural terrain has played a determining role in its spatial development. The district features an approximately 3 km long coastal strip stretching between the Harmanlı Stream to the east and the Şana Stream to the west (Doğanay, 2011). Figures 1 and 2 illustrate satellite images from 2009, 2015, 2019, and 2024, which demonstrate the developmental progression of Yomra.



Figure 1. Satellite images of Trabzon-Yomra district from 2009 to 2015 (Google Earth Pro, 2025)



Figure 2. Satellite images of Trabzon-Yomra district from 2019 to 2024 (Google Earth Pro, 2025)

The linear coastal development of the settlement is attributable to the region's topographic characteristics. The North Anatolian Mountains are located in close proximity to the shoreline, which has had a significant impact on the development of Yomra. The city's growth has been constrained to the narrow coastal plain due to this geographical limitation. This spatial constraint has rendered the coastal zone more susceptible to human interventions (Doğanay, 2011).

While the natural morphology of Yomra's coastal area was maintained until the 1980s, it became increasingly subject to artificial interventions following the construction of the Black Sea Coastal Highway during that period. The development of highway infrastructure along the coast resulted in the disruption of the shoreline, which was followed by large-scale land reclamation. The rate of these activities increased significantly between 2012 and 2018, resulting in a marked widening of the distance between land and sea. Consequently, approximately 300 decares of new land were gained through reclamation, with part of the area allocated for the highway and the remainder planned as green spaces and parks. Consequently, a range of social facilities, port structures, walking paths and various recreational units were constructed in these park areas. The Yomra Coastal Project, initiated subsequent to 2020, sought to mitigate the tangible disconnection between the urban centre and the sea, whilst concurrently enhancing public access. In the context of the project, a series of developments were undertaken, including the creation of walking paths, designated seating areas, recreational facilities, and landscape arrangements (Doğanay, 2011; Yomra Municipality, 2025; Yomra District Governorship, 2025). Figure 3 presents photographic documentation of the Yomra coastline in 2019, and of the Yomra Coastal Walkway in 2021 and 2024.



Figure 3. Yomra Coastline in 2019, 2021, and 2024

In the contemporary era, the Yomra coastal strip is predominantly composed of areas that have been designated for recreational purposes. These areas are utilised by both district residents and visitors from surrounding settlements for daily activities, recreation, and transportation. Moreover, the high concentration of Arab tourists in the region, especially during the summer months, results in a significant increase in the utilisation of the coastal walkway.

2.2. Methods

The present study focuses on the evaluation of user satisfaction with the coastal area located in the Yomra district of Trabzon, Turkey. In order to obtain objective results, a quantitative research approach was adopted, utilising the survey technique. The survey was conducted through a structured form designed to measure how and for what purposes users utilise the area, their transportation preferences to the site, the distance between their residence and the coast, their level of satisfaction with the coastal area, and their expectations from the space.

The ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee for Scientific Research and Publication in Social and Human Sciences at Hatay Mustafa Kemal University during its meeting held on 17 February 2025. In accordance with the aforementioned approval, participation in the field study was entirely voluntary, participant identities were kept confidential, and the data were used solely for scientific purposes.

The study sample consisted of individuals using the coastal area in Yomra. A convenience sampling method was employed to select participants. The formula proposed by Newbold (1995) was utilised in order to ensure the attainment of statistically reliable and valid results in the process of determining the sample size. It is evident that, in accordance with the aforementioned formula, the sample proportion was accepted as $p = 0.5$, with the objective of maximising variance within the population. According to the official 2025 population data provided by the Governorship of Trabzon, the total population of the Yomra district is 50,339. In consideration of the aforementioned parameters and employing a 95% confidence level and a 7% margin of error, it was determined that a minimum sample size of 196 participants would be adequate. Consequently, surveys were administered to a total of 200 participants as a result of the fieldwork carried out within the scope of the research.

