VIEWS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MUSLIMS LIVING IN NORTHERN CYPRUS REGARDING FAITH TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Background and purposes: Alternative tourism activities are becoming more important for the future of Northern Cyprus. In this context, faith tourism, which has gained popularity in recent years, has special importance for Northern Cyprus, a country with essential structures of different religions. In this paper, the importance of faith tourism, which supposedly contributes to the tourism of Northern Cyprus, is revealed through the public's perspectives.

Methodology: Data was collected through the questionnaire distributed to 60 respondents. The questionnaire consists of two sections; the first section includes two questions on the socio-demographic characteristics and the second section consists of 10 multiple choice questions to determine the opinions and expectations of people living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on faith tourism.

Findings: It is found that the Muslim people living in Northern Cyprus have a positive view towards faith tourism, and they have general information about the sites. In addition, they are tolerant of this form of tourism.

Contribution: This study is significant in terms of showing the potential of faith tourism in the Northern Cyprus. In this article, a number of suggestions have been presented on how this type of tourism can be developed, especially by taking the opinions and expectations of the people.

Keywords: Tourism, faith tourism, Northern Cyprus, island, religion, Islam.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism can be defined as travels of people for recreation (rest, entertainment, renewal) or for spending their leisure time outside their basic occupations, and the set of events and interactions that occur during these travels and temporary stays (Çelik, 2018). Tourists, who carry out tourism activities, stay in the countries they visit and make a significant contribution to the economies of these countries. Tourism investments create positive effects in terms of regulating income distribution by providing different job opportunities in different regions of the country (Yeşiltaş & Öztürk, 2008). For this reason, developing countries attach special importance to tourism activities and pay effort to generate more income from these activities. Tourism activities have been highly diversified by developing countries in order to obtain more income from such activities, which are an important source of revenue. As a result of the increase in the number of tourists in the world and different environmental factors, alternative tourism activities have emerged, and countries that diversify these activities have entered in competition with major countries by obtaining more income within the sector. In this context, alternative tourism activities such as cultural tourism, health tourism, congress tourism, sports tourism and faith tourism have claimed an important place in the tourism sector especially in recent years. Environmental effects and the increase in the number of tourists and the general trends in tourism are very important in the emergence of alternative tourism types. Plateau tourism, mountain tourism, cultural tourism, ski tourism, health tourism, congress tourism and faith tourism can be given as examples of the mentioned alternative tourism types (Düzgüneş & Demirel, 2013). Faith tourism, which is among these forms of tourism, is defined as the visiting of sacred places by tourists from different religions within the phenomenon of tourism (Sargın, 2006; Çelik, 2018).

In this study, the term faith tourism was preferred in general. Faith tourism is a type of tourism that includes places such as mosques, churches, temples, shrines, lodges, cemeteries, martyrdoms, churches and monasteries, and traditions and practices related to religion. This means that sites that are directly worship places or that are affiliated with religion without serving as a place of worship in the strict sense are also covered by this concept. Another term used in related studies is "religious tourism". However, in our opinion, religious tourism sets a stricter framework. Religious tourism is a type of tourism that includes places and structures

directly linked to worship, such as Mecca, the Vatican, pilgrimage, Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, Kushinagar, mosques, churches, and temples. For these reasons, the term faith tourism was considered more appropriate in the definition of the study. On the other hand, this work does not cover the term "pilgrimage tourism" as there is no place to travel for pilgrimage in.

The belief centers in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus consist of various structures and places, mostly established by the followers of the religions of Islam and Christianity. Structures with religious characteristics such as mosques, churches, tombs, dervish lodges and historical cemeteries can be seen in almost every part of the island. For this reason, the mentioned places should be opened to tourism, and those that are open should be adapted to faith tourism in a more organized way. This study sought to answers two questions:

i.   What are the opinions of the public regarding faith tourism in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus according to education level and age?
ii.   What are the expectations of the people about faith tourism in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus according to education level and age?

In line with the above questions, the study aimed to determine the opinions and expectations of the people, which are very important factors in the development of tourism in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in general and faith tourism in particular. The study also emphasizes the lack of interest in the works within the scope of faith tourism in the TRNC, offers solutions to some problems in this regard, and contributes to the further development of the faith tourism already existing in the island. Since the development of faith-based tourism in almost every country will bring people of different beliefs closer, it will make a contribution, albeit small, in achieving universal peace in this sense.

