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**TOURISTIC EXPERIENCE AND PERCEPTIONS OF ELDERLY PEOPLE AND
EVALUATION OF THESE EXPERIENCES FROM INFORMAL LEARNING
PERSPECTIVE: CASE OF ERDEMLI¹**

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ABSTRACT

Tourism and old age, which have been examined and discussed with the same perspective in the field of social sciences in Turkey, are actually multifaceted and comprehensive at a level that require research reflecting broader perspectives. Just like the tourism sector being examined only at an economic level, the old age, which is the most critical stage of adulthood, is addressed predominantly with its diseases. However, the relation of the various activities within the scope of tourism with the learning and educational activities on social and cultural platforms cannot be denied. In addition to the problems related to tourism profile of Mersin, there are missing points in defining the needs of the elderly population's social life. In fact, the socialization and learning needs of elderly population are directly related to touristic activities. This study aims to illustrate tourism from the perspective of the elderly and local tourists and to show the informal learning experiences of the elderly people who have participated in the touristic activity. In this context, this study was designed in qualitative research design and the study group consisted of 15 participants living in the Erdemli district of Mersin. According to the research findings, elderly individuals with touristic experience are aware of the socio-cultural role and importance of tourism. Although they experienced difficulties in participating in touristic activities due to financial difficulties and health problems. Participants' experiences with tourism were mostly positive and led to them getting familiar with many different cultures, cities and foods. Negative experiences faced have shown that experience based socializational informal learning can lead people to generate generalized prejudices towards a business or a city.

Keywords: Tourism, old age, informal learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The share of the elderly population in the general population, which has been increasing worldwide since the beginning of the 20th century, continues to rise in Turkey. While the population growth rate in the young age groups slows down, the population of older age groups is increasing at a faster rate than the national average (Esendemir, 2016, 15; Öztürk & Kızıldoğan, 2017, 2). The fact that this change in the structure showing the distribution of age and gender groups called population pyramid is in favor of the elderly population has led to new social obligations, needs and social policies.

Cases such as intense internal migration, unplanned urbanization, informalization, localization, globalization, impoverishment and socio-cultural degeneration are the causes and consequences of the problems frequently experienced in developing countries such as Turkey. The intense urbanization process and the technological progress can be reflected in the demographic structure of societies in a variety of dimensions. Among these, it is noteworthy that the isolated and impoverished elderly population as a result of the change in family institution and the average life expectancy has increased (Arpaci, 2005, 26-29). Therefore, it is inevitable to perform scientific and socio-cultural preparation for an elderly population structure that is getting older and becoming impoverished. The multifaceted and functional structure of the tourism sector has the potential to contribute to the needs of this new demographic profile. The socio-economic, geopolitical, political and cultural dimensions of the phenomenon of tourism have been the source of a wide range of research and discussions, especially since the second half of the twentieth century. The tourism sector has the potential to contribute to the development of social policies of developing countries such as Turkey and it can not only play an economic role but also play the roles that will enable different social segments to achieve gains outside the economic plane (Bahar et al., 2015, 5-17).

The phenomenon of tourism, which can be defined in different ways due to the extent of its scope, in its most general form, refers to the trips not exceeding a period of one year that the individuals take for purposes like a business trip, a leisure time activity etc. Therefore, tourism covers both individuals called tourists and all socio-economic activities they interact with (Soyak, 2013, 4). As a result, it is unlikely that an activity area with a wide structure can be characterized as fully economic or fully cultural, or be confined to the lines of business in certain geographic boundaries and sectors. As a matter of fact, tourism includes not only the travel and accommodation sectors but also the food and beverage and transportation areas of the economy and social life (Bahar et al., 2015, 221). However, it is mainly discussed with components such as economic effects and financial dimensions and its individual and social planes outside the economic area are neglected.

The main purpose of our study is to describe how the elderly people who have experienced a touristic experience see the tourism profile of the city they live in and to identify the problems of tourism experience and to describe the positive and negative aspects of the tourism activities they participate in informal learning. The research questions determined in this context are as follows:

- * What are the views of elderly people on tourism activities in Mersin?

- * What kind of tourism activities did the elderly people participate in?
- * What are the difficulties and obstacles faced by elderly people in tourism activities?
- * Did the elderly people get any learning outcome thanks to their participation in tourism activities? If there is any, what kind of effects / consequences of them are perceived?
- * Did older people have a result for their participation in tourism activities? If there is any, what kind of effects / consequences of them are perceived?