The analysis of the collected data was conducted utilising IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software. In order to ascertain the reliability of the obtained data, an internal consistency analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. To assess the distribution characteristics of the variables, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied, and skewness-kurtosis values were examined. The relationships between variables were determined by correlation analysis, and the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to examine differences between two independent groups. Furthermore, the Chi-square test was utilised to ascertain the level of association between categorical variables.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A survey was conducted among 200 participants as part of the study, with the objective of evaluating user satisfaction with the coastal walkway area located in the Yomra district of Trabzon. The collected data were evaluated in terms of participants' socio-demographic characteristics, modes of transportation, time spent in the area, and satisfaction levels. The relationships between the variables were analysed using statistical methods.

With respect to gender distribution, 53% of the participants were male and 47% were female. With respect to age distribution, a considerable proportion (50%) of the sample fell within the 30–45 age range, with smaller percentages falling into the 18–29 and 46–59 age groups, at 21% and 19%, respectively. Participants aged 60 and above constituted 8% of the sample. The educational background of the participants revealed that 64% had completed university, 22.5% had completed high school, 7.5% held a postgraduate degree, 4% had completed middle school, and 2% had completed elementary school. This distribution suggests that the participant group predominantly possesses a medium to high educational level.

With regard to the methods of transportation employed, it was found that the most prevalent was walking (49%), with private vehicles (38.5%) and public transportation (12%) being the next most common. The utilisation of bicycles was found to be minimal, with a mere 0.5% of respondents reporting its use. An analysis of the time required for participants to reach the coastline revealed that 48.5% of respondents reached the area within 10 minutes, 28% within 10–20 minutes, 17% within 20–30 minutes, and 6.5% within more than 30 minutes. These findings suggest that the coastal area is largely accessible from nearby neighborhoods. Based on the information about the neighborhoods in which the participants reside, the graph created according to the distribution of survey participants is presented in Figure 4.