The local people are shown as one of the most important stakeholders affecting the development of tourism in general and faith tourism in particular. In the development process of tourism, it is extremely important to obtain the views of the local people, to exchange ideas with them and to reveal their expectations on this issue, so that the local people can influence decision centers and regard themselves as a stakeholder of tourism. It is a fact that if people living in any touristic country have a positive view on the development of tourism, it will pave the way for the developments to be experienced in that country, which is of great importance in the development of the sector (Uzun & Somuncu, 2011; Yeniasır & Gökbulut, 2018). It is an undeniable fact that people living in a geography have an important role in the protection and marketing of cultural structures in the region, especially within the scope of faith tourism.

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review was conducted on the views and expectations of local people towards faith tourism, and it was observed that different studies were conducted on the subject. In various previous studies in this field, the importance of obtaining the opinions of the local people in faith tourism has been emphasized. Some of the studies conducted are listed below in the context of their similarities with this research.

For example, Çavuş and Zere (2019) reveal that the public viewed faith tourism positively and believed that it would contribute to the development of the city. In addition, it was observed that gender, education and age were among the essential variables. The main objectives of the study were to determine the opinions of the local people on religious tourism and to examine if there was a difference in terms of demographic characteristics. For this purpose, a questionnaire consisting of 17 statements was employed in the research. T-test and one-way ANOVA were used for data analysis.

In a study by Öner and Cansu (2019), it was determined that local people had different views according to demographic variables, and it was concluded that this type of tourism might cause harm as well as good. In the study, a questionnaire consisting of seven demographic questions and 14 statements were used in data collection. Among the variables of the study were age, gender, and marital status. In this study, Mann Whitney U, Kruskall Wallis, correlation and Tamhane's T2 tests were applied in order to test the research hypotheses.

Çelen, Zenger, Bayram, and Altunoz (2019) attempted to evaluate faith tourism in Şanlıurfa from the perspective of the local people in their research. Accordingly, it was determined that local people had the necessary knowledge about sacred places, and although they were happy with the development of faith tourism, they also had certain concerns. In the study, a four-part questionnaire form including 5-point Likert type questions and variables such as age, gender, education level, income, and life span was used in data collection. Reliability and descriptive analysis were applied in the analysis of the data, and T-test and ANOVA analysis were used to measure the significant differences between variables.

Koçoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, and Acar (2019) aimed to determine the perspectives of the local people living in Kastamonu towards faith tourism and to identify the differences of these perspectives in line with the demographic characteristics in their work. In the paper, a questionnaire was used to collect data, and variables such as gender, age and income were taken into consideration. In the study, analysis was conducted with descriptive statistical methods including T-test, ANOVA and Tukey tests. According to the results obtained from the

research, it was determined that the local people were moderate towards faith tourism, but received medium scores in terms of knowledge of the sources of belief.

In her work on balancing tourism and religious experience in sanctuaries, Kasim (2011) tried to understand the perspectives of local devotees in Thaipusam in connection with faith tourism and Thaipusam festival in Malaysia. In this context, the findings section of the study focuses on the problems, concerns and improvements related to improving the balance of tourism and religious activities and the quality of experience in Batu Caves while in the sanctuary. Data collection on the perspective of local devotees in the article was carried out through an open-ended questionnaire mailed to the addresses of 250 randomly selected participants from the parents of Indian students at Utara Malaysian University. The most striking element in the study is the emphasis on the need to make an effort to understand the perspectives of local devotees regarding the Thaipusam festival in Batu Caves.

Nghia (2015), in her study investigating the role of the local community in the development of spiritual tourism, revealed some findings specific to the city of Ninh Binh. The elements of the region, which stands out with its natural, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, are closely connected with the local community. As revealed in the research, the people of the region are not only the owners of cultural-spiritual values, beliefs and religions, but also those who protect, preserve and develop these cultural-spiritual values. Therefore, tourism development in general and spiritual tourism development in particular cannot take place without the role of the local community.

In their study, Albayrak et al. (2018) aimed to determine the experiences of religious tourists in Jerusalem, one of the most important holy destinations in the country. In the study, data were collected from tourists belonging to Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions visiting the region and it was emphasized that faith tourism experience is a multifaceted structure. The findings also show that overall tourist satisfaction in Jerusalem is affected by the faith tourism experience. As stated by Albayrak et al. (2018), although some religious rituals performed by small groups attract the attention of tourists, their transformation into an international festival is considered by the locals as a corruption of culture and generates the idea that it has a negative impact on cultural heritage.

Among the resources obtained, it has been observed that there is a deficiency in the sense of determining the views and expectations of the local people in Northern Cyprus towards faith tourism. In addition, it has been observed that there are deficiencies in emphasizing the importance of local people in faith tourism in the articles. Northern Cyprus has a rich historical

background and is home to different civilizations and religions, which requires the development tourism on the island.

