

## **Geographical Analysis of Cultural and Eco-tourism Potential in Cittaslow Halfeti (Şanlıurfa-Turkey)**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Cultural and eco-tourism represents an area of significant economic benefit to museums and heritage sites. In recent years, the concept of eco and cultural tourism has become widespread at the global level and is considered jointly with the concepts of protection of natural and cultural heritage and rural development. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the ecotourism and cultural tourism potential of the Halfeti District in the Şanlıurfa Province and make recommendations for sustainability. The number of studies on the eco and cultural tourism potential of the Halfeti is limited. The study is expected to pave the way for similar studies in future. In accordance with this purpose firstly surveys conducted so areas of interest for tourists are determined. As well as field work done so the tourist areas were photographed and get coordinated with GPS. Finally data which collecting in the study area mapped using Geographical Information System methodology. Study results shows tourists are coming to Halfeti for make a boat trip, seeing Submerged Villages and Sunken Mosque, Runkale and Black Rose. The purpose of ecological planning should not be limited to economic development. Objectives must include raising awareness among locals regarding natural protection. Ecotourism applications in the Halfeti Cittaslow must certainly be monitored, assessed, and controlled.*

**Keywords:** *Eco-Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Cittaslow, Halfeti.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

One of the most important keys to development, prosperity, and wealth, tourism is simply the activity of traveling for relaxation and vacation purposes with no intention of profiting or settling in the destination (İlhan et.al, 2017). Eco-tourism term appera in the 1980s as a result of the world's acknowledgment and answer to sustainable and global ecological practice. In these terms, the ecological-based element of holiday activities together with the increased awareness to minimise the effects of tourism on the nature contributed to the demand for eco-tourism holidays (Boo, 1990; Diamantis, 1999). Ecotourism has three principles; a) Preservation of ecological carrying capacity and ecological balance b) Ensuring acceptance of tourism development and c) Environmental friendly transport alternatives (Vrujci, 2005).

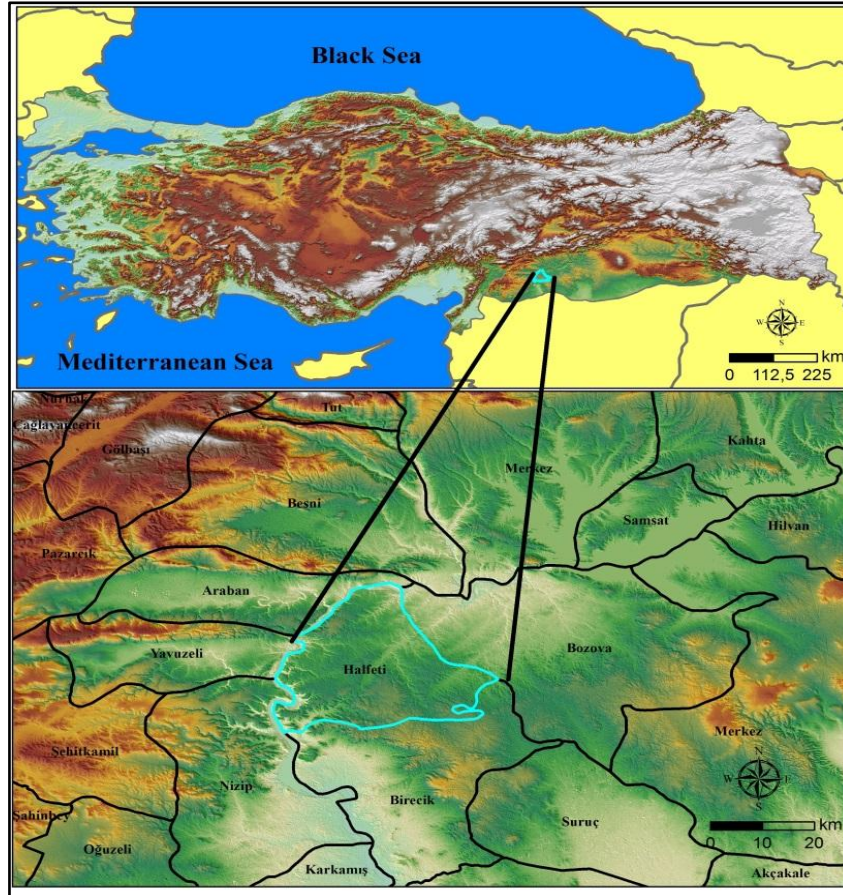
Cultural tourism display an area of important economic benefit to museums and heritage sites. Challenging economic times in particular require cultural and heritage facilities to explore ways and means to increase attendance and self-generated revenues and to control operating expenses (Silberberg, 1995; Butler and Ivanovic, 2015; Throsby, 2016). Cultural tourism is a type of special interest tourism based on the search for and participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic, intellectual, emotional, or psychological. Several cultural forms such as museums, galleries, festivals, architecture, historic ruins, artistic performances, and heritage sites routinely draw tourists (Stebbins, 1996; Richards, 2016).