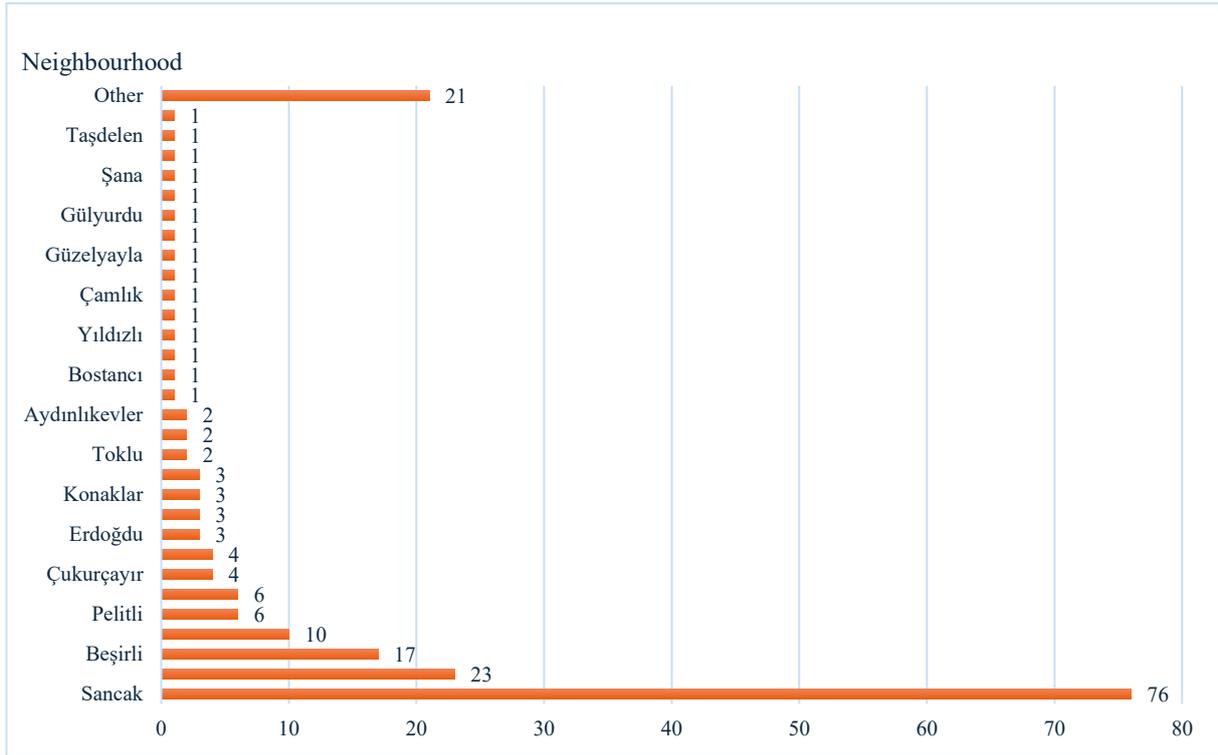


Figure 4. Weighted graph of participants residence addresses

Upon analysis of the time spent in the area by participants, the following results were obtained: 36.5% reported spending between 60 and 90 minutes, 35% between 30 and 60 minutes, 19% more than 90 minutes, 5% between 15 and 30 minutes, and 4.5% less than 15 minutes.

With regard to the purposes for using the area, the majority of participants stated walking/cycling (70.5%) as their primary reason. Figure 5 presents the remaining responses. The distribution of the area in question indicates that the Yomra Coastal Walkway serves as a means of escape from dense urbanization and functions as a socialization space for the local community.

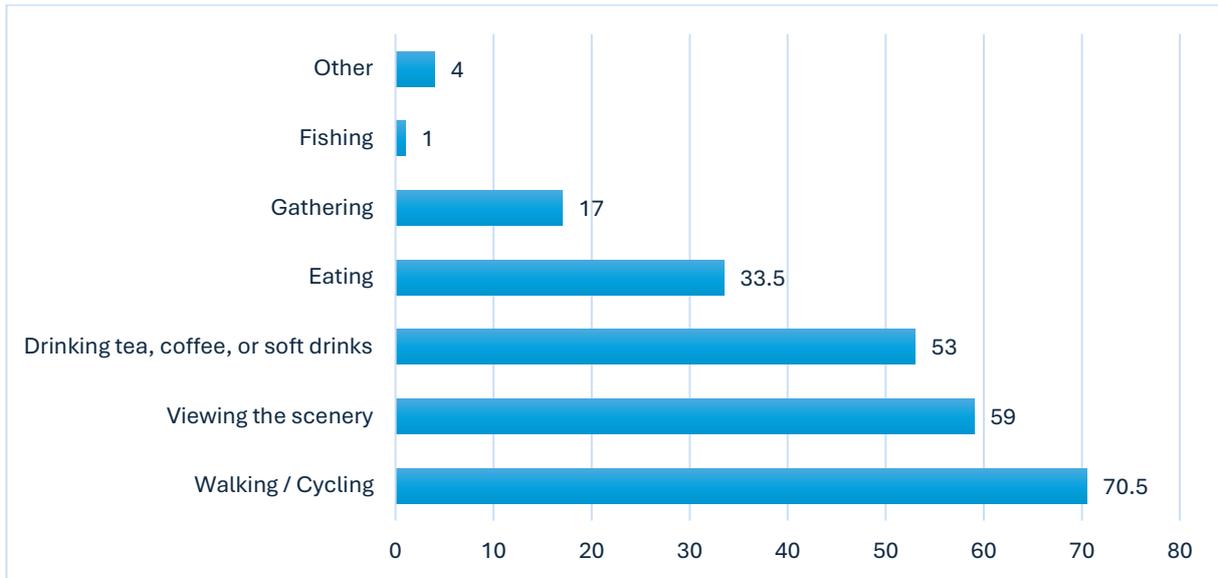


Figure 5. Reasons for using the area (Participants could choose more than one option; percentages are provided)

The responses given by participants when asked to identify the positive and negative features of the area are presented in Figures 6 and 7. A thorough investigation of the salient positive attributes reveals that natural

beauty is a prominent feature, while the Yomra Coastal Walking Area and its amenities are also considered significant by participants. Regarding the identification of negative features, the absence of activity diversity is considered to be the most significant. Noteworthy issues with the infrastructure include parking, underpasses and overpasses, inadequate maintenance, unpleasant odours, and a lack of adequate play and activity areas for children.