In this context, we believe that it is important to find out the deficiencies of faith tourism on the island and consult the local people in order to remedy these deficiencies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Sample

The sample of the study consists of people living in various regions of Northern Cyprus. A total of 60 participants were chosen and they are from different background in terms of age and education level. Levels in the age variable were determined as 20-35 years old, 36-55 years old, and 56-80 years old. As for the education variable, the levels were determined as Primary and Secondary Education, High School, and University and Above, as it was aimed to determine the similarities and differences between the opinions and expectations of a primary school graduate and a high school or university graduate about faith tourism.

Number of participants were 20 people each at 20-35 age group, 36-55 age group, and 56-80 age group; as for education, 10 people at primary and secondary school level, 24 people at high school level, and 26 people at university and above level were chosen. The number of people who receive only primary and secondary education in Northern Cyprus is quite low and this explains the small number of participants from this group.

3.2 Collection and Analysis of Data

A questionnaire form was used in obtaining the data that would form the basis of the research. The questionnaire form, consisting of two sections, included 12 (2+10) questions prepared by the researchers. After the questions were prepared, opinions of two experts, one pedagogue and one theologian, were received and the questionnaire was restructured based on the opinions received.

The first section included two questions on socio-demographic characteristics of the people participated in the questionnaire (age and education level). The second section included 10 multiple choice questions to determine the opinions and expectations of people living in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on faith tourism. In the fifth question of the study, "Does opening belief centers to tourism spoil the spiritual aura and general structure of the site?" two options were provided (Yes-No) and the participants were asked to provide the reason for their answer. Due to Covid-19, some data in the study were obtained online (via WhatsApp) and some data were obtained through face-to-face.

Data was analysed mainly using simple descriptive statistics involving frequency count and percentage.

4.0 FINDINGS

In the findings section, tables were created based on the answers given to the questions asked in order to determine the opinions and expectations of the participants about faith tourism, and the frequencies and percentages were identified depending on the answers given.

Table 1: Sites specified by the participants according to age range

20-35 years of age	36-55 years of age	56-80 years of age
Bellapais (Monastery)-8, Hala Sultan Mosque (Dervish Lodge)-11, Yeni Mosque-4, Selimiye Mosque-10, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque-9, Arap Ahmet Mosque-4, Apostolos Andreas-2, St. Paul Anjlikan, Santa Anna Church, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Değirmenlik Church, Karaoğlan (Son) Martyrs' cemetery-4, Tashkent Martyrs' cemetery-2, Kızılbaş Church-2, Hz.Ömer Tomb-9, St. Marina Church, Kızılbaş Church, St. Andreas Church, Armenian Church-3, Zahra Tomb-3, Turunçlu Mosque-2, Akkonuk Mosque, Kırklar Tomb-2, Lutuf Church, Mevlevihane Dervish Lodge, Canbulat Tomb-2, Barnabas Church (Monastery) -3, Haydar Pasha Mosque, Pir Pasha Mosque, Yediler and Karababa Tomb, Saint Mamas Church-2, Lakadamya Turkish Cemetery, Limassol Cemetery, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Canbulat Tomb, Sultan Ahmet Mosque, Salamis Ruins, Barbarism Museum	Armenian Church (Monastery)-2, Selimiye Mosque-13, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque-12, Hala Sultan Dervish lodge (Mosque) -7, Hz. Ömer Tomb-11, Barnabas Monastery-5, Saint Mamas Monastery (Church)-5, Bellapais Monastery-8, Hala Sultan Mosque, Bedesten, Apostolos Andreas Monastery-4, Aya Anastasya, Haydar Pasha Mosque, Yediler Tomb, Canbolat Tomb-2, Lakadamya Turkish Cemetery, Cyprus Karababa Tomb-2, Karaoğlanoğlu Cemetery, Arap Ahmet Mosque, Mevlevihane-2, Kurt Bey Tomb, Ottoman Cemetery, Kutup Osman, Buğday Mosque, Ayfilon Church, Canbulat Tomb, Kırklar, Bosphorus Martyrs' cemetery, Karaoğlanoğlu Martyrs' cemetery	Selimiye Mosque-8, Lala Mustafa Pasha-8, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Yeni Mosque, Hz.Ömer Tomb-8, Hala Sultan Mosque-6, Karaoğlanoğlu Martyrs' cemetery, Kızılbaş Church, Zahra Tomb, Apostolos Andreas-5, Buğday Mosque, Laleli Mosque, İplik Pazarı Mosque, Haydar Pasha Mosque-2 The Mevlevi Dervish lodge-2, St. Barnabas Monastery-4, Nurettin Ersin Pasha Mosque, Mehmetçik Mosque, Kırklar Dervish lodge-3, Bella Pais Monastery-5, Durmuş Dede Tomb, Kutup Osman Tomb, Pir Pasha Mosque, Saint Mamas Monastery (Church), Chrysorrogiatissa Monastery, Ornuta Mosque (Gazikoy)

