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Sustainable management of Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park: Visitor experiences and evaluation of tourism potential

<https://doi.org/10.2478/ejthr-2026-0017>

received June 16, 2025; accepted March 12, 2026

Abstract: Understanding and improving visitor experience is a priority for destination managers to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of tourism services. This study aims to analyse the experiences of tourists who visited Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park between 2012 and 2024, based on comments made on www.tripadvisor.com, and to determine the region's tourism potential and visitors' perceptions. It aims to contribute to sustainable tourism management by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the nature park through visitor comments. The study population consists of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park, while the sample consists of all tourists (425 people) who visited Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park between January 2012 and December 2024 and wrote comments about their visit on Tripadvisor. MAXQDA software was used to parse and analyse text-based data, and ArcGIS software was used to create maps. Visitor comments were divided into 6 main codes and 22 sub-codes in line with certain themes. As a result, it shows that Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park is a destination that stands out with its natural beauties, but visitor experiences are not fully satisfactory due to some infrastructure and service deficiencies.

Keywords: Sustainable tourism management; visitor experiences; tourism potential; waterfalls nature park; Sinop-Erfelek (Türkiye)

1 Introduction

Nature parks are natural areas designated for the conservation of biodiversity and the promotion of environmental sustainability, protected by state or local governments. These parks not only preserve biodiversity but also support environmental sustainability by ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources. In recent years, the growing interest in natural attractions has made nature parks appealing tourist destinations for both domestic and international visitors. This trend has led to increased economic benefits, as tourism revenues generated through nature parks significantly contribute to local economies and enhance societal well-being (Özdemir Şahin & Eşbah Tunçay, 2023). In particular, the ecosystem services provided by nature parks improve the quality of life for community members while also raising awareness about nature conservation (Kaya & Uzun, 2019; Kaya, 2019). Additionally, nature parks contribute to the preservation of historical and cultural assets, playing an active role in transmitting these values to future generations alongside biological diversity (Tonyaloğlu et al., 2020).

The conservation of biodiversity is one of the primary functions of nature parks, as these areas develop strategies to protect various species and habitats, thereby supporting the healthy functioning of ecosystems (Hüseyinbaş et al., 2022; Binboğa & Daşdemir, 2023). Moreover, biodiversity plays a crucial role in addressing global challenges such as climate change (Avcı & Avcı, 2019). In this context, nature parks are of critical importance not only for preserving natural beauty but also for maintaining the capacity to sustain ecosystem services. Additionally, nature parks contribute significantly to individuals' quality of life by providing opportunities for recreation and interaction with nature. Beyond their intrinsic value, enhancing visitor satisfaction and experience quality is essential for ensuring the sustainability of recreational and tourism destinations. Therefore, focusing on visitor satisfaction

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and experience quality in a nature park is necessary for its success beyond its natural attractions.

In the literature, the role of visitor satisfaction in fostering positive perceptions and promoting sustainable tourism practices is frequently emphasised. For example, a study on Taman Negara Pahang in Malaysia demonstrated that visitor satisfaction and service quality directly influence the perceived value of national parks and tourist loyalty (Chew *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, an analysis of Sanqingshan National Park in China highlights the impact of crowd management and service quality on tourist satisfaction and sustainable development (Nian *et al.*, 2024). These findings reveal that factors such as perceived service quality and environmental management are integral to shaping the visitor experience.

Ecotourism initiatives also frequently consider visitor satisfaction as a critical measure of success. For instance, research on Komodo National Park in Indonesia has shown that service quality and destination management significantly influence visitor perceptions, resulting in high satisfaction levels (Mahmudin, 2024). In the Mekong Delta National Parks, perceptions of quality and value reflect the interaction between natural aesthetics and service-oriented strategies, positioning them as key motivators for repeat visits (Tri & Nguyen, 2024). Enhancing the visitor experience requires addressing both psychosocial and environmental factors. For example, a study conducted in Tyresta National Park, Sweden, found that natural sounds provide psychological relaxation and enhance the visitor experience (Reule, 2024). Similarly, a study conducted on Kakum National Park in Ghana revealed that while visitors experienced high levels of satisfaction regarding the dimensions of reliability, empathy, and staff responsiveness, they encountered uncertainties concerning pricing. By confirming that visitor satisfaction depends not only on service quality but also varies according to socio-demographic characteristics such as the visitors' continent of origin and educational attainment, this study underscores the significance of segmentation-based strategies in destination management (Tengan *vd.*, 2023). For nature parks to evolve as sustainable destinations, it is crucial to balance ecological conservation with improved visitor experiences. These elements can enhance the attractiveness of nature parks while contributing to both economic and environmental sustainability.

In this context, Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park, located in the Erfelek district of Sinop, a province in Türkiye's Black Sea Region known for its high happiness index, stands out with its visual richness and restorative atmosphere. Visitor reviews serve as a valuable source of information for the management and development of

natural areas while also providing an opportunity to evaluate visitor experiences based on feedback about the park. This assessment helps to understand the current state of the park and identify areas for future improvement, contributing to the creation of an effective roadmap that meets the expectations of both visitors and park administrators.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse visitor comments from the TripAdvisor platform, focusing on themes, satisfaction levels, and suggestions, to develop practical recommendations for enhancing visitor experience and ensuring the sustainable management of Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park. In line with this objective, the study examines the experiences of tourists who visited the park between 2012 and 2024 by analysing their reviews on www.tripadvisor.com, with the goal of assessing the region's tourism potential and understanding visitor perceptions.

