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## A RESEARCH TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOLF TOURISM IN BELEK REGION

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the views of managers, who represent top and middle level executives working in Golf Clubs operating in Belek region, on the development of golf tourism and to reveal possible obstacles that may set back the development of golf tourism. For this purpose, the depth interview were conducted with the representatives of Golf Clubs operating in Belek region and eight main themes were identified after categorical content analysis of the data obtained from semi-structured interviews by using QSR NVivo 10 program. In the study, qualitative research design was used. According to research results, it is determined that golf tourism is an developing types of tourism in Belek and the fundamental problems of golf tourism development are the lack of direct scheduled flights, the shortage of qualified staff, the small number of golf course, the shortage of land, infrastructure problems and the negative impression of the destination because of the social situation of our country. At the end of the study, several suggestions were presented for the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Golf Tourism, Belek.

### 1. Introduction

Tourism and travel are directly associated with the practice of sports is an expanding phenomenon. (Higham and Hinch, 2002). Golf is an outdoor sport played on a field covered by grass along with natural obstacles, water, sand and other artificial barriers, in which it is aimed to hit small balls into a series of holes located at the end of the track, with the least possible strokes by various types of clubs from the golf tee (Kaplan, 2010: 1). Many participants see it not just as an opportunity to exercise and sharpen their skills, but also as a chance to do so while interacting with some of the most scenic environmental settings that can be found, particularly when playing a sport (Wheeler and Nauright, 2006: 427). In the sport of golf, there are some holes with different points located on different parts of the field, and the main purpose is playing a ball with a club, made of wood and iron, into the hole with the fewest number of strokes. In general, the golf courses are consisting of an arranged progression of 18 holes, which require a certain starting point for each hole. In general terms, each starting point is called as either "tee" or "teeing ground", while the finish points are called as "green", the field with 30-70meters width and 70-550 meters length between starting and finish points is called "fairway", and lastly the remaining natural fields surrounding these three areas from outside is named as "rough" (Çetin, 2008: 4).

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The sport of golf has become a popular sport in the 1920s, and it has continued to increase in popularity in the following years. As an approximation, there are 60 million golf players around the globe. The United States holds 44% of the market share, while Japan has 25% and Europe with 12% (Readman, 2003: 165). The sport of golf is a tourism branch mostly preferred by high-income people. According to a study, it is determined that 28.1% of the tourists come to Turkey to play golf spend at least 3000 Euros, and 54% of them have at least 3000 Euros of monthly income (Artuğer et al., 2008: 669). A tourist travelling to play golf spends five times more than a tourist that travels for only usual touristic purposes in a certain country. The average daily spending of a tourist is 72.4 dollars in Turkey, while the daily spending of a golf tourist is 250 Euros, which is five times more than then a usual one (Kasap & Faiz, 2008: 1). Golf tourism is defined by Readman (2003: 166) as: "travel for non-commercial reasons to participate in golf activities away from the traveller's local environment". Tourism Victoria (2003) describes golf tourism as an activity where the golfer is travelling more than one hour outside their place or regular golf course. Golf tourism is considered a major tourism activity both as a direct form of special travel and as an adjunct to other forms of travel (Hall, 1992) and golf tourism has been accepted as a contributor to the economic development of tourism destinations (National Golf Foundation, 2003).

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the views of managers, who represent top and middle level executives working in Golf Clubs operating in Belek region, on the development of golf tourism and to reveal possible obstacles that may set back the development of golf tourism. The rest of this paper is organized as follows. First, we provide a literature review of our theoretical foundations including development of golf tourism. Next, the qualitative research methodology, analysis and results are presented. Finally, we conclude with a conclusion of the research and suggestions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Development of Golf Tourism in Turkey**

In Turkey, it can be claimed that the history of golf tourism dates back to 1895 with establishment of the Istanbul Golf Club by the British Embassy, permitted by Sultan Abdulhamit the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In 1895, only five golf clubs were actively operating. The first field was opened in Okmeydani by the Istanbul Golf Club. This 18-hole course has existed until 1914, and then in Maslak, Istanbul Golf Club has opened a new 18-hole course, which is also the current location of the club. Meanwhile, the Bosphorus Golf Club is founded as the second golf club in 1911 in Belek and has continued its activities until 1923 with 30 members (Sonbay, 2004: 34).

In the 1980s, even though the sport of golf in Turkey has suffered, in the mid-1990s the investments in this sector and the establishment of the Federation helped golf to regain some momentum. The Belek region is determined as a tourism area at the end of 1980s, which resulted in start of the investments in the region. In 1994, Turkey's first professional golf course is opened, which is Klassis Golf and Country Club operated by the National Golf Club. Then, in 1995 the Golf Federation is founded. As a result of the incentive laws and the work done by the Golf Federation, the golf sector has gained important developments and achievements after the year of 2000 (Golf Tourism Industry Report, 2011: 5).

In Turkey, along with the contribution of given incentives, other studies made by the Ministry of Tourism and the risks taken by investors on time, there is another factor affecting the development of golf tourism, which is Turkey Golf Federation (TGF). In particular, TGF has contributed to the sportive development and promotion of golf (Çetin, 2008: 56).

Table 1. Golf Facilities Operating in Turkey

Golf Facility	Location	The Number of Golf Course
Kemer Golf & Country Club	Eyüp-İstanbul	1
Klassis Golf & Country Club	Silivri-İstanbul	1
Antalya Golf Club	Belek-Antalya	2
Carya Golf Club	Belek-Antalya	1
Cornelia Golf Club	Belek-Antalya	3
Gloria Golf Resort	Belek-Antalya	2
Kaya Eagles	Belek-Antalya	1
Montgornie Maxx Royal	Belek-Antalya	1
National Golf Course	Belek-Antalya	1
Robinson Nobilis	Belek-Antalya	1
Sueno Golf Club	Belek-Antalya	2
Tat Golf Courses	Belek-Antalya	3
Lykia Links	Manavgat-Antalya	1
Vitapark Golf Resort	Bodrum-Muğla	1
Kuşadası International Golf	Söke-Aydın	1
	Total	22

Source: Turkey Golf Federation, 2013

The number of golf facilities operating in Turkey as of 2013 is given in Table 1. As it can be seen, 10 out of 15 golf facilities on Turkey are located in Belek region. Clustering in golf sector is important, because the tourists, who play golf, prefer to play in the courses close to each other. Belek is a good example in terms of clustering with 10 on-site golf resorts and 17 golf courses. Since the number of golf courses in the world is very few, Belek region has an important advantage (Golf Tourism Report, 2010: 4).

