



## EVALUATION OF MERSIN PROVINCE TOURISM POTENTIAL BY CONTENT ANALYSIS

Abdullah Akmaz<sup>1i</sup>,

Resul Çelik<sup>2</sup>,

Taner Dağlıoğlu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Mersin University, Tourism Faculty,  
Tourism Guidance Department, Turkey

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Mersin University,  
Technology Transfer Office Project Specialist, Turkey

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Gaziantep University,  
Vocational School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Turkey

### Abstract:

The aim of this research is to offer suggestions for the work to be done regarding the development of the situation and potential of Mersin tourism. In this context, the opinions about the works that can be done for the current situation and development of Mersin tourism were asked and evaluated by 8 people, including public institution directors, academicians and private sector employees. In this study, semi-structured interview technique that is one of the qualitative research methods was used. In our study, the interview form prepared as a data collection tool has been revealed due to the opinions of the experts about the subject. As a result, the form consists of 8 questions and the first question that we have prepared determine the demographics features of the participants, while the other 7 questions are related to the feasibility of Mersin tourism regarding the current situation and potential of it. At the end of the study, strengths and weaknesses of Mersin tourism have been revealed. In addition, it is another contribution to the field of the study that reveals potential studies that can be done about Mersin tourism. It is believed that as a result of this study, the thoughts and suggestions have been revealed will be light and guide to other studies to be done in the field.

**Keywords:** Mersin, tourism, tourism potential

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [aakmaz@mersin.edu.tr](mailto:aakmaz@mersin.edu.tr), [resulcelik@mersin.edu.tr](mailto:resulcelik@mersin.edu.tr), [tanerdaglioglu@gantep.edu.tr](mailto:tanerdaglioglu@gantep.edu.tr)

## 1. Introduction

Today, tourism is one of the rapidly growing and developing industry branches (Sabbağ, 2011: 207; Olcay and Sürme, 2014: 837; Yılmaz and Çalışkan, 2015: 6586; Olcay Yildirim and Sürme, 2015: 325). Therefore, in order to increase the income of the tourism sector in developed countries that have strong and developed economies and developing countries, the existing tourist products have been developing within the framework of the needs and desires of tourists. In other words, countries works to make cultural assets and attractiveness of both historical and natural destinations to be attractive for tourists by establishing tourism resources so this enables to develop their economies and tourism areas (Aslan, Güneren and Çoban, 2014: 4; Çiçek, Pala and Ozcan, 2013: 3). For this reason, along with the existing tourism types, the diversification of tourism products enables the tourism destinations to market the values that they have (Ukav and Çetinsöz, 2015: 9).

What is important in efficient and effective tourism marketing is not only to know the values that tourism destination has but also to prepare these values according to the needs and requirements of tourists and to put them in the markets (Pike, 2017: 126; Olcay and Sürme, 2017: 181). In this regard, in places where tourism destination area, management and marketing of these values are possible if local governments, private and public sector, as well as local people are a unity and they participate in whole activities (Li, Robinson and Oriade, 2017: 95). In this way, locally acting as a whole within the unity and togetherness of all stakeholders will make it possible for the destination area to produce cultural, social and economic benefits (Vatter, 2014: 70). The aim of marketing the destination is not only to make profit in short term but also to develop and improve long term strategic planning and programs by maintaining the ready position of destinations, besides, to enable and to increase competition power with other destination areas (Bahar and Kozak, 2005: 75, Özdemir, 2007: 94 Line and Runyan, 2014: 91).

Situated on Turkey's Mediterranean Coast Mersin is one of the oldest known settlements in history. It is thought to be the oldest settlement of Mersin named "Zephyrion" by the Greeks is "Yumuktepe". It is thought that the Assyrians and the Persians were called "Ingira" for this city (Yılmaz, 2015: 2). Traces and works belonging to all of the Historical Ages were found in Mersin and it had hosted many civilizations had historical, cultural and touristic values. "Yumuktepe" region is known to be the home of olives and figs in the Mediterranean and then the grape came to that region (Mersin Valiliği, 2009: 36). It is known that the first known defensive technique in Anatolia was established in Mersin (Sevin, 1999: 77). Along with this, for the first time

the parts of the mine made by forging technique are processed for the first time in the world (Yalçın, 1999: 74).