The findings of the study are limited to the data obtained from old individuals who can be reached in Erdemli district and have touristic experience. Besides, yet the study's design is qualitative research, all the findings and results represent its own statistical content and can not be generalized for inductive analysis.

Tourism And Old Age

The world is becoming more and more sensitive to the significant impact of the elderly on tourism industry in the coming years. For example, the number of tourists aged 60 and over, which was 593 million in 1999, is expected to reach 2 billion by 2050. This value indicates that one third of the total tourism expenditures will be made by this group (Cengiz & Kantarcı, 2013, 31). Tourism is mostly addressed in terms of its economic and financial impacts and contributions. However, in recent years tourism has been exposed to socio-cultural impacts, social policies and individual needs.

From the 1980s, the rapid developments in the globalization process together with the environmental problems show that tourism activities have negative effects on the natural and cultural resources. However, the tourism sector can contribute to the interaction and change of traditional values, local arts and cultures with some economic and socio-cultural dimensions (Okuyucu & Somuncu, 2012, 38). In addition, different tourism alternatives have been developed according to the requests, times, interests, personalities and ages of individuals. For example, Third Age Tourism refers to the travels of different age groups who are over a certain age and who have finished their working life (retired). Individuals in this group give importance to factors such as having suitable climatic conditions in the regions to be traveled, cheapness/affordability, widespread health services, transportation possibilities and taking into account the physical obstacles due to aging (Cengiz & Kantarcı, 2013, 34).

Old age, one of the natural stages of human life, causes cognitive, behavioural and psychological dimensions and transformations that involve almost the complete opposite of childhood stages. The phenomenon of old age cannot be defined in a way that is based on clear criteria due to the differences in values and cultural differences. This is considered a process that can be explained in various ways from different perspectives. For example, the "chronological age" is indicated with the criterion 60 or 65 years of age. On the other hand, "functional old age" is expressed by criteria such as physical strength, mobility, endurance, coordination and mental capacity. "Biological aging" includes changes in the anatomical and physiological structure of the individual due to time (Arpaci, 2005, 15-22). Old age includes the definitive and cultural differences and some

positive aspects. However, it is also a process that causes universal decline in biological, cognitive and behavioral levels. For example, loss of physical competencies, difficulty in learning, decreasing movement speed and increasing age-related health problems are among the negative aspects of this process (Arpacı, 2005, 33-41). The reflections of these negative transformations on the social and economic dimensions and the inability to meet the new needs specific to the old age period can also be hard to deal with. Loneliness, social isolation, deterioration in relations and social roles, poverty and deprivation are among these (İçli, 2008, 33-34; Öztürk ve Kızıdoğan, 2017, 3-4). It can be argued that such problems specific to old age can be overcome by becoming more socialized and more active.

The tourism sector has the largest market potential with its economic, cultural, architectural, aesthetic, recreational, natural and archaeological planes. It has the qualities that can appeal to every individual from every culture, every life view and ages. Considering that tourism activities in the world are transformed into more individual and alternative activities than the concept of mass tourism (Soyak, 2013, 15-16), with models like plateau, health and nature tourism it can touch to the lives of the elderly who are faced with problems like being isolated, lonely and poor. To increase the accessibility of touristic activities in city life to individuals living in travel, sport, meeting etc. shall improve their life satisfaction and learning needs in personal development processes and provide satisfactory results. Touristic activities (such as visiting public places and museums) that can hamper the separation from public spaces as well as prevent changing or replacing the social roles can support the social and psychological problems of the elderly.

When we evaluate the tourism profile of Turkey, it can be seen that there are increases of the share of tourism in national economy and improvements both qualitatively and quantitatively of tourism supply, as a result of public policies since 1980's. The Turkish tourism which mostly identified with trilogy of sea, sand and sun, and focused on the regions of Aegean and Mediterranean, has succeeded on increasing the number of foreign tourists and begun to tend to different tourism types (Oskay, 2012, 186-187; Soyak, 2013, 11-12). As a part of such profile, city of Mersin has structural problems which are prevalent even in coastal counties like Erdemli. The share of Mersin in tourism revenue of Turkey is very low as well as the number and quality of touristic businesses of the city. Furthermore, the city exhibits a profile of underrated geographical, archeological and cultural advantages in the meaning of tourism (Oskay, 2012, 192-198). Consequently, it can be discussed that there is a sharp need for employing alternative tourism types and target markets (including the aged), based on the city's counties' local circumstances.