Turkey has managed to be one of the leading countries in terms of golf tourism with its golf courses located in Belek that has a favorable climate allowing 12 months to play golf on the well-designed fields. As a result, the region has been selected the best golf region of Europe in 2008 by International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) (Kasap ve Faiz, 2008: 40). According Golf Travel Trends 2013 carried out with 110 golf tour operators from 38 different countries, conducted by the tourism department of KPMG, which is a global audit, tax and advisory firm, Turkey has been determined as the fourth most popular destination in the world right after Spain, Portugal and Scotland (KPMG, 2013, p. 3). Furthermore, Tiger Woods, world's most famous golf player, has attended to Turkish Airlines World Golf Final tournament held in Belek, and had significant contributions for promotion of the region (Golf World, 2012).

Various studies are made related to golf tourism. Sonbay(2004) conducted a study in order to determine food and beverage preferences of the tourist, who come to Turkey to play golf, in Belek region. As a result of the study, it is determined that the quality of the food and beverage services is the fourth important factor that affects the choice of golf destinations. Çetin(2008) conducted a research to determine how to ensure the development of golf tourism in Turkey and the barriers preventing the sustainable development. For this purpose, he conducted some interviews with the golf clubs located in Belek and İstanbul, and at the end of the research, he classified the profiles of the tourists coming Turkey to play golf and their demands. The golf tourism demand to Belek tourism center is modeled by Box-Jenkins methodology and these models is estimated for 2013 and 2014 on a monthly basis by presenting detailed information about the development of golf tourism in Turkey from past to present by Çuhadar(2013). Oyman and Yılmaz (2014) made a research in Belek region in order to determine the communication strategies of the golf tourists based on their travel motives and information sources that they use when choosing a destination. As a result of this research, it is determined that the golf tourists have two travel motives as golf-oriented and socio-cultural motives. In addition, the television, exhibitions and events regarding golf and the internet are the most important sources that are used by golf tourists while making their choices about the destination.

Marcwick(2000) made a study, in which he discussed the development of golf tourism in Malta, and proposed some recommendations on the development of golf tourism to the

representatives of the sector. Petrick (2002) related golfers' satisfaction to the intention to revisit. Petrick, Morais and Norman (2002) made a research on the perceptions of the golfers' experiences, their loyalty to the course and their intention to revisit. Kim, Chun and Patrick (2005) conducted an analysis of the positioning overseas golf courses from the perspective of Korean golf travelers. Petar (2010) addressed to development of tourism sector by the construction of the golf courses in Croatia. Valek, Tasiopoulos and Haydam (2008) determined the profile of golf tourists in South Africa in order to evaluate the level of number of development of golf travelers in that country. Faganel and Slak (2013) conducted a study, which aimed to develop the tourism strategy, to determine the expectations of the tourists coming to Slovenia to play golf. As a result of the research, it is concluded that even though Slovenia is a suitable destination for the development of golf tourism, there are some problems about direct scheduled flights. Boukas and Ziakas (2013) carried out a study, which aimed to determine the motivations of the tourists playing golf in Cyprus. According to the results of the research, although the natural environment, atmosphere and the view play important roles for golf tourists, the golf courses created with artificial turf determined to be creating a negative impression.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Design of the Study**

The research design was based on a qualitative approach. In this research, in-depth interviews and semi-structured interview forms was used as qualitative data collection techniques to reveal the views of managers, who represent top and middle level executives working in Golf Clubs operating in Belek region, on the development of golf tourism and to reveal potential obstacles that may set back the development of golf tourism.

The most commonly used data collection techniques are observation, interviews and document analysis in qualitative researches. The main characteristics of qualitative research are as follows; being sensitive to the natural environment, the participant role of researcher, holistic approach, revealing perceptions, flexibility in the research design and inductive analysis (Türköz Bozboğan, 2012: 26).

In-depth interviews are one of the qualitative data collection methods like focus group meetings. The most important difference from focus group meetings is having one on one interview with the respondents (Nakip, 2005: 60). The interviewer's questions posed to responders are open-ended survey questions. In-depth interviews, since there is no group pressure, each participant express her/his thoughts more honestly. In addition, participants pay more attention to face to face interviews, because respondents are in direct relation with the interviewer and there is no other group member to hide behind (Proctor, 2005: 221).

#### **3.2. Questionnaire**

Appropriate sections were used in preparing the questionnaire by performing a comprehensive literature reviews and examining several books, articles, theses involving surveys application. The questions focused on the participants' views of the development of golf tourism and the potential obstacles that may set back the development of golf tourism in Belek region. For this purpose, it was sought an answer the following eight questions:

- 1- What are your thoughts on golf tourism in Belek region?
- 2- What are the distributions of your golf tourists by country?
- 3- What are the characteristics of an ideal golf tourism destination?
- 4- Are there any obstacles that may set back the development of golf tourism in Belek region?
- 5- What are the actions to be taken for further development of golf tourism in Belek region?
- 6- Where it should be the suitable destination for the development of golf tourism other than Belek?
- 7- Are there enough qualified staffs in the area of golf tourism?
- 8- Golf training should be giving in the primary school level as in other developed countries?