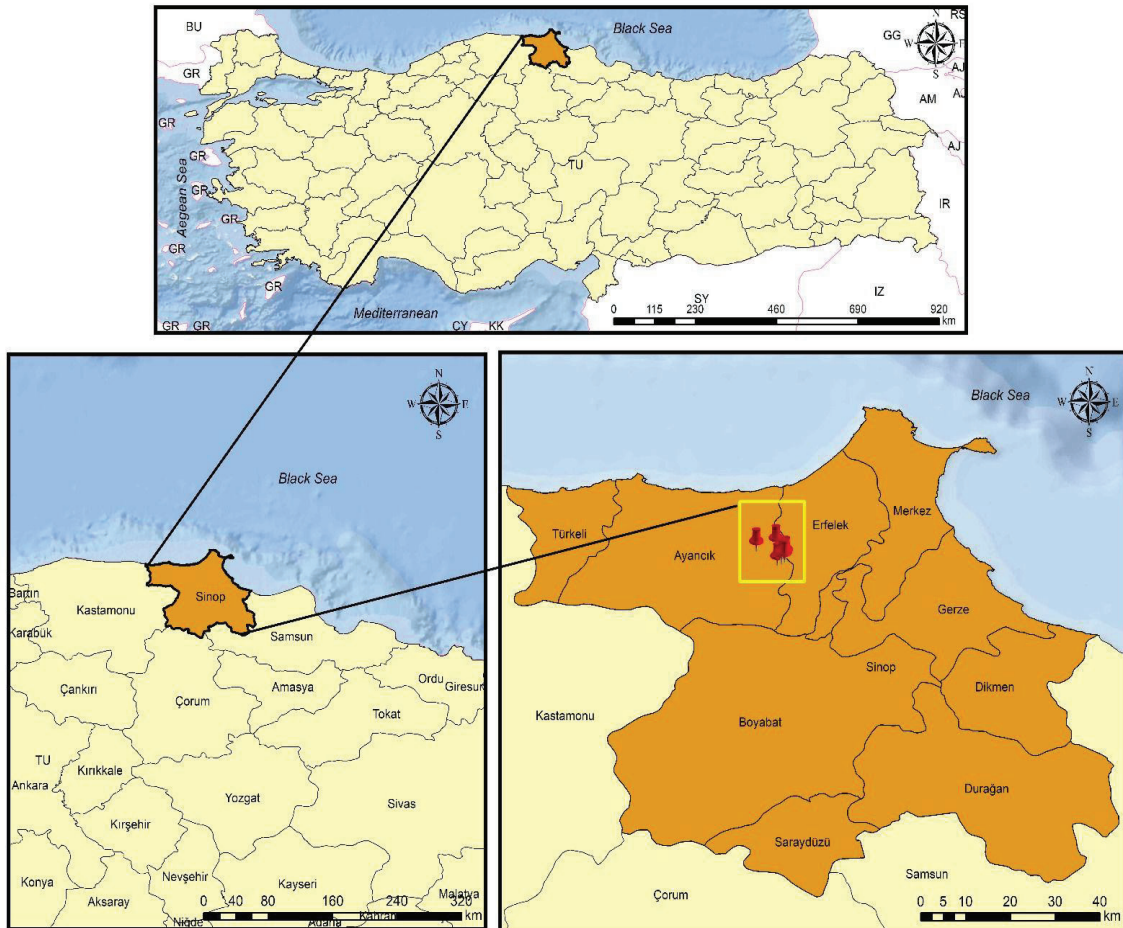
2 Geographical Location and Boundaries of Sinop Province

Located between 41° 12'-42° 06' north latitude and 34° 14'-35° 26' east longitude, Sinop is situated in the Western Black Sea Region of Turkey, in the northern part of the country. With an area of 5,792 km², Sinop constitutes approximately 0.75% of Turkey's total land area (Map 1). The province is characterised by its mountainous and rugged terrain (Kaya & Yilmaz, 2017).

The city is located in the narrowest part of the Boztepe Peninsula. Sinop province, which is a thin peninsula towards the sea, has 9 districts, 9 municipalities, 46 neighborhoods and 466 villages together with the central district. The districts connected to Sinop are: Ayancık, Boyabat, Erfelek, Durağan, Gerze, Türkeli, Saraydüzü and Dikmen. The province is surrounded by Alaçam district of Samsun from the east, Çatalzeytin district of Kastamonu from the west, Vezirköprü district of Samsun from the south, Osmancık and Kargı districts of Çorum, Taşköprü district of Kastamonu and 300 km of its 475 km borders are land and 175 km are sea (Sinop Valiliği, 2023).

3 Method

This study aims to determine tourist experiences, the region's tourism potential, and visitor perceptions based on online reviews posted on www.tripadvisor.com by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park between



Map 1: Map of Sinop

2012 and 2024. Drawing upon visitor reviews, the study aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the nature park and contribute to sustainable tourism management. The sustainable management of natural areas and the development of tourism potential require a comprehensive understanding of visitor satisfaction. As a destination distinguished by its natural beauties, Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park warrants an examination of visitor experiences to facilitate the improvement of regional tourism services. By determining visitors' expectations and satisfaction levels, this study offers recommendations for improving the park's management and service quality. The findings serve as a guide for both local governments and tourism operators, providing data capable of shaping the region's tourism strategies. By emphasising the importance of visitor feedback in the management of tourism destinations, this study provides a new perspective to the academic literature in the fields of destination marketing, tourist satisfaction, and sustainable tourism management. Furthermore, this analysis, conducted specifically for Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls,

serves as a reference for comparative studies on the development and management of similar natural areas.

The research was designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. While the research population consists of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park, the sample comprises 425 tourists who visited the park between January 2012 and December 2024 and posted a review regarding their visit on TripAdvisor. In this study, criterion sampling, a type of purposive sampling method, was utilised. The research data were obtained via the document analysis method from the TripAdvisor.com platform, which possesses a broad user base. Since publicly available data were utilised, the study does not require ethics committee approval. The research covers the period from January 2012 to December 2024, and all reviews regarding Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park during this timeframe were examined. All reviews posted on TripAdvisor for Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls were manually harvested and transferred to a word processor program. Prior to analysis, the transferred data were edited by checking for orthographic

and punctuation errors; irrelevant statements and spam content were excluded, and off-topic reviews not exceeding 2-3 words were omitted from the dataset. Finally, reviews written in different languages were translated into Turkish by experts in the field, and a total of 425 valid reviews were included in the study. Information regarding the languages of the reviews, based on the conducted content analysis, is presented in Table 1.

According to the table, the vast majority of reviews (92.24%) regarding Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park on TripAdvisor were written in Turkish. This indicates that the park attracts significant interest from domestic visitors. English reviews rank second at 5.65%, demonstrating that the park is also evaluated by international visitors. Reviews in German, French, Russian, Japanese, and Dutch appear in significantly lower proportions (ranging from 0.24% to 0.94%), revealing that the destination is predominantly reviewed by local tourists.

During the content analysis process, the researchers conducted a systematic analysis by examining the data based on presentation styles and recurring themes. This method facilitates the identification of patterns within the data and enables a comprehensive evaluation through the creation of thematic structures (Spencer *et al.*, 2003, p. 200). Through coding and frequency analyses, the meaningful components of the reviews were revealed and interpreted. The content analysis of the data obtained through document analysis was carried out by following a two-stage procedure. In the first stage, the researchers read the reviews multiple times; recurring comments, emphasised experiences, and elements deemed important by visitors were identified, and initial codes were generated using the open coding technique. During the generation of initial codes, themes frequently emphasised in the text, positive or negative situations experienced by visitors, and emphases regarding the physical and service-related characteristics of the area were taken into consideration. In the second stage, axial coding was performed by grouping the generated preliminary codes based on their

similarities and relationships. Throughout this process, 6 main themes and 22 sub-codes were established. These codes were developed with strict adherence to principles such as the sub-code semantically supporting its corresponding main theme, suitability to the data, distinctiveness, and the existence of semantic relationships between the codes. To ensure the validity of the codes, methods such as triangulation, participant confirmation, and peer review were utilised (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). For the reliability assessment, the coding of visitor reviews was examined, and the consistency between codes was compared based on “Agreement” and “Disagreement” criteria. As a result of the calculation performed using Miles and Huberman’s (1994) reliability formula, the reliability coefficient of the research was determined to be 0.84. Since this ratio exceeds the acceptable threshold of 0.70, it was concluded that the research is reliable.

