

Overtourism in Uzungöl Trabzon, Türkiye: A Study Based on Tourist Reviews

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ABSTRACT

Uzungöl is a popular natural route and a major tourist attraction in Turkey, but recently overtourism has become a major problem. With the increase in the number of visitors, rapid construction, concreting and various forms of pollution have had a negative impact on the destination of Uzungöl and its environment. The aim of this study is to reveal the evidence for the existence of overtourism in Uzungöl through visitors' reviews on online platforms and to determine in which areas overtourism is effective. In this study, which was conducted using an exploratory approach, it was observed that many visitors reviewed on overtourism in Uzungöl using TripAdvisor. These reviews were analysed using content analysis. As a result of the analysis, it was found that visitors' reviews focused on three themes related to overtourism in Uzungöl. These are environmental, economic, and socio-cultural themes. As a result of the study, it was determined that environmental concerns are more prominent in terms of overtourism. In addition, it was understood that tourists visiting the region have a negative image in terms of overbuilding, concretisation, and unplanned urbanisation.

KEYWORDS

Overtourism, TripAdvisor, Online reviews, Qualitative Analysis, Uzungöl Trabzon, Türkiye.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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1. Introduction

In the last quarter-century, despite fluctuations due to economic crises, wars, and pandemics worldwide, the tourism industry has continued to grow (UNWTO, 2022). It is a fact that within this growth there are destinations that are trying to increase the number of tourists and destinations that are trying to find solutions to the problems that arise from the arrival of more tourists. However, it is well-known that the number of the latter type of destinations is increasing day by day. The rapid growth in these areas and the resulting issue of overcrowding threatening the local economy and housing options have highlighted the necessity of controlling this growth (Croes, Rivera, Semrad, & Khalizadeh, 2017). The concept of overtourism has emerged in this context, and it has been increasingly used in both contemporary media and academic literature concerning the management of the current growth in popular tourist destinations and the sustainability of the region. Overtourism particularly affects European cities (Seraphin, Sheeran, & Pilato, 2018; Alonso-Almeida, Borrajo-Millán, & Liu, 2019; Adie, Falk, & Savioli, 2020; Sequera & Nofre, 2020; Díaz-Parra & Jover, 2021), North American cities (Weforum, 2017; Khomsi, Fernandez-Aubin, & Rabiner, 2020), and Asian cities (Weforum, 2017; Hess, 2019; Loverio, Chen, & Shen, 2021) negatively. It is well-known that major urban tourism destinations are facing this issue. So, what needs to be done to solve the problems of overtourism that can arise in small-scale centres of natural attraction in rural areas? This study explores these questions in the Uzungöl region of Trabzon province, located in northern Turkey, which is an important tourism center with natural attractions.

The news about the ecotourism region of Uzungöl, which is the target region within the scope of this research, has taken place in the public. In this direction, in addition to the number of tourists exceeding 625 thousand in 2019 in the region, it has become necessary to conduct research due to the perception that the balance between economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions has deteriorated despite the evolution of tourism. Due to the emergence of problems such as increasing overcrowding, overbuilding, destruction of nature, costly and cultural degradation with unplanned urbanisation in the region due to the evolution of tourism in Uzungöl, it was considered to use the opinions of visitors to the region as data. A review of the literature shows that there are studies on the data obtained from Tripadvisor and other similar applications, which is the source from which the data is taken, and studies on the analysis of highly visited points or visitor ratings. However, it is recognised that there are limited studies that evaluate visitor reviews on tourism evolution (Moreno-Gil & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020; Martin-Fuentes, Nieto Ferrando, Marine-Roig, & Ferrer-Rosell, 2020; Hidalgo-Giralt, Palacios-García, Barrado-Timón, & Rodríguez-Esteban, 2021; Ganzaroli, De Noni, & Bonera, 2021; Rozmiarek, Malchrowicz-Moško, & Kazimierzczak, 2022). Although stakeholders' and local people's opinions on the impact of tourism, overtourism and sustainable tourism on Uzungöl, which is the study area (Alptekin, 2017; Küçükaşçı, 2019; Kılıç, 2020; Mutlu, 2021; Güzel & Çakır, 2023a), there is no study that considers the views of tourists coming to the region about Uzungöl and the level of evolution of tourism in the region. Especially in the tourism literature, despite the popularity of the destination image concept, there are very few studies that focus on tourists' reviews regarding destinations. It was considered necessary to evaluate the opinions of visitors to the region in order to increase the satisfaction of tourists coming to Uzungöl, which is a small region, to ensure sustainable management and to identify and eliminate problems that may arise.

In this regard, this study aims to identify evidence of overtourism in Uzungöl based on visitor reviews and determine the areas where overtourism is effective. Accordingly, tourist reviews on TripAdvisor regarding Uzungöl and tourism in the region were analyzed, and reviews that could be related to overtourism were examined and analyzed. Based on the findings, conclusions were drawn, and an assessment of the dimensions of overtourism in the Uzungöl destination was made. Considering the outcome of the evaluation, it is believed that this study contributes to the field by qualitatively analyzing visitor reviews. Furthermore, recommendations are made for local governments and other tourism stakeholders regarding the establishment of sustainable tourism management for Uzungöl and similar destinations, aiming to provide practical contributions. Within the scope of the research, answers to the following questions were sought:

- What are the views of visitors to Uzungöl on overtourism?
- What are the prominent dimensions of overtourism in Uzungöl?
- What are the methods to reduce the problems caused by overtourism in Uzungöl?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overtourism

Overtourism is a complex and challenging phenomenon that has garnered academic interest in the last fifteen years. It refers to excessive pressure on both the infrastructure and natural environment, as well as the socio-cultural environment, due to tourism. Overtourism leads to environmental degradation and negative impacts on the tourist experience, including alienation between the local population and tourists (Mihalic & Kušcer, 2022). In essence, overtourism signifies the unsustainability of tourism (Mihalic, 2020). Excessive tourist traffic results in aggressive commercialization that disrupts natural and cultural resources. Furthermore, overcrowding in tourist destinations diminishes the aesthetic quality of the tourist experience (Szromek, Kruczek, & Walas, 2020).