In recent years, the concept of eco and cultural tourism has become widespread at the global level and is considered jointly with the concepts of protection of natural and cultural heritage and rural development. By the reason of the quick growth of the tourism sector worldwide, many destinations now compete in the marketplace globally and the competition among them is make more than ever. This puts much pressure on destinations to find better and unique ways to compete and differentiate product offerings from other destinations. Creating a sustainable competitive advantage has therefore become an important topic for many destinations, including Turkey (Özüpekçe, 2008; Gümüş and Özüpekçe, 2009; Okumuş et.al, 2012). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the ecotourism and cultural tourism potential of the Halfeti District in the Şanlıurfa Province and make recommendations for sustainability. The number of studies on the eco and cultural tourism potential of the Halfeti is limited. The study is expected to pave the way for similar studies in future.

#### **1.1. Study Area**

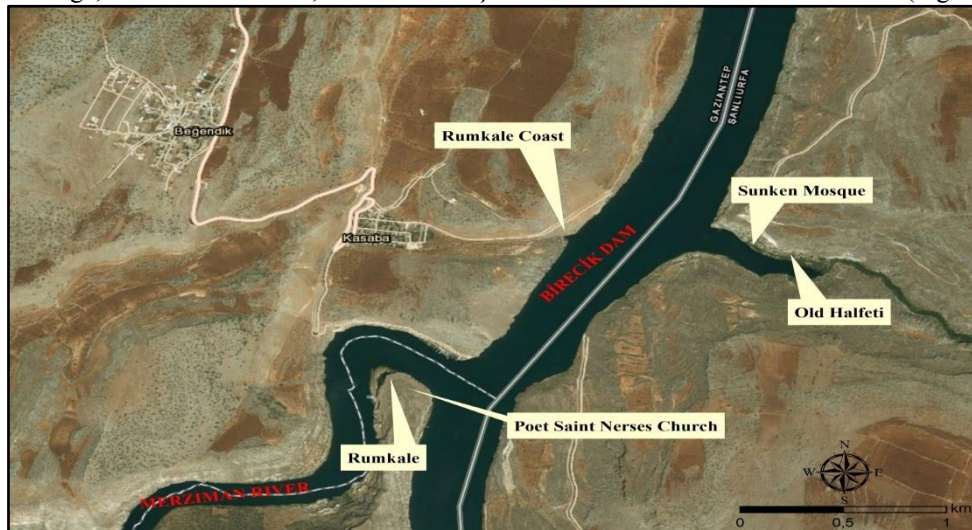
Halfeti is district of Southeast of Turkey in Şanlıurfa province. It's one of the most unusual settlements in Turkey because the old town is mostly submerged into the water because of Birecik Dam building (in 1990s).

A total of 14 districts of Turkey's "Cittaslow" has been declared. One of these districts is Halfeti, 110 km west of Şanlıurfa. Halfeti is a small settlement located on the bank of Euphrates, in south-eastern Turkey (Yamaç, 2015). There are two dams on Euphrates on the region: Ataturk Dam, 145 km north of Halfeti and Birecik Dam, 55 km south of Halfeti. (Figure 1). Located along the banks of the river Euphrates in the southeastern Turkish district of Şanlıurfa, Halfeti was partially flooded in 1999 to create the Birecik dam.