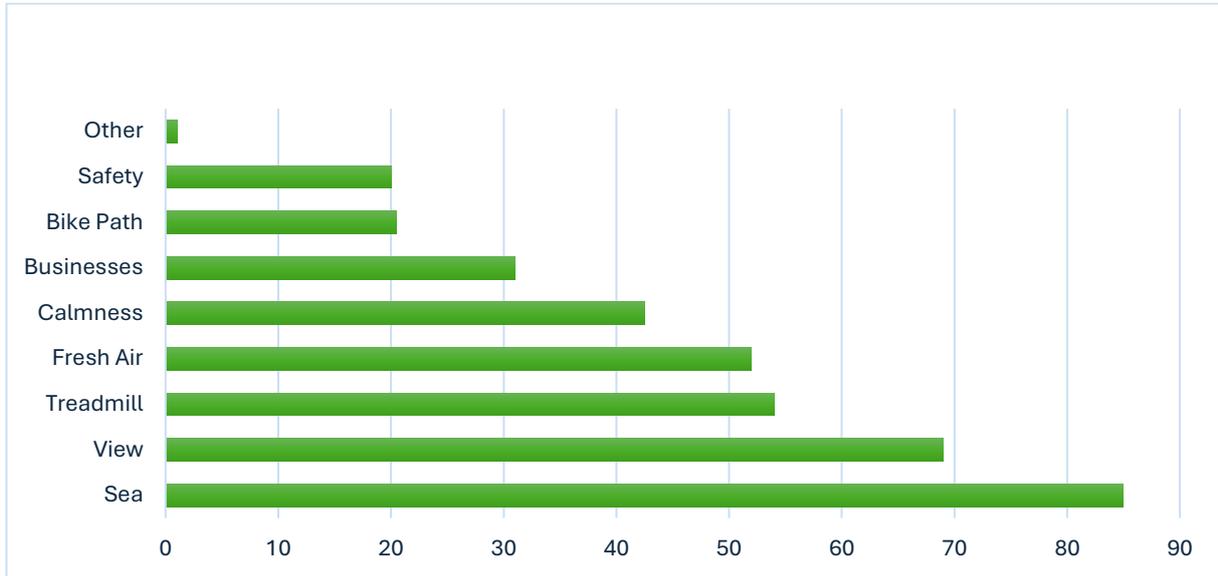


Figure 6. Positive features of the area (Participants could choose more than one option; percentages are provided)