The development of the concept in the literature is guided by four key books. Firstly, Young (1973) anticipated the serious social, environmental, and economic risks for destinations if tourism growth does not occur in a planned manner. In this context, he emphasized the importance of tourism policies that minimize the harms of overtourism. Subsequently, Turner and Ash (1975), Haulot (1974), and Krippendorf (1975) argued that uncontrolled growth in tourism would reach dimensions that destinations could not sustain, leading to depletion of environmental resources and land. Recent developments in mass tourism further validate the arguments made by these researchers.

The evolution and utilization of certain resources in destinations are often planned for tourism purposes. However, tourists often become unplanned users of these resources (Hall, 2009). Butler (2018) noted that the concept of overtourism is less about tourists and more about expressing social injustice and widespread stress for the local population in a destination. However, according to Pearce (2018), if the dissatisfaction of the local population reaches its limit and turns into direct aggression, it will not only affect the region's residents and businesses but ultimately the tourists themselves. The presence of a large number of tourists in a destination does not necessarily imply the existence of overtourism (Żemła, 2020). It is possible to say that destinations with a high number of visitors and no overtourism issues have a planned visitor management system and sufficient hosting capacities (Genç & Türkay, 2022).

2.2 Economic, Socio-cultural and Environmental Consequences of Overtourism

Urbanisation, globalisation, migration, digitalisation, the environment and even people's sense of place and identity are all pressing issues that need to be addressed and are all linked to the growth of tourism. Cities are complex places where these issues converge, where global trends meet local character. While tourism can help cities become more outward-looking, hospitable, and prosperous, it should be recognised that this process is not automatic and does not always benefit everyone equally. Tourism in some European cities has become highly unbalanced, with limited infrastructure, high demand for tourist attractions and sharp peaks at certain times of the year (Jordan, Pastras, & Psarros, 2018). Depending on the number of people who can afford to travel, more and more tourists and special groups of tourists have emerged in tourism. In this direction, there has been an international tourism boom in the Chinese and Indian markets. This increasing demand has led to the neglect of social and environmental sustainability in Asian destinations (Dodds & Butler, 2019a). Indeed, countries, regions and cities are still heavily promoted at the national and often regional level, and even at the municipal level. Global economic growth has increased the potential number of tourists, while technological advances have enabled more people to travel widely (Dodds & Butler, 2019b). Looking at the last decade, the number of international tourists has increased from 25 million in 1950 to over 1.3 billion in 2017. The UNWTO estimates that the sector will continue to grow at 3.3 per cent annually until 2030, when 1.8 billion tourists will cross borders. These emerging situations are fuelling overtourism, which it is estimated will be difficult to control if the same policies continue (UNWTO, 2018).

With traditional policies focusing on increasing volumes, it has become possible to see signs of overtourism in various destinations around the world (Peeters et al., 2018). Overtourism demand at the international level has manifested itself in rural areas as well as in world-famous metropolises (Drápela, 2023). While the increasing number of tourists and tourism activities in rural areas leads to unplanned

construction and uncontrolled growth in these areas (Barakazi, 2023), it can also cause social, psychological and health problems for the people in the region (Ghaderi et al., 2022). On the other hand, there may be resistance to tourism in society and negative situations such as traffic congestion and destruction of nature may occur in the region (Drápela, 2023). UNWTO (2018) defines the carrying capacity of tourism as “the maximum number of people who can visit a tourist destination at the same time without causing damage to the physical, economic and socio-cultural environment and without causing an unacceptable reduction in the quality of visitor satisfaction”. As can be seen, overtourism that exceeds capacity can cause economic, socio-cultural and environmental problems in destinations and in the societies that are part of destinations. Looking at the dimensions in more detail, it can be seen that due to overtourism, the number of short-term stays in destinations increases economically (Veríssimo et al., 2020), land and house prices increase, the understanding of tourism increases the prices of services and products (Martín et al., 2018), overdependence on the tourism sector due to seasonality (Cheer et al., 2019) and negatively affects other sectors, and high prices create a negative image among tourists (Peeters et al., 2018). The social and cultural problems of overtourism can be diverse and variable. Destinations may experience socio-cultural problems such as touristification of settlements, marginalisation of residents, crime, loss of cultural identity (Seyhan, 2023) and cultural shock (Namberger et al., 2019), social conflicts between different interest groups (Jamal & Getz, 1999), and reduced quality of life (Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019). Other problems that may arise as a result of overtourism relate to environmental goods. Problems that may arise in the environmental dimension are mainly the result of increased use (Peeters et al., 2018). In this context, increased use of natural resources (soil, water, energy), investments in tourism infrastructure, degradation of the natural and cultural landscape (Seyhan, 2023), threats to local species and geological areas, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution (Veríssimo et al., 2020), congestion and overcrowding (Peeters et al., 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2019), deterioration of urban safety and cleanliness (Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019; Veríssimo et al., 2020), land use issues (Sarantakou & Terkenli, 2019) are the environmental problems that can occur in tourist destinations.