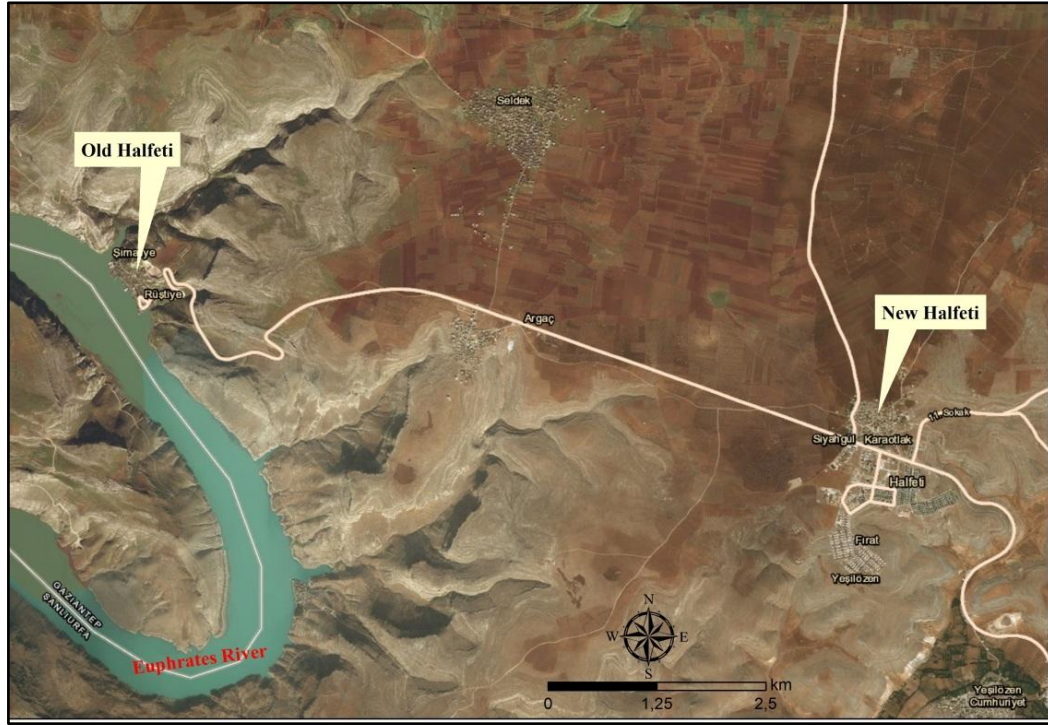
**Figure 1.** Location Maps of Cittaslow Halfeti.

Cittaslow Halfeti has numerous historic, cultural and ecological values. Noteworthy historical, archaeological cultural and ecologic places in Halfeti include Kız Cave, Rumkale, Halfeti Ulu Cami (Mosque), Halfeti drawbridge, Halfeti Black Rose, Church of Barşavma and Church of Poet Saint Nerses (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Cittaslow Halfeti has numerous historical, cultural and ecological values. Maps of tourism values of Halfeti.

The number of tourists increases in Halfeti with its natural and historical riches. Boat trips on the Euphrates River (Değişel and Bingöl, 2018). Until the area was flooded in 1999, the people lived from fishing in the Euphrates and farming on the riverbank, especially growing peanuts and the area's famous black roses (Figure 3).. Then the waters came and “new” Halfeti was built (<https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2015/07/24/the-black-rose-of-halfeti>).



**Figure 3.** Location of New and Old Halfeti District.

Halfeti has hosted many civilizations. Birecik Dam has been completed in 2000, 3/5 parts of the Halfeti District was under water (<http://cittaslowturkiye.org/cittaslow-halfeti/>). Halfeti now attracts nearly two hundred thousand visitors a year from around the world, most of them arriving in spring and autumn - but avoiding the searing heat of the summer. Trekking and water-sports are offered in the town where there is also a quad bike track. The town is also a member of the “slow city” movement, “Cittaslow,” that advocates a cultural shift toward slowing down the pace of life (Figure 4).