Table 2: Sites specified by the participants according according to the level of education

Elementary and secondary school	High school	University and above
Selimiye Mosque-4, Lala Mustafa Pasha-5, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Yeni Mosque, Tomb of Hz.Ömer-4, Hala Sultan Mosque-2, Karaoğlanoğlu Martyrs' cemetery, Kızılbaş Church, Apostolos Andreas-4, Buğday Mosque, Laleli Mosque, Yarn Market Mosque, Haydar Pasha Mosque, Kırklar Tomb-2 , Ornuta Mosque (Gaziköy), St. Barnabas Church	Hala Sultan-8, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Değirmenlik Church, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque-11, Yeni Mosque-1, Karaoğlanoğlu Martyrs 'cemetery-2, Tashkent Martyrs' cemetery, Kızılbaş Church, Armenian Church, Selimiye Mosque-10, Tomb of Hz.Ömer-12, Zahra Tomb , Kırklar Tomb (Dervish lodge) -3, Barnabas Monastery-6, Saint Mamas Monastery (Church) -3, Bellapais Monastery-11, Mevlevi Dervish lodge (Mevlevihane) -3, Nurettin Ersin Pasha Mosque, Aya Anastasya, Mehmetçik Mosque, Haydar Pasha Mosque-3, Yediler Tomb (Karababa Tomb) -3, Canbulat Tomb-2, Lakadamya Turkish Cemetery, Limassol Cemetery, Pir Pasha Mosque, Durmuş Dede Tomb, Kutup Osman Tomb, Apostolos Andreas-2, Chrysorrogiatissa Monastery, Pir Pasha Mosque	Bellapais (Monastery) -10, Hala Sultan (Mosque-Dervish lodge) -15, Yeni Mosque-4, Selimiye Mosque-18, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque-16, Arap Ahmet Mosque-4, Apostolos Andreas-6, St. Paul Anjlikan, Saint Anna Church, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Değirmenlik Church, Karaoğlan (Son) Martyrs 'cemetery-4, Tashkent Martyrs' cemetery-2, Kızılbaş Church-2, Hz.Ömer Tomb-13, St. Marina Church, Kızılbaş Church, St. Andreas Church, Armenian Church-3, Zahra Tomb-4, Turunçlu Mosque-2, Akkonuk Mosque, Kırklar Tomb-2, Lutuf Church, Mevlevihane Dervish lodge, St.Barnabas Monastery (Church) -6, Bedesten, Saint Mamas Monastery (Church) -5, Arap Ahmet Mosque, Canbolat Tomb-2, Mevlevihane, Kurt Bey Tomb, Ottoman Cemetery, Kutup Osman, Buğday Mosque, Ayfilon Church, King Tombs, Kırklar Tomb, Bosphorus Martyrs 'cemetery, Karaoğlanoğlu Martyrs' cemetery, Hz. Ebubekir Mosque, Canbulat Tomb, Sultan Ahmet Mosque, Salamis Ruins, Barbarism Museum

As shown in the tables above, the sites from both the Southern and the Northern regions of Cyprus were specified. In addition, one of three participants in "20-35 years of age-University and above" level named a site which is not in Northern Cyprus (Sultan Ahmet Mosque) and two participants named sites outside the scope of faith tourism (Salamis Ruins, Barbarism Museum). It can be understood from the table that the examples with highest frequency were given by "20-35 years of age" and "university and above" participant group.

Table 3: The contribution of faith tourism to general tourism revenues and regional development

	a		b		c	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	10	50	9	45	1	5
36-55 years of age	11	55	4	20	5	25
56-80 years of age	13	65	5	25	2	10
Elementary and secondary school	8	80	1	10	1	10
High school	13	54,16	7	29,16	4	16,66
University and above	14	53,84	9	34,61	3	11,53

(a. Low, b. Medium, c. High)

According to the findings shown in Table 3 where the contribution of faith tourism to general tourism revenues and regional development is questioned, it has been observed that all participating groups provided the highest rate (50%, 55%, 65% - 80%, 54.16%, 53.84%) in the first option according to age and education variables, and it was stated that the contribution of faith tourism to tourism revenues and regional development was slight.