“The Gözlükule Mound” in Tarsus district, which has similar features to this region, has a history starting from 5500 BC and it has a great number of architectural and cultural works as a transit place between eastern and western civilizations (Zoroğlu, 1995: 35-42). Apart from these values, it is also possible to find many ruins in the inner parts of the city.

In the Roman period, the ancient city of “Soli-Pompeipolis”, which is bound to the Mezitli district, in the center of Mersin, gained importance as a port and it was a culture city of the Eastern Mediterranean. Along with these, “the Kanlıdivane”, pothole which be formed with minarets that melts of limestone stone. “The Kız castle” which is famous with the legends and “the Silifke Castle” with the eagle nest that is under control of Sertavul Passage... There are many archaeological works between Aydıncık and Anamur, with its historical and cultural heritage so we cannot finish to talk about Mersin, is both a natural wonder and an important place for Islam and Christianity (Unur ve Arıcı, 2012: 231-232).

In this context, with its historical, cultural and belief tourism values, Mersin is expected to provide significant contributions to the solution and development of regional problems as well as to increase the number of tourists and tourism revenues by diversifying tourist products (Sabbağ, 2011, 207).

## 2. Research Method

Semi-structured interview technique was used in this study which was carried out in order to reveal what needs to be done regarding tourism potential of Mersin province. In this context, 8 people including public institution representatives, academicians and private sector representatives were asked about the current situation of Mersin tourism and their opinions about the necessities to be done.

The research questions were formed from previous researches (Olçay, Karacil and Sürme, 2017). In fact, only the abstract part of this research was printed and the authors were contacted and the interview form was requested. At this point, the problems and recommendations of the authors are taken into consideration. Therefore, it was aimed to reveal the tourism potential of Mersin Province with similar questions in this research.

### 3. Results

In this section of this study, findings take part. According to this, when the education status of the participants is examined, 4 of them are undergraduate, 2 of them are masters and 2 of them are doctoral graduates. 2 participants ages are between 25 to 30, 2 of them are between 31 to 35, 2 of them are between 36 to 45 and 2 of them are 45 and over.

Participants were asked about the tourism potential of Mersin province and the results were coded on the basis of the answers given. According to this, the general opinions about the tourism potential of Mersin province are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** General views on tourism potential of Mersin Province

Expressions	Frequency
History has enough potential in terms of tourism.	8
Nature has enough potential in terms of tourism.	6
It has a long coastline.	3
Because the port is a city, it is important for business tourism.	3
Potential importance of Kazanlı-Tarsus Tourism Region Project.	5
The plateau has sufficient potential in terms of tourism.	3
Culture has enough potential in terms of tourism.	8
Active use of facilities built in the Mediterranean Games in terms of sports tourism	4
Faith has enough potential in terms of tourism.	6
Gastronomy richness is an important potential.	2
The cave has an important potential in terms of tourism.	1
Eco-tourism has an important place in terms of potential.	3
Many different civilizations hosted it.	4

As seen in Table 1, the most, the participants indicated that Mersin has enough potential for cultural and historical tourism. On the other hand, the lowest, the participants stated that cave tourism has sufficient potential in terms of gastronomy richness. Some of the participants in this issue were quoted directly below:

*"There are important places in Cappadocia-Mersin-Antakya triangle in terms of belief tourism." (X3)*

*"Mersin province has both cultural and natural tourism potential. In addition to sea, sand and sun tourism, there are alternative tourism types. Historical and cultural richness of Mersin and its surroundings, tableland tourism in Toroslar, cave tourism, Mersin local rich local cuisine, eco-tourism resources (including endemic plants, caretas, Mediterranean monk seals), Tarsus' religious tourism potential, the increase of*

*industrialization of Mersin province and because of harbor of Mersin province, it has important tourism potentials like business tourism”(X5)*

**Table 2:** Views on the factors that negatively affect Mersin tourism potential

Expressions	Frequency
Despite being a port city, it is not evaluated adequately in terms of tourism	3
Authorities do not show enough interest in myrtle tourism	2
The surplus of secondary housing	5
Stay in the shadow of Antalya	8
Airport shortage	6
No alternative transportation between Antalya and Mersin outside the highway	7
Not to use the sea and yacht tourism facilities adequately	1
Bad and unconscious use of destinations and natural resources	3
No effective promotion	5

As seen in Table 2, a large majority of the participants think Mersin's tourism potential remains in the shadow of Antalya. Participants stated that there is no alternative transportation between Antalya and Mersin outside the highway and the lack of airports negatively affect the tourism potential of Mersin.