### 3.3. Participants

In the study, criterion sampling method was used, which is one of the purposive sampling methods. The basic idea of the criterion sampling method is studying all situations that satisfy a predetermined number of criterions. The mentioned criterion or criterions may be prepared by the researcher or a predetermined list of criteria can be used (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 112). The sample universe of the study consists of top and middle level managers, working in Golf Clubs operating in Belek region.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Sex	Age	Educational Status	Task	Working Period in Corporation	Working Period in Tourism Sector
K1	Male	35	University	Deputy General Manager	1 year	20 years
K2	Male	60	University	General Manager	2 years	35 years
K3	Male	45	University	General Manager	11 years	23 years
K4	Male	24	University	General Manager	7 years	3 years
K5	Male	48	College	General Manager	10 years	25 years
K6	Male	32	University	Sales Manager	6 years	18 years
K7	Male	35	University	Sales Manager	3 years	10 years
K8	Male	40	College	Sales Manager	12 years	22 years
K9	Male	32	College	Sales Manager	2 years	16 years
K10	Male	32	High School	Sales Manager	7 years	15 years

All ten managers, included in the study working at the top and middle level positions of the Golf Club facilities, are male. The average age of the managers is 39. In terms of graduations, 6 of them hold undergraduate degree, while 3 of them have college and 1 of them have high school degrees. 4 of the participants included in the study work as general manager, 1 of them is a deputy general manager, 4 of them are sales manager and 1 is working as deputy sales manager. The average year of work in the same club is 6 years, whereas it is 19 years in the tourism sector.

While determining the sample universe of this study, senior and middle level managers working for Golf Club facilities are included as a suitable participant profile and suitable facilities (n=10) are selected in the Belek region. Golf facilities located in Belek region were selected as the area of application to conduct the interviews. The facilities in questionnaires elected through the sampling criteria and they are included in the study. This region was chosen for the study, because this area may be called the center of golf attraction among other regions in terms of Golf Club facilities. In the context of the study, appointments scheduled with the managers of the Golf Club facilities, and the interviews held in their facilities. Interviews were completed between April 10<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup> 2014 and each interview took approximately 40 minutes. The participants were informed that their names would remain anonymous and that the research information would not be available in raw data form to anyone other than the researchers. Interviews were performed by giving an interview form with open-ended interview questions and by recoding their answers with a recording device based on the participants' permissions. In addition, the interviews were also noted in written form to have more data variations.

### 3.4. Reliability and Validity of the Study

Validity and reliability are the two criteria, which are most widely used in terms of credibility of the research. The observation of the researcher on a case as it is and as neutral as possible is validity in qualitative researches (Kirk and Miller, 1986). It is possible to examine the strategies in two separate sections as internal and external validity presented to the researcher in terms of validity.

In the scope of the study, in order to ensure the internal validity; the findings were defined depending on the environment, where the data is obtained, the literature related to the study were reviewed, the conceptual framework of the study were established in this context, the literature were read when creating the data collection tools, direct quotations were used from the interviews and they were interpreted thereafter. In the scope of the study, in order to ensure the external validity; the research model, working groups, data collection tools, the features related to data collection, analysis and interpretation process were described in detail to be able to make comparisons with other samplings; the results of the research were presented which allow readers to associate them with their experiences and necessary explanations were made to allow the findings of the research to be tested by the other researches.

In the study, the reliability has two meanings. First, it refers to the reliability of research method. This is completely related to the method. The second meaning refers to have complete and accurate measurements for length, amount or level of the case or object (İslamoğlu, 2009: 129).

In the study, to ensure the internal reliability; the data was presented by a descriptive approach, the data obtained from the interviews were presented as quotations without adding any comment or making any change, then some interpretations were made in case of a necessity, and the results of other studies in the literature related to this study were used in order to confirm the reliability of the research and the internal reliability was maintained by giving open and detailed information about the analysis process of the data. In the study, to ensure the external reliability; the answers and explanations of how the qualitative structure was created, what the data collection tools are, the creation process, how the interviews were conducted during the data collection process as well as noting that all the data of the interviews were put down on a paper by the researchers and followed steps during the data descriptive analyses have taken place.

### **3.5. Data Collection and Analysis**

Audio recordings taken during the interviews are transferred to a computer as raw data. After recording the interviews, the codes and general categories were determined in accordance with the related literature and in the light of the data obtained, and the audio recordings put on paper are analyzed by considering these categories. The content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the participants. The basic idea of the content analysis is combining similar data under certain concepts and themes and interpreting these analyses to be understood by the readers (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 227). In the study, the categorical analysis was used which is a type of content analysis. Data were coded primarily in the content analysis. The codes and symbols used to classify or categorize the groups were related concepts to the research questions. Then, the categories (themes) describing the codes on a general level were determined and the finding were interpreted. As a result of the findings, eight categories were identified.

In the content analysis, quotations are included to address the ideas, subjects and concepts (Patton, 1987). Coding was made in the form of K1, K2...,K10 while using direct quotations from the participants. The QSR NVivo 10 software was used to analyze the data of the research. The main categories reached during the analysis of the data are as follows:

(i) The views of the managers on golf tourism, (ii) Distribution of the golf tourists by country, (iii) Characteristics of the ideal golf tourism destinations, (iv) The possible obstacles in the development of golf tourism, (v) Actions to be taken for further development of golf tourism, (vi) The suitable destination for the development of golf tourism, (vii) The need for qualified staff in the area of golf tourism, (viii) Giving golf training in the primary school level

## **4. Findings and Interpretation**

In accordance with the aim of the study, the data obtained from the analyses of the interviews made with the managers of 10 Golf Clubs were categorized under eight main themes. Sub-themes and findings were given under the relevant sub-headings for each determined theme.

#### 4.1. The Views of the Managers on Golf Tourism

In this section, the findings related to the views of the managers on golf tourism are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 1.

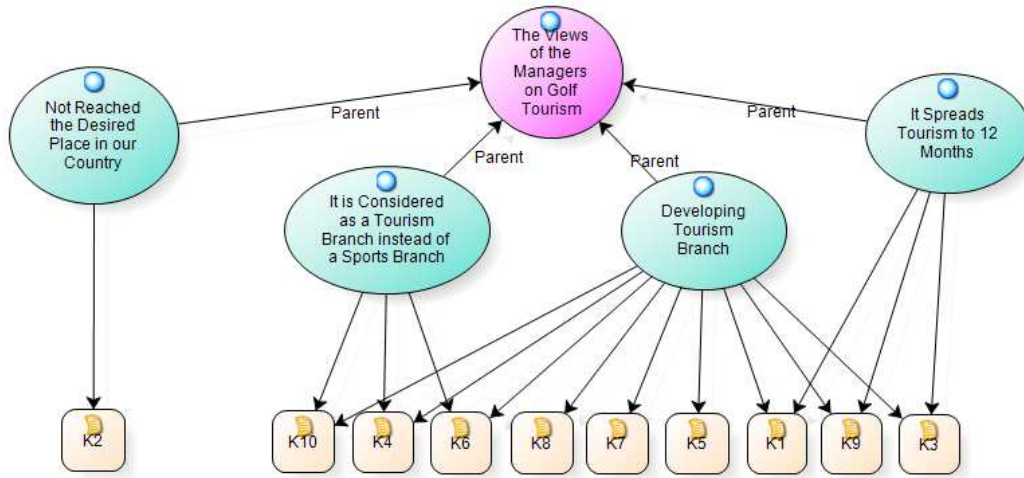


Figure 1. The Views of the Managers on Golf Tourism

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

*"Golf tourism has not reached the desired place. There are some reasons for this; time, money, golf equipment ...etc. Golf tourism is presented to only a specific segment of our country and it is not very well-known because it is an expensive sport." (K2)*