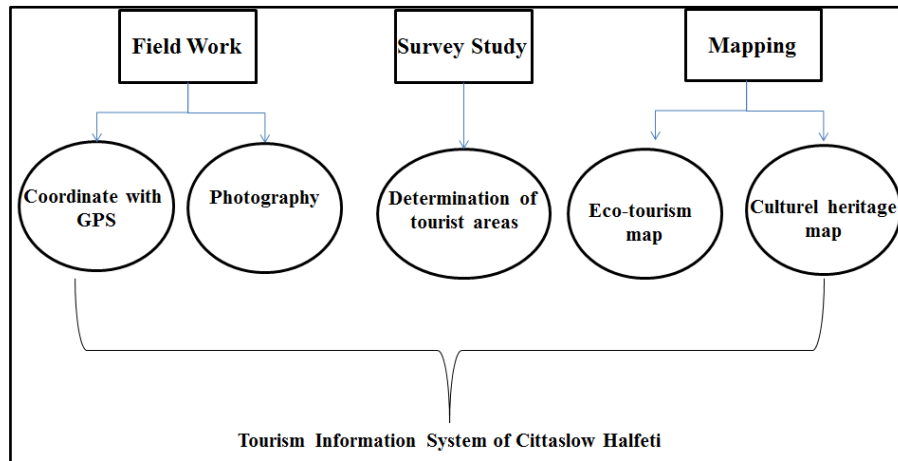


**Figure 4.** Seem of Old Halfeti and Birecik Dam.

## II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the ecotourism and cultural heritage of the Halfeti district of the Şanlıurfa province and make recommendations for sustainability. The number of studies on the ecotourism and cultural potential of the Halfeti is limited. The study is expected to pave the way for similar studies in future. The study material consists of natural and cultural characteristics of the Halfeti access to the topographic structure, tourism facilities available in the area, and the area's demographic construct.

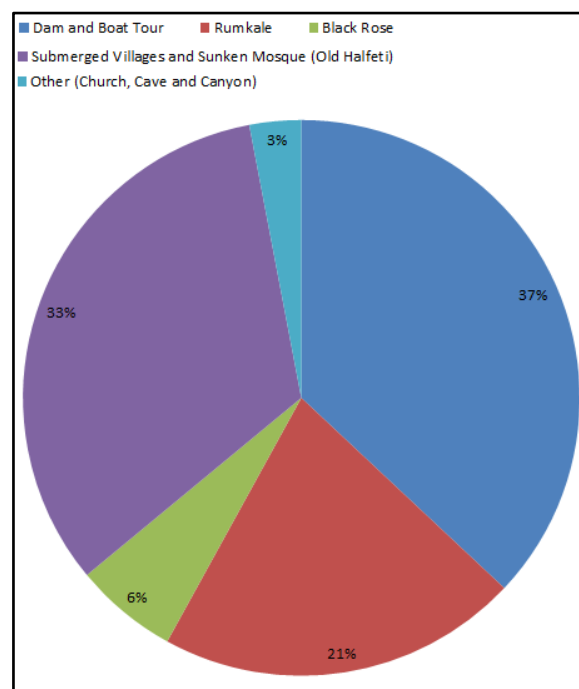
In accordance with this purpose firstly surveys conducted so areas of interest for tourists are determined. Survey with 100 tourists. As well as field work done so the tourist areas were photographed and get coordinated with GPS. Finally data which collecting in the study area mapped using Geographical Information System (GIS) methodology (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Work flow chart.

## III. RESULTS

According to result of the survey study shows tourists are coming to Halfeti for make a boat trip (% 37). Also survey results show tourists are coming to Halfeti for see Submerged Villages and Sunken Mosque (% 33). A lot of tourists are coming for Rumkale (% 21). Rumkale is at the point where two rivers (Euphrates and Merzimen River) meet. Number of tourists to see the famous Black Rose of Halfeti so much (% 6). Halfeti also has many churches, cave and canyon. Survey study shows tourists are coming to Halfeti for Church of Barşavma and Church of Poet Saint Nerses (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Result of survey study.

### 3.1. Eco-Tourism Potantial Of Halfeti Cittaslow

Ecotourism and other forms of sustainable tourism mostly focus on places that have seen minimal change in terms of natural environment and cultural values in under-developed countries or regions. Social responsibility, economic efficiency, and ecological awareness are involved in all steps of such forms of tourism, and caution needs to be exercised to avoid negative effects on the natural environment and cultural values and such tourism activities should contribute to the economy of locals (Özgen, 2010; İlhan et al., 2017).

#### 3.1.1. Halfeti's Black Rose

Growing in the world's only Halfeti district of Şanlıurfa, Black Rose (Karagül) admires people with its color. It blooms red. Thanks to the micro climate in the region, it only grows here. Also Black Rose growing in that region requires a certain pH level (<https://www.dailysabah.com/feature/2015/07/24/the-black-rose-of-halfeti>). It has its own smell and appearance. In other words the flower a unique rose that only grows in the southeastern province of Şanlıurfa's Halfeti Cittaslow in the whole world. Its production has stopped due to changing ecological dynamics and anthropogenic effects but is set to be produced in greenhouses and be reached out to international floral markets with a new project. Halfeti Black Roses to be produced in the greenhouse, where the processes of shading, fertilization, ventilation, irrigation, heating, cooling and humidification are carried out with computers in order to ensure optimal conditions for growth, and is expected to be offered to domestic and international markets (<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/halfetis-black-rose-to-grow-in-greenhouse--110359>). Black roses used in the production of soap and cream (<https://www.sozcu.com.tr/hayatim/yasam-haberleri/dunyada-sadece-halfetide-yetisiyor-karagul/>).

