

Reflections on visitors' experiences of the beekeeping museum: an analysis of the guestbook notes

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Abstract

The number of alternative tourism types that appeal to niche markets is increasing daily in response to the changing demands and expectations of tourists. Apitourism, which is a blend of nature and culture, has attracted attention and has become an important niche tourism market in recent years. In this study, the tourists' experiences of visiting the beekeeping museum, which is an attraction within the scope of apitourism, were examined. The notes written in the museum's visitor book, and the observations made to support the notes, enabled the visitors' experiences to be classified into 32 codes and six themes. The resulting themes, such as shedding light on the past, experiencing intense emotions, information and awareness, being a recreational activity, features of the museum, and staff. As a result of the study, some suggestions have been put forward for researchers and apitourism stakeholders.

Keywords: tourism; beekeeping; apitourism; beekeeping museum; experience

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1. Introduction

Agriculture and tourism are closely related, and many types of tourism are directly related to the agricultural sector. The emerging tourism categories that appeal to niche markets include rural tourism, agro-tourism, gastronomic tourism, tea tourism, and wine tourism. In recent years, beekeeping, which is one of the most common and sustainable agricultural activities in the world (Eroğlu & Yüksel, 2020: 351; Tamali & Özkırım, 2019: 30), has started to be carried out in many countries under the name of apitourism or bee tourism. Apitourism has emerged as a popular form of tourism and has played an important role in the development of rural areas. Apitourism has been accepted as one of the most sustainable ways of development and is blending the culture and traditions of rural communities (Woś, 2014). The development of apitourism can increase the variety and attractiveness of touristic products in rural areas, and therefore offers extremely important opportunities to revitalize rural areas, create new jobs and promote the culture and tradition of a region (Šuligoj, 2021; Arich & Korošec, 2015; Woś, 2014).

Apitourism is accepted by many researchers (Šivic, 2013; Arich & Korošec, 2015; Aliyeva et al., 2019; Şeker, 2020; Şahin & Aydın, 2021) as a form of tourism identified within the niche tourism field and has become one of the important types of tourism, especially in the modern world (Şeker, 2020). A reason for the increasing interest in apitourism is the efforts by modern societies to consume environment friendly and organic products coupled with the desire to live healthily. Tasting high-quality honey and consuming other bee products, learning how they are produced, and discovering secrets about bees lead tourists to apitourism (Aliyeva et al., 2019; Grigorova et al., 2016). According to Arich and Korošec (2015), apitourism can offer additional opportunities to strengthen and consolidate the position of beekeepers. Aliyeva et al. (2019) point out that apitourism has great potential as an additional opportunity for beekeepers to expand and strengthen their presence in the tourism market. Besides, apitourism can provide tourists with rich experiences by offering both cognitive and physical activities (Woś, 2014).

With the implementation of apitourism activities in many countries, the number of academic studies in this direction has been increasing day by day. Apitourism practices and studies, which will set an example especially in Slovenia, have encouraged other countries to work in this direction. When studies on apitourism are examined, studies evaluating apitourism activities and applicability have been carried out in Slovenia (Šivic, 2013; Arich & Korošec, 2015; Šuligoj, 2021), Bulgaria (Grigorova et al., 2016), Europe (Woś, 2014), Chile (Shiffler, 2014; Pantoja et al., 2017), Mexico (Lemelin, 2020), Kazakhstan (Aliyeva et al., 2019) and Turkey (Bahar & Yilmaz, 2016; Suna, 2018, 2019; Arıkan Saltık et al., 2019; Şeker, 2020; Cesur, 2021). However, when the relevant literature is examined, there are studies conducted within the scope of the beekeeping museum (Şahin & Aydın, 2021) and for beekeepers (Suna, 2020). However, any study investigating the experiences of tourists/visitors participating in apitourism activities couldn't be found in the literature.

Understanding the tourist experience is considered a central issue for tourism destinations (Mendes et al., 2010; Ritchie et al., 2011; Seyitoğlu & Alphan, 2021). Oh et al. (2007) define experience as enjoyable, engaging, and memorable encounters for consumers. Zhang (2008) claims that the satisfaction of tourists will increase as a result of presenting experiences designed in line with the needs of tourists as touristic products. Ritchie et al. (2011) argue that tourists today often travel to have memorable experiences. Especially at this point, Richards (2012) emphasizes that destinations need to develop a new range of skills that go beyond traditional tourism services and enter the field of experience development, creativity, and innovation. In this context, apitourism can offer important opportunities in the destinations, both in terms of making people live rich experiences (Šivic, 2013; Woś, 2014; Arıkan Saltık et al., 2019; Apiturizem, 2021) and in terms of creativity and innovation (Cesur, 2021; Apiturizem,