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Number of Agreed Codes (28)}}{\text{Number of Agreed Codes (28)} + \text{Number of Different Codes (5)}} * 100 = 84,8484$$

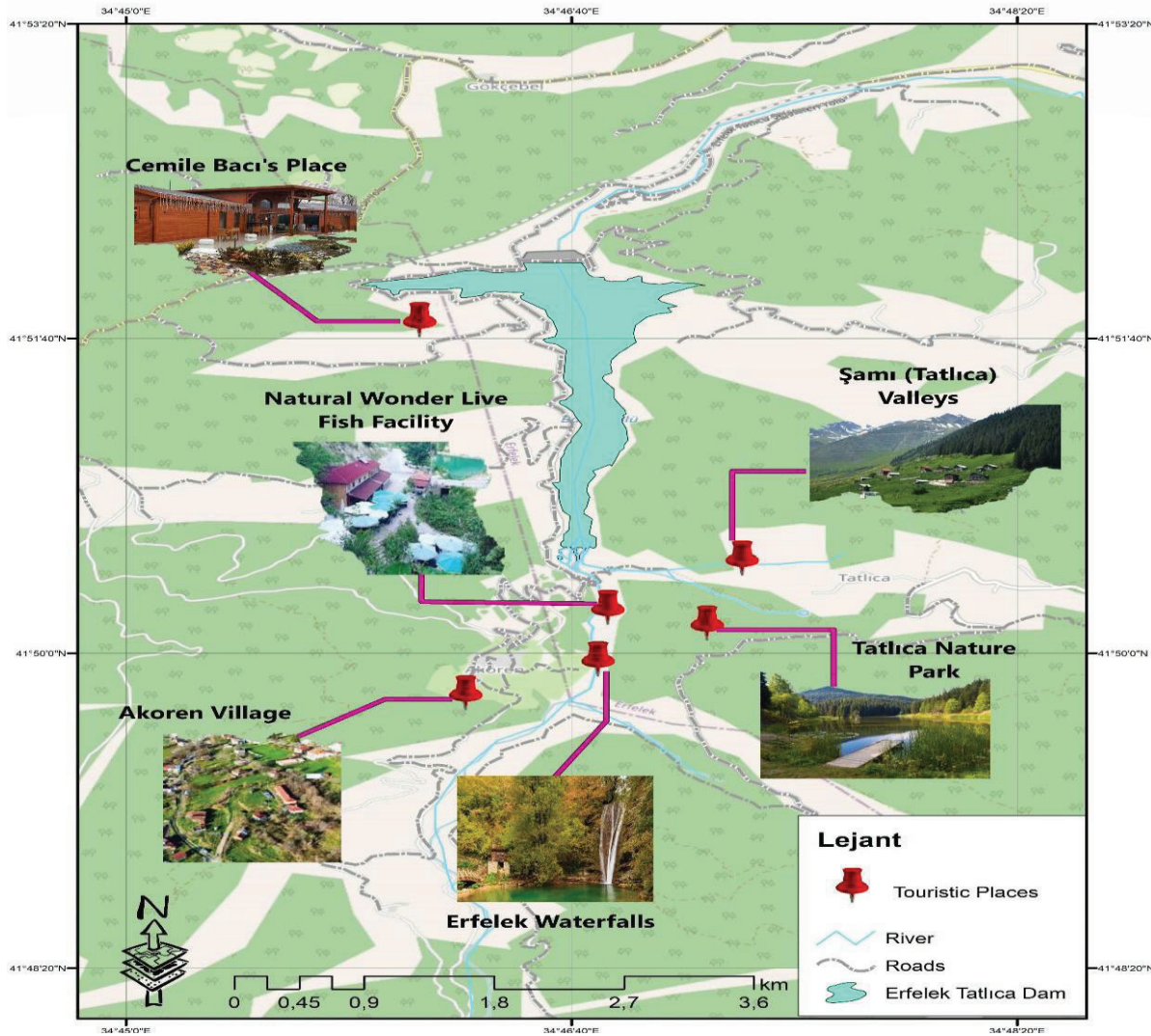
MAXQDA 20 software was utilised for the decomposition and analysis of text-based data. Through this software, the frequency distributions of themes and the concentration of reviews on specific topics were visualised. Additionally, nearby tourist attractions were identified to create a map, and the spatial tourism potential of the region was substantiated by Map 2.

In the map creation process, the stages of identifying, downloading, and processing the parcels surrounding the park within ArcGIS were implemented first. The necessary data were acquired using the parcel inquiry platform of the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (TKGM) (<https://parselsorgu.tkgm.gov.tr/>). Furthermore, digital data derived from satellite imagery via remote sensing techniques were integrated with existing location information. In the final phase, the spatial tourism potential map of the region was generated using these data and analysed in ArcGIS Pro.

Map 2 shows the important points in terms of nature tourism in the region. While Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls is one of the most remarkable natural beauties, Tatlıca Nature Park and Şam Valley stand out with their natural landscape. Cemile Bacı’s Place and the Natural Wonder Live Fish Facility offer eating, drinking and resting opportunities, while Akören Village provides a rural life experience. However, visitors are mostly concentrated on Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls and Erfelek Tatlıca Dam, while other touristic spots are less known. This shows that some areas are not sufficiently promoted or have limited accessibility.

Table 1: Languages of comments on Tripadvisor site

Comment Languages	Number of People	Percentage (%)
Turkish	392	%92,24
German	2	%0,47
Russian	1	%0,24
Japanese	1	%0,24
English	24	%5,65
French	4	%0,94
Dutch	1	%0,24



Map 2: Spatial tourism potential of the region
Source: Created by the authors using ArcGIS software.

In line with the aim of the study, answers to the following research questions will be sought:

- How is the distribution of online visitor comments about Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls in terms of language?
- What is the distribution of online visitor comments about Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park in terms of evaluation scores?
- What is the distribution of online comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park according to the main code “Transportation and Access”?
- What is the distribution of online comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park according to the main code “Natural Beauties and Aesthetics”?
- What is the distribution of online comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park according to the main code “Services and Maintenance”?
- What is the distribution of online comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park according to the main code “Visitor Experiences and Evaluations”?
- What is the distribution of online comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park according to the main code “Timing and Seasonality”?
- What is the distribution of online comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park according to the main code “Price and Performance Factors of Businesses”?