Informal Learning, Tourism And Old Age

Informal learning, which is also expressed in terms such as perception learning, incidental learning and indirect learning, differs from the learning processes of formal and non-formal education activities. Informal learning, which does not include the main objectives of other learning activities, is not a purposive, programmed and

systematic learning process. The basic features of informal learning can be summarized as follows (Marscik & Watkins, 2001, 28; Reischmann, 2008, 23-25; Schwan, 2008, 34):

- It may occur in random activities.
- It is not organized, systematic and controlled.
- It does not require a certain space and learning material.
- It can take place at any time and anywhere in daily life.
- It occurs due to random interactions, not due to the conscious choices and goals of the individual.
- It is related to the learning of other individuals.

Informal learning, which can be defined as unplanned, systemless and coincidental learning, offers more diverse and effective learning environments, learning spaces and learning material than formal education system. In fact, informal education methods have become a natural part of formal science education in the West. It facilitates the learners in the formal education process to gain more effective learning through the classroom environment through observations and excursions (Karadoğan, 2016, 47-63). It would not be wrong to argue that the same potential exists in the context of daily life, professional life and touristic activities of adult learners.

According to some theorists, informal learning is an inseparable part of process of learning which has a structure of continuity. Therefore, informal learning itself might be more functional and efficient in company with formal learning, and occurs in daily life's issues and learning environments (Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2012, 4). Informal learnings mostly arise freely when visiting a museum, attending a conference, in a public place or work place without an expectation of certification or being rewarded (Mahajan, 2017, 153). Marscik and Watkins (2001, 25-26) suggested that informal learning encompasses self-directed learning, networking and mentor-mentee model learning activities. Accordingly, the learning that emerged in such learning was obtained implicitly or unconsciously. Thus, knowledge and skills acquired through such means can then be consciously discovered and learning from mistakes is a good example of this. However, it cannot be asserted that all these kinds of learning also provide positive or good learning outcomes. Because informal learning, which is shaped according to the conditions of learning environments, can also include all kinds of negativity or mistakes of cultural and local qualities (Özen, 2011, 2). As a matter of fact, negative learning outcomes were analysed through interview questions in this study. Eraut (2004, 249-269) has drawn attention to the relationship between informal learning and experience and short-term memory, and highlighted concepts such as self-confidence and self-efficacy when analyzing how informal learning occurs in the workplace. Valentine's (2016, 18-26) study showed that both formal and informal curriculums could be designed in formal education systems in order to increase efficiency of learning outcomes.

There are researches that indicate the fact that self-directed learning, critical reflection and experiential learning styles defined for adult learning processes can be facilitated by the availability of informal learning environments and that these are natural elements of adult learning (Türkmen, 2015, 16). Schugurensky (2000,

3-4) proposed a triple taxonomy for informal learning: *Self-directed, incidental, and socialization*. While there is awareness of self-directed and incidental informal learning in this structure, there is no such awareness exists in informal learning through socialization. In addition, self-directed informal learning can take place with individual's intention and determination. The conscious decision and orientation of learners cannot play a role in informal learning processes based on incident and socialization; It occurs spontaneously in the social relations of daily life.

Self-directed, coincidental and socialization based informal learning can be encountered in all kinds and stages of tourism activities (traveling, eating, taking pictures, etc.). Therefore, as a requirement of lifelong learning philosophy, it is possible that the individual development and learning needs of the elderly population can be met with the cultural results of touristic activities. In this context, the diversity and wide scope of tourism activities can enable individuals of all segments and ages to learn something related to various subjects and experiences had in such events can lead to effective and permanent learning. They are not like learning in a formal education or non-formal education process. But it can be more functional and important than them. Learning is realized by the influence of human relationships and shared experiences, whether the individual aims to learn a particular subject this way. (while visiting a museum, swimming, chatting, eating in a restaurant, etc.) (Özen, 2011, 2-4; Schugurensky, 2000, 4-5). This unique structure of informal learning enables it to be used in studies to determine individual needs and new social policies and to identify the services, individual perceptions, processes, quality and problems related to the tourism sector. The characteristic structure of the touristic activities makes it possible to have both informal learning as well as incidental and socialization learning through self-directed preferences. For example, typical activities for self-directed learning are activities with regards to visiting natural beauties, such as nature conservation areas and national parks, within the scope of health tourism.