Table 4: Actions needed from the public to develop faith tourism

	a		b		c	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	8	40	3	15	9	45
36-55 years of age	5	25	3	15	12	60
56-80 years of age	6	30	5	25	9	45
Elementary and secondary school	2	20	3	30	5	50
High school	6	25	6	25	12	50
University and above	11	42,30	2	7,69	13	50

(a. Contributing to the protection of the sites of belief in their region, b. Being tolerant towards tourists visiting these sites, c. Contributing to the awareness of future generations on this issue)

In Table 4 which presents answer to the question of what people should do about religious tourism, it can be seen that the highest concentration of all participant groups in both variables (45%, 60%, 45% - 50%, 50%, 50%) is the option of "Contributing to the awareness of future generations on this issue". This shows that the participants agree that the next generation should gain awareness according to age group and education level.

Table 5: Actions needed from the state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop faith tourism

	a		b		c	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	2	10	12	60	6	30
36-55 years of age	3	15	3	15	14	70
56-80 years of age	1	5	4	20	15	75
Elementary and secondary school	1	10	2	20	7	70
High school	1	4,16	6	25	17	70,83
University and above	4	15,38	11	42,30	11	42,30

(a. State and NGOs making financial contribution for belief tourism, b. State and NGOs raising awareness of the people of the region on this issue, c. Contribution by the state and NGOs to promotion activities abroad)

As seen in Table 5 above, the 20-35 age group preferred option b (the state and NGOs should raise awareness of the people of the region on this issue). It is seen that 36-55 years old, 56-80 years old, Primary and Secondary Education and High School participant groups are mostly (70%, 75%, 70%, 70.83%) focused on option c (Contribution by the state and NGOs to the promotion activities abroad). University and above group stated their opinions equally in options b and c. All groups reported very weak opinions about the state and NGOs making financial contribution for faith tourism.

Table 6: Whether the opening of belief centers to tourism spoil the spirit and general structure of the place

	a		b	
	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	4	20	16	80
36-55 years of age	3	15	17	85
56-80 years of age	1	5	19	95
Elementary and secondary school			10	100
High school	4	16,66	20	83,33
University and above	4	15,38	22	84,61

(a.Yes, b.No)

In Table 6, we can see a high percentage of NO was chosen by the respondents. The reasons for the "yes" and "no" answers were also asked and interesting data were obtained. While only 3 participants gave reasons to "yes" answer, several participants gave reasons to "no" answer.

One participant, 36-55 years old and at university and above education level, said, "*Opening belief centers to tourism will destroy the spiritual aura and general structure of the place. It will lead to environmental pollution. Visits do not contribute financially as no entrance fee can be received and souvenirs cannot be sold (P45)*". Two participants in 56-80 age group with high school education used the following expressions: "*It can lead to construction in its surrounding. In addition, overcrowding can disturb the spiritual peace (P31)*" and "*I don't think non-Muslim visitors will show enough respect here (P51)*".

The participants who stated that opening belief centers to tourism will not spoil the spirit and general structure of the place presented different reasons. Some of these reasons are given below.

The reasons stated by the participants aged 20-35 with university and above education level are as follows: "*People getting to know and exploring these places cannot disrupt the religious spirituality that has formed in these places over the years (K14).*", "*The more you visit, the more spirituality increases and everything that happened there is appreciated (P26).*", "*Restorations are being made to prevent deterioration of these areas.*", "*People who go there do not spoil the essence of the place in any way because they visit the place knowing its spirituality (P44).*", "*I think that the deterioration of the general structure of the place will be prevented by making a good planning (P39).*"

Table 7: Compliance with religious norms in visiting sacred sites

	a.Yes		b.No	
	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	11	55	9	45
36-55 years of age	14	70	6	30
56-80 years of age	13	65	7	35
Elementary and secondary school	5	50	5	50
High school	17	70,83	7	29,16
University and above	16	61,53	10	38,46

As shown in Table 7, groups other than the "Primary and Secondary School" agree that it is necessary to adapt to religious norms during a visit (55%, 70%, 65% - 70.83%, 61.53%).

"Primary and Secondary School" participant group answered "yes" and "no" at equal rates (50% - 50%).