Participants were asked about the qualification levels of tourism services in Mersin and the results were coded in responses to the answers given. Accordingly, the negative opinions regarding the sufficiency of tourism services in Mersin province are shown in Table 3 and the positive opinions regarding the sufficiency of tourism services in Mersin province are shown in Table 4.

**Table 3:** Negative opinions about sufficiency of tourism services in Mersin province

Expressions	Frequency
Hygiene problems of eating and drinking establishments	5
Transportation services are not enough.	6
Not enough tour arrangements for attractions of travel agencies	3
Occupational competence of employees is low.	5
Inadequate publicity services	3

As seen in Table 3, the large majority of participants believe that restaurant services in Mersin do not have adequate hygiene standards. It is also stated that the level of professional qualification of the personnel is not sufficient. The views of some participants on the subject are given below.

*“There are hygiene problems in the service sector especially in the food and drink enterprises in Mersin province.” (X3)*

*"Untrained people deal with tourism." (X6)*

**Table 4:** Positive views on the sufficiency of tourism services in Mersin Province

Expressions	Frequency
Tourism schools are not enough	2
Hotel sector provides quality service.	1
Large chain hotels available	4
There is a tremendous wealth of gastronomic tourism	2
The number of beds is sufficient according to the student	6

As shown in Table 4, the large majority of participants indicated that the number of beds available was sufficient according to request. The views of some participants on the subject are given below.

*"According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Mersin, there are 55 facilities have facility operation certificate with a total of 4.012 rooms and 8.351 beds. 7 of the facilities are 5 star and have 1,500 rooms and 3,084 beds. 47 enterprises with a total of 6,075 rooms and 13,230 beds have the investment document. The 9 of the facilities are 5 star and have 2.979 rooms and 6,636 beds capacity. In addition, 409 facilities with municipality certificate have 8.603 rooms and 22.616 bed capacity." (X8)*

*"When we look at the whole province, we can consider it as an advantage of big chain hotels like Hilton, Divan, Ramada... (K7)"*

Participants were asked about the tourism awareness of the people of Mersin and answers were coded. According to this, the positive opinions regarding the tourism awareness of the people of Mersin are shown in Table 5 and the negative opinions about the tourism awareness of the Mersin people are shown in Table 6.

**Table 5:** Opinions of Mersin people regarding tourism awareness

Expressions	Frequency
The people of Mersin have the necessary awareness in terms of tourism	2
The people of Mersin recognize sea-sand-sun tourism.	4
People get friendly against tourists.	1

As shown in Table 5, only 4 of the participants stated that Mersin people are aware of sea-sand-sun tourism as a positive opinion on tourism awareness. However, only 2 of the participants stated that the people of Mersin has the necessary awareness in terms of tourism.

**Table 6:** Negative opinions about tourism awareness of Mersin people

Expressions	Frequency
The people of Mersin do not have the necessary awareness and consciousness in terms of tourism	5
Tourism is seen only as sea-sand-sun tourism.	5
They are not aware of your cultural, historical and natural riches.	4
People's tourism is only viewed as money.	1

As shown in Table 6, the large majority of the participants stated that the tourism awareness of the Mersin people was not enough and that the point of view of tourism was only sea-sand-sun. At the same time, they have stated that people are not sufficiently aware of cultural, historical and natural riches. Some of the participants in this issue were quoted directly below.

*"Although the people of Mersin are engaged in tourism in certain areas, this is insufficient and the majority of the people are not aware of tourism."* (X2)

Participants were asked about proficiency level of employees in the sector and their responses were coded and shown in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Opinions on the sufficiency levels of personnel workers in the sector

Expressions	Frequency
Vocational competence and knowledge levels are very low	7
Businesses employ low-paid staff instead of qualified personnel.	8
Despite the richness of gastronomy, the number of diploma cooks is small.	1
There are very few staff trained in tourism.	5

As seen in Table 7, participants indicated that businesses are headed towards cheap labor and that the level of professional competence of the staff working in the sector is very low. At the same time, participants stated that there was very few staff trained in tourism. Some of the participants in this issue were quoted directly below.

