

EVALUATION OF YANBOLU-SANTA BASIN IN TERMS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE REGION OF TRABZON-GÜMÜŞHANE, TÜRKİYE¹

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Abstract: Culture, which is the whole of the features that societies produced and transferred from generation to generation during the periods they lived, creates an identity that includes its own characteristics and distinguishes it from other nations. Culture is among the most important and effective tools in the development of cultural heritage tourism. Cultural heritage elements specific to the regions are among the most basic determinants in the destination selection of tourists who demand nature tourism as for example the handicrafts, local architectural elements, festivals and festivities, legends, folk dances, local food and beverages, wedding traditions, etc. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements are among the tourist attractions that eco-tourists want to experience. In this study, the cultural tourism potential of the Yanbolu Valley, which is located between the provinces of Trabzon and Gümüşhane in the Southwest Caucasus, Southeast Black Sea, which is an area of attraction with its natural and cultural riches, has been studied. The most important and known value among the historical and cultural heritage values of the valley is the Dumanlı village, which is the historical settlement of Santa (Dumanlı). The historical Santa Village consists of 13 settlements (neighbourhoods), 7 of them registered as Cultural Heritage sites, located on the eastern and western slopes of the Yanbolu River Valley at 1600-2000 m altitude. Important cultural heritage values of the valley include historical buildings 10 mosques, 13 churches, 28 stone bridges, more than 10 stone fountains and more than 200 local civil architectural works. The natural and cultural heritage values of the valley should be evaluated within the scope of conservation-based sustainable eco and culture tourism where local people are prioritized and carried to the future. In this context, the main purpose of this research is to present the current situation of the cultural heritage elements in the Yanbolu-Santa Valley and to offer suggestions for sustainable tourism guidance for the use of the mentioned heritage elements in the context of protection-use balance. The data obtained in the research were collected by the in-site measuring, photography, interview technique and the compilation of secondary data. In order to bring the Yanbolu basin and Santa Historical settlement area to sustainable conservation and tourism, a conservation zoning plan for area management and protection was envisaged.

Keywords: Santa-Yanbolu Basin, Cultural Heritage Tourism, Eastern Black Sea Region, Türkiye.

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage has an important place among the reasons for people to travel. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements of different cultures are among the main travel motivations. In this context, one of the types of tourism considered is cultural tourism. This type of tourism, which is based on culture, also has different sub-fields. Cultural heritage tourism is one of the basic sub-categories of cultural tourism. Cultural heritage tourism envisages visiting sites, monuments and belief centres, while at the same time it has a structure that revives traditions. Cultural heritage tourism is seen as cultural-oriented travels that include visual and performance arts, special lifestyles, values, events and traditions.²

The Yanbolu-Santa basin is located within the borders of Trabzon and Gümüşhane provinces in the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey. The basin is surrounded by the Black Sea in the north, Arsin and Yomra in the east, Araklı in the west and Gümüşhane in the south. The most important and remarkable tourist attraction of the basin is called Santa. Seven neighbourhoods of the historical Santa settlements are also under protection as a Cultural Site. The basin has the potential to become an important tourism destination with its historical and cultural values. However, the Yanbolu-Santa basin does not have the value it deserves in the tourism of the region due to the infrastructure and superstructure, promotion and marketing deficiencies. In order to carry the natural and cultural values of the Yanbolu-Santa basin to the future without deterioration, it is necessary to develop and implement a conservation-based sustainable tourism strategy.

In this research, it is aimed to reveal the cultural heritage tourism potential of the Yanbolu-Santa basin. Revealing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the basin in terms of cultural heritage tourism is considered important in terms of tourism development in the region.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Cultural Heritage Tourism

Tourism, benefits from natural, cultural and ecological attractiveness. Although each region does not have enough natural or ecological attractions to attract visitors, it has its own unique culture.³ The use of culture as an element of attraction in tourism has gained popularity with the development of alternative tourism. Cultural tourism, which develops in this context, consists of four elements including the use of cultural heritage assets, the consumption of experiences and products, and the tourist.⁴ Tourists who prefer cultural tourism are characterized by a high level of education, investigative spirit, inquisitiveness, curiosity, sensitiveness to local cultures, and openness to sharing and protecting their tourism values.⁵ The concept of cultural heritage tourism, which is considered as a sub-dimension of cultural tourism, includes tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements.⁶ Heritage tourism is an important part of cultural tourism, which is based on experiencing places and events that truly represent the historical, cultural and natural resources of a particular region. Cultural heritage tourism activities are a type of tourism that develops in line with visiting areas and monuments in visited places.⁷ Cultural heritage tourism appeals to human memory and creativity. On the other hand, it can serve to stimulate the economies of cities and regions. Quality and respect for the environment, and rational development of cultural resources are the main characteristics of cultural heritage tourism.⁸

Yanbolu-Santa Basin Cultural Heritage Tourism Resource Values

The most important and remarkable tourist attraction centre of the basin is the Santa Ruins. Due to its geographical location, it is located at an altitude of 840-2000 m and is used as a plateau and a hamlet. The historical Santa settlement area and its surroundings have been taken under protection as an ecological and natural protected area. Santa, whose central residential area is Piştöflu District, was

² Alagöz, Çalik, Güneş 2018.

