



ALTERNATIVE TOURISM AND TOURISTIC PRODUCT VARIATION STRATEGIES: THE ALAKIR (KUMLUCA) VALLEY

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Abstract

As tourism sector has become a big potential in terms of economic and social perspectives, among destinations there has been an immense competition. In this competition to make use of available resources, to compose various touristic products and to develop alternative tourism have gained great importance. Antalya, which is one of the most important tourism centers of the world just as of Turkey, is very much suitable for alternative tourism and a new touristic products with its rich historical background, its cultural structure and its clear and wide natural areas. In this study, although Alakır valley, which is unused, has an alternative tourism potential, its physical and human geographic peculiarities were studied.

Key words: *Alternative tourism, Product variation strategies, Alakır valley, Kumluca, Antalya*

Introduction

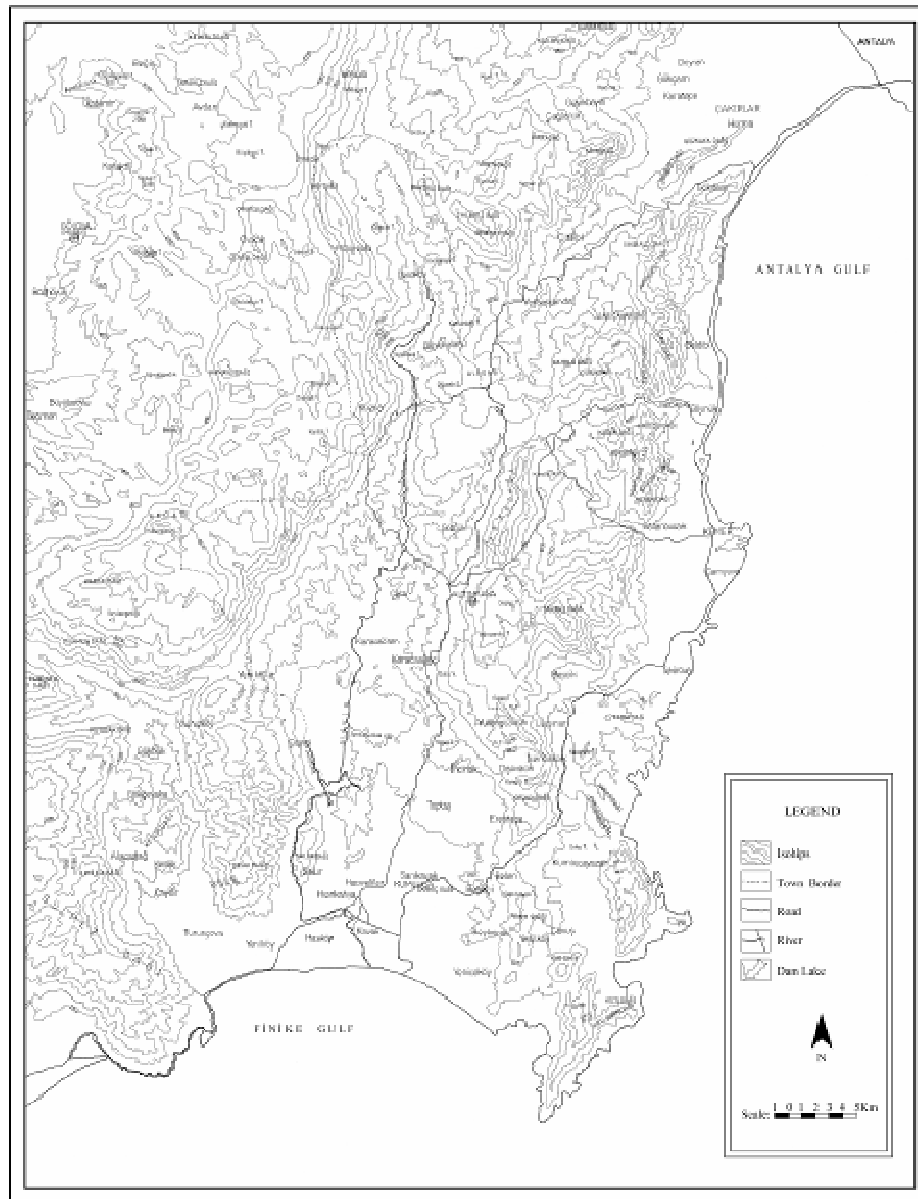
This study focuses on the Alakır Valley, located to the west of the city of Antalya, Turkey. The Alakır Valley is situated in the region of Beydağları, and is located to the west of gulf of Antalya (Map 1). Beydağları is widely spread around the gulf of Antalya. The Elmalı and Finike plains, and the Teke peninsula consists of two parallel mountain chains. The "Kıyı mountain chain" is closer to the coast line, and the "Asıl Beydağları" rises behind it (Saraçoğlu, 1989: 200). There is a flat place where the V-shape begins, and this is called the Beydağları plateau. The two mountain chains then depart from each other as they extend to the south, which results in a deepening of the valley. This widened valley towards the Gulf of Finike is known as the Alakır Valley. The valley starts at the Beydağı plateau (2000 m) and this 60 kilometer valley reaches out south to the Mediterranean Sea.