Table 8: The problems experienced in faith tourism in the TRNC

	a		b		c		d		e	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
20-35 years of age	6	30	3	15	6	30	4	20	1	5
36-55 years of age	7	35	0	0	9	45	4	20	0	0
56-80 years of age	8	40	0	0	5	25	7	35	0	0
Elementary and secondary school	1	10	0	0	3	30	6	60	0	0
High school	11	45,83	0	0	8	33,33	5	20,83	0	0
University and above	9	34,61	3	11,53	9	34,61	4	15,38	1	3,84

(a. Non-recognition of the country, b. Errors and deficiencies in the restoration of the sites, c. Inadequacy and indifference as regards the protection of the sites, d. The insufficient coverage of faith tourism in national education curricula, e. The difficulties experienced in visiting sites in Southern Cyprus)

In Table 8, effort is paid to determine the most prominent problem experienced in faith tourism in TRNC, and it is found out that each participant group sees different problems as the most important. For example, according to the 20-35 age group, options "a" and "c" are equally important (30%). Option "c" (45%) was seen as an important problem according to the 36-55 age group, and option "a" (40%) according to the 56-80 age group. As for the education level, option "d" (60%) is the most prominent according to the "Primary and Secondary School" participant group, while the option "a" is in the foreground for the "High School" level participant group. As for the "University and Above" participant group, both options "a" and "c" were found to be equally important (34.61%).

In general, it has been observed that the most prominent problems for the participant groups depending on both variables are the "non-recognition of the country" and "inadequacy and indifference as regards protecting the sites", respectively.

Table 9: Solutions the problems and issues experienced in faith tourism in the TRNC

		a		b		c		d		e
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	9	45	4	20	3	15	2	10	2	10
36-55 years of age	8	40	5	25	3	15	4	20	0	0
56-80 years of age	8	40	4	20	2	10	5	25	1	5
Elementary and secondary school	4	40	2	20	0	0	4	40	0	0
High school	11	45,83	3	12,5	4	16,66	5	20,83	1	4,16
University and above	10	38,46	8	30,76	4	15,38	2	7,69	2	7,69

(a. Adequate promotion of the sites, b. The government showing proper interest in the sites, c. The increase in the interest of the local people in the region where the site is located, d. The education on faith tourism and related places in schools affiliated with the ministry of national education, e. Making an intergovernmental agreement to facilitate visiting the places which are located in Southern Cyprus.)

Table 9 presents the suggestions on how to solve the problems and issues experienced in faith tourism in the TRNC. All groups except for the "Primary and Secondary School" participant group stated "adequate promotion of the sites" as the main solution. "Primary and Secondary School" participant group, on the other hand, preferred the options of "adequate advertising of sites" and "providing education on faith tourism and related sites in schools affiliated with the ministry of national education" at equal rates (40%).

The option "e", which is "by making an intergovernmental agreement to facilitate visiting the places which are located in Southern Cyprus", has been the least preferred option by all groups.

Table 10: The main purpose of a visit in faith tourism

	a		b		c		d	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	2	10	6	30	11	55	1	5
36-55 years of age	0	0	10	50	10	50	0	0
56-80 years of age	2	10	4	20	14	70	0	0
Elementary and secondary school	2	20	2	20	6	60	0	0
High school	1	4,16	7	29,16	15	62,5	1	4,16
University and above	1	3,84	11	42,30	14	53,84	0	0

(a. Religious belief and worship, b. Seeing the region mentioned in a story or legend about the place, c. Obtaining knowledge about different religions and cultures, d. Taking a vacation and resting in different countries)

As shown in Table 10, all participant groups except the 36-55 age group chose option "c" (55%, 70% - 60%, 62.5%, 53.84%). Participants aged 36-55 chose both options "b" and "c" at an equal rate (50%) as the main purpose. Accordingly, the main purpose of visiting the sites was stated as "to obtain knowledge about different religions and cultures" and "to see the region mentioned in a story or legend about the place" respectively.

Option "d", which is "taking a vacation and resting in different countries", was chosen by only two groups of participants (20-35 age: 5%-High school: 4.16%).

Table 11: Supporting the development of faith tourism in the TRNC

	a		b		c		d	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20-35 years of age	10	50	1	5	5	25	4	20
36-55 years of age	10	50	2	10	5	25	3	15
56-80 years of age	10	50	1	5	1	5	8	40
Elementary and secondary school	5	50	0	0	1	10	4	40
High school	9	37,5	2	8,33	6	25	7	29,16
University and above	16	61,53	2	7,69	4	15,38	4	15,38

(a. I support it as I think tourism activities are vital to the development of the country, b. I support faith tourism as it has become popular all over the world in recent years, c. I support it especially for promoting Islamic culture and art to the world, d. I do not support it as I do not think such touristic activities are very important for Northern Cyprus.)