So, how does sustainable tourism management work to reduce and control the problems caused by overtourism in rural destinations? In parallel with the evolution of tourism in rural areas, it can be said that although it is an important factor in the evolution of rural areas due to its positive social and cultural effects with the interaction between local people and tourists, as well as providing economic returns in the region (Eusébio et al., 2014), it is inevitable to face all kinds of costs caused by overtourism. In this regard, D'Mello et al. (2016) suggest that research should be conducted on stakeholder cooperation and participation as a key to sustainable tourism development in rural destinations. Especially in rural areas, evolution that ignores the local community should not be expected to be successful (Güzel & Çakır, 2023b). In fact, it is stated that the chances of success of sustainable rural tourism will be higher if all stakeholders in the rural area where tourism activities will be developed are willing to actively participate in sustainability initiatives. According to this understanding, which is called community-based tourism, it includes all interactions between local people and external stakeholders (Widawski et al., 2023).

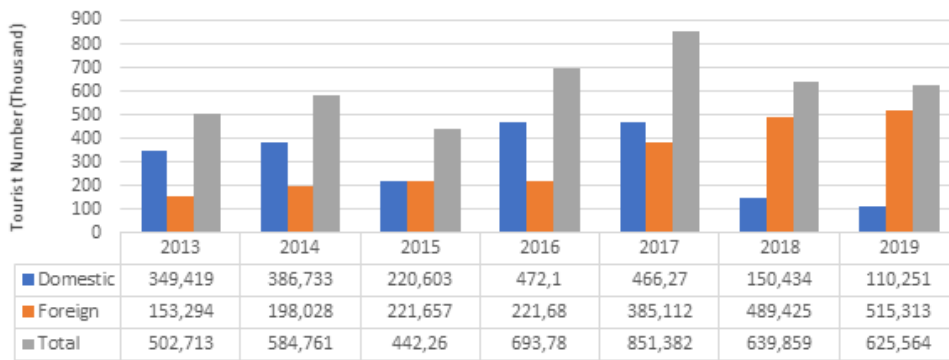
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Site: Uzungöl, Trabzon, Turkey

Uzungöl, an important tourism destination in Turkey, was selected as the sample for this study. The reason for choosing this destination is its status as an ecotourism region that hosts a significant number of tourists despite its limited geographical area. When examining the number of tourists in Uzungöl, it can be observed that the number increased from 51,464 in 1996 to 346,554 in 2000. In other words, the number of tourists increased sevenfold between 1996 and 2000. The majority of these tourists are domestic tourists (Yeşilyurt, 2002). When Figure 1 is analysed, it is seen that the total number of tourists peaked in 2017 and reached 851,382. However, this number decreased in 2018 and 2019. This decrease seems to be due to the decreasing interest of domestic tourists. Because there is no significant decrease in the number of foreign tourists in this period. Based on these data, it can be said that Uzungöl's popularity

for domestic tourists has decreased after 2016, but it has maintained or increased its popularity among foreign tourists. Fluctuations in the number of foreign tourists may be related to international tourism trends or changes in Turkey's tourism policies in certain years. The reasons for this decrease in the number of domestic tourists may be worth investigating; this may be related to economic factors, changes in local tourism policies, marketing efforts or changes in the attractiveness of the region.

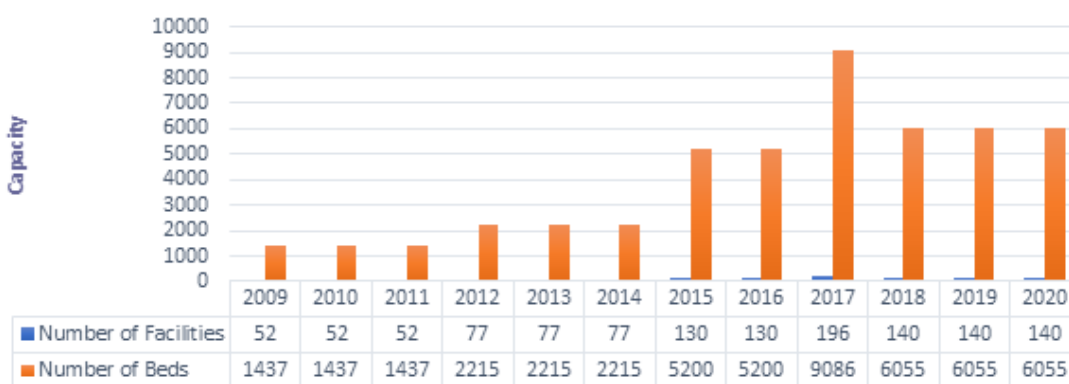
Figure 1. Tourist Numbers in Uzungöl between 2013-2019