*"Golf tourism is a type of boutique tourism variations, which is mentioned all the time. The golf activities are carried out between September and May, which is the low season for tourism sector. The inactive golf courses are being occupied as part of the tourism and the tourism is being spread to 12 months rather than 6 months by golf tourism." (K3)*

*"Golf tourism is a new kind of tourism, which is emerging recently in our country. There is not such a major related to at the universities; however, I know that Marmara and Akdeniz Universities offer a training class for the sport of golf. Firstly, golf should be a branch of sports in Turkey to be recognized by the people and attain a place. In this way, the number of the people interested in golf and playing golf will be increased." (K4)*

According to the data obtained, it can be said that golf is a developing tourism branch in our country, which is an important tourism segment increases the touristic movements especially in the winter season and an important factor that contribute to spread tourism to 12 months rather than 6 months. However, it is also stated that although golf is considered as a tourism branch instead of a sports branch in our country, it has to be considered as a branch of sports to attain a place. On the other hand, one of the respondents indicated that golf is not in the desired place and the number of the players is decreased, because it is known as an expensive sport and presented only a specific segment of the people.

#### 4.2. Distribution of the Golf Tourists by Country

In this section, the findings related to the distribution of the golf tourists by country are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 2.

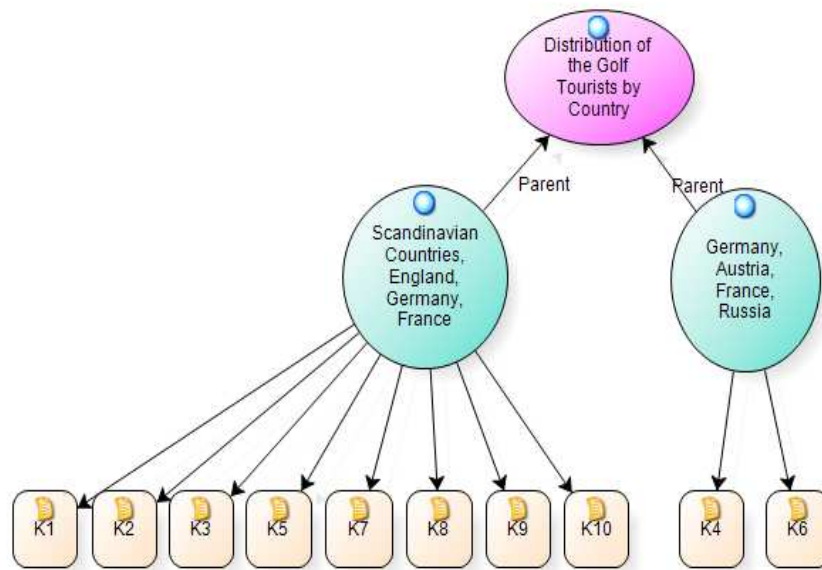


Figure 2. Distribution of the Golf Tourists by Country

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

*“Since we are a German company, 90% of our visitors are Germans. The remaining 10% is consisted of the visitors come from Austria, France and Russia respectively.” (K6)*

*“Our customers come from Nordic countries primarily, then Germany, Austria, France, and finally England.” (K7)*

*“They come from firstly, Sweden; then from Germany, Austria, UK, Poland and Hungary respectively.” (K10)*

According to the data obtained, most of the participants expressed that most of their visitors come to Belek from Scandinavian countries, England, Germany and France respectively to play golf; however two of the participants indicated that most of their visitors come from Germany, Austria, France and Russia.

### 4.3. Characteristics of the Ideal Golf Tourism Destinations

In this section, the findings related to the characteristics of the ideal golf tourism destinations are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 3.

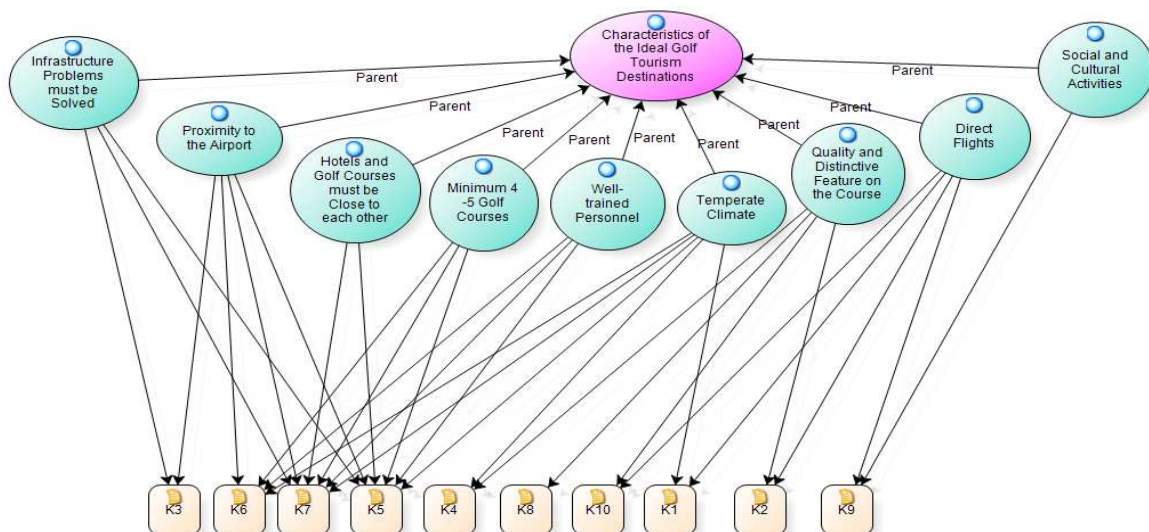


Figure 3. Characteristics of the Ideal Golf Tourism Destinations



Some examples from the interviews are given below:

*"First of all, the destination should have a suitable tourism climate. The average annual rainfall for the construction is important and water resources are a priority. On the other hand, the destination should be built nearby an international airport. It is also important to be close to the markets with the potential of golf players." (K1)*

*"The quality of the golf courses and the services is very important. The Belek region is among 100 golf courses in Europe. Of course, climatic conditions are one other advantage of the region. Golf tourism can be made under temperate climate conditions." (K4)*

*"First of all, the destination must be accessed by a direct flight. There must be direct flights both in winter and summer seasons from the countries of the visitors coming to our region to play golf to Antalya. Although, there is no problem about the direct flights in summer season, especially on February and March, the number of direct flights is reduced by 80%. It is a debate topic that how well-educated and rich people consider the indirect flights of Turkish Airlines. The bed capacity of Belek region and the number of golf players is not equal, thus there are a few golf courses. Despite the fact that there are a few golf courses, there is no other destination in which the golf courses so close to each other. Therefore, the region is preferred very well. Besides, very quality services are provided. There should be some social and cultural activities other than hotel and golf in the destinations. Belek region is troublesome in this regard, because no alternative can be called for dinner outside the hotel." (K9)*

According to the data obtained, it is determined that the destination should have direct flights both in the summer and winter seasons; must have at least 4-5 golf courses, where the hotels and golf courses must be close to each other; the region must have a temperate climate; the infrastructure problems must be solved; well-trained personnel must be on the field with quality service opportunities in order to be an ideal golf tourism destination. Besides, only one of the participants claimed that there should be some social and cultural activities other than hotel and golf; however the Belek region unable to provide enough improvement in this aspect.

#### 4.4. The Possible Obstacles in the Development of Golf Tourism

In this section, the findings related to the possible obstacles in the development of golf tourism are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 4.

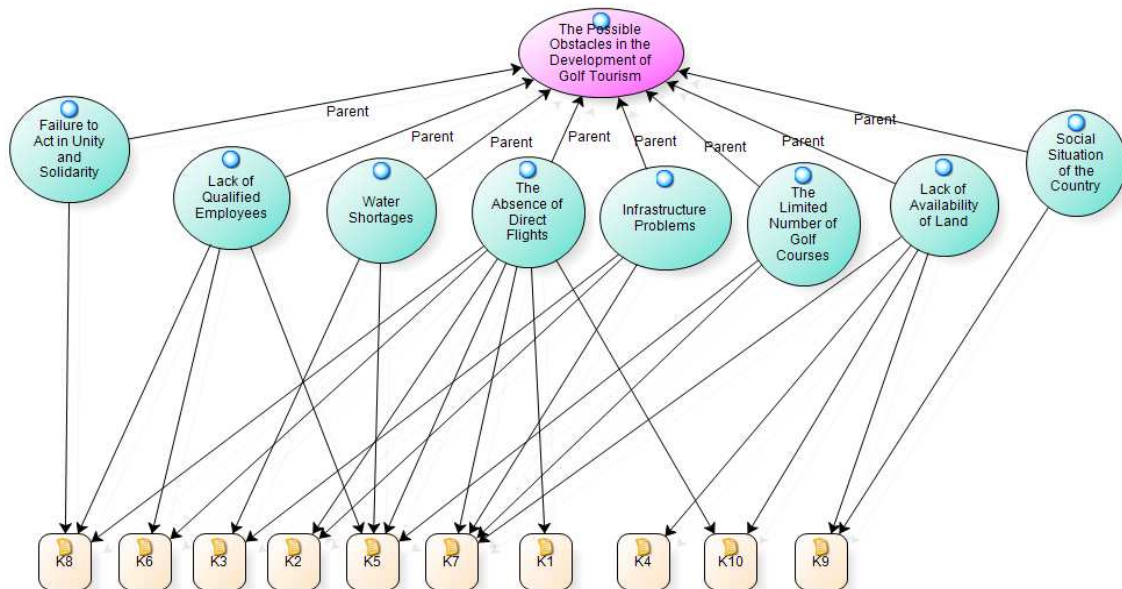


Figure 4. The Possible Obstacles in the Development of Golf Tourism

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

*"Firstly, I can say that there is not enough availability of land. We need more golf course but it does not possible for the moment a because of the lack of land for golf tourism. Infrastructure problem is*

another obstacle in the development of golf tourism furthermore the absence of direct flight in the winter season is another obstacle..."(K7)

"The lack of direct flights... No incentives by the State to tourism. No incentive from the ministry of Tourism. A majority of the existing courses are built with the efforts of the business owners themselves. Besides, there is no unity and solidarity in terms of golf tourism in the Belekregion. Meeting on a common ground in terms of the operations and organizations is important, but not achieved yet. Such an initiative will create an increase in the number of guests. Our most important competitor is Morocco, and the majority of our visitors are going to Morocco. A certain system must be employed similar to Europe. If we gather under the same roof, then there will be an increase in the number of guests. More golf courses are needed, but there isn't any land left to build new golf courses in Belek. Either agricultural areas or the regions beyond Alanya can be used for this purpose. Besides, the lack of qualified personnel trained in this are also a problem."(K8)

"In fact, it can be said there is an inadequate number of courses. There must be more investors even foreign investors to open new golf courses. However, I must say that there aren't enough lands left in the Belek region. Social situations can also constitute obstacles to the golf tourism. We are facing some situations such as; some of our guests are asking that "Are we going to be able to use YouTube in there?"(K9)

According to the data obtained, the possible obstacles in the development of golf tourism in Belek are determined as follows: The absence of direct flights to the region especially in the winter season, the limited number of golf courses (even it is tried to build new courses, there is no suitable land left in Belek), infrastructure problems of the region, water shortages due to the insufficient use of groundwater resources and the negative image on the destination created by the social situation of our country. In addition, only one of the participants stated that golf facilities in the district are not acting in unity and solidarity, which is an obstacle for golf tourism in Belek.