2021). In this context, determining the apitourism experiences of the tourists participating in apitourism activities and offering products in this direction will provide great advantages for apitourism destinations. The main purpose of this study is to determine the experiences of the tourists who visit the beekeeping museum and thus to provide theoretical and practical contributions to apitourism stakeholders. A qualitative research method was adopted in the study to achieve this determined purpose. Museum visitor notes were used as the main data source and observations were made in the beekeeping museum at different times to support the notes. The obtained data were read again and again by the researcher and were analysed with descriptive and content analysis methods. Finally, MAXQDA 2020 qualitative data analysis program was used in the presentation of the determined codes and themes.

This study has three main contributions. Firstly: especially in today's tourism sector, where experiences come to the fore, multidimensional and complex experiences of tourists participating in tourism activities related to beekeeping have been revealed. Secondly: the study provides information that will contribute to practitioners in practice within the scope of apitourism, which is an alternate type of tourism. Finally: this study, which is an example of the use of visitor notes in tourism research, contributes to the development of different perspectives in collecting data from a methodological point of view. In this context, a literature review on apitourism and tourist experience was first conducted in the study. Next, the method of the study is explained and the use of visitor notes in tourism research is discussed. In the findings section, direct quotations, codes, and themes were revealed. Finally, the discussion and conclusion part includes the discussion of the findings and suggestions developed for practitioners and researchers.

2. Literature review

2.1. Apitourism and Apitourism Applications

Bees are creatures of vital importance for the sustainability of nature. The wind, which is accepted as the main pollinator of flowering plants, is not sufficiently pollinated in many plant species because it cannot provide homogeneous pollination and cannot carry heavy pollen. Flowers need bees to be pollinated, and bees need flowers to feed. 90% of the world's food products are obtained from 82 plant species. 63 of these plant species, need bees to be pollinated. Therefore, pollination is one of the most important contributions of bees to the human economy (Delaplane & Mayer, 2000). As Albert Einstein said about bees, "If the bees disappear from the face of the earth, human beings can only live for four years. Without bees, there would be no fertilization, no plant, no animal, no human." This shows that bees have a critical role for both nature and humans.

There are many valuable foods that the bees have offered to humans from past to present. So that people carry out beekeeping activities to obtain these nutrients more systematically. All of the activities related to raising honey bees as a result of certain rules in order to obtain nutrients including especially honey, pollen, propolis, royal jelly, bee venom, bee bread/perga (pollen fermented with honey), beeswax, etc. are called beekeeping. Beekeeping is one of the most important incomes of many countries, regions, or families. For example, the income from bee products has a significant share in Turkey's exports, and beekeeping is widely practised in some provinces (Muğla, Ordu, Adana, etc.) (Burucu, 2021). In recent years, in addition to the contributions of bees, it has been witnessed that beekeeping activities in the tourism sector have turned into an economic value. So that apitourism a type of tourism that has started to be implemented in many countries is accepted as a separate type of tourism because it has a broad concept. Apitourism (the name comes from Latin name of honeybee - *Apis mellifera*) is a form of tourism connected with beekeeping as a traditional profession and with bee products in ecological, food, and medical aspects (Woś, 2014; Grigorova et al., 2016; Aliyeva et al., 2019). Apitourism could be

defined as bringing together travel and education experiences, starting with the bee culture, with a sense of responsibility for the environment and human life (Suna, 2018).

The basis of apitourism is the agricultural sector as honey production and beekeeping (Aliyeva et al., 2019). Apitourism has a content of many basic elements of tourism such as education, health, entertainment, gastronomy, culture, and recreational activity. Such that, teaching bee and beekeeping activities to tourists, using bee, beekeeping materials and nutrients obtained from bees for health purposes (apitherapy), tasting/making of bee-derived foods, and various other activities related to beekeeping are sufficient for beekeeping-related activities to be a type of tourism alone (Arich & Korošec, 2015). In this context, it is a type of tourism with a high level of creativity and compatible with sustainable tourism principles. Experiencing activities such as hive painting, honey and wax making, pollen collection is an important aspect of apitourism and creative experiences (Cesur, 2021).