Source: Trabzon Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2020

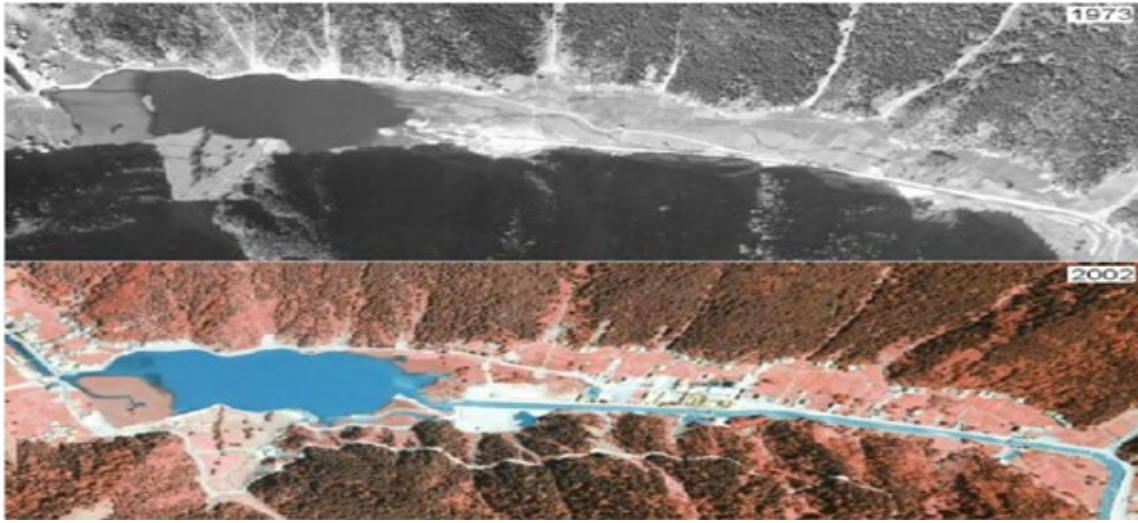
When observing Figure 2, it can be seen that Uzungöl's accommodation capacity has increased significantly in the last ten years, with the number of facilities increasing by nearly three times and the number of beds by more than four times. The number of establishments shows a continuous increase from 2009 to 2020. This increase shows that tourism is developing in the region and investment is increasing. The number of beds increased sharply in 2015 and peaked at 9 086 in 2017. However, after this peak, the number of beds fell sharply in 2018 and beyond. This may indicate an exceptional situation in 2017, or perhaps a saturation point in tourism. After the decline in 2018, the number of beds remained stable until 2020. This suggests that the region may have decided to operate at a certain capacity or that the market has stabilised. While the number of establishments is increasing, there are fluctuations in bed capacity. This may indicate that there is diversity in the size of existing facilities and the types of services they offer, or that facilities have changed their capacity in certain years.

Figure 2. Uzungöl Accommodation Capacity between 2009-2020



Source: Trabzon Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2020

When examining Image 1 and Image 2, it is apparent that Uzungöl, which appeared natural and less developed in the 1970s, saw some evolution in the 2000s. However, in the 2020s, it is clear that there has been significant evolution around the lake and the river that feeds it, resulting in a concrete appearance and a negative visual impact.

Image 1. Temporal Changes in Uzungöl between 1973 and 2002

Source: Atasoy, 2010

Image 2. A Bird's Eye View of Uzungöl in 2023

Source: Google, 2023

After determining the Uzungöl example, the Uzungöl destination was selected on the TripAdvisor website. Overtourism reviews were examined based on the selected keywords, and 516 reviews were categorized according to factors.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative exploratory approach to identify tourists' experiences of overtourism. The research follows a cross-sectional design and is based on data collected over a period of time (2010-2023). This approach is a method frequently used in the social sciences and allows for reliable results (Creswell, 2013).

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out on a major travel site such as TripAdvisor. This platform allows users to review on their travel experiences. The reviews were collected between January and April 2023. The researchers selected 516 user reviews about the Uzungöl region of Trabzon for analysis.

3.4 Content Analysis

Content analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis methods proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). This method allows for in-depth analysis of the data and systematic identification of themes. The content analysis process was carried out in two stages: a. Pre-coding: The researchers identified the reviews related to overtourism using the keywords obtained from the literature review. At this stage, statements were distinguished according to the dimensions of overtourism. b. Theme evolution: The statements identified in the first stage were grouped into broader categories. This categorisation was supported by discussions among the researchers, which increased the reliability and validity of the themes and concepts that emerged from the data (Saldaña, 2015).

3.5 Inter-Researcher Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the research process, the data were coded and analysed by three independent researchers. The researchers were in constant communication during the coding and theme development process and discussed any disagreements until consensus was reached (Krippendorff, 2004). This process aimed to increase the objectivity of the study and the reliability of the findings.

4. Findings

4.1 Descriptive Findings of Visitors

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics related to visitor reviews. When examining Table 1, it can be observed that reviews are predominantly in Turkish (71.5%), followed by English (18.8%) and Arabic (6.2%). It was found that 37.7% of visitors found the Uzungöl destination excellent, while 13.5% found it terrible. The majority of visitors appear to be families (45%), followed by couples (26.8%) and friends (24.1%) who visited the destination.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Visitor Reviews

Languages	n	%
Turkish	370	71.7
English	97	18.8
Arabic	32	6.2
German	7	1.4
French	2	0.4
Russian	5	1.0
Portuguese	1	0.2
Dutch	1	0.2
Hebrew	1	0.2
Total	516	
Evaluation	n	%
Excellent	195	37.7
Very Good	120	23.2
Average	87	16.8
Poor	44	8.53
Terrible	70	13.5
Total	516	