For a very long time, various human activities have taken place in this region. The present study aims, first to describe the physical and human geographic characteristics of the Alakır Valley. Second, it aims to bring into light the significance of alternative tourism as a factor in the possible development of future tourism strategies in the Antalya area.

Alternative Tourism

The tourism sector in Turkey has enormous growth potential and has gained increased importance within the economy over the past few decades. This sector, with high economic and social benefits, has a significant potential for future growth and development, leading to the possibility of significant competition between tourist sponsoring organizations and destinations. In the implementation of policies meant to increase tourism, the development of alternative tourism has become more important. Traditional tourist areas fail to answer the varied demands of tourists, and often operate beyond their capacity. In some attractive tourist destinations, such as in the Antalya region, the increasing numbers of tourists make it important to vary and expand the availability of tourist attractions.

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Map 1: Physical Map of Alakır Stream and its Surroundings

Antalya, one of the most important tourist centers both globally and in Turkey, is a place of significant potential for alternative tourism and new tourist products. Its rich historical background, its rich cultural structures, its pleasant climate, and the beauty of its natural areas have an enormous potential to expand beyond traditional tourism.

There are 21 tourism centers in the Antalya area recognized by the Council of Ministers, in the districts of Kaş, Demre, Kemer, Serik, Manavgat, Alanya, and Gazipaşa (Akgün, 2003: 43).

Antalya could vary its tourism by using its infrastructure, its tourist -related establishments - such as hotels and restaurants - and its identity as a tourist destination. The natural and cultural resources of the Alakır Valley could enrich this variation.

Touristic Product Variation: The Example Of The Alakir Valley

Although it supports its tourist potential with natural cultural resources, Antalya has been lacking in varying its tourism products. Despite the increasing numbers of tourists in the short run, tourist activities are not being offered throughout the year. This could be interpreted as a serious problem for the future of tourism in Antalya.

When we consider the high numbers of sunny days and the high temperature of seawater in most Mediterranean countries, Antalya could have a difficult time competing with other Mediterranean countries, including Spain, France and Italy, unless it expands its capacity to offer a greater variety of tourist options, and expand its offerings to include year-round activities. Indeed, Antalya could benefit by creating a variety of tourist activities, to become a worldwide tourist center.

Most places in Antalya could be used to increase tourist product variation, and the Alakir Valley is one them. The valley has been relatively untouched, unaffected by tourist developments, and its natural structures have the potential for the application of sustainable tourism plans and alternative tourism variation right in the Southern Antalya Touristic Growth Region.

The Natural Touristic Resources Of The Alakir Valley

The flora of Alakir stream contribute to the attraction of the Valley as a tourist destination. The Alakir Valley extends between the two parts of the Beydağları and the Beydağı plateau and the start of the Valley, which widens and finally extends to Gulf of Finike. Kumluca is located around this area (Photo 1).