4 Finding

In this section of the study, the findings obtained by examining the comments about Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Natural Park on TripAdvisor between January 2012 and December 2024 are presented. The rating of 425 comments on TripAdvisor is presented in Figure 1.

Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park received a score of 4.5 based on 425 visitor comments and was generally evaluated quite positively. 64% of visitors (272 people) rated the park as “Perfect”, while 24% (102 people) gave it a “Very Good” rating. The proportion of those who had a “Centre” experience was 8.7% (37 people), and those who gave a negative evaluation were very few. The rate of those who rated the park as “Bad” was 2.1% (9 people), and the rate of those who rated it as “It is awful” was limited to 1.2% (5 people). These data show that the majority appreciate the park and that it is a satisfying natural area for visitors.

Visitors’ opinions were grouped under 6 main themes. These themes are: Visitor Experiences and Evaluations, Timing and Seasonality, Price and Performance Factors of Businesses, Services and Maintenance, Transportation and Access, Natural Beauties and Aesthetics (Figure 2). In total, 28 codes were coded 1387 times.

Within the framework of the comments made by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park, a total of 1387 sections were coded, and evaluations were made and presented in the form of diagrams. The 425 comments analysed were also evaluated numerically within the framework of the codes created. Figure 3 shows the classification of the comments of tourists

visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park regarding transportation and access to the park according to the number of coded sections.

When the evaluations of the tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park on transportation and access are examined in Figure 3, the visitors made the most comments on “Reaching the Top” (131) and “Road Condition” (118). Under the heading of road condition, “Physical Obstacles” (92) stands out as an important sub-category, while “Easy Access” (16) received fewer comments. In addition, the park’s “Proximity to Sinop Center” (24) was also evaluated by the visitors. In general, tourists mostly focused on issues related to the roads within the park, transportation to the summit, and physical obstacles. Some visitor comments on the codes are shown in Table 2.

When Table 2 is evaluated in terms of proximity to the centre of Sinop, visitors state that the park is

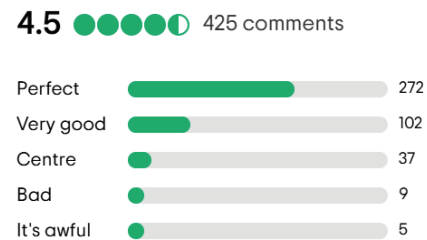


Figure 1: Information on Visitors’ Ratings of the Region

Source: https://www.tripadvisor.com.tr/Attraction_Review-g652366-d3677485-Reviews-Erfelek_Tatlıca_Selaleleri_Tabat_Parki-Sinop_Sinop_Province_Turkish_Black_Sea_Co.html



Figure 2: Code Cloud for Reviews on Tripadvisor

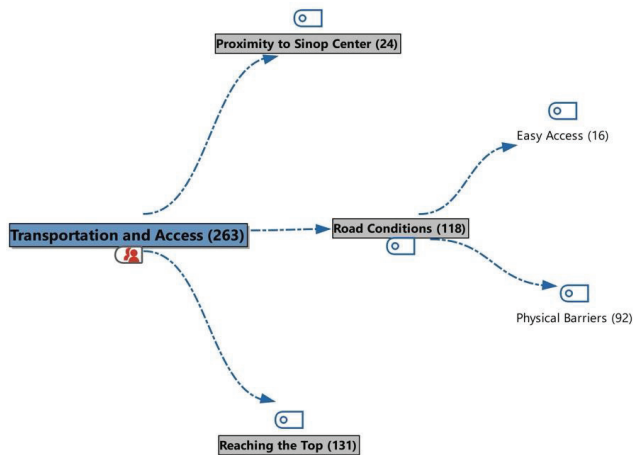


Figure 3: Distribution of subcodes for transportation and access main code

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

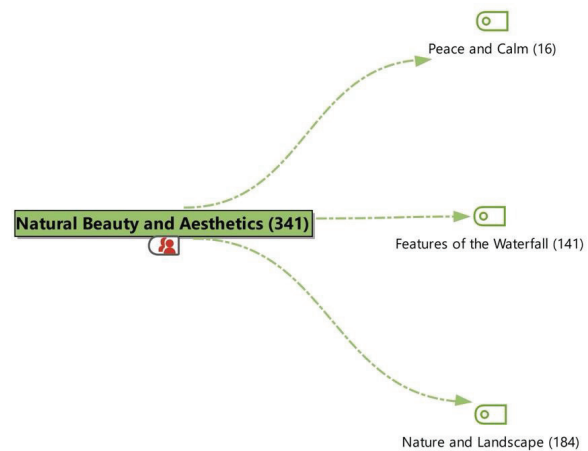


Figure 4: Distribution of subcodes for the main code of natural beauties and aesthetics

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

Table 2: Some visitor comments on the transportation and access master code

Transportation and Access	Visitor comments
Proximity to Sinop Center	"...40 min. drive from the center of Sinop..."
	"...about 40 kilometers outside Sinop..."
	"...This natural wonder, which can be reached by a 1-hour drive inland from Sinop in the direction of Ankara..."
Reaching the Top	"...The hiking trail can be challenging in places, but there are 28 waterfalls, each with its own beauty..."
	"...there are both normal walking paths and exits from the waterfalls..."
	"...Definitely don't take the stairs, for the adventurous ones, go through the rocks to reach the summit..."
Easy Access	"...Easy to reach by car..."
	"...It's easy to get to the waterfalls..."
	"...We went with our private car Transportation was easy and the roads were smooth..."
Road Condition	"...The road may be bad, but when you see the end, it's worth it..."
	"...it was very winding and your left side was completely dammed..."
	"...also the road is bad, dirt in places..."
Physical Barriers	"...The road is narrow and winding..."

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

approximately 40-60 minutes from the city centre. Comments on access to the summit emphasise that the hiking trail can be challenging at times, but there are different routes available. Visitors say that it is more adventurous to go over rocks instead of stairs. In terms of road conditions, comments on easy transportation indicate that the roads are generally smooth and easy to access by private vehicles. However, under the physical obstacles sub-code, negative evaluations that the roads are narrow, winding, and sometimes dirt come to the fore. In general, it is seen that transportation is possible, but there may be difficulties in some sections.

Figure 4 shows the classification of the comments of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlica Waterfalls Nature Park on the natural beauties and aesthetics of the park according to the number of coded sections.