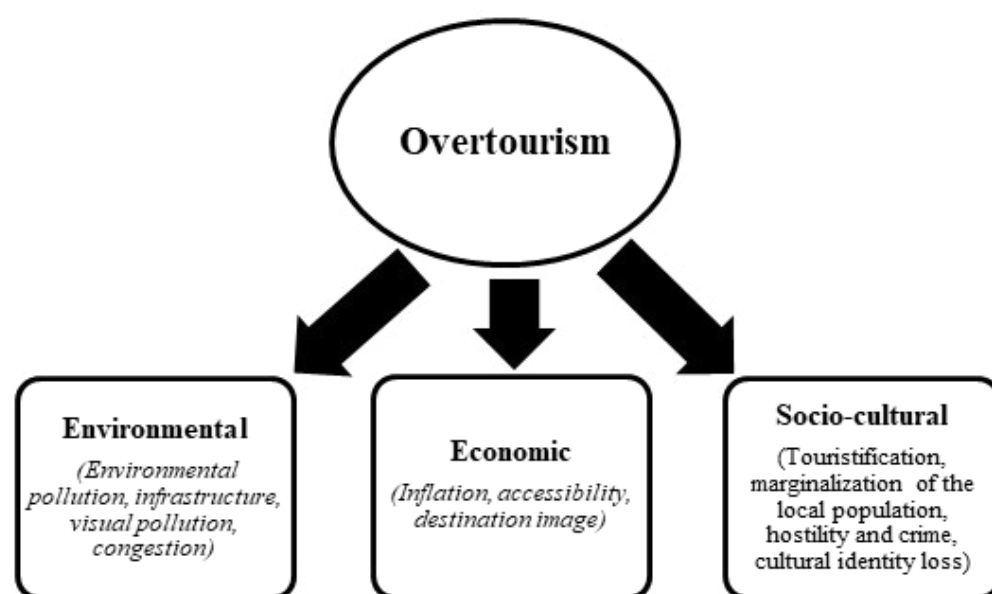
Type of Visit	n	%
Business	7	2.1
Couples	91	26.8
Family	153	45.0
Friends	82	24.1
Solo	7	2.1
Total	340	

Source: Own Elaboration

4.2 Results Regarding the Dimensions of Overtourism

According to the literature review, there are three dimensions of overtourism in tourism studies (Peeters et al., 2018). These dimensions are environmental, economic, and socio-cultural. These three dimensions were used as coding and analytical framework. The unit of analysis consists of sentences extracted from explanations related to overtourism. Researchers then clustered the sentences using qualitative analysis. The results of content analysis are summarized in Figure 3. Here is a detailed discussion of some of the key findings:

Figure 3. Dimensions of Overtourism and Key Terms



Source: Peeters et al., 2018

4.2.1 Findings Regarding the Analysis of Tourists' Overtourism Reviews in Environmental Dimension

Within the scope of the research, the frequency of tourists' reviews related to the "Environmental" dimension is as follows:

Table 2. Codes and Frequencies of Tourists' Environmental Dimension in Uzungöl

Environmental Dimension	Frequencies
Visual Pollution	18
Congestion	16
Environmental Pollution	12
Infrastructure	4
Total	50

Source: Own Elaboration

Based on the data in Table 2, tourists' reviews about Uzungöl on TripAdvisor provide important indicators of the environmental dimensions of overtourism. For example, one tourist said: *'The view is of course wonderful, but unfortunately this place has also had its share of concrete piles and its naturalness has been damaged. You have a wonderful view of the lake from the viewing platform, but when you look around you see a lot of hotels, cafes, shops and you can't help but wish it had stayed natural, and of course it's full of Arabs again'*. In another review, *'I've been to Uzungöl before, but this time I was very disappointed. If anyone has not seen it, I would say you should definitely see it. Because in a few years it will be gone because of the absurd constructions that have been made for the greed of making money'*. The statements suggest that the construction is causing environmental damage, and that this situation is negatively affecting the tourist experience. Finally, another tourist said: *'It's totally disappointing. When a magnificent nature was touched by unconscious people, a shameful landscape was created. You go to see some nature, to breathe, but there are buildings and concrete everywhere. I definitely do not recommend it'*, criticises the destructive effect of overdevelopment on natural beauty. These reviews clearly reveal the environmental dimensions of overtourism in Uzungöl and the impact of this situation on tourists' perceptions.

When the tourist experiences in Uzungöl are analysed, it is seen that congestion and density create environmental negativities. A tourist said, *'We went there to spend 4 nights with the family by the lake. 50 minutes of traffic congestion to enter the city from the only access road. And this is the case for every entry and exit to and from the city, no matter what time of the day. It's a very touristy place so we overlap. For lunch... if we are patient... we have to wait for the tables to empty. Tourists are disrespectful to the places and the inhabitants. Suddenly, an hour after we arrived, we used an excuse to change places completely. It's a pity because it's a really nice place but you should go there out of season. Mass tourism is just fear.'* indicates that congestion negatively affects the tourist experience. Furthermore, another tourist reviewed: *'It is very good but there are too many visitors. I think it is crowded like in Venice.'* shows that the crowds make Uzungöl less attractive for visitors. Finally, *'Uzungöl has become a place with an incredible number of Arabs. There are hotels everywhere and it is very crowded.'* also emphasises the impact of the concentration in the region on its diversity and quality. These reviews clearly reveal the environmental dimensions of overtourism in Uzungöl and its effects on tourist perceptions.