Ecological requirements of Halfeti's Black Rose: Halfeti's Black Rose variety in sandy soil. Soil is very heavy due to clay and require adding some sand or organic mulch in soil. As far as location requirements are concerned, these Halfeti's Black Roses need partial shade to grow healthily. After planting, pack the soil slackly around plant and then water. During hot weather, black roses should be watered at least thrice a week. Mostly black roses need to be fertilized at start of their growing season and once in middle of their growing season (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Halfeti's Black Roses grows in clay soil

#### 3.1.2. Euphrates River and Birecik Dam

The Birecik Dam, one of the twenty one dams of the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, is located on the Euphrates River sixty kilometers downstream of Atatürk Dam and eight kilometers upstream of Birecik district eighty km west of -Şanlıurfa in the southeastern region of Turkey (Figure 5). Birecik dam covers a total 44 villages in Halfeti, Birecik and Bozova Districts in Şanlıurfa Province. Old Halfeti District completely flooded and three will be partially flooded. Approximately 6,500 people will be re-settled due to Birecik Dam (Figure 8).

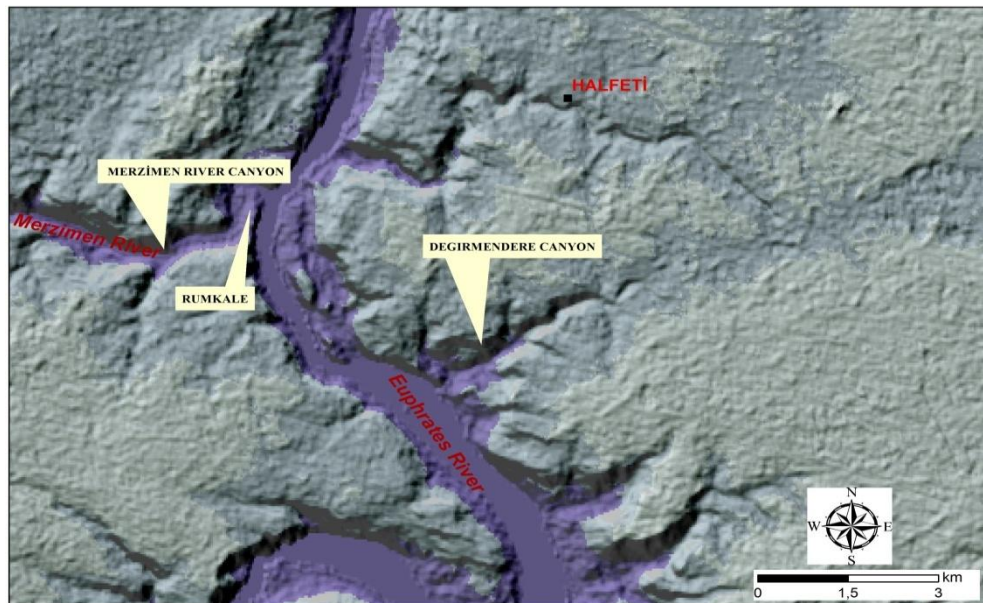


**Figure 8.** Location of Birecik Dam from satellite map (a) and Seem of Birecik Dam (b).

Total length of Euphrates River 2,800 km South east of the Turkey. The Euphrates River rises in Erzurum, where the Dumlupınar Mountain rises and passes through the main east-eastern Anatolia region to Syria and Iraq. It joins the Tigris River before pouring into the Gulf of Basra. The region around the Euphrates river is known as Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia eventually became the important region of the Babylonian and Assyrian world empires (<http://www.biblestudy.org/maps/euphrates-river-valley-map.html>).

### 3.1.3. Canyons and Caves

Kız Cave is in old Halfeti. Caves provide critical habitat for a variety of plant and animal communities and are nature's time capsules, preserving evidence of past life, climates and earth-forming processes. Caves are highly valued by the community as places for recreation, shelter and refuge and provide water for more than a quarter of the world's population (Gunn, 2004).