When the evaluations of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlica Waterfalls Natural Park are analysed in Figure 4, it is seen that the visitors mostly commented on "Nature and Landscape" (184) and "Waterfall Features" (141). Under the heading of the characteristics of the waterfall, visitors' evaluations of the water flow, aesthetic structure and the coldness of the water stand out, while "Peace and Calm" (16) received fewer comments. In general, tourists mostly focused on the natural landscape of the park, visual attractiveness and aesthetic structure of the waterfall. Some visitor comments on the codes are shown in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, about the nature and landscape of the park, visitors highlighted the green nature of the park, its oxygen-rich air and various vegetation, and the colours of nature and the visuality offered by the landscape were among the most emphasised elements.

Regarding the characteristics of the waterfalls, comments on the water flow, coolness and physical structure of the waterfalls are noteworthy. Visitors found the number and size of the waterfalls and the cooling effect of the water to be important, and stated that the ability to enter the water in some areas made the experience even more special. There were also relatively few comments about the peace and tranquillity of the area, but visitors considered the quietness of the park, the birdsong, and the opportunity to be alone with nature peaceful. In general, it is understood that visitors attach more importance to the natural landscape and visual appeal of the park, as well as the aesthetic and physical features of the waterfalls.

Figure 5 shows the classification of tourists' comments visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park by

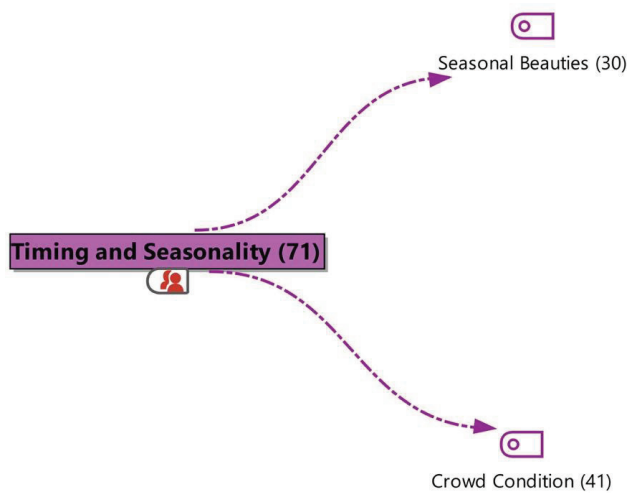


Figure 5: Distribution of Subcodes for Timing and Seasonality Main Code
Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

time of visit and seasonal beauty, according to the number of coded sections.

When the timing and seasonality evaluations of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park are analysed in Figure 5, it is seen that visitors mostly commented on “Crowd Condition” (41) and “Seasonal Beauties” (30). Under the heading of crowdedness, visitors’ evaluations of density, visit timing, and calmness stand out, while under seasonal beauties, there are comments about the natural landscape and visuality offered by the park in different seasons. In general, it is seen that tourists take both seasonal factors and crowding into consideration when determining the timing of their visits. Some visitor comments on the codes are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that visitors had different experiences in terms of timing and seasonality. In terms of seasonal beauty, visitors stated that the park is ideal for sightseeing in hot weather, offers a cool microclimate in summer and can be preferred in the fall. However, some visitors stated that a visit in March was not very suitable. This shows that the park offers different experiences seasonally and that visitors’ expectations change according to the season.

Visitor comments on the crowding situation indicate that it is especially crowded during holiday periods and on weekends. It was stated that there are queues of vehicles during the holidays and that it can be crowded even if visited on weekdays. On the other hand, it was emphasised that a visit made in April and on a weekday was calmer and that the crowd had no effect. These comments reveal that crowding is an important factor in the way visitors experience the park and that the timing should be carefully chosen for a calmer experience.

Figure 6 shows the classification of the comments of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park

Table 3: Some Visitor Comments on Natural Beauties and Aesthetics Main Code

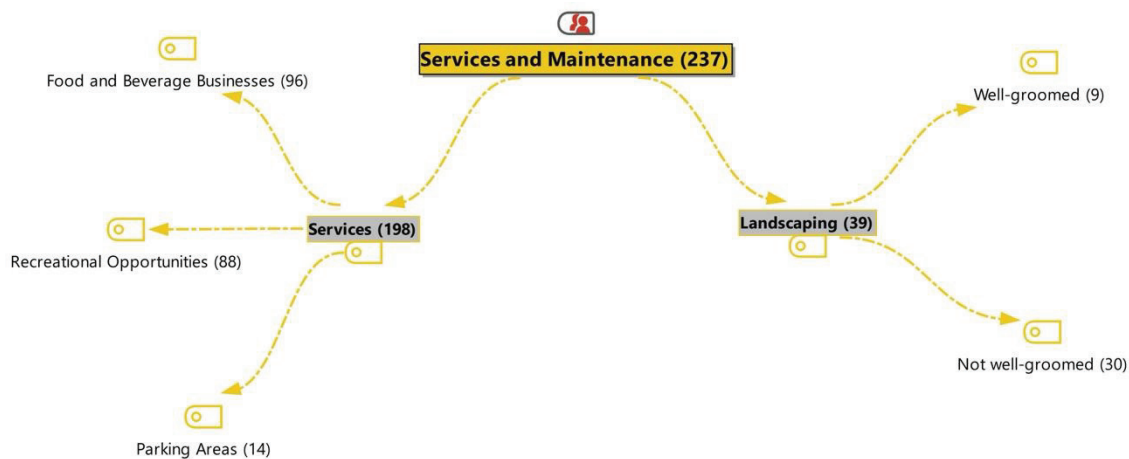
Natural Beauty and Aesthetics	Visitor comments
Peace and Calm	“...luckily we were there one morning and no one was there. It was wonderful to listen to the birdsong in the silence...”
	“...It gives you peace of mind to see just one or two of them, let alone all of them...”
	“...A beautiful place for hiking and relaxing...”
Features of the waterfall	“...In some places you can enter the water with your feet. The water is like ice and soothes the feet...”
	“...consists of 28 waterfalls. The waterfalls are small in size...”
	“...immerse yourself in the sound and coolness of the waterfalls...”
	“...You are greeted by a large waterfall and then a series of waterfalls, large and small...”
Nature and Landscape	“...The green nature will make you very happy...”
	“...the lung that inhales that oxygen is incorrigible, a more fragrant nature
	A wonder of nature...”
	“...First of all, the park is really wonderful with its nature, very beautiful green, cascades, waterfalls, the colors of the water, the nature cover contains a thousand and one shades of green...”