³ Bahçe 2009.

⁴ McKercher, du Cros 2012.

⁵ Çetin 2010.

⁶ Alagöz, Çalik, Güneş 2018.

⁷ Karagöz 2019.

⁸ Baudrihaye 1997.

established on three separate slopes where the Yanbolu Creek originates, at an altitude. Santa district is located in a narrow and deep valley formed by two mountain ranges, at an altitude of 1600-1800 m. During 17th-18th centuries, and later, Santa turned into a mining town due to the presence of mineral deposits in the vicinity. Today, there is no mining activity in the region. Cultural areas in the seven neighbourhoods in Santa district are shown in Table 1 (Fig. 1-2).

Table 1. Existing Building Stock Identified in the Seven Conservation Neighbourhoods of Santa Historic Settlement

Range of Santa Ruins Historical and Cultural Values								
	Piştöflu	Binath	İşhanlı	Terzili	Zurnacılı	Çakallı	Cınganlı	Total
Old House	35	19	37	30	20	11	7	159
Fountain	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7
School	1							1
Mosque			1					1
Historical ruin	62	22	62	33	18	24	12	233
Place of business	1							1
Church	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	9
Wreck	5	4	8	2	2	6		27
Total	107	47	110	67	43	43	21	438



Fig. 1. Building features available in Santa/Dumanli settlements.



Fig. 2. Santa Ruins in Yanbolu Basin.

METHOD

Research Area

The Yanbolu-Santa basin is located within the borders of Trabzon and Gümüşhane provinces. The basin is surrounded by the Black Sea in the north, Arsin and Yomra in the east, Araklı in the west and Gümüşhane in the south (Fig. 3-4). The Yanbolu-Santa Basin, which has an area of 272 km², has a valley length of 68 km and an elevation ranging from sea level to 3081 m. Administratively, 142 km² of the basin is located in Gümüşhane and 130 km² of it is within the borders of Trabzon province. Havza is located within the administrative borders of two provinces and three counties, namely Gümüşhane central district and Arsin, Yomra and Araklı. At the highest elevation of the basin, Gümüşhane central district Dumanlı (Santa) and Çorak villages are located. Çamlıyurt, Kılıçlı, Tandırlı and Maden villages and neighbourhoods of Yomra district are located on the western slopes of the basin to the north of the borders of Gümüşhane.



Fig. 3. Yanbolu –Santa Basin Location.

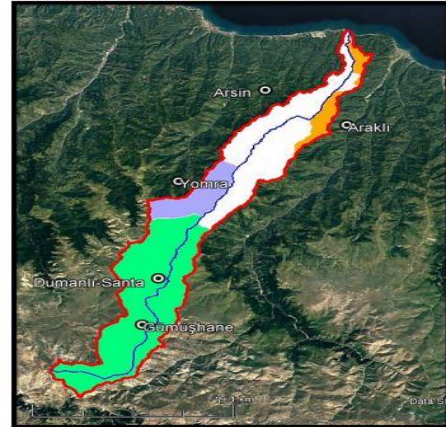


Fig. 4. Administrative borders of the Yanbolu-Santa Basin.

The data obtained in the research were collected using secondary data, document analysis and interview methods. The SWOT analysis method was used to analyse the data. The main purpose of the research is to reveal the potential of the Yanbolu Valley within the scope of cultural heritage tourism, and to determine the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities in this direction. SWOT Analysis is a method in which an organization is systematically examined in interaction with its internal and external environment.⁹ This method focuses on determining the strengths and weaknesses of the tourism situation in any region, and what the opportunities and threats might be in future planning.¹⁰

Results

A- The strengths of the Yanbolu-Santa basin in the context of cultural heritage tourism

- Buildings such as historical houses, churches and mosques in the area keep the tradition alive with their local materials and architectural texture;
- The area has other protection structures, along with the historical settlement of Santa, which is an important historical value and attraction centre. Qualified historical sites and structures (stone bridges and fountains, mosques, churches, historical houses, etc.), including Santa/Dumanlı, are important resource values for cultural tourism. With this feature, it has the potential to attract many tourists from different regions;
- The basin has the potential to create an alternative cultural tourism corridor by integrating with existing touristic destinations such as Altındere Valley National Park, Kurum Valley, Zigana Mountain pass, Hamsiköy, Kuştu Monastery;
- The Kervan Road passing through Taşköprü is the summer route of the Silk Road Culture and Tourism Route, which will cover the provinces of Trabzon-Gümüşhane-Erzurum.