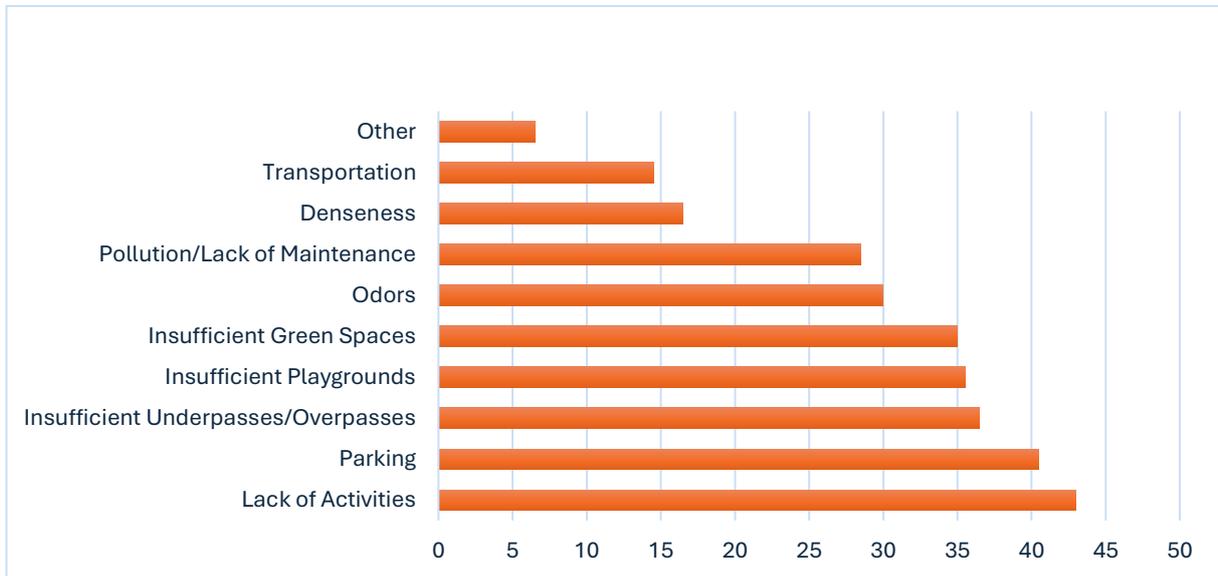


Figure 7. Negative features of the area (Participants could choose more than one option; percentages are provided)

The study's objectives included the measurement of satisfaction among users and tourists. As demonstrated in Figure 8, the mean satisfaction of users with other users is 3.36 (range: undecided to satisfied), while satisfaction with tourists is 2.76 (range: unsatisfied to undecided). This finding indicates that the Yomra Beach Walkway, a popular destination for both Arab tourists and residents, exerts a substantial influence on user satisfaction, particularly among the latter group.