Based on the data shown in Table 11, it can be concluded that the participants favored the development of faith tourism. Accordingly, it was observed that all participating groups mostly agreed on the option "I support tourism activities because I think tourism activities are vital for the development of the country" (50%, 50%, 50% - 50%, 37.5%, 61.53%).

However, although 56-80 years old and "Primary and Secondary School" participant groups support faith tourism at a high rate (50%), it has been observed that a close proportion of participants is against faith tourism (40%).

5.0 DISCUSSION

It has been observed that the groups participating in the research are generally knowledgeable about the religious sites in the TRNC. In the study, the Muslim participants adopted and wrote several sites related to Christianity, which is also an indicator of the tolerance of Muslims towards other religions. Among the most mentioned sites, Selimiye Mosque, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque, Hala Sultan Mosque (Tekke-Tomb), Bellapais Monastery and Hz. Omer Tomb can be listed.

The existence and survival of Christian structures in the TRNC is due to the understanding of tolerance of Muslims towards other religions. Using a similar discourse in their study, Önger and Çetin (2017) stated that the freedom enjoyed by people with diverse beliefs during the Ottoman period was a very important factor in the building of this tolerance.

In the research, it has been revealed that the contribution of faith tourism carried out in the TRNC to general tourism revenues is limited. One of the best ways for tourists coming to the island to get to know the culture and spirituality of this place is to adapt such faith centers more to tourism. Otherwise, the tourists will stay in their hotel and return to their country without getting to know the culture and the world of faith of the island; they will only have a sea-sand-sun holiday. This will also mean that tourists do not make any financial contribution to the local population. In addition, it is known that tourists visit certain faith centers (Selimiye Mosque, Lala Mustafa Pasha Mosque, Bellapais Monastery, St. Barnabas Church), but there are not many incentives for them to spend money in these places. Karabulut and Köksal (2019), in their study stated that the said tourism activity has contributed greatly to the economies of countries in the recent period. Karabulut and Köksal (2019) emphasized that people want to participate in faith tourism, especially because they want to strengthen and relax spiritually. The authors stated that the city of Jerusalem, the city of Santiago de Compostela in Spain (one of the three important pilgrimage centers for Christians along with Rome and Jerusalem), the city of Lourdes in France, the city of Bethlehem in Palestine, the Basilica of Our Lady of

Guadalupe in Mexico, Kashi Vishwanath Shrine in India, and the Meiji Shrine in Japan are among the most important centers for today's faith tourism, and underlined that pilgrimage travels have become a rapidly growing market segment that has become very popular today.

It is of great importance for the youth, state and NGOs to raise the awareness of the island people about faith tourism in terms of tourism activities. Karakaş and Şengün (2017) put forward a similar opinion in their article. The authors emphasized that involving the local people in the tourism development process, obtaining their opinions and suggestions on this issue, and mutual exchange of ideas to encourage the development of future tourism is very important for local people to influence decision centers and to feel themselves as a part of tourism. In addition, they stated that pure economic planning approaches made without taking into account the values and expectations of the society will never be successful.

Some of the participants in the study associated the underdevelopment of faith tourism in the TRNC with the topic of education. Consequently, they put forward that the main problem in this area is the insufficient coverage of the mentioned tourism activities in the national education curricula. This finding confirms Uğuz's (2011) that education and educated guides play an important role in the continuation of tourism activities in general. In the study, it was also seen that the participants asked the governors of the country to make more efforts, especially in the advertisement of religious places, in order to solve some of the problems experienced in faith tourism on the island. This shows that the public has knowledge about the importance of promotion and marketing through which touristic visits to most religious centers can be multiplied. Karabulut and Kaynak (2016) also used a similar discourse in their work. The authors underlined that beliefs are the basic elements of faith tourism, which are thought to contribute to the meeting of cultures and civilizations, and they should be advertised to locals and foreigners visually and audibly. In this context, they emphasized that the richness of Konya, the subject of their work, that can be visited more than once, should be promoted and marketed properly.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Interesting results have been obtained in this study which aimed to determine the opinions and expectations of the people about faith tourism in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC).