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

Table 4: Some Visitor Comments on Timing and Seasonality Main Code

Timing and Seasonality	Visitor comments
Seasonal Beauties	“...It’s an ideal area for sightseeing in warm weather...”
	“...It’s very beautiful but it didn’t make sense to go in March, we did. I think it would be perfect in the summer...”
	“...Fall is preferable, but it’s also nice and cool in the summer with a microclimate...”
Crowd Condition	“...We went on the 3rd day of Eid around 11 a.m. The entrance and parking lot were comfortable. But a few hours later there were kilometers of vehicle queues...”
	“...It’s very crowded during the holidays and weekends...”
	“...It’s very crowded even though it’s a weekday...”
	“...In the summer I’m sure there are some people who can’t resist going into the pools where the waterfalls cascade. Since we went in April and on a weekday, there was no one there...”

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

**Figure 6:** Distribution of Subcodes for the Services and Maintenance Main Code

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

regarding the service and maintenance of the park according to the number of coded sections.

In Figure 6, when visitor comments on Erfelek Tatlica Waterfalls Nature Park are analysed in terms of services and maintenance, it is seen that visitors mostly commented on “Food and Beverage Facilities” (96) and “Recreation Opportunities” (88). While the food and beverage facilities in the park are evaluated under the heading of food and beverage establishments, the recreation facilities include visitors’ comments about the activities offered in the park. Under the heading “Parking Areas” (14), evaluations on parking areas in the park come to the fore. In the Landscaping category, the maintenance status of the park attracted the attention of the visitors, and while the comments indicating that the park was “Well-groomed” (9) were limited, the comments indicating that the park was “Not Well-groomed” (30) were more common. In general, visitors were positive about the park’s services, but emphasised that there were deficiencies in landsca-

ping and maintenance. Some visitor comments on the codes are shown in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that visitors had different experiences in terms of services and maintenance. In terms of services, visitors stated that there are food and beverage establishments at the entrance of the park, but these establishments are limited, and there is a lack of grocery stores for shopping. In terms of recreational facilities, visitors emphasised that the park is suitable for various activities such as picnics, hiking, camping and trekking. In addition, the presence of observation terraces and parking areas was evaluated positively by the visitors. In terms of landscaping, while there were comments indicating that the park was clean and well-maintained, some visitors stated that the park areas were not cleaned sufficiently and that garbage polluted the environment. It is also noteworthy that there were comments that the toilets were inadequate in terms of hygiene and capacity. In general, it is seen that visitors evaluate the services of the park

positively, but emphasise that there are deficiencies in terms of cleaning and maintenance.

Figure 7 shows the classification of tourists' comments on the price and performance factors of the establishments at Erfelek Tatlica Waterfalls Nature Park, according to the number of coded sections.

In Figure 7, when visitor comments on Erfelek Tatlica Waterfalls Nature Park are analysed in terms of price and performance factors of the establishments, it is seen that the most common factors are "Entrance Fees" (60) and "Price-Performance Ratio". (27) commented on the entrance fees. Under the heading of Entrance Fees, it is seen that visitors evaluated the entrance fees of the park, and while some visitors found the fees reasonable, others stated that they were not commensurate with the service quality. Under the Price-Performance Ratio, visitors evaluated whether the services offered by the businesses in

the park are adequate compared to their prices. While some visitors stated that the services were in line with the prices, others stated that the services provided were insufficient compared to the prices. In general, the price-performance balance of the services offered by the businesses and entrance fees are among the most evaluated issues by the visitors. Some visitor comments on the codes are shown in Table 6.

When Table 6 is analysed, it is seen that visitors have different experiences regarding the price and performance factors of the establishments. In terms of price-performance ratio, visitors evaluated the prices of food and beverage services in the park. While some visitors found the prices of products such as tea, flatbread and rotisserie lamb to be affordable, others stated that the quality of the services offered did not meet the prices. In particular, it was stated that there are affordable but shabby places

Table 5: Some visitor comments on the services and care core code

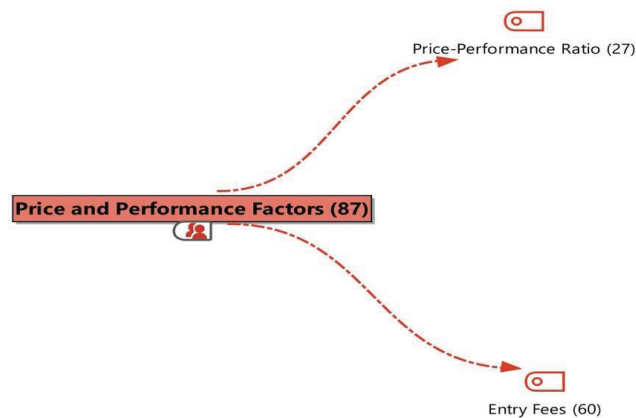
Services and Maintenance	Visitor comments
Food and Beverage Businesses	<i>"...There is a business at the entrance of the waterfall where there is food and drink..."</i> <i>"...There are no quality facilities. There is a small village restaurant, bring your needs with you, there is no grocery store style place to shop..."</i> <i>"...When you get to the spring, you can drink the cold water and eat the buttermilk, corn, potatoes sold there..."</i> <i>"...The food courts run by the people of Erfelek in the picnic area can also be considered for food (lamb roast, grill, pancakes)..."</i>
Services	<i>"...there are some very nice barbecue places..."</i> <i>"...It's the place where you can go for a family picnic or a walk in the waterfalls or both..."</i> <i>"...This is a perfect place, there are camping sites right in front of it, picnic area, go with barbecue..."</i> <i>"...There are observation decks..."</i> <i>"...After breakfast, go down to Erfelek sweet waterfalls with a long nature walk..."</i> <i>"...That's actually the place to go trekking over a normal waterfall..."</i>
Recreation Oppurtunities	<i>"...No parking problems..."</i> <i>"...There is a parking lot inside..."</i> <i>"...There is absolutely no parking problem if you go by car..."</i> <i>"...In general, everywhere I went in Sinop province was full of garbage thrown left and right. It's good that this place has remained so clean. I hope it will continue like this..."</i> <i>"...The surroundings are well maintained and clean..."</i> <i>"...the facility built around it has not disturbed the naturalness at all, but the whole place is spotless..."</i>
Parking Areas	<i>"...It is not clear whether it is a nature park or a fairground. The smell of barbecue is everywhere. Pet bottles on the floor..."</i> <i>"...But unfortunately such a natural wonder is being ruined by plastic bottles and garbage..."</i> <i>"...The toilets are very bad..."</i> <i>"...It's not enough for that many people and it smells very bad even from a distance. They condemn people to that toilet..."</i>
Well Groomed	
Landscaping	
Not Well Groomed	