Tourist reviews in Uzungöl show that environmental pollution and infrastructure deficiencies pose serious environmental problems. The review of a tourist, *'It is a wonder of nature, it is very badly consumed, the environment is dirty, the lake is polluted, it receives a significant number of tourists from the Middle East, it should be seen before it gets worse'* emphasises that the natural beauty of the region has been damaged, and this situation has been noticed by tourists. Another review, *'Our citizen have done what they would do again. They managed to ruin that beautiful natural wonder. Everywhere there is construction, everywhere there are businesses, everywhere there is rubbish and filth. The wastewater of the businesses flows into the lake. They have destroyed the naturalness of the lake'* expressions point to the negative effects of construction and waste management problems on the environment. A third review criticises the inadequacies in infrastructure and service quality, *'Uzungöl has changed compared to the past, the prices are very expensive, the noise of motorbikes and restaurants is very loud and expensive, all the streets are full of garbage and the walking path around the lake is narrow, they do not have a system to pull.'* Finally, the review *'The nature is very beautiful, but the roads are completely construction site, the traffic is very bad, two vehicles cannot pass side by side, everywhere is like an excavation site, I hope it will be completed as soon as possible'* reveals the

damage caused by the infrastructure works to the environment and how this situation affects the tourist experience.

Looking at the reviews that may be related to overtourism in relation to Uzungöl, it can be seen that environmental concerns are more prominent. The most frequently mentioned problem of tourists in Uzungöl was visual pollution. It is understood that tourists visiting the region have a negative image in terms of overbuilding, concreting and unplanned urbanisation. In fact, it is a fact that the number of tourism-related structures in Uzungöl has increased, especially in recent periods. Increasing structures cause concretisation by disturbing the natural appearance and visual pollution becomes noticeable for visitors. Atasoy (2010) states that the increase of tourism activities in the region is due to the acceleration of the construction of facilities by the local people after the start of the motorway works in 1990 and the rapid increase of private sector investments. He stated that almost all of the investments made in this context are mainly accommodation and restaurant businesses in the lake region and noted that construction has increased by 125% in the last 35 years. Barakazı (2023) states that the region cannot meet the increasing demand for accommodation in Uzungöl, and as a result, concreting has taken place on the basis of visual pollution. In parallel with the increasing number of tourists and facilities, pollution is one of the issues that disturb tourists. In Uzungöl, in addition to the pollution caused by locals and tourists, waste from the facilities is one of the problems perceived in the region. As a result of the intensive tourist activities in the region, pollution has become inevitable. This density of tourists creates human and traffic congestion as well as pollution in the region. Considering both tourists and day-trippers who come to the region, there is a crowd of people that reaches the level of disturbance in the region. Traffic congestion is also caused by the frequent use of private vehicles to access the region. The pressure on the region's borders means that the infrastructure is inadequate, and the lake is also polluted by waste and environmental pollution.

4.2.2 Findings Regarding the Analysis of Tourists' Overtourism Reviews in Economic Dimension

In the scope of the research, the frequencies of tourists' reviews related to the "Economic" dimension are as follows.

Table 3. Codes and Frequencies Related to the Economic Dimension of Tourists in Uzungöl

Economic Dimension	Frequencies
Inflation	13
Accessibility	13
Destination Image	3
Total	29

Source: Own Elaboration

An analysis of Table 3 shows that the economic dimension is important to tourists after the environmental dimension, and especially inflation and accessibility problems are among the notable problems of overtourism. Tourists made different reviews about the economic conditions in Uzungöl. For example, one tourist stated that *'the service is bad and expensive because it is for tourists'*, which indicates that the quality of the service is not compatible with the price. Another said: *'The customer service is terrible. But only for Turkish customers. Arabs are cherished. Would you believe me if I told you that there is no interest in Turks in these places? It is unnecessarily expensive. It is as if the locals do not want the local tourists to come'* draws attention to the different treatment and economic discrimination between local and foreign tourists. Another tourist pointed out the transport difficulties and the impact of this situation on the tourist experience, saying: *'There was almost Istanbul traffic in Uzungöl, yes, there was traffic all around the lake. The name of a town in the Çaykara district of Trabzon and the name of the lake in that town. It was a place I had seen photographs of and wondered about since my childhood. Although I was not disappointed when I went there, I was sad when I thought about how it used to be'*. This review shows how changing environmental and economic

conditions affect tourists' emotional and aesthetic evaluations. These reviews clearly show the economic dimensions of tourism activities in Uzungöl and the impact of this situation on tourist perceptions.

It can be stated that there are also economic inconveniences for tourists in Uzungöl. In fact, the region is experiencing regional inflation as a result of its excessive commercialisation. The increasing understanding of services, especially for rich Arab tourists, can cause prices in the region to rise considerably, and this situation can be reflected as expensive for local tourists and the public. On the other hand, while the accessibility of the region is a problem from a physical point of view due to congestion and traffic, from an economic point of view it may become inaccessible to domestic tourists due to high costs. In fact, in Uzungöl, which is an over-commercialised region, the image of the destination for tourists can be negatively affected both environmentally and economically. In particular, the fact that the region is economically difficult to reach can give tourists a negative impression of the region. So much so, that the perceived high prices create a negative destination image in the minds of tourists, thus negatively affecting the loyalty of the unsatisfied tourist to the destination (Rajesh, 2013). As a matter of fact, when the number of domestic and foreign tourists coming to Uzungöl and their reviews are taken into consideration, it is seen that unsatisfied domestic tourists move away from the region.

