



## CANOE SPORTS TOURISM IN MANAVGAT

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The general purpose of this study is revealing the role of canoeing as an alternative tourism for Manavgat. Manavgat is one of the most important tourism destinations in Turkey. It also takes attention with its own nature and water resources so they are very convenient for water sports. Especially these water sources are able to cater to different branches of canoe sports. Canoeing is a sport to join by the local community and tourists. In this concept International Manavgat Dragon Canoe Fest is studied at 21-23 October 2016. It has been observed that Canoe Fest creates high tourism value and satisfactory activities for the local people in Manavgat.

**Keywords:** Manavgat, Sport tourism, Canoe.

### **Introduction**

Manavgat is one of the most important tourism destinations in Turkey. It also takes attention with its own nature and water resources. It has been stagnant water and rivers with different degrees of discharge so it is very convenient for water sports. Especially these water sources are able to cater to different branches of canoe sports. Canoeing is a sport to join by the local community and tourists. However canoeing is a new sport in the region and it is necessary to create awareness with recreational activities such as festivals, camping and races. Recreational activities support tourism and provide benefit for the local community.

Sport tourism is a major tourism area of rural and urban communities and has power to redefine economic approaches especially in developing countries. Such as tourism can improve the welfare of the local population also increases the individual quality of life (Honari, 2010).

### **Manavgat**

Manavgat is the largest village of Antalya in Turkey with an area of 2283 km<sup>2</sup>, 220.000 population and 250 000 bed capacity. Manavgat attracts tourists with trio (sea-sand-sun) as resort tourism. The destination needs product diversification to increase its competitive advantage and to make it sustainable.

Manavgat tourism destination attracts tourists with trio (sea-sand-sun) as resort tourism. The destination needs product diversification to increase its competitive advantage and to make it sustainable. The most important values are nature and water sources in the region. There have been sea, river, lake and waterfalls as rich water sources. And also mountains and forests are already intertwined with these water resources. From this point the destination is very convenient for nature sports and water sports.



**Picture 1.** Titreyengöl- Sorgun (sea-lake-river-forest)

It is more possible that water sports activities which are shaped to focus over canoeing will be success. Because the region of Titreyengöl-Sorgun has a favorable geographical conditions to this sport in Manavgat. Appropriate infrastructure of tourism is available to develop combination of sports and tourism. There are approximately 30,000 beds and 30 5-star hotels in the area. This capacity is not used between October and April due to the seasonality characteristics of the tourism. These months are very suitable for nature sports and water sports so alternative tourism activities in this area may extend the tourism season. For this purpose the unique nature and water resources of Manavgat destination can be developed for sports tourism. In this way Manavgat destination will reveal new tourism products in a different direction from other tourism destinations so tourism will spread further apart in time and space.

Stagnant water and river in different stream degrees in terms of water resources are very convenient for water sports. These resources are able to cater to the different branches of canoeing. The local community and tourists of all ages could easily participate to canoeing sports. However canoeing is a new sport, so it is necessary to create awareness with recreational activities such as race, festivals and camping (Duran E. and Özkul E., 2012; Ağılönü A. and Mengütay, 2009).



Picture 2. Titreyengöl Dragon Fest

### Canoe Sport Tourism

Tourism destinations develop different strategies to attract more tourists and to spread the tourism season to time and space in a highly competitive environment. Each destination has to offer new tourist products using its original values (Porter, 1990). Water sources of Manavgat are original values. Sport tourism is an improving tourist product in recent years (Honari, 2010).

Stagnant water and river in different stream degrees are very convenient for water sports. These sources are able to cater to the different branches of canoeing. The local community and tourists of all ages could easily participate to canoe sport. So the tourists coming to the region can be more satisfied with their leisure experiences, and also special interest tourists which deal with canoe visit to the region (Tükeltürk, 2013).

Canoeing is a nature sports which is usually applied in lakes and rivers. Average camping period in winter of canoe athletes are 3 months. This period is very useful for off season. The majority of tourists coming to Manavgat are from European Countries. European people are very interested in nature sports and water sports. Especially in canoeing European countries have successful athletes. Due to the climatic conditions they do not have camping facilities in winter in their own countries. The winter climate of Manavgat is convenient for canoe sports.

Antalya Belek destination has a strong brand for golf tourism. Manavgat destination can also have a strong brand with canoe tourism.

Destination can also offer recreational opportunities with tourism activities for local community. Local people can benefit from infrastructure opportunities which will be created for sports tourists (Türker, 2014).

## Methodology

In this study, the observation was carried out over the local community and canoe athletes participating of Manavgat Titreyengöl Dragon Canoe Fest on 21-23 October 2016. The fest has total of 24 teams with 11 people in every team. There were 5 professional teams. Other teams were from local people. I also interviewed the president of Turkish Canoe Federation and I participated the fest as a competitor.

## Findings

Observations reached the following findings;

- The fest would offer the opportunity to meet new people for local community,
- It would create opportunities on entertainment for local community,
- Canoeing had been useful for a healthy life,
- During the fest they felt happy ,
- All the fest events made a sensation for them
- They wanted to share their experiences with others,
- They thought the existence of the fest made a positive contribution to Manavgat,
- The fest helped to show the unique and special local values of the village,
- It offered recreational opportunities for the local community,
- It offered the opportunity to interact among local community,
- The fest was advertising and promotional at national level for Manavgat.

I also interviewed with Turkish Canoe Federation.

**President of Turkish Canoe Federation;** ‘It is beginning time now. In the future we are targeting large organizations for wider society. Sport tourism has a big share in tourism sector. Therefore Manavgat has potential nature features for sport tourism. We are going to support these activities as a federation. This is the first official Dragon Canoe Event in Manavgat. Titreyengöl is appropriate for Dragon Boat activities. These activities are also useful for water and environment. All canoe branches can be applied when infrastructure is established in Manavgat.’

Before the Festival the president came to Manavgat three times. He said that Manavgat was so important for canoe sport.

## Results

Sports tourism can improve the welfare of the local population and it also increases the individual quality of life. Manavgat has been limited sea-sand-sun as a tourist destination and it has been remained limited in time and space. There is a need for new tourist products. Manavgat should develop unique tourist destination products and focus on this product. The tourists who come to spend their holidays at hotels all-inclusive in Manavgat cannot see the natural beauty of Manavgat.

On the result of studies it can say that canoeing is quite convenient in Manavgat destination. There is a great potential for canoe sports tourism with the local people's power and water resources. The important factor affecting the development of canoeing sports tourism activities is to ensure the awareness and support of the local community.

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