#### 4.5. Actions to be taken for Further Development of Golf Tourism

In this section, the findings related to the actions to be taken for further development of golf tourism are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 5.

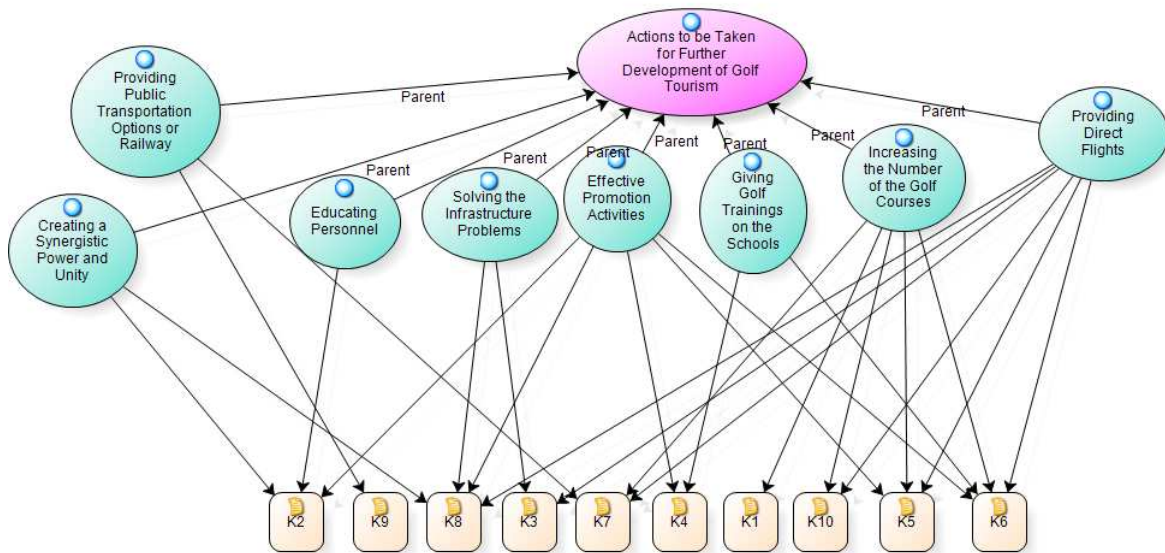


Figure 5. Actions to be taken for Further Development of Golf Tourism

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

"A call center can be founded that support all the golf clubs located in the Belek region. It is ideal to create a synergistic force. Other than that, everybody must be trained from cab drivers to the personnel. I think more promotion activities in terms of golf tourism will be also helpful. The training of the field staff working in the golf club, and informing them in terms of hospitality and customer care is also important." (K2)

"Belek region has the night golf option, firstly done in Europe. The lighting system (projector) allows customers to play golf at nights. This is not available in any other region of Europe. It is done for the

first time in Belek. There are some examples of this practice in Dubai and the United States as well. Besides, golf tourism in Turkey must be promoted effectively, because the visitors are not aware of such facilities and golf courses in our country until they see them in Belek by the eye. Furthermore, raising good golf players will contribute our voices to be heard in the field of golf." (K4)

"Belek is already in a place close to the airport, but when we compare with the courses in Europe, the visitors can use public transportation or tube options to go to the destination in Europe. Even though the courses in Belek are close to the airport, the public transportation and railway opportunities should be provided to the visitors. However, if you haven't arranged your transportation prior to your departure with the agency or hotel, you might experience some difficulties. Even though it is a short distance, it may become a huge deal." (K9)

According to the data obtained, the most discussed issues to develop the golf tourism are; providing direct flights to Antalya both in winter and summer seasons, increasing the number of the golf courses, organizing promotion activities for the region and moving in the sense of unity, founding academies to raise the children as professional golf players, providing public transportation options or railway between the airport and the hotel, and educating people from cap drivers to the staff.

#### 4.6. The Suitable Destination for the Development of Golf Tourism

In this section, the findings related to the suitable destination for the development of golf tourism are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 6.

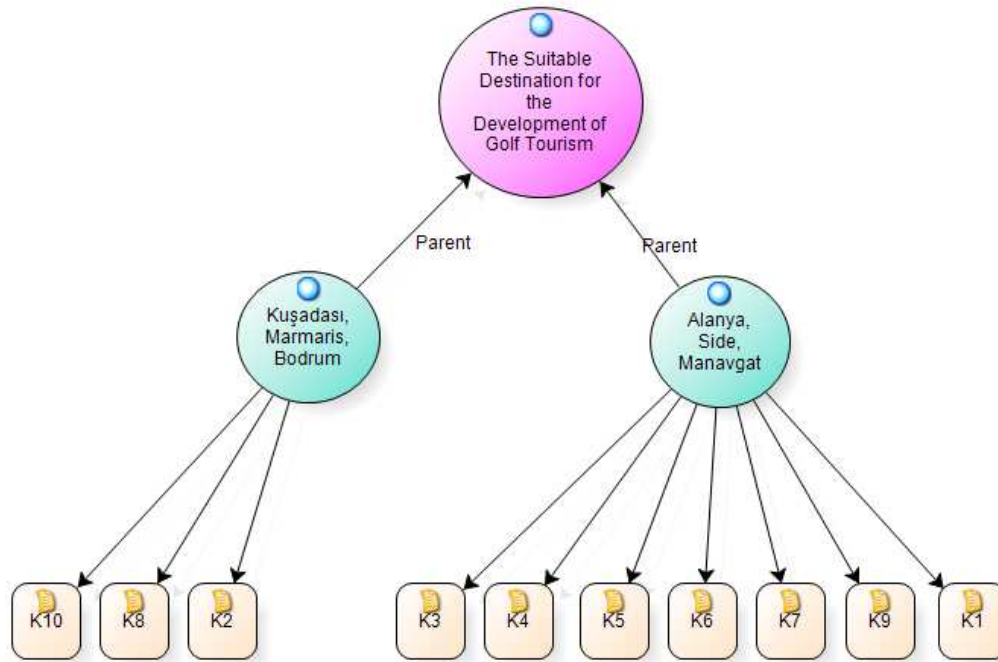


Figure 6. The Suitable Destination for the Development of Golf Tourism

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

"Actually, there is no such place like that other than Antalya, because it is not very easy to find a place having frequent direct flights and water resources. Close places such as Alanya, Side and Manavgat can be considered. This new place can be a cheaper version of Antalya with competitive prices." (K3)