4.2.3 Findings Regarding the Analysis of Tourists' Overtourism Reviews in Socio-Cultural Dimension

In the scope of the research, the frequencies of tourists' reviews related to the "Socio-cultural" dimension are as follows.

Table 4. Codes and Frequencies of Tourists' Reviews on the Socio-cultural Dimension in Uzungöl

Socio-cultural	Frequencies
Touristisation of the Settlement	10
Hostility and Crime	8
Loss of Cultural Identity	6
Marginalization of Local People	3
Total	27

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 4 shows that for tourists, socio-cultural dimensions, especially touristisation, hostility and crime, are among the main problems of overtourism. Tourists' reviews about Uzungöl reflect the profound effects of these socio-cultural changes. For example, one tourist said: *'I was horrified when I visited this natural wonder 10 years ago this year. I saw that hotels, houses, guesthouses, and restaurants had been built everywhere for the sake of rent. Nature has been slaughtered. Let's come to the other point: there is no Turkish at the entrances and on the menus of the restaurants, everywhere is full of Arabic writing. Arabic songs have replaced the Black Sea music that used to be played in these places. So much so that you feel like you are in Arabia. They even built an amusement park in the middle of such a natural wonder, of course with Arabic music playing again. Just to make more money from Arab tourists, they made them feel at home. Shame on you and the mentality that allows you to do this. But remember, this is not their home, it is mine, our home'*. This statement sums up the cultural changes in the region and their impact on the local people. Another review: *'There are hotels and hostels everywhere. There are Arabs in rental cars with 61 plates driving around, and Arabs in dozens of them in every place you enter on foot. We have been officially invaded by the Arabs, and we have even been invaded.'* This underlines the pressure of the increase in the number of tourists on the socio-cultural structure. These reviews clearly reveal the socio-cultural dimensions of overtourism in Uzungöl and the impact of this situation on the experiences of tourists and local people.

Reviews from tourists in Uzungöl reflect serious concerns about increasing hostility, crime and loss of local identity in the area. One tourist said: *'Don't try to go, you'll regret it, it's a problem to get there and a problem to get out, there's nothing to see. There is rubbish everywhere. When Turks are refugees, a fight can*

break out at any moment'. This statement reveals how social tensions and environmental problems in the region are perceived by tourists. Another review: *'It's a slaughtered nature. Hotels and restaurants designed and priced for Arabs. Incredible noise (horns and traffic), piles of rubbish everywhere. The lake is dirty and surrounded by concrete. A place where only Arabs are treated like human beings. Soon there will be a big fight there but be sure you will be beaten by the shopkeepers, not the Arabs. There's nothing to see, don't go', emphasises the social and environmental costs of economic interests. Also: 'It should change its name, not Uzungöl, it should be Arapgöl (Arabiclake). I couldn't read the names of the places or the signs because I don't speak Arabic. It is impossible to walk around, the pavements are used as car parks by the hotels'*, criticises the change in the cultural and physical infrastructure of the region. Finally, *'let's talk about the Arabic signs and the privilege they are given. The name of this country is Turkey, Turkish is spoken here, and our signs are organised in this way. When tourists come to our country, they are welcome. But we cannot forget our own values and change the signs and the language so that we can earn 2-3 cents more'* draws attention to the problems of managing cultural integration processes. These reviews highlight the socio-cultural dimensions of tourism in Uzungöl and the impact of this situation on tourists' experiences.

It is assumed that the perceived economic environment in Uzungöl has similar results in the socio-cultural dimension. In fact, there are problems with tourists being socially disturbed. One example of this is the way in which the social and cultural structure of the region is shaped for a certain mass of tourists (Arab tourists) who come to the region. This situation creates the impression that the cultural identity of the region has been lost and can lead to the marginalisation of some local people in the region. So much so that the fact that the region is dominated by a certain group of tourists, as well as the arrival of many tourists to the region, can make the local people feel that they are in a minority. In fact, from the perspective of tourists, the goal of earning more money is thought to be particularly effective in creating such a social and environmental environment in Uzungöl. However, unlike the tourists, Güzel & Çakır (2023a) also found in their research that the region did not experience any negative socio-cultural effects of tourism according to the perception of the local people. Alptekin (2017) came to a similar conclusion, stating that the tourism-induced economic change in the region did not cause any significant change in the cultural and social structure. The difference between the tourists' image of Uzungöl and the local people's perception of the effects of tourism can be seen by considering the results of this study and the results of the research conducted.

5. Conclusion

In parallel with the growing international tourism activities, the demand for tourist destinations is increasing quantitatively every day. Indeed, countries aiming to claim a larger share of international tourism income are marketing their tourist destinations with various attractions. Especially in developing countries, the tourism sector is becoming more important. However, in such countries, the problem of sacrificing sustainable principles arises, especially due to the dominance of profit-oriented approaches. Tosun (2001) cites national economic policy priorities, the structure of public administration, the emergence of environmental problems, excessive commercialization, and the structure of the international tourism system as obstacles to the development of sustainable tourism. Especially in developing countries like Turkey, it can be understood that there are destinations that may experience problems due to the barriers mentioned by Tosun (2001). In this context, the findings related to the reviews of tourists about Uzungöl, where problems are frequently mentioned, are also noteworthy.