Activities such as shops with bee and honey products, museums about beekeeping, therapy halls (apitherapy), accommodation houses in the concept of beekeeping, flower gardens, honey making and food workshops about beekeeping, workshops and various educational presentations for children and adults, festivals and seminars on beekeeping, apitourism routes, and tours, etc. are the main sources of apitourism. Some apitourism activities are carried out in such areas and activities. These are observing bee colonies and the work of beekeepers in their natural environment, participating in apitherapy practices, visiting beekeeping museums, tasting honey and honey products, learning how to cook dishes cooked with honey. Besides, these activities can be increased as participating in honey milking with beekeeper clothes, painting hive, collecting pollen, getting to know bee products, participating in informative presentations about bees, purchasing bee products, taking photos, etc. (Woś, 2014; Šivic, 2014; Arich & Korošec, 2015; Aliyeva et al., 2019). Additionally, other than the activities listed above, tourists can obtain additional information about the history, nature, culture, gastronomy, traditions, and customs of the place visited (Aliyeva et al., 2019; Apiturizem, 2021).

When we consider the beekeeping activities in the world, the highest number of hives is in India (13,048,275), China (9,048,546), and Turkey (7,947,687). In terms of honey production, China (446.900 tons) ranks first. Turkey (114.113 tons) and Argentina (79.468 tons) follow China (The Food and Agriculture Organization-FAO, 2021). However, 90% of the world's pine honey production is produced in Turkey (MAYBİR, 2021). Slovenia, which is not in the top 20 in terms of several hives and honey production, is the pioneer of apitourism practices in the world. It has made a name for itself, especially with the apiroutes, which it has implemented within the scope of sustainable environment-friendly projects (Šivic, 2013). Apart from Slovenia, apitourism activities can be carried out, to a small extent in the countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Lithuania, Ukraine, Egypt, Chile, Mexico, Kazakhstan, China (Shiffler, 2014; Woś, 2014; Pantoja et al., 2017; Arıkan Saltık et al., 2019; Suna, 2020). In Turkey, apitourism is still in its early stages of development. Researches (Bahar & Yılmaz, 2016; Suna, 2018, 2019; Arıkan Saltık et al., 2019; Şeker, 2020) demonstrated that Turkey has an apitourism potential that has not yet been discovered, and that if this potential is developed, economic, social and environmental contributions can be made. Especially in Anatolian lands, honey bees and beekeeping have been an important part of the culture for a long time. Although, there is some evidence of beekeeping in Çatalhöyük, one of the first urban centres in the world, the first definitive written evidence about honeybees belongs to the Hittites. Anatolia, which is the meeting point and bridge of three continents, has always attracted great attention for the development of beekeeping and reaching its modern form due to its location (Akkaya & Alkan, 2007). Today, within the scope of apitourism in Turkey; products such as beekeeping museums (see Table 1), beekeeping festivals

(Istanbul Beekeeping Festival, Marmaris Pine Honey Festival), beekeeping fairs, bee safari (in cities such as Rize and İzmir) are offered to tourists.

Apitourism can promote travel to green destinations (Apiturizem, 2021). It is also a sustainable tourism approach realized with the aim of 'travel for education and development' and created by the synthesis of beekeeping activities and sustainable travel understanding (Arıkan Saltik et al., 2019). In other words, apitourism is the whole of the activities that occur during the process of a special mass acting with bee culture, going to its natural environment where the bees continue to exist to better understand this culture, maintain a healthy life, or be treated (Suna, 2018). On the other hand, apitourism is accepted as a new type of tourism that provides a different perspective on the mysterious world of honey and bees (Bahar & Yılmaz, 2016). That's why apitourism has become popular and valuable thanks to its education, tourism, health, and social functions (Woś, 2014). With its' educational role, apitourism can reveal the best in destinations and services, the best in people, the best in perceptions and actions, and transforms all this awareness and knowledge into an important value for bringing, sharing, and living (Arih & Korošec, 2015). Tourism function, tourists become aware of the traditional and special nature of those regions and the history of beekeeping in that region along with bee tourism routes. With the help of its' health function, it is stated that honey turns into many benefits for health/wellness in addition to being nutritious. The social function contributes to the development of the local people by providing new employment opportunities in the destination where apitourism is carried out (Bahar & Yılmaz, 2016).

2.2. Apitourism and Beekeeping Museums

The changes in the wishes and expectations of individuals participating in tourism movements cause the emergence of new market areas in the tourism industry day by day. Apitourism is one of these market areas. When apitourism resources (Woś, 2014; Suna, 2020) are examined, the beekeeping museums are one of the most important apitourism products preferred by tourists. Considering that apitourism is a sustainable-based tourism type, beekeeping museums can be shown as the best example of this sustainability. Particularly, the development of sustainable tourism needs to evaluate the tangible or intangible cultural heritage elements of a region, paying attention to the protection/use balance. Elements such as visual arts and expressions, handicrafts, places, traditions, daily lifestyles, tools and equipment, and food culture are the basic elements that make up the cultural heritage. Beekeeping museums can also be seen as important cultural areas where bee culture is reflected and kept alive with visual presentations, written and oral explanations, traditional production methods, and exhibits of past tools (Özdemir & Akyürek, 2017; Akyürek & Erdem, 2019). Table 1 shows the beekeeping museums established in different countries.