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

Table 6: Some visitor comments on the main code of price and performance factors

Price and Performance Factors of Businesses	Visitor comments
Price-Performance Ratio	"...There's a charge in the restroom. I don't like the taste of the tea in the cafe. A small glass costs 2,5 tl..."
	"...When we went downstairs we had tea (2,5 lira) it was good..."
	"...I kept my eye on the roast lamb. They just put it on and I would like to eat it if I had time, 120 liras per kilo is very reasonable..."
	"...We had gözleme. It wasn't very tasty, the price was 10 TL..."
	"...of course, at the end, a simple place that welcomes you in places we call wooden tables and seats that sell buttermilk, potatoes, etc. pancakes from the 2000s is waiting for you, and it is also very cheap to eat and drink there, the buttermilk is great..."
Entrance Fees	"...Entrance fee..."
	"...Entrance fee is 75 TL, you can pay by credit card..."
	"...The entrance fee makes sense by car. 15 tl per car, 5 tl per person if you want to enter on foot..."
	"...First of all, the entrance fee is 14,5€, which I think is very expensive..."
	"...But after paying this fee, it is a disappointment to encounter paid toilets inside. Besides the cleanliness problem, there is no soap or toilet paper..."

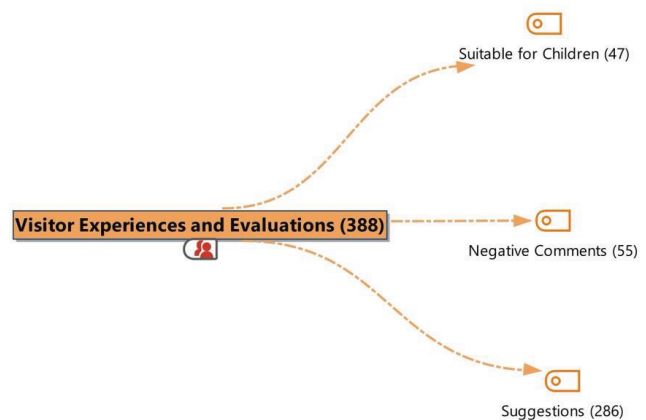
Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

**Figure 7:** Distribution of subcodes for the main code of price and performance factors

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

in the park and that it is more economical to eat in these places. This shows that there are options that appeal to different budgets within the park and that visitors make evaluations according to their expectations.

Visitor comments on the entrance fee revealed different opinions on the reasonableness of the prices. While it was stated that the entrance by car is advantageous compared to paying per person, some visitors found the entrance fee high and stated that the presence of additional paid services (e.g. toilets) inside is a negative situation. In particular, the lack of hygiene and lack of soap/toilet paper in the paid toilets were criticised. These comments reveal that visitors consider not only the entrance fee but also the quality and cost balance of the services offered within the park in their price-performance evaluations.

**Figure 8:** Distribution of sub-codes for the main code of visitor experiences and evaluations

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

Figure 8 shows the classification of the comments of tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park on the visitor experiences of the businesses according to the number of coded sections.

Figure 8 shows that visitors shared their experiences with a total of 388 comments. Most of these comments are gathered under the heading "Suggestions" (286), and the fact that there are 55 comments under the heading "Negative Comments" reveals that dissatisfaction with the park is also noteworthy. There are 47 comments under the category "Suitability for children". This number shows that the evaluation of the park for families with children is also an important issue. In general, most visitor comments contain suggestions for future visitors. On the

other hand, the fact that negative experiences are in the minority shows that the park offers a positive experience in general, but has deficiencies in some service areas. Some visitor comments on the codes are shown in Table 7.

The visitor comments in Table 7 include different experiences and evaluations of Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Natural Park. Regarding suitability for children, some visitors stated that there is a children's playground at the entrance of the park, but warned that it would be difficult to climb the waterfalls with young children. This shows that although the park is partially suitable for families with children, it poses risks especially for younger age groups. When the negative comments are analysed, the most common complaints are that the expectations regarding the size of the waterfalls are not fully met, safety problems due to slippery stairs and the negative impact of barbecue smoke on natural beauty. It was especially emphasised that barbecue smoke is a great source of discomfort for visitors. In the suggestions section, it was recommended that visitors should prefer daily tours, wear comfortable

clothes and appropriate shoes, and consider that the park may be crowded during holidays and vacation periods. In addition, suggestions that barbecues should be banned were also frequently mentioned. In terms of travel comfort, it was stated that the road coming from Sinop should be preferred, and it was also suggested that local delicacies such as coffee and ayran should be tried in the park.

In general, visitors' experiences show that the park is highly appreciated for its natural beauty, but that some arrangements are needed in terms of safety, cleanliness and visitor management. In particular, controlling barbecue smoke and taking additional safety measures for slippery areas stand out as important steps that can increase visitor satisfaction.

5 Discussion

This study aimed to analyse tourist experiences, determine the region's tourism potential, and assess visitor

Table 7: Some visitor comments on the main code of visitor experiences and evaluations

Visitor Experiences and Evaluations	Visitor comments
Suitability for Children	<i>"...There is a park for children at the entrance..."</i>
	<i>"...we went with our 11-13 year old children..."</i>
	<i>"...Not very suitable for families with small children..."</i>
	<i>"...If you go with very young children, you will have difficulty climbing the waterfalls..."</i>
	<i>"...Leave the kids and see all the waterfalls with or without ropes, both the path and the waterfalls themselves are exquisite..."</i>
	<i>"...don't come with small children..."</i>
Negative Comments	<i>"...The expectation of the waterfall may be a little small, it's not a very big gigantic waterfall. The same narrow stairs up and down, some places are slippery because they are wet, my wife fell while going down..."</i>
	<i>"...It is very disturbing that they allow barbecues near the waterfall. The whole area around the waterfall is filled with smoke because five people are barbecuing..."</i>
	<i>"...the smoke from barbecues here and there is disturbing..."</i>
	<i>"...It's a pity they put the tables in front of the heavenly waterfall..."</i>
	<i>"...I went here with my wife about 7 years ago and it is officially ruined. The barbecues have smothered the beautiful waterfall view with smoke..."</i>
Suggestions	<i>"...You can go to Sinop Erfelek saddles with day tours..."</i>
	<i>"...it is recommended that you wear comfortable clothes and shoes as it will be visited..."</i>
	<i>"...Absolutely no fires should be allowed..."</i>
	<i>"...If you're going to go, you shouldn't go on a holiday..."</i>
	<i>"...The road through Sinop should be preferred, the road through Erfelek is winding and passes through forested areas..."</i>
	<i>"...one of Turkey's paradise places and a must-see place to visit..."</i>
	<i>"...If you want to climb the Erfelek waterfall, take your non-slip sneakers. Don't forget to drink coffee under the trees on the descent..."</i>
	<i>"...you will fall in slippers, wear shoes that are as non-slippery as possible and that you can afford to get dirty and take a backpack and a bottle to get water from the waterfall..."</i>
	<i>"...you can have a nice buttermilk or tea at the place located next to the spring..."</i>