**Figure 9 .** Place of Değirmendere and Merzimen River Canyon



**Figure 10.** A view from Değirmendere Canyon (a) and Merzimen River Canyon (b).

It is possible to visit Kız Cave with boat tours. Boat tours are made for this cave after the Birecik Dam has been built (Figure 11).



**Figure 11.** Seem of Kız (Girl) Cave

### **3.2. Cultural Tourism**

#### **3.2.1. Submerged Villages and Sunken Mosque (Old Halfeti)**

Old Halfeti and Merkez Camii Central Mosque flooded by the lake of Birecik Dam on the Euphrates river. Minaret of Halfeti Merkez Camii partly flooded by the lake of Birecik Dam (Figure 12). The majority of Halfeti was flooded in 2001 in the aftermath of a massive state project to dam the Euphrates. The dam cost thousands their homes and their livelihoods. It changed the shape of the town, dividing it into “New” and “Old” Halfeti. New Halfeti lies on the hill above the Euphrates and its houses are all recently built; it does not have a view of the water (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/black-roses-in-turkey>).



**Figure 12.**A view of Sunken Mosque

#### **3.3. Rumkale and Around Churches**

Rumkale is located on the cliffs in the area where the Merzimen River flows into the Euphrates River, 62 kilometers northeast of Gaziantep. The history of Rumkale, (Hromgla), goes back to the beginning periods of Christianity. After the Battle of Meracidabik, Rumkale moved to Ottoman rule and became a district of Aleppo province. Rumkale where St. John copied the drafts of the New Testament. This area is now attracting more tourists with the boat tours. Rumkale is situated on a mound of solid ground surrounded by high and steep cliffs on the west banks of the Euphrates, where the river and the Merzimen Stream meet in the village of Kasaba in Yavuzeli, Gaziantep (Figure 13). There are many structures in the town belonging to the Turkish-Islamic period. Displaying many examples of the art of that period, the fort also includes a mesjid, now in a state of ruin. (<http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/20221.asp>). The castle is in two sections. First part; east of the castle, north and west of the natural rock in the perpendicular carved, the natural fortification



**Figure13.** Rumkale is at located where the Euphrates and Merzimen Rivers meet

It was built towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In the name of Patrick Nerses who died in Rumkale. Church of Poet Saint Nerses is located in the south of Rumkale. Richard Peacock, who visited Rumkale in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, referred to this structure as Gothic style church (Figure 14). The church in the east-west direction has a rectangular plan, three naves and three apses. The other church is Barşavma in Halfeti. This church built 13<sup>th</sup> century. Barşavma Curch built by Yakubi Saint Barşavama. This building adherent forms in today.



**Figure 14.** Seem of Poet Saint Nerses Church

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Spatial resourcesformation in tourism besides areal development and effects of tourism. Turkey is located in a geography containing diversity in geologically, geomorphologically, climatically and vegetative terms. Anatolia has sedimentary, volcanic, metamorphic rocks and lands, belonging to fanerezoik period (all geological period). Situated within temperate zone, Turkey also has rich vegetation cover. The number of plant species showing dispersion in Turkey is close to that of plant species which whole of the Continental Europe has. In this context, tourism activities come into prominence in Turkey based on features of natural environment. One of tourism activities which had emerged in 1980s as an alternative tourism and which has been growing rapidly is ecotourism. It, an activity for ecological, archeological and cultural settings, is tourism activity which has been performed in the undisturbed ecological settings, and which has aims such as observing, examining landscape, wild life, rural environment and culture and living there etc., in a manner where it would have effect on natural and cultural environment as little as possible (İlhan et. al, 2017). Ecotourism contributes to socio-cultural condition of local people and provides economic resource in protecting natural and cultural settings. Purpose of this paper is to present potential, in terms of cultural and eco-tourism that is one of alternate tourism activities, of Halfeti District in Şanlıurfa city.

The article does not recommend that Turkey should solely focus on cultural tourism and eco-tourism should be the main product of Turkey. Given this, it is perhaps important to develop synergies among different types of tourism such as 3S tourism (sea, sun, and sand); cultural tourism; and eco-tourism so they support and complement each other. Resultly, future studies can look at social networking sites to examine tourists postings



related to their positive and negative cultural and ecological experiences in Turkey and Halfeti (Okumus et.al, 2012).

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