*"As a tourism worker, I think that the answer to the question of who can work with a low salary should be sought an answer rather than the level of proficiency. A qualified university graduate is very hard to work with a minimum wage of a staff member who has received many training and many certificates. For this reason, you are more likely to encounter in the tourism sector with someone who says, "Whatever I can do, brother".*  
"(X1)

*"Since Mersin was not originally built as a tourist city, the individuals working here are usually people who are devoid of tourism consciousness and whose education levels are generally low and vision is narrow." (X2)*

*"In Mersin, in general, in the tourism sector, the employers do not care their staff, so the qualified staff goes to regions where tourism is more alive, such as Antalya, in order to develop themselves.*

*For this reason, most of the personnel in the Mersin region are not qualified to work in tourism."(X4)*

Participants were asked their views on national and international publicity, and their responses were coded and shown in Table 8

**Table 8:** Views on national and international publicity

Expressions	Frequency
Inadequate national and international promotion	5
There is no effective promotion plan and project	3
Participation in fairs and festivals should be increased.	3
Regional administrators and politicians are making efforts to promote.	2
Tourism council in the city should be established.	2

As shown in Table 8, participants indicated that national and international publicity has not enough. Only 2 of the participants stated that the managers and bureaucrats have not made any efforts. At the same time, participants stated that there has no planned, programmatic presentation and participation in fairs and festivals should be increased. Some of the participants in this issue were quoted directly below.

*"Increasing participation in fairs and festivals is necessary to increase publicity and awareness." (X3)*

*"Emitt zf. It introduces itself in large-scale tourism organizations, but in the past years, there are not many activities such as the citrus festival which has enabled the local and national media to take place. This situation keeps Mersin background."(X4)*

*"Mersin tourism can be advertised at national level fairs and similar organizations. However, international publicity is inadequate. The number of foreign investors is not adequate. Multinational investors are not available. Mersin tourism destination management council should be established. Mersin province needs an efficient web page, CD brochures and catalogs to introduce the city. However, although the city constantly has been improved and it is a developing city, it still uses old publicity videos and*



*brochures. Therefore, tourism councils should be established in the city and districts.*  
"(X5)

Participants were asked how to increase the length of accommodation and their answers were coded and are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9:** Opinions on what can be done to increase the length of accommodation

Expressions	Frequency
Package tours should be arranged.	4
Otters should increase their animation and recreational activities	4
Congress tourism should be developed.	3
The number of daily tourist tours to the surrounding cities should be increased.	1
Accommodations should be made attractive by setting travel and walking routes.	1
Festivals and tourists should be attracted to the region.	2
Alternative tourism types should be developed.	2
Sea-sand-sun tourism should be emphasized.	3

As shown in Table 9, participants noted that package tours were prepared to increase the length of accommodation. At the same time, the tourists' animation and recreation activities were increased, indicating that the length of accommodation could be increased. Also, they stated that festivals and congress activities and tourism mobility can be improved.

Participants were asked about their opinions about the positive and negative effects of the highway work in Aydıncık- Bozyazı- Anamur region in terms of Mersin tourism and the answers were coded and shown in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Opinions about the positive and negative effects of highway work in Aydıncık-Bozyazı-Anamur Region in terms of Mersin tourism

Expressions	Frequency
The locality will be active in terms of tourism.	8
Interest in clean sea and valuable beach areas will increase	4
Could be a skewed urbanization.	2
Natural areas can be destroyed during tourism activities.	4
The heritage awareness in the region will increase.	1
The awareness of natural beauty in the region will increase.	4
Local product promotion possible	2
Cooperation in regional tourism may increase as the distance to the center decreases temporally.	3

As shown in Table 10, it is stated that tourism will be active after the opening of tunnels and road expansions.