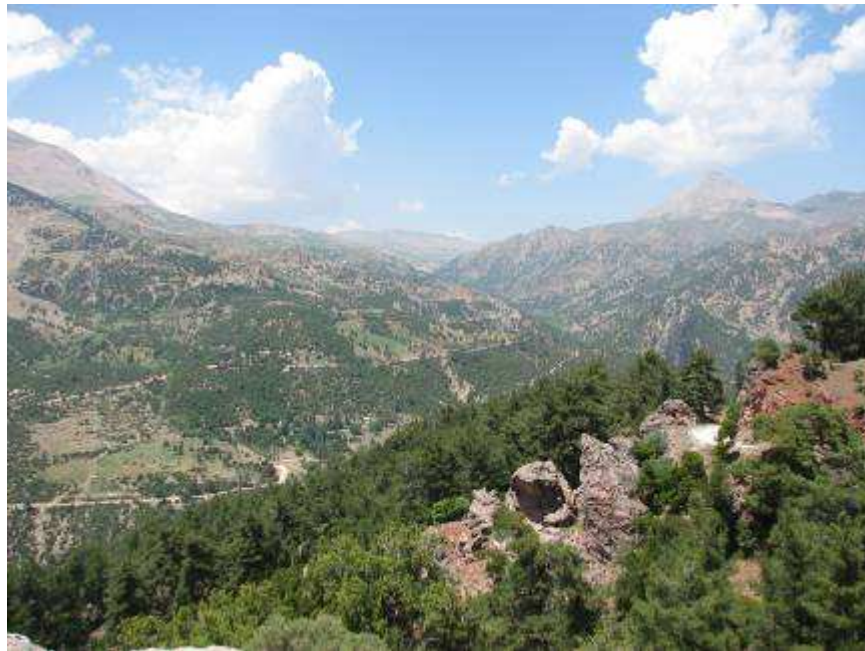


Photo 1: The appearance of the Alakir Valley (Dere Village).

Kumluca has a Mediterranean climate along the coastline and a continental climate in the north highland sections of the district. Winters are relatively long and cold, and summers are relatively short and cool. This typical plateau climate rules in Altınkaya, Gölcük, Kuzca, Büyükalan, and Dere villages of the Alakir Valley. These villages are all at a high altitude.

Since the Alakir Valley extends from north to south, the Mediterranean climate reaches up to the north, gradually diminishing. Because the mass of mountain rises very close to the sea behind the district of Kumluca, the Mediterranean climate reaches to the

north through the Alakır Valley. Although early produce and citrus fruit agriculture takes place in Karacaören (500 meters), Yenikışla (400 meters) and Çayıçi (300 meters), there are other economic activities in Çaltı (500 meters), Altınyaka (950 meters), and Gölcük (1200 meters) at almost the same altitude.

In much of the plateau and mountainous areas, it does not snow every year and snow does not stay on the ground very long, due to the effects of the Mediterranean climate. This makes it possible for a variety of delicious fruits to grow in the Valley. Besides, in areas close to Alakır stream, there are olive trees (*olea europea*), fig trees, and pomegranate tree that are infertile, including in the villages of Karacaören, Karacaağaç, Altınyaka, Çaltı, Gölcük, Kuzca and Büyükalan.

The Alakır Valley, with different and diverse natural structures and cultural characteristics, present appealing alternatives for visitors. The rich flora of the Valley makes it a potentially attractive place for tourism. The plant geography of the region is quite attractive to those who are interested in diverse and rich vegetation. The natural flora consists of long-living plants because of the topography and elevation of the Valley (Photo 2).



Photo 2: Cedar (*Cedrus libani*) and red pine (*Pinus brutia*) forest around Gölcük Village.