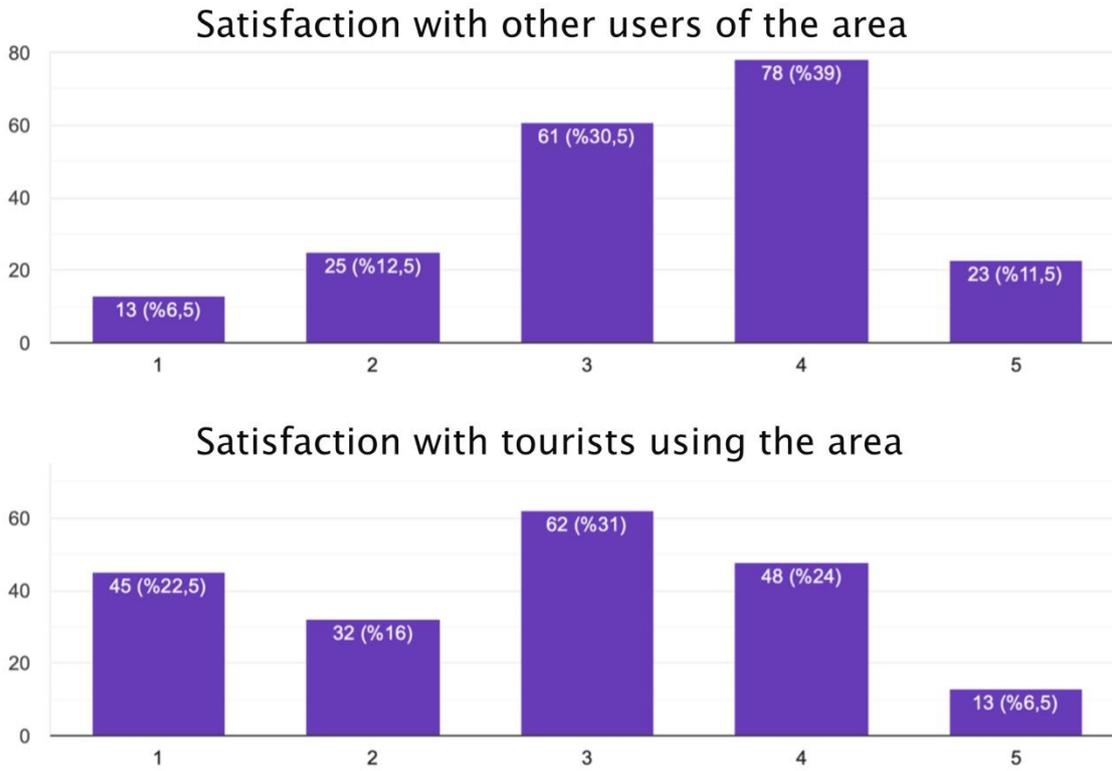


Figure 8. Satisfaction with other users and tourists using the area

The statistical analysis of the obtained data was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software, with a range of analysis methods applied in accordance with the characteristics of the variables. The results of the normality test demonstrated that the variables of age, travel time, time spent on the beach, user satisfaction, and tourist satisfaction exhibited a normal distribution. However, since the variables gender, education level, and mode of transportation did not meet the normal distribution assumptions, non-parametric tests were deemed the preferred option for analysis. The non-normal distribution of gender, a key demographic variable, proved to be a particularly decisive factor in the selection of the analysis method.

The implementation of correlation analyses yielded statistically significant relationships between certain variables. A positive and significant correlation was identified between gender and travel time, suggesting that male participants accessed the beach from greater distances. The findings of the study demonstrated a negative correlation between gender and tourist satisfaction, indicating that female participants expressed lower levels of satisfaction than their male counterparts regarding the presence of tourists on the beach. A Mann–Whitney U test, conducted to examine gender-related differences, yielded similar results. This phenomenon may be attributed to the fact that women who use the beach experience greater discomfort due to cultural differences. The age variable was found to be positively correlated with transportation preferences and travel time and negatively correlated with time spent at the beach. This result suggests that as individuals age, they tend to use private vehicles, travel from longer distances, and spend less time at the beach. This finding indicates that, while the area caters more to middle-aged users in terms of user diversity, it is generally used by younger people.

A negative and significant correlation was identified between travel time and tourist satisfaction. Consequently, users arriving from more distant locations tend to stay for shorter periods and express lower levels of satisfaction with the presence of tourists. This phenomenon may be attributed to the Yomra community's practice of welcoming Arab tourists and their subsequent economic impact on the region. Conversely, a positive and significant correlation was identified between time spent on the beach and user satisfaction. It has been demonstrated that users who spend a longer time in the area experience an increase in overall satisfaction.

A chi-square analysis was conducted to test the relationship between education level and user satisfaction. This revealed no statistically significant difference. It was thus determined that educational attainment does not serve as a primary predictor of satisfaction levels.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Yomra Coastal Walking Area, owing to its geographical location, natural landscape features, and proximity to the city centre, is an important coastal recreation area for both locals and tourists. The study's findings suggest that the area is generally accessible, aesthetically appealing, and suitable for recreational activities. However, there are significant deficiencies in infrastructure capacity, activity diversity, and social interaction, which impact the user experience. While the area's natural beauty and walking opportunities are notable assets, significant areas for improvement have been identified, including a lack of activity diversity, inadequate parking and pedestrian connections, inadequate maintenance, and limited children's areas. These findings suggest that the area requires re-evaluation from physical, functional and social perspectives. Notwithstanding the aforementioned factors, the designated study area confers numerous benefits, including the establishment of a city-coastal connection and the enhancement of user access to coastal areas.

In this context, recommendations can be made to increase the use of the Yomra Coastal Walking Area and improve its satisfaction. Such recommendations may include increasing infrastructure capacity and improving the maintenance standards of existing facilities. Furthermore, recommendations may include increasing the variety of activities to appeal to different age groups and interests, and ensuring ease of access by pedestrian, vehicle, or bicycle. It is asserted that these measures will serve to maintain the venue's capacity during periods of peak usage, enhance its social appeal, and provide easier access. In order to mitigate the negative impact of tourist traffic on local users, it is necessary to spread usage intensity across time and space.

In conclusion, the Yomra Coastal Walking Area offers high potential as a public space for both locals and international tourists. However, it is imperative that a holistic planning approach is employed, encompassing its physical, functional and social dimensions. In order to ensure the effective management of coastal areas in the future, it is essential that future planning considerations extend beyond the aesthetic and recreational values of such regions. Instead, it is imperative to take into account the diversity of users, social cohesion, and the impact of tourism. This approach is expected to contribute to the long-term preservation of the area's value.

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