There are many museums about beekeeping in the world, and the number of these museums is increasing day by day. However, an exact number of beekeeping museums in the world has not been reached. General information and visuals about bees, bee products, beekeeping materials, and how beekeeping is done are generally included in most of the museums. Furthermore, how beekeeping is done from the past to the present and the origin of beekeeping, old beekeeping materials, images, videos, and animations are shown to the visitors. Although the purpose of the establishment of museums is generally education, entertainment, and awareness-raising, many museums also sell bee products produced in the region or produced by themselves. Some beekeeping museums also offer and sell gastronomic products such as honey wine, honey beer, mead, honey cookies, and pollen. Again, souvenirs such as bee motifs or beekeeping-related jewellery, honey soap and cream, honey cologne, candles made of honeycomb, etc. could be sold in museums.

Table 1. *Some selected beekeeping museums around the world*

Museum name	Place	Contact address
1. Museum of Apiculture	Slovenia	https://mro.si/en/museum-of-apiculture/
2. Cebelarski Muzej Cebelarstvo Tigeli Krapje	Slovenia	http://cebelarski-muzej.si/tigeli/en/bee-museum
3. Open-Air Museum of Bee Keeping (Včelárska Pasek)	Slovenia	http://www.vcelarskapaseka.sk/ https://slovakia.travel/en/open-air-museum-of-bee-keeping
4. The Beekeeping Museum in Stróże	Poland	https://polishorigins.com/blog/the-beekeeping-museum-in-stroze/
5. Museum of Ancient Beekeeping	Lithuania	https://www.visitaukstaitija.lt/en/sightseeing-places/museum-of-ancient-beekeeping/
6. Museum of Beekeeping and Winery Živanović	Serbia	https://www.museumzivanovic.com/
7. Bee Museum of Rhodes	Greece	https://beemuseum.gr/
8. Germany Weimar Beekeeping Museum	Germany	http://bienenmuseum.lvthi.de/
9. Museo de la Miel	Spain	https://www.museodelamiel.com/
10. National Beekeeping Museum	Ukraine	https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g294474-d6616644-Reviews-National_Beekeeping_Museum-Kyiv_Kiev.html
11. Apiland	France	https://www.apiland.com/
12. Honeybee Discovery Center	USA	https://www.honeybeediscoverycenter.org/
13. Apicultural Museum China	China	http://english.visitbeijing.com.cn/a1/a-XCCG5C832EC6BBEFBBB644
14. Beekeeping Museum, Ooty	India	https://unusualcollections.wordpress.com/2016/04/24/beekeeping-museumooty/
15. Malacca Bee Gallery	Malaysia	https://malacca-bee-gallery.business.site/
16. Mayan Bee Sanctuary	Mexico	http://www.mayanbeesanctuary.com.mx/
17. Polonezköy Beekeeping Museum	Turkey	http://www.polonezkoy.biz/polonezkoy-aricilik-muzesi.html
18. Marmaris Honey House	Turkey	https://www.marmarisbalevi.com.tr/
19. Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum	Turkey	https://www.maybir.org.tr/aricilik-muzesi-tarihce
20. Çine Beekeeping Museum	Turkey	https://aydin.ktb.gov.tr/TR-64421/cine-aricilik-muzesi.html

Source: The table was created by the author.

2.3. *Experience and Tourist Experience*

The concept of tourist experience has become a key issue for current tourism research and management in recent years (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Barnes et al., 2016; Rather et al., 2022). Knowing tourist experiences makes important contributions to destination marketing and management (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Lugosi & Walls, 2013). Because of an ever-growing need for destination diversification, experiences have become the basic tool in creating a tourism supply since tourists can identify with the destination through real-life experience. Again, experiences directly relate to destination image as well as to visitor satisfaction (Jelinčić & Senkić, 2017). All kinds of emotions that tourists experience during their travels can be effective in shaping their experiences. Especially joy, love, and positive surprise have differential effects on both overall image and satisfaction (Prayag et al., 2017).