Maquis vegetation can be found at elevations between 0 and 600 meters above sea level. Some of these are *Quercus coccifera*, *Styrax officinalis*, *Pistacea lentiscus*, *Caretonia siliqua*, *Phillyrea latifolia var. media* and *Arbutus andrachne*. *Pinus brutia*, the most widespread tree species in the forest formation, is found at different elevations between 0 and 1200 meters (e.g. in Akdağ-Kozağacı, Çatlı, Sarıcasu, Altınyaka, Gölcük, Kuzca, and Büyükalan). *Cedrus libani* and *Pinus brutia* are the dominant trees at elevations between 1000 and 1400 meters (e.g. at Altınyaka, Gölcük, Kuzca ve Büyükalan). Some of the *Cedrus libani* are more than 1000 years old. *Pinus nigra* begins at 1000 meters and grows up to 1400 meters, together with *Pinus brutia*. Beyond this elevation, *Pinus nigra* spreads around in pure stands (Büyükalan). *Pinus nigra* and *Cedrus libani* (Kuzca, Karacaören) in some cases reach levels of 1700 meters, dispersed among juniper forest. *Cedrus libani* is widespread in the Akdağ Dibek forest in the villages of Kuzca and Karacaören.

Abies cilicica and *Juniperus* sp. are the dominant trees at heights between 1400 and 1700 meters. *Abies cilicica* appears mostly mixed with *Pinus nigra*, *Cedrus libani* and *Juniperus*. *Juniperus* is found mixed with *Pinus nigra* (e.g., villages of Gölcük-Çayır, Büyükalan, Kuzca-Akdağ) and is widespread at an elevation above 1500 meters. The most common species of junipers in the area are *Juniperus drupacea*, *Juniperus oxycedrus*, and *Juniperus excelsa*.

Moreover, there are also willow, poplar (*Populus alba*), oleaster, pear (*Pyrus communis*), *Ulmus glabra*, *Phillyrea latifolia*, and *Tamarix parviflora* in the Alakır Valley. The Alakır Valley has a rich wildlife as well as rich natural flora. This include *Dama dama*, *Capra aegagrus*, *Vulpes vulpes*, *Canis lupus*, *Ursus arctos*, *Sus scrofa*.

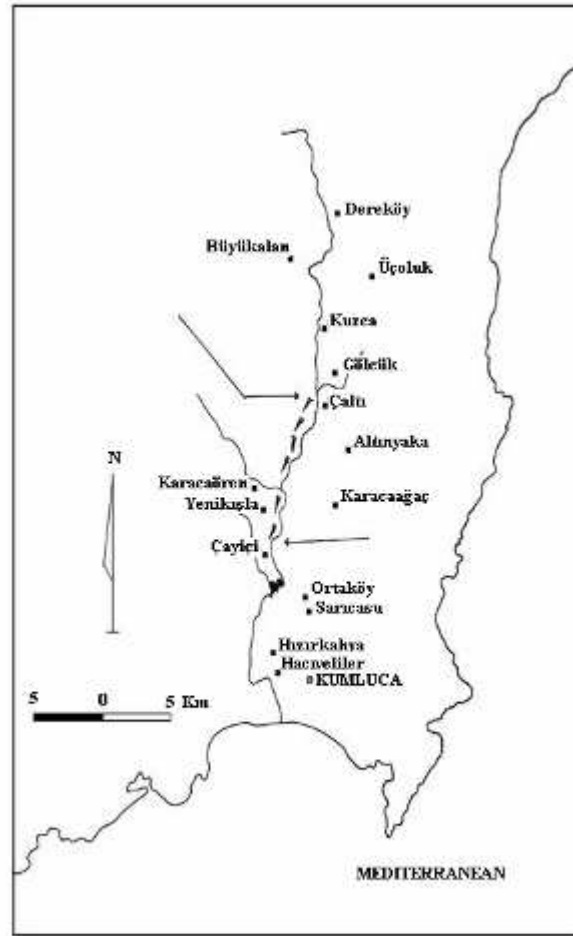


Figure 1. Alakır Stream Rafting Route

The Alakır stream is another natural resource of the Valley with potential for tourism. The Alakır stream springs from Beydagları in the north of Kumluca. The Valley's basin consists of small creeks. The stream extends 60 kilometers through the big valley between the coastal mountain chain and Asıl Beydagları in the west and reaches the Mediterranean Sea. The stream begins at the northern Dereköy and passes by the villages of Büyükalan, Kuzca, Çatlı, Karacaören, Çayıcı ve Kavak in a north to south direction. The stream is not very long and its basin is rather narrow. However, it has a strong flow because it is fed by high mountains and strong natural springs. It turns out to be a rather strong river with high

amounts of rainfall during winter and spring, and looks like a thin stream during the summer. The stream is very suitable for water sports (rafting, water skiing, canoeing) and other recreational activities. The three kilometer area between Çaltı and Karacaören villages is very convenient for rafting (Figure 1).