As a result, although Uzungöl has many protection statuses, why has it entered an unsustainable path? This question can be answered briefly as 'prioritising economic returns'. Especially Arab tourists, who bring more money, are the favourite of the region. The shaping of the region according to the wishes of Arab tourists has caused local tourists to move away from Uzungöl over the years. It is understood that the local tourists, who are economically uncomfortable, are also dissatisfied in environmental and social terms and move away from the region. Ultimately, utilitarian policies have been followed in Uzungöl due to the fact that the environmental, socio-cultural and even economic negativities are ignored and only the motive of making money is acted upon. To put it with the interpretation used by Akoğlu Kozak et al.

(2013) for countries and regions far from sustainable tourism, it is seen that Uzungöl also acts with the understanding of 'economic growth at all costs.

Within the framework of the research, what kind of model can be proposed to prevent unsustainable practices in Uzungöl? It is thought that it would be useful to consider the results of the studies carried out in the region and the results of this study in a holistic perspective. In this context, it would be more accurate to evaluate the issue in terms of the evolution of tourism in the region, its impacts and sustainable tourism. On the other hand, it is necessary to know that local people, tourists, and other tourism stakeholders have a direct impact on the evolution of tourism in the region. Therefore, it is necessary to address the evolution of tourism in the region so that all stakeholders can evaluate the region and tourism in the region. Studies on the evolution of tourism in the region began in the 1990s, and attention was particularly drawn to environmental problems (Akkan et al., 1993; Yazıcı & Cin, 1997). At the point of examining the problems of tourism in the region in more detail, Alptekin (2017) revealed that the social structure and culture in Uzungöl did not deteriorate much. Küçükaşçı (2019) also revealed the dilemma between the predicted and achieved results of the tourism policy in the region with the results obtained by interviewing local people, civil society members and politicians. Kılıç (2020) discussed the evolution of tourism in the region in terms of tourism indicators by interviewing stakeholders in the region and revealed that there are problems such as deficiencies related to control, supervision, incentives and support, insufficient infrastructure and superstructure, and the inability to create zoning plans. Mutlu (2021) interviewed people living in the region and discussed photographs from different periods of Uzungöl. He found that the region had become concretised, that there was an increase in waste and that there were no measures in place to protect resources. Güzel (2022) conducted interviews with local people and other tourism stakeholders in order to provide a holistic perspective on the development and impacts of tourism in the region and the understanding of sustainable tourism management. In this context, although there are differences between local people and stakeholders in the perception of the impacts of tourism, it was found that there are negative impacts in the region.

5.1 Recommendations for Practice and Researchers

Considering the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Uzungöl, the following recommendations are made for practitioners and researchers:

5.1.1 Recommendations for Implementation:

Environmental Dimension

- 1) Sustainable Tourism Planning: Tourism planning should be based on the principles of environmental sustainability. This planning should include the protection of natural areas, the reduction of visual and environmental pollution and the maintenance of tourism without harming the ecological balance.
- 2) Waste Management and Infrastructure Development: Waste collection and treatment capacity should be increased through the establishment of effective waste management systems. Investment should also be made in infrastructure projects to reduce traffic congestion and improve pedestrian access.
- 3) Environmental Education: The importance of protecting the natural beauties of the region should be emphasised by organising environmental awareness trainings for local people and tourists.

Economic Dimension

- 1) Review Pricing Policies: A fair and balanced pricing policy should be implemented to ensure that tourism services are accessible to local people and domestic tourists.
- 2) Supporting Small Enterprises: Support for small and medium sized enterprises should be encouraged to revitalise the local economy and ensure that local people benefit from tourism.
- 3) Increasing Tourism Diversity: To avoid dependence on a single tourist profile, different types of tourism and activities should be developed. In this way, visitors from different income groups and cultures can be attracted to the region.

Socio-Cultural Dimension

- 1) Protection of Cultural Heritage: Projects should be developed to preserve and promote local culture and traditions. This can be an attractive element for tourists while strengthening the cultural identity of the region.
- 2) Social Cohesion Programmes: Programmes and events should be organised to promote social cohesion between locals and tourists. This will help to prevent potential hostility and misunderstandings.
- 3) Language and Communication: Businesses in the region should be supported to provide services in international languages such as English as well as the local language. This can reduce communication barriers and provide a more inclusive tourism experience.

3.1.1 Recommendations for Researchers:

- 1) Research Studies: In order to better understand the impact of tourism in Uzungöl, comprehensive research should be carried out using different disciplines. Studies covering socio-economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions can play an important role in shaping tourism policy in the region.
- 2) Multidimensional Studies: Studies that focus on the socio-cultural impacts of tourism can help to understand changes in the region and develop strategies to adapt to these changes. In particular, studies that compare the perspectives of local people and tourists can provide valuable information for policy makers.
- 3) Long-term Monitoring: Continuous data collection and analysis should be carried out to monitor the long-term impacts of tourism activities in the region. This can improve the effectiveness of future planning and management strategies.
- 4) Cultural Interactions: Theoretical models should be developed to analyse the impact of tourism on cultural interactions, and strategies should be developed to manage these interactions at local and global levels.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has some limitations. First, it is an exploratory study that provides a snapshot of reviews on the web platform, which limits the study. Second, the study focuses on a specific city and the data from a specific web platform. The scope of the research can be expanded by examining similar destinations and including information from different online review sites. Third, due to Covid-19, there has been a decrease in tourist mobility worldwide. Therefore, data on the number of tourists before 2020 was used because it was thought that a statistically accurate evaluation could not be made. Finally, online platform reviews are written by those who visit these places. Taking into account the opinions of the local people will contribute to a deeper understanding of the overtourism phenomenon in the region.

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