In a study by Turkmen (2015, 21-22) studying adults who visited a natural park in Izmir, it was observed that adults were taking part in these activities so that they teach their children something new, socialize and entertain themselves; It was also observed that about half of the participants learned something new and about a quarter of them corrected the mistakes in their former knowledge of things.

METHOD

In this section, firstly the basic information about the research design and the validity and reliability profile of the study are presented. Then, the population and sample of the research were introduced and the explanation of the structure of the data collection tool and information about the analysis of the collected data are presented.

Research Design

Qualitative researches differ from quantitative studies in terms of the assumption, purpose, approach and the role of the researcher. In such studies, a created reality is deeply depicted and interpreted by the researcher's subjective and empathic role (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000, 29-47). Therefore, qualitative research can be defined as studies aiming at realizing the perceptions and events using data collection tools such as observation, interview and document review (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000, 19). In this study, mainly qualitative research design and methods were applied. In qualitative research, trustworthiness criteria are recommended rather than validity and reliability concepts in quantitative research. Within the scope of trustworthiness, in this study, purpose sampling, member checking and triangulation of searcher were performed. Member checking means the verification of the data and the report by contacting the participants at the end of each interview and triangulation of searcher refers to the involvement of more than one researcher in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Başkale, 2016, 23-25).

Population And Sample

The population of this research is the inhabitants of the Erdemli, who are at least 60 years old and have had a touristic experience in their lives. According to TURKSTAT 2013 data, the number of residents aged 60 and over is around thirteen thousand. However, the number of those who have a touristic experience is not known or recorded statistically. In qualitative researches, sample size has no function as in quantitative researches, cause of the aim is to get more in-depth information from a small number of samples (Başkale, 2016, 27). In order to increase the validity of the qualitative structure, a study group consisting of 15 people was formed by means of purposive-intentional sampling. The purposive-intentional sample is based on those whom the researcher believes will find answers to research questions and this is a sampling method created from participants not randomly selected (Altunışık et al., 2010, 140). In the selection of the working group, conditions such as accessibility to the person, having an extrovert personality and having experience in tourism were taken into account.

The basic demographic profile of the participants of the study group is as follows: The mean age of the participants is 66.3; the youngest is 60 years old and the oldest is 82 years old. 7 (46.7%) of the participants were female and 8 (53.3%) were male.

Table 1. Monthly Income and Education Level

Monthly Income (TL)	f	%	Education level	f	%
1.000-1.500	2	13,3	Illiterate	1	6,7
1.501-2.000	6	40	Primary school	6	40
2.001-2.500	2	13,3	High school	6	40
2.501-3.000	3	20	Associate degree	1	6,7
3.001-3.500	2	13,3	Master's degree	1	6,7
Total	15	100	Total	15	100

As can be seen in Table 1, the monthly income of the majority of the participants (10 people, 66.6%) was determined as below 2,500 TL. One of the participants is illiterate. Primary and high school graduates are 6 people, 1 person has an associate degree and 1 person has a master's degree.

Table 2. Economical Status

Economic-Professional Status	f	%
Retired	7	46,7
Active-retired	2	13,3
Housewife	6	40
Total	15	100

According to the data in Table 2, the majority of participants (13 people) are not economically active. There are 6 housewives and 7 retirees, and 2 retirees who are still economically active. In addition, the profile of the participants of the study group and the health problems specific to old age are as follows: No health problem: 3 people (25%); those with the highest frequency (12 people - 75%): Diabetes, hypertension, heart diseases, rheumatism, allergies and prostate.

Data Collection Tool

As a data collection tool, a semi-structured interview form was used. The form consists of two parts: Demographic profile questions and research questions. A total of 8 questions were asked to the participants within the framework of the research questions. As a pilot application, after the finalization of the interview form applied to 3 people in the vicinity, the main application was started. In the process of collecting data, two researchers also took part in the process due to the triangulation of searcher and the forms of the interview were examined mutually. Both of the researchers examined the interview form of the other and carried out works in order to find out the missing points and correct expression mistakes. The interviews were held in June 2018.