The Cultural Touristic Resources of Alakir Valley

The Alakır has become a wonderful place in terms of variety with its chain of mountains, and its brook and valley. The Alakır Valey has important cultural aspects, in addition to its rich natural beauty. For those who want to encounter local culture, the Valley presents villages, plateaus, and other rich possibilities. Alongside Alakır brook, there are over 20 villages that are spread on both sides of the valley. Kuzca, Büyükalan, and Dere are some of these villages.

Beydağı, Altınyaka, Söğütçuması are there most famous plateaus. In the Valley, there is the potential for many types of activities, from river activities to trekking, hunting, camp-caravanning and plateau tourism. Alongside Alakır brook, old settlements of antiquity include Rhadapolis, İdebessos, Akalissos and Kitinaura. These cities, that are located in a row, one behind the other, can enlighten tourists to the rich geography of the past (Photos 3 and 4).



Photo 3: Past Reminders, near Gölcük village, dispersed between red pines (*Pinus brutia*) is the antique city of Kitinaura.

The existence of these historical cities shows that the valley has been inhabited since ancient times. The Alakır Valley is a potential tourist site with rich cultural sites and splendid views of rich natural plant covering, consisting of reddish pine (*pinus brutia*), cedar (*cedrus libani*), juniper and oak (*quercus*).

Although there is both natural and human potential for tourism in the area, the resources of the region have not been used until now. Tourism activities have come together generally in the Söğütçuma Plateau. In summer, this plateau is an important route. Towards Kemeboğazı from Kemer, safari tours pass through many villages, including the village of Kuzca. These are primarily daytime tours. There are no hotels, motels and pensions (boarding-houses) on the route through which safari tours are arranged. Only in Söğütçuması and Karaağaç (Büyükalan village) are there restaurants and shops which have been formed (with limited goods and services) by local people. The organizations that run these are not professional and well-organized (Photo 5).

Whereas the Alakır Valley has the potential for recreational activities and water sports, picnic and trekking are done. By making accommodations for tourists in rural areas, visitors could enjoy the traditions and customs of local people. They could be exposed to local cuisine. Akdağ and Katran Mountain nearby are extremely suitable for hunting, trekking and bicycle tours with their fresh air and unspoiled nature. Cedar (*Cedrus libani*) forests are quite attractive for campers.



Photo 4: The area of Idebessos is the most important antique city of the Alakır Valley.



Photo 5: Rural restaurant, Söğütçuması plateau.

On the other hand, although the Valley is located so close to big tourism centers, there are traditional practices in the local culture of the valley that have not been affected. Examples include:



agriculture, which is carried out without chemicals;

local herds of sheep, goats and cattle;

a blacksmith shop;

craftsmen that make the traditional gourd bow, a common musical instrument of weddings from the Teke regions; other crafts, including wood embroidery (wooden spoon and varied ornament goods, Photos 4 and 5).

Result and Suggestions

Tourism projects offered to date in Antalya (e.g., the East Antalya Tourism Improving Area etc.) remain limited, geographically covering only a restricted band on the coast. In spite of this, there is a great potential to move beyond the coast. The Alakır Valley presents extremely high potential for alternative tourism activities with both geographic position and its rich natural and cultural aspects. But in spite of this potential, the Valley has not been appreciated, and its potential in terms of tourism has not been realized. Tourists directed from big tourism centers nearby could experience both the rich and varied physical and wildlife of this region and the rich human geography of this area as well. They could experience many activities by being in this rural environment.

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