B- Weaknesses of the Yanbolu-Santa basin in the context of cultural heritage tourism

- Although it is close to the most important historical and touristic destinations of the region, the standard of transport connections to the area is not sufficient;
- Within the scope of infrastructure, the quality of services such as roads, sewage, water and electricity do not meet the tourist needs;
- Tourism services such as food and beverage and accommodation facilities are insufficient for visitors who come to the area for day trips or accommodation purposes;
- Existing historical and cultural values are damaged due to the lack of environmental and conservation awareness of the local people or visitors to the area. This situation leads to the deterioration of values that need to be protected. Solid waste pollution is high in the basin;
- Although the area has effective seasonal opportunities all year round, it does not show diversity in terms of alternative tourism activities. Touristic activities are mostly stuck in the June-September period. Thus, there is a decrease in the number of expected visitors;
- Failure to carry out maintenance, repair and renewal activities in historical houses in historical areas in Santa Ruins in the basin in accordance with historical artefact restoration procedures, deterioration of historical texture and insufficient restoration of mosques, churches, fountains, bridges and roads in the basin;
- Buildings and lands that should be in public ownership, such as some religious buildings and schools, are presently private property;
- Illegal and unplanned construction/urbanization due to insufficient sanctions and interventions for the protection and sustainability of cultural heritage;
- The lack of systematically revealing the archaeological and urban heritages through scientific research and the deficiencies in the identification and registration of archaeological and natural sites;
- Insufficient knowledge of the local people about natural and cultural values and conservation awareness;

⁹ Aygün 2007.

¹⁰ Ünal, Demirkol 2022.

- Disruption of relations between official institutions and organizations and local people due to scattered and mountainous settlements.

C- Opportunities of the Yanbolu-Santa basin in the context of cultural heritage tourism

- With its climate, land topography, rich vegetation features, the area provides opportunities for various recreational and touristic activities;
- The presence of many buildings with historical and cultural experiences in the basin. In the case of restoration work, house boarding etc. has the potential to be evaluated within the scope of activities;
- The economic empowerment of the local people can be achieved by highlighting the traditional village and highland life (rural life) and marketing local products;
- The region has the potential to attract different types of tourists with its discovered or undiscovered archaeological and alternative resource values;
- Santa Ruins have the potential to host historical film productions with their unique view, and original architectural and cultural features. The main condition that will ensure this situation is the termination of the restoration works.

D- Threats of the Yanbolu-Santa basin in the context of cultural heritage tourism

- In the basin, illegal excavation and treasure hunting activities, which are caused by the inability to protect the historical structures in Santa, which is the most important attraction value, are intensely conducted and historical artefacts and areas are greatly damaged;
- Quarry and hydroelectric power plant investments that damage the integrity of the physical landscape;
- The carrying capacity limits of the basin have not been determined;
- The area is a basin open to natural disasters, with frequent floods and landslides resulting from excessive precipitation. As a result of wrong land interventions, a normal natural event reaches the size of a disaster;
- The administrative management of the tourism areas in the area (security, infrastructure, superstructure, etc.) by different provinces may cause administrative confusion;
- Construction and concreting in the highlands is an important problem.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Yanbolu-Santa basin has important problems regarding the protection and use of its cultural and natural heritage. First of all, in order to understand the location and boundaries of the existing cultural assets in the basin and to reveal the history of the region, archaeological materials and historical sources that may be related to the area should be studied with scientific methods.

There are many architectural structures with historical and cultural experiences in the area. If these structures are restored, they can be used as house boarding houses etc. has the potential to be evaluated within the scope of activities. These structures should be included in the house boarding and visitors should experience the unique traditional life culture of the area. There are some fundamental problems in the conservation and use of public and civil architectural structures in the Santa Historical Settlement Area. Especially civil architectural residences and all other structures do not have a functional use in accordance with their historical function today. For example, some historical and religious buildings are used as barns.

Historical and archaeological sites and structures such as old mines, settlement ruins, castles, churches, bridges, fountains and residences, especially in the Yanbolu and Santa basins, are subjected to great destruction by treasury excavations. In order to prevent this situation, identification, registration, protection and social awareness studies should be carried out in all historical buildings and areas, and it should be ensured that the historical and cultural values of the people are protected together with the law enforcement officers. Projects including the protection status, restoration opportunities, landscaping,

urban conservation plan and facility proposals for the historical settlement of Santa should be prepared and the ancient city should be integrated into cultural tourism.

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