Data Analysis

The data of the study were analyzed by using both descriptive and content analysis methods which are frequently used in such qualitative researches. However, content analysis method was the main method applied predominantly. Within the scope of the trustworthiness of the study, the responses in the interview forms were read to the participants and a total of 2 participants added some expressions to their responses, while others have fully approved what was reported. In analyzes of qualitative studies, trustworthiness is required rather than validity. Within this process, firstly all the responses were read in order to do appropriate coding; then the categories were defined according to the coding results; and some of the responses of the

participants were also presented directly. As stated in the findings, there occurred 3 to 4 main themes, many subthemes more than themes and tens of codes derived from reported responses for each research question.

Building the main conceptual frame and coding of data is the first step of content analysis (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2000, 162-163). In qualitative analysis, three types of coding models are generally applied: Coding according to the pre-determined concepts according to the literature, coding according to research data and the general framed coding reflecting the composition of the other two methods (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2000, 165-168). In this study, a coding based on collected data was applied and the concepts in literature were also used. Within the scope of trustworthiness purpose sampling, member checking and triangulation of searcher were performed. Member checking means the verification of the data and the report by contacting the participants at the end of each interview (Başkale, 2016, 24-25). And the themes are key components of content analysis. Theme means united and categorized expressions of data and that allows researcher describe and order findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2000, 172-174). In this study, both two researchers participated in the process of coding and determining the themes consecutively and collaboratively. After completing his own task, the first researcher let the second one to cobuild and all the codes and themes were reviewed and reorganized repeatedly through eliminating inappropriate ones. Totally 28 codes and 14 themes were created.

FINDINGS (RESULTS)

In this part of the study, the questions in the interview form were grouped according to the themes and sub themes and accordingly, the findings obtained are presented below.

1) What are the views of the elderly about tourism activities in Mersin?

To find out what elderly people think about Mersin tourism, the question : "In your opinion, how is the tourism sector's condition in Mersin?" was asked. Here are some sample answers to this question.

K6- "Tourism in Mersin has not developed much. There are usually domestic tourists. They do not have economic and cultural effects ".

K9- "It is not in a good condition. Nobody comes to visit here."

K10-" Nobody wants to come to Mersin for holidays The city was wonderful when there were minorities living here, but nobody was interested in the city. Mersin really needs cultural tourism"

K12-"Mersin has never been a touristic city. There is not even an airport here."

The codes and themes created according to the answers of the participants are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Opinions on Tourism Activities in Mersin

Codes	Sub Themes	Themes
Mersin tourism is good It has seas and the Kız Kalesi (Maiden's castle).		
It is a normal developed sector	Despite its beauties, it was unable to develop due to not getting enough interest.	
Adds foreign currency, therefore makes contribution		Not making use of its tourism potential
Hotels and beaches are not in good condition therefore, the tourism is in bad condition	It contributes moderately	
Lacks development since the managers are incapable of realizing things		Tourists not preferring the city
Domestic tourists visit in general	It is appealing for neither the domestic nor foreign tourists	
Neither domestic nor foreign tourists come to visit		Lack of promotion and investment
It was unable to become a touristic city since it did not have enough infrastructure	It lacks promotion and infrastructure	
It is below the average, because there is not enough promotion		

According to Table 3, the participants stated that despite the tourism potential of Mersin, it is not made use of and therefore not enough tourists come to visit the city. The lack of infrastructure, insufficient investment and lack of promotion are seen as the reasons related to Mersin not being a touristic city. Most remarkable codes which were regarded as reasons for underdeveloped tourism are underqualified executives and bad operated businesses.

2) What kind of tourism activities did the elderly people participate in?

Elderly individuals who were involved in tourism activities were selected for the study group and participants were asked what kind of tourism activities they participated in. The vast majority of the participants have never been abroad. Those who went abroad had a chance to visit Umrah and travel thanks to their relatives. It was observed that mostly hot springs, famous coastal cities and travels to Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Anatolia are predominant in domestic activities. Table 4 shows the geographical distribution and types of tourism experiences of the participants.

Table 4. Participation in Tourism Activities

Codes	Themes
Domestic travels/trips/voyages (Adana, Afyon, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Çanakkale, Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kayseri, Konya, İstanbul, İzmir, Mardin, Muğla, Nevşehir, Şanlıurfa, Tarsus, Van)	Health tourism Coastal tourism
Travelling abroad (USA, Germany, UK, Israel, Syria, S.Arabia)	Faith tourism Culture tourism

Examples of participation in touristic activities are as given below.