"Temperate weather conditions are dominant in the Antalya region. Therefore, the regions with temperate climate conditions should be preferred. The climate comes first, followed by quality of the courses and service. Accordingly, the cities nearby Mediterranean Sea come first in this context; Alanya-Side-Manavgat." (K4)

"Marmaris and Bodrum regions are new destinations recently became popular. Mostly Brits go to the Aegean region as tourists and the next destination after Antalya will be probable the Aegean region." (K9)

According to the data obtained, most of the participants have stated that Alanya, Side and Manavgat regions can be suitable for golf courses, since they are close to the airport with temperate climate conditions. However, three of the participants stated that since the Brits prefer the Aegean region, Kuşadası, Marmaris and Bodrum regions are suitable destinations for golf tourism.

#### 4.7. The Need for Qualified Staff in the Area of Golf Tourism

In this section, the findings related to the need for qualified staff in the area of golf tourism are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 7.

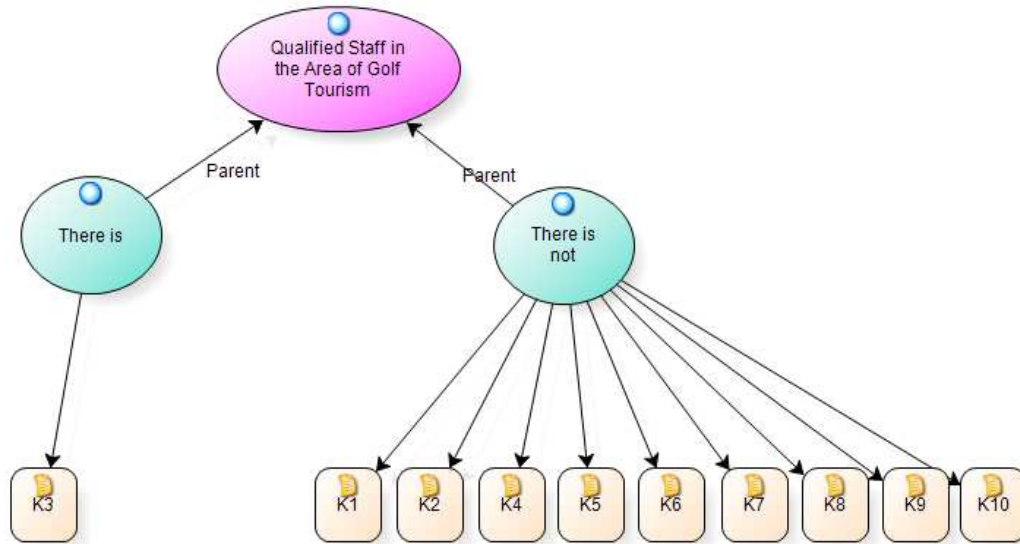


Figure 7. The Need for Qualified Staff in the Area of Golf Tourism

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

*“Unfortunately, there is a lack of qualified staff in the golf tourism sector. Since we are not very familiar in this branch of sports, there is neither enough labor force in this field, nor any interest to this sport activity.” (K1)*

*“Actually, I think there is enough qualified staff. I think the staff trained in the field of hotel management is also qualified for the field of golf for me. Being open to learning and self-cultivation are the most important factors.” (K3)*

*“There is not a school for golf in Turkey. It is not possible to get an education in any way from a school except Marmara University. The vast majority of golf teachers in Turkey are catching up from scratch, which means that they are self-trained. I can say that we are having difficulties in this regards, and I don’t believe we have enough qualified staff in this area.” (K4)*

According to the data obtained, most of the participants stated that there is not enough qualified staff in the golf tourism sector and there isn’t any school to get education and to be trained in the golf sports. Only one of the participants stated that, there is enough qualified staff in the golf sector and self-training is more important than getting an education.

#### 4.8. Giving Golf Training in the Primary School Level

In this section, the findings related to giving golf training in the primary school level are given. The findings related to this theme are presented in Figure 8.

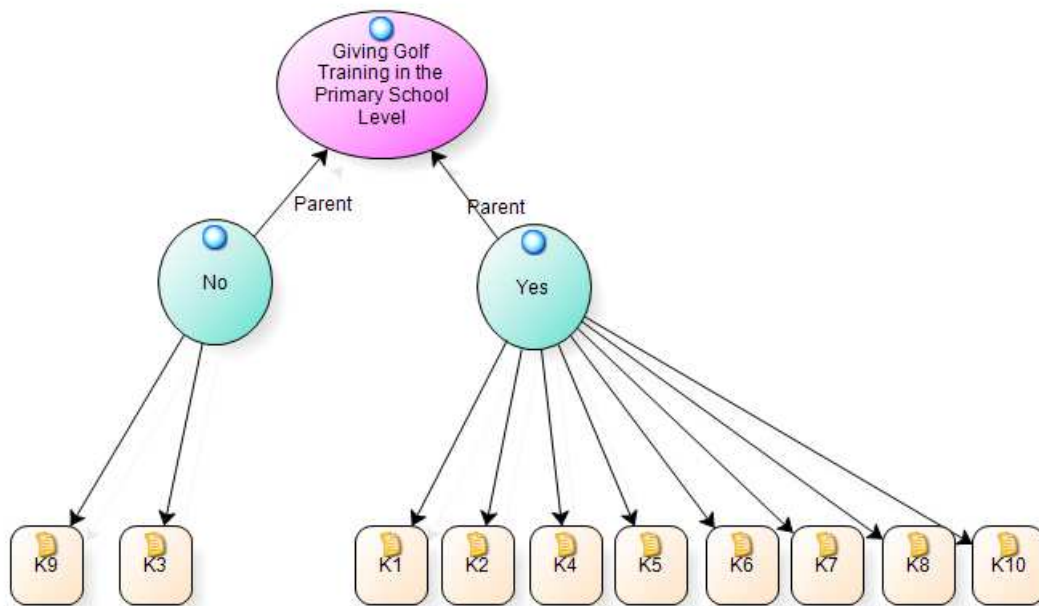


Figure 8. Giving Golf Training in the Primary School Level

Some examples from the interviews are given below:

*“Absolutely it has to be given in the primary school level, because sportive activities must be started at early ages and it is very well developed if started younger. Of course, some infrastructural investments have to be made in schools. I see lots of inadequacies in the general infrastructure in the sense of golf tourism. This is directly related to the sports policy of the country in the macro sense. I believe that it will contribute significantly to the physical and mental development of individuals. You are developing a discipline through sport at a young age and this will also contribute to academic development.” (K1)*

*“Certainly it has to be given in primary level, because I find extremely wrong that this sport is presented as only for the people over a certain age group. Golf is played in accordance with a set of rules same as other sport branches, but there are some title codes in the golf tourism differs from the rules of other sport branches. This will help to children in terms of development of the personality. They gain a certain discipline and principles. Besides, a child’s muscle development is completed between the ages of 5-12. The child may benefit through the sport of golf for the development of his/her muscles. Therefore, I think children should take golf trainings in the level of primary school for sure.” (K4)*

*“The mentioned tourism education in the primary school is fully towards professionalization and acquiring a profession. I already believe that such training is necessary in Turkey. Starting this training on the high school level might be better, but there isn’t any training even on the undergraduate level. It might be given as an optional course to the students, who take physical education classes. This can be possible only in Antalya. If you take the training classes in Ankara, there would be no point if you are not going to be able to play and practice. The ages of 13-14 are good to start this sport; however the ones, who want to make career in this field, can start at earlier ages and they may participate tournaments in future. It seems too utopian to give golf trainings on the primary school level.” (K9)*

According to the data obtained, most of the participants agree that the golf trainings should start on the primary school level for the physical and mental development of the children and to have professional golf players in the future; however, it doesn’t seem possible due to the socio-economic situation of our country. Two of the participants do not agree on giving trainings on the primary school level, instead they stated that it is more appropriate to have such training at high school.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

In this study, the views of the managers, working in golf club facilities located in the Belek region, on the development of the golf tourism were revealed and a general evaluation was carried out related to issues as potential obstacles for the development of the golf tourism

In the light of the findings; it is determined that the golf tourism is an important and developing branch of tourism that contributes to the winter tourism and it is an important factor that contribute to spread tourism to 12 months rather than 6 months. One another finding of the study is that the night golf is played in the United States for the first time, but it is also being played in Belek for the first time in Europe. It is determined that the lighting system allows golfers to play at nights in Belek region. One of the participants, who think otherwise, stated that the golf tourism could not achieve the expected development, the number of the golf players decreases coming to Belek since it is an expensive branch of the sports.

When the distribution of the golfer tourists coming to Belek are investigated by country; it is determined that most of them come from Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland) followed by England and German speaking countries (Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands), and finally France and Russia. As a result of the findings obtained from the participants, there are some factors for a region to be a golf tourism destinations such as; having direct flights both in winter and summer season, minimum of 4 or 5 golf courses, short distance between accommodation facilities and the golf courses, temperate climatic conditions, no infrastructure problems as well as providing quality services by qualified and well-trained staff, and offering social and cultural activities outside of the hotel that the guests can enjoy.

According to the findings, the most important factor that might affect negatively the development of the golf tourism is the lack of direct flights in the winter season. This result is consistent with the studies of Çetin(2008) and Faganel and SlakValek(2013). On the other hand, it is determined that the limited number of golf courses (even it is tried to build new courses, there is no suitable land left in Belek), infrastructure problems of the region, water shortages due to the insufficient use of groundwater resources and the negative image on the destination created by the social situation of our country are the obstacles for the development of the golf tourism. Accordingly, there is a remarkable detail that some of the participants stated that the golf club facilities are not acting together in the promotion of the golf tourism and this affects the development of golf tourism negatively.

To have a further development in the golf tourism of Belek region, some actions need to be taken as follows: Having direct flights in both winter and summer seasons to Antalya region, increasing the number of the golf courses, providing railway from airport to the destination or increasing the number of the public transportation vehicles, solving the infrastructure problems, increasing the number of regional promotion activities and acting as together, educating and training all the staff working in the field and creating academies to have young golf players in the future. According to a study (Akova, 1995), Turkey needs 35-40 golf facilities and these numbers may increase upon request; besides, Turkey should continue to promotion and marketing activities more effectively, and need to organize activities towards spreading this sport in domestic market.

It is determined that Alanya, Side and Manavgat regions can be suitable destinations for the development of golf tourism other than the Belek region, since they are close to the airport with temperate climate conditions. However, some of the participants stated that since the Brits prefer the Aegean region, Kuşadası, Marmaris and Bodrum regions are suitable destinations for the golf tourism. Indeed, in a study (Çetin, 2008), the temperate climate conditions and proximity to the airport are taken as the primary criteria in the determination of the destination suitable for the development of golf tourism.

As a result of the interviews, it is revealed that there is not enough qualified staff in the golf tourism sector, but the number of the qualified staff would increase with the trainings on the primary school level, which also contribute to raise professional golf players in the future;

however, it is ensued that it does not seem possible due to the socio-economic structure of the country.

Considering the overall results of the study; it can be said that it is necessary to provide direct flights to the region not only in summer but also in winter season, to solve infrastructure problems in the Belek region, to provide railway between the airport and hotel to have an effective transportation service, to increase the capacity of the golf courses and to promote the quality of the provided services to the world through effective promotion activities in order to have a further development of golf tourism in the Belek region. Besides, it can also be claimed that more academies must be founded for kids by the golf facilities, providing golf training classes in high schools and universities to have more qualified and trained staff as well as raise professional golf players; and it should be a branch of sports rather than a tourism sector to be recognized by more people.

Quantitative methods have been used often for the studies concerning the development of golf tourism so far. In this study, qualitative methods and NVivo software program were used so it is expected to provide contribution to the literature regarding both theoretical and practical aspects. But this study has some limitations too. The main limitation of this study is to show the inclusion of only Belek region while other golf clubs in İstanbul, Bodrum, Manavgat and Söke regions are excluded from this investigation. To get more reliable statistical results, larger samples are required thus future researches which will be held in this area may include the regions which are important in terms of numbers of Golf Clubs outside Belek.

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