In the study, the participants were asked to write down their expectations from religious places and belief centers in Cyprus, and it has been observed that the participant groups "20-35 years old" and "University and Above education level" mentioned the highest number of

places. The obtained data show that young people and university graduates are knowledgeable about these sites. Interestingly, among the three participants of the mentioned groups, one mentioned a site in Turkey and two mentioned non-religious sites each. Still, a general view shows that these two groups are knowledgeable about the existence of the sites. Looking at the places written within the scope of the study, it is seen that these include mosques, dervish lodges, mausoleums, monasteries, churches, martyrdoms and historical cemeteries. While it was shown in the study that the people in the TRNC had information about the places, it was revealed that the contribution of faith tourism to the general tourism revenues and regional development in the island was limited. This situation can be explained by the fact that the state does not give sufficient importance to faith tourism, as a result of which, faith tourism income is low.

It is seen that all the participants agree that contributing to the awareness of future generations will have a positive effect on faith tourism. This shows that the majority of the people consider the education given to the new generations in the mentioned subject inadequate. When we look at the primary and secondary education curricula, there is information about certain sites, but the younger generations do not embrace and internalize them. In order for the new generations to know and adopt religious places in a real sense, it should be ensured that these places are introduced with conscious guides during the trips organized through schools.

It was observed that the participating groups put forward various opinions about what the state and non-governmental organizations should do regarding religious tourism. Young people indicated that the state and NGOs should raise awareness among the public, which shows that they have belief and trust in education.

Participants at the university level and above, on the other hand, show an equal distribution in terms of both awareness raising and promotional activities, which can be explained by their high awareness due to their educational background and their awareness that education and marketing together will create a stronger effect.

Participants in the study expressed their opinion that opening the religious centers to tourism would not spoil the spiritual aura and general structure of the places, which is extremely important in terms of the development of the said tourism activity. As regards to the opinions presented about why the opening of belief centers to tourism will not spoil the spiritual aura and general structure of the place, the participants generally presented ideas such as that the people who visit the places are conscious and tolerant, that they respect the place, that such

visits will further glorify the spirit of the place, and that the places will be restored and protected because they are being visited.

Although only a minority of the participants think that the spirit of the sites will be spoiled, the reasons presented by these participants should also be taken into account. For example, reasons such as overcrowding disturbing the spiritual peace, causing environmental pollution, leading to building activities in its surroundings, and non-Muslim visitors not showing enough respect to the sites point to realistic problems that may be encountered with tourism. For this reason, a good organization and planning should be made for the visits to religious centers that will be brought forward within the framework of faith tourism, and visits should be tied to certain rules. In addition, within the framework of preventing construction and protecting the environment, coordination between the TRNC Ministry of Tourism and Environment, Ministry of Interior, Forestry Department and regional municipalities should be ensured and the spiritual, physical and natural environment should be protected. In this way, it will be ensured that faith tourism is sustainable.

The agreement of most of the participants in the study in terms of expecting compliance with religious norms when visiting sacred places is an indication of the high respect of the people of the TRNC for religious places. The sensitivity of the people for paying attention to the attitude, behavior, actions and dressing when visiting sacred places is remarkable.

The participants also revealed their views regarding the country's lack of recognition, and the inadequacy and indifference in the protection of the places in terms of tourism activities. It is also quite meaningful that the "Primary and Secondary Education" participant group participating in the study associated this situation with education. However, a significant portion of the participants believed that some problems experienced in faith tourism in the TRNC could be solved with adequate advertisement for the sites.

A significant portion of the participants in the study stated that having knowledge about different religions and cultures is the main goal of faith tourism. This may be because people already pray at their homes or in mosques close to their residences. In addition, a Christian's visit to mosques and shrines or a Muslim's visit to a church or a monastery will naturally be aimed at gaining knowledge about different religions and cultures.

As a result, it is seen that the local people living on the island consider faith tourism in general, as well as other tourism activities, as important for the development of the country and support it. However, it has been observed that 56-80 age group and "Primary and Secondary Education level" participant groups have a negative view on faith tourism to a considerable extent.

Participants between the ages of 20-35 and 36-55 who have received university education show high level of awareness in terms of faith tourism. Since the participants in question are generally aware of the problems experienced in this regard, they have put forward some suggestions to overcome these problems. In the study, it can be said that the Muslim people living in the TRNC have a positive view towards faith tourism, have general information about the sites on the island, and are open to this type of tourism.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The faith tourism should be increased and international promotions should be made so that tourists from different countries around the world can come to the TRNC. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism should take an active role in promotions and work in coordination with travel agencies abroad. However, under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, transportation opportunities to all sites of faith tourism in the TRNC should be developed without damaging the natural structures. In addition, faith tourism should be included in the primary education curriculum in the TRNC, and the consciousness of local people on this issue should be improved. In addition, the government support to investors who want to take part in the sector in question would be effective in reaching the desired level of the mentioned tourism activities.

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