K5- "I've never been abroad. I once visited the Aegean region and Black Sea region many years ago."

K6- "I've never been abroad. I tried travelling even if I was short in money at the time"

K14- "I travelled a lot when I was younger."

Such results show that study group's experience on tourism was mostly consisted of travel issues. As stated above, most of travels were domestic.

3) What are the difficulties and obstacles faced by elderly people in tourism activities?

Another important theme of the study is the difficulties or obstacles encountered by the elderly individuals who participate in tourism activities. In this context, the question of "What kind of obstacles or difficulties do you face when you want to participate in touristic activities?" was asked. The answers related to this question are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Difficulties and Obstacles in Tourism Activities

Codes	Themes
Financial problems	Economic difficulties
Health problems	
Transportation problems	Health problems
Social environment related problems (friend barrier, mismatch, etc.)	Social environment related problems/obstacles
The touristic facilities being expensive	
Family conditions and obstacles (not getting the permission of the spouse, patient care etc.)	

12 of the 15 participants expressed "economic insufficiency" as the main reason. In the second place, "health problems" are expressed. The fact that they are alone and that their spouses do not give them permission were also mentioned as problems encountered in participation in touristic activities. Some examples of responses are:

K8 -"There are not many activities and prices are high."

K13- "The biggest obstacle for the retired is money."

As seen through the responses above, such responses reflect participants' income based profile, efficiency of municipal services and socio-cultural values. These results are compatible with the financial conditions of old people in Turkey.

4) Did elderly people perceive *learning outcomes related to participation in tourism activities? If there is any, what kind of effects/consequences of them are perceived?*

The crucial purpose of the study is to measure what kind of learning outcomes the elderly individuals who participated in tourism activity have achieved during this period. The question "In your touristic activities, could you tell us what kind of learning outcome you have achieved, what have you learned and how they have affected you?" was asked. Everyone, except for 2 people, mentioned a positive learning outcome. The two people mentioned that they had a pleasant time and the touristic travels had no effect whatsoever.

Table 6. Learning Outcomes Related to Participation in Tourism Activities

Codes	Themes
Getting to know the cities and culture of Turkey Seeing the beauties of Turkey Tasting traditional and local foods	Learning experiences that contribute to personal development
Information about Anatolian history and our ancestors Learning languages To enjoy visiting different places	Recreational experiences
Having good time Support of tour officials and hotel staff	Experience of satisfaction with touristic personnel
Change of local prejudices	Experiences contributing to cognitive and intellectual development
Change of way of life and thinking	

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen getting to know different cultures, tasting and learning local dishes can be counted as touristic activities contributing to personal development of the elderly individuals. Recreational experiences and satisfaction with touristic personnel are the other outcomes determined and such outcomes exhibit how wide the range of informal learnings' unintentional effects could be. In addition, there were participants who stated that their perspective of life and the way of thinking have changed. An exemplary response from positive contributions is as follows.

K12- "It changed my thinking and my viewpoints. Going abroad let's you compare the values of different societies. One cannot stop without comparing them. This comparison leads to value conflict."

5) *Have the elderly individuals ever had any negative experiences with participating in tourism activities? If there is any, what kind of effects/consequences of them are perceived?*

Finally, the participants were asked whether they had any negative experience with their participation in tourism activities. In this context, 5 participants shared their negative experiences. The others stated that they did not have any negative experiences. Negative experiences are expressed as follows:

K2- "They sold me something different instead of pistachio."

K3- "I was not paid attention to and faced double standards. Then I never went there again."

K4- "Local artisans at a seaside were very rude and not caring at all. I will never go there again."

K7- "My friend's money and my phone were stolen."

K13- "Entrance prices are way too high" I also witnessed that we take enough care about our historical values.