Moreover, the importance of clean sea and precious sandy beaches will be increased, awareness of natural beauties will increase, roads will be improved and road transportation will be relieved and a short transportation time will be formed from these regions to the center. Therefore, cooperation in regional tourism activities may increase. Also, it is stated that after this positive result, the distorted urbanization in the region may increase and the natural areas may be destroyed during the tourism activities. Some of the participants in this issue were quoted directly below.

*"Planning must be done very efficiently. This will bring immense mobility. The interest will increase in precious sandy beaches in the region with a very clean sea. With this interest will be a distorted urbanization. Some measures need to be taken. So, hormonal growth should be avoided. When we want to increase tourism, destruction of natural areas will increase." (X3)*

*"The ease of transportation will increase the awareness of natural beauties, both in the region and in the historical heritage. It will also make it easier for the coastal communities to be described as almost empty." (X4)*

*"A safe bike or hiking trail must be built on the Old Anamur road, where natural wonders can be seen, which should not be left idle after the road tunnel construction works. Local products can also be introduced thanks to the natural product markets that can be built on the road. In addition to that, Anamur and its surroundings will approach Mersin city center, which will shorten the distance between Mersin's tourist destinations and make the business association stand out." (X2)*

*"Completion of the road will facilitate access to regional attractions. The accessibility of the hotels that are reached by highways can contribute to the tourism potential of Mersin." (X1)*

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Mersin in the Mediterranean region of Turkey is one of the world's oldest settlements had hosted different civilizations. The importance of researching Mersin tourism will be easily seen when it is thought that Mersin province has a strategical importance in terms of history and culture. In this research carried out in this context, the current situation of Mersin tourism and the necessary developments have been revealed.

As a result of the research, the participants stated that Mersin has sufficient potential in terms of cultural and historical tourism and that it is among centers of belief. Based on this result, it can be said that it has history, culture and belief. However,

the large majority of the participants stated that the tourism potential could not be used due to reasons such as the fact that Mersin province is in the shade of Antalya, the surplus of secondary houses and not being properly evaluated of opportunities.

Participants in the survey indicated that transportation services were not adequate and the professional competence of staff was low. Moreover, the large majority of participants indicated that large chain hotels may be available and they may have adequate bed capacity is favorable. This situation shows that although the accommodation facilities are sufficient, it is a positive situation to increase the education level of the service employees, to provide better quality service, and to improve the transportation problems in terms of development of regional tourism.

Another remarkable result of the research is that participants have not found the tourism awareness of Mersin people enough. At this point, it is important that trainings are given to raise public awareness of tourism. Especially, it is suggested that academic staff in the tourism department of the university introduce tourism to the public in cooperation with other institutions.

Participants stated that the qualification levels of the staff in the sector are very low and that low-paid unqualified personnel are employed. Another finding that draws attention to the results of the research is the low number of personnel trained in tourism. When we look at the results, it is considered that the problems related to the unqualified and untrained employees, who are related to each other, will be disappeared by the employment of tourism educated people. Mersin University has been giving Undergraduate, Graduate and Ph.D. degrees in Tourism Faculty, Tourism Associate Degree education in Social Sciences Vocational School and continuing education of high school tourism vocational high school show that tourism training is sufficient in the city but private sector has cheap labor and unqualified and uneducated people. At this point, it is suggested that managers, academicians and private sector act together for quality service.

Participants pointed out that the national, international publicity was inadequate, and the bureaucrats and executives have not seen to make a serious effort in this regard. At this point, it is considered that the necessary plans and projects should be determined and acted, and publicity of the festivals that were performed and fairs will be carried out in national and international dimensions so the problems will be disappeared.

Participants stated that package tours and animations can be increased to increase the length of accommodations. Moreover, participants stated that congress tourism, festivals, alternative tourism types should be encouraged.

Participants stated that the highway work in Aydıncık - Anamur region affected Mersin tourism in a positive way, being increased mobility, being increased awareness

of natural beauties and being increased opportunities to act in cooperation with tourism in the region with close-range. Also, they also pointed to negative anxieties such as the mobility results distorted urbanization and natural areas can be destroyed.

As a result of this study, after development of tourism sector, the do's that coordination of the planned tourism mobility in a planned way can minimize the destruction of the natural areas, preventing distorted urbanization and secondary houses and taking important precaution to protect of historical and natural heritage and enabling awareness of people provided by authorities and academicians.

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