Source: Created by the authors using MAXQDA software

perceptions based on reviews posted on www.tripadvisor.com by tourists visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park between 2012 and 2024. According to the results of the content analysis, Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park was appreciated by the vast majority of visitors and evaluated as a natural area with a high satisfaction rate. The findings indicate that visitors were largely impressed by the natural beauties, and elements such as the scenery, clean air, and peaceful atmosphere offered by the park ensured satisfaction. This finding aligns with the literature highlighting the natural environment as a prominent component of the visitor experience in nature-based tourism areas. According to research by Şengül and Çılgınoğlu (2023), positive comments such as “natural wonder, oxygen depot, green beauty” were observed in online reviews made by visitors. A similar situation was observed in the study by Savaşkan and Haliloğlu (2021). The researchers analysed visitor reviews of Acarlar Longoz (Floodplain Forest) as a nature tourism destination and stated that positive evaluations predominantly included emphases on “enchanted natural beauties” and “natural wonder.”

Visitors generally mentioned that the roads leading to Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park were narrow and winding, highlighting transportation difficulties. This situation demonstrates a discrepancy between expectations and experiences, in addition to the transportation difficulties encountered. Similarly, in a study by Tür (2023) examining online reviews of tourists visiting the Kaz Mountains, it was observed that visitors reported negative opinions regarding transportation. These results reveal infrastructure deficiencies in nature-based recreation areas. On the other hand, visitors noted the presence of food and beverage establishments at the park entrance but stated that options were limited and felt a lack of grocery-style outlets. The results of the research conducted by Şengül and Çılgınoğlu (2023) support these findings, where visitors to Yozgat Çamlığı National Park made negative comments regarding the insufficiency of establishments. These results indicate that access to services is inadequate and represents a critical variable in area management.

It was determined that those visiting Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park predominantly visited the region during summer months or expressed views that visiting in summer would yield better experiences. They specifically mentioned relaxing in the ice-cold waters of the waterfalls during hot summer days. This situation indicates that the waters provide thermal relief, showing that seasonality in nature-based visits is a factor directly affecting visitors' physiological experiences. In a study by Niezgoda and

Nowacki (2020) examining online visitor reviews for Tatra National Park, it was observed that visitors made suggestions that visiting the park was more suitable, especially in hot weather. These results support the current study's findings.

In their online reviews, visitors stated that Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park offers suitable facilities for various recreational activities such as picnicking, nature walking, camping, and trekking. For instance, research by Erşahin and Şahbaz (2024) examining online reviews for Gülhane Park found that emphasis was placed on recreational facilities such as resting, picnic, and walking areas. Research by Yücedağ and Yelsiz (2022) and İnanır and Ogun (2019) also support this finding. These results demonstrate that nature-based experiences play a determinant role in visitor satisfaction. On the other hand, visitor reviews regarding Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park frequently mentioned that the region is very crowded, especially during religious holidays and weekends. Similarly, in a study by Ogun et al. (2021) examining online reviews of visitors to Şirince Village, it was stated that the area was very crowded on holiday days. These results indicate that increasing visitor demand is not being effectively managed, and consequently, the carrying capacity is exceeded during official holidays. This situation shows that similar problems are experienced in small destination areas with high tourist attractions, and it is not a situation unique to Erfelek. Consequently, there is a need for sustainable visitor planning in similar destinations in terms of visitor density management.

Visitor reviews generally concentrated on negative aspects, such as Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park not being clean and well-maintained, and the entrance fee. These results are consistent with other studies in the literature (İnanır & Ogun, 2019; Özdemir et al., 2019; Savaşkan & Haliloğlu, 2021; Tür, 2023; Erşahin & Şahbaz, 2024). These findings suggest systemic issues regarding managerial service quality in nature-based recreation areas. Visitors offered some suggestions in their online reviews. The most emphasised topic was that those coming to the region should prefer clothes suitable for nature walking and climbing. Similarly, in Tür's (2023) research, it was observed that visitors warned potential visitors to come with sports shoes; these findings support the results of our study. On the other hand, these results indicate that the nature-based experience depends highly on user preparedness.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that while Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park is a destination distinguished by its natural beauties, visitor experiences are not fully satisfactory due to certain infrastructure and service deficiencies. Based on the content analysis results, several recommendations have been made to both improve the visitor experience and promote sustainable tourism in Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park and similar destination areas. Firstly, work should be carried out to improve the roads leading to the region, and dependency on private vehicles should be reduced by offering regular public transport services between the Erfelek district and the park. On the other hand, directional signage should be increased to ensure visitors can easily access information and discover different tourism destinations in the nearby region and within the park. Security measures should be increased at the waterfalls and walking paths, and information signs should be placed in slippery and risky areas. Additionally, resting areas and seating groups within the park should be increased without damaging nature. Barbecuing around the waterfall should be strictly prohibited, and picnicking outside designated areas should be prevented. Furthermore, suitable walking trails and children's playgrounds should be created for families with small children.

It is observed that the region is mostly visited by local tourists. In this context, to increase the park's international recognition, promotional activities should be carried out on social media and tourism platforms using multilingual promotional materials, and guidance services should be offered for foreign tourists. Additionally, to ensure the area's carrying capacity is not exceeded on special days, circulation should be managed by admitting a limited number of visitors within certain time intervals. Finally, park management and local governments should guide their services and improvement works in line with visitors' expectations by monitoring complaint boxes, surveys, and e-reviews to evaluate visitor opinions and suggestions. When these suggestions are implemented, significant steps will have been taken towards making Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls a more attractive and sustainable destination for both local and international tourists. Furthermore, the findings obtained and the suggestions presented offer significant implications not only for the management of Erfelek Tatlıca Waterfalls Nature Park but also for other nature-based recreation destinations and protected areas with similar characteristics. Therefore, these research results serve as a guide for park managers with similar characteristics at local and national levels, both in terms of increasing visitor satisfaction and developing sustainable management strategies.

7 Additional Information

Ethics Committee Approval: This study was conducted using publicly available data and does not require ethics committee approval.

Author Contributions: Concept -O.Y., E.K.; Design-O.Y., E.E.; Supervision-E.K.; Resources-O.Y., E.E.; Data Collection and/or Processing-O.Y.; Analysis and/or Interpretation-E.E.; Literature Search-O.Y., E.E.; Writing Manuscript-O.Y., E.E.; Critical Review-E.K.

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Financial Disclosure: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.

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