When the complaints of the participants were examined, it was seen that two points were emphasized. The first one is about the practices and behaviour of tourist areas, facilities and local businessmen. Second one, is the problems with the security. At this point, it was observed that informal learning processes may not always take place in a plane that will contribute to the personal development of adult individuals. On the other hand, when the fact that the learning products experienced with such negative experiences are considered to contribute to the protection of the physical and psychological existence of the individual, it is wrong to deem it negative.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

Firstly, it must be emphasized that yet this study is a qualitative one, statistically generalizing results can not be done, except conceptual and theoretical. If a general evaluation is to be performed, the participants of the study group evaluate tourism in terms of tourism, travelling, recognition of the country and promotion of the country. These findings and the perception of tourism on this axis are quite up-to-date and functional in terms of Turkey's and Mersin's tourism sector conditions. The vast majority of the respondents said that despite the tourism potential of Mersin, it was not made use of and the situation of the tourism sector was bad. This profile showed that the problems related to the economic identity of the city can be perceived by the residents and can be learned informally. Individuals over the age of 60 who participated in the study pointed out the financial problems and health problems as the most significant problems they faced when taking part in a touristic activity. The findings are parallel to the characteristics of the old age period and socio-economic problems of the retirement period. As a matter of fact, the third age tourism is a phenomenon which is aimed at exceeding the typical obstacles of the old age period. Cengiz and Kantarcı (2013, 34) also pointed out the characteristics of reducing the physical obstacles and reducing the health problems in touristic products for the tourists of the third age. Therefore, it is necessary to define a tourism understanding which is designed according to the budget of the retired population and their health problems in the policies towards improving the third age tourism.

Participants predominantly experienced the travel dimension of the tourism sector. Most of the travel activities took place domestically. Coastal and cultural tourism and hot springs have been preferred when it comes to health tourism. The majority of the participants, who stated that they could not participate enough in the domestic tour due to their financial status, did not have the opportunity to go abroad. The majority of those who could travel abroad experienced faith tourism. Participants expressed that they have learned about different cultures, people, cities and food according to their tourism experiences. Such experiences are considered as the basic stage of informal learning processes. Informal learning, which is one of the unpredictable learning activities and which contributes to personal development and transformation, can have an effect that can lead to development and change of the individual. As a matter of fact, some participants stated that their perspective and life view changed and that some of their prejudices were eliminated. The findings of the study of Turkmen (2015, 21-23), proved that the adults visiting the wildlife park refreshed their memories as well as having a great time. These findings also showed that these adults experienced informal learning when trying to learn new information. Such findings are considered critical for the functions of out-of-school learning. For example, in studies conducted on informal learning in Canada since the late 1990s, although not being related to the results and learning outcomes of the informal learning, detailed statistics on four different sized profiles (related to work, voluntary activities in local communities, related to household work and general interests) were established (Livingstone, 2001, 9-14). Unfortunately, studies on the nature and type of informal learning in Turkey are still inadequate. Çavuş et al. (2013, 20-23)'s study on the role of informal learning in gaining environmental awareness has shown that teachers are aware of the importance of informal learning outside the school.

Informal learning can have negative learning outcomes, as well as positive learning outcomes. The majority of the participants stated that they had not experienced such a negative transformation and experience. However, those who experienced such an experience pointed out the structural problems in the tourism sector. In addition, people even avoided going to the workplace/business or the city in which they had negative experiences. This situation also demonstrates the fact that experience-based and socializational informal learning can be seen as a new area and be generalized. Since in-depth informal learning based on such negative experiences may be based on incidental or socialization, more in-depth research on the occurrence of this effect may be required. A similar concept like the Eraut's (2004) institutionalization of learning at work, can be conceptualized using terms such as learning by traveling or learning during the touristic travel process.

SUGGESTIONS

The tourism sector as a social policy tool is a policy tool that can meet the recreational needs of the both disadvantaged and working population. The natural course of the aging process and the prolongation of the average human life expectancy require the application of new-specific-different economic, architectural and political systems for the growing elderly population. The increasing life expectancy will probably lead to an individual's learning needs not being met only by formal and non-formal teaching activities. The multifaceted

and multifunctional structure of the tourism sector is suitable for contributing to such learning and personal development. Therefore, the following suggestions can be made for future research:

-By realizing that the tourism sector is not just an economic research area with all its dimensions, it is possible to conduct research on development and learning for each of the touristic activities.

-Along with quantitative research designs, and with the studies with qualitative design, such as this study, the problems and needs of adult individuals participating in touristic activities can be analyzed in detail.

-With time series analysis, following the course of change in a working group, the realization environments of informal learning and their effects on the individual life can be monitored.

-In addition to the non-formal education activities organized for adults in private course buildings or public education centers, programs based on tourist trips that trigger or encourage informal learning can be developed.

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