Tourism is an experience-intensive industry where tourists seek experience above all else and pay for it (Barnes et al., 2016). In fact, tourists want experiences of the highest possible value (Pechlaner et al., 2012). The tourist experience has a multidimensional and holistic structure that includes the complexity of people, places, organisations, actions, technologies, and objects (Mendes et al., 2010). In this context, destination marketers and managers have been working to understand tourist experiences in recent years. Thus, by producing experience-oriented products, they entered the path of creating competitiveness in this direction (Walls et al., 2011; Ali et al., 2016). Tourist experiences occur spontaneously, every day, in the tourist-host relationship as well as in the tourist-space relationship which is sometimes difficult to control (Jelinčić & Senkić, 2017). According to Yuan (2009), the tourist experience is the total outcome, which includes a combination of cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses that tourists gain by interacting with tangible and intangible components in the consumption process.

Experiences can occur in different ways and degrees according to ordinary or extraordinary, cognitive or emotional, and individual characteristics or situational factors (Walls et al., 2011). An experience is only successful if it enables a visitor to easily identify with the exhibited story, if it excites tourists' emotions and if it leaves memorable traces of such an experience (Jelinčić & Senkić, 2017). Pine and Gilmore (1998) emphasize that creating a memorable and personalized experience can provide economic benefits and strengthen a company's position among its competitors. In this context, Pine and Gilmore (1999) divided the dimensions of experience into four groups: entertainment, education, esthetics, and escape. According to the authors, customers want to learn in the educational experience, go and do in the escape experience, feel in the entertainment experience, and just be there in the esthetic experience.

Schmitt (1999) classified experiences into five different categories: sensory, affective, cognitive, behavioural, and relational experiences. In this context, affective experiences aim to create sensory experiences by stimulating the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. However, affective experiences reflect the emotions and mood of the customer in the areas they receive service (such as nostalgia). Cognitive experiences, on the other hand, aim to gain a place in the minds of customers by arousing curiosity, excitement, and surprise. Behavioural experiences target customers' physical experiences, while relational experiences target their relationships with their social environment.

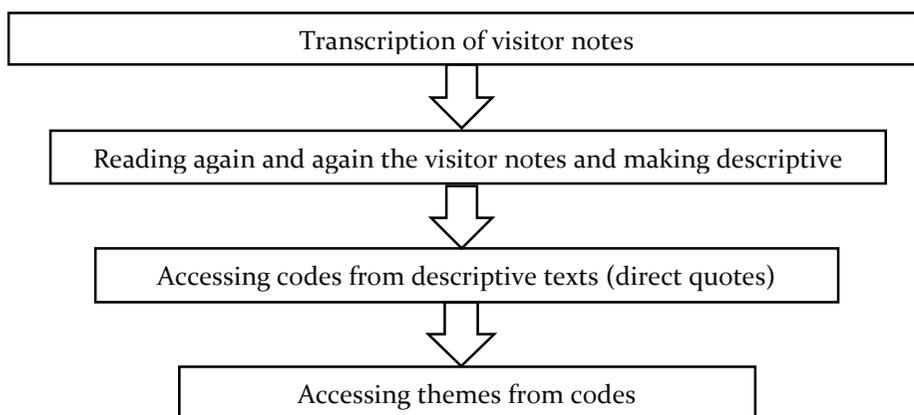
3. Methodology

This study was created by analyzing the notes written voluntarily in the guestbook of the museum by 197 visitors who visited the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum. The 'Muğla Private Beekeeping Museum (Turkey)', which constitutes the data source of the research, was established by the Muğla Provincial Beekeepers Association to reflect the history of beekeeping, which has been identified with the name Muğla and pine honey for centuries, to the present and future generations. The museum, continuing its activities as a Private Museum, contains artefacts, animations and information about beekeeping. The museum is visited by around 3,000 people every year. The honey journey of the bee is explained in a 50-minute documentary with a cine-vision screening, and consumers are informed about organic honey by showing how the right honey is produced (MAYBİR, 2021).

A qualitative research approach was adopted in the research and document analysis and observations made in the museum were used as data collection techniques. Document analysis is a scientific research method that can be defined as the collection, review, inquiry, and analysis of various documents as the primary source of research data (O'Leary, 2017). Documents are considered as the third main data collection source in qualitative research. In this context; social records, individual writings, visual

materials, etc. are evaluated within the scope of document analysis (Merriam, 2009). Document analysis includes the analysis of written materials containing information about the case or cases that are aimed to be investigated (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). O'Leary (2017) discussed the stages of document analysis in four steps. These are 'planning for all contingencies', 'collecting documents', 'reviewing the reliability of documents and questioning their intentional and unintentional evidence' and finally 'analysing data'. In this study, the steps suggested by O'Leary were followed. During the verification of the documents, some questions were asked about the documents (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). First, are the comments in the visitor's book related to the museum that is the subject of the research? Are there any modifications to the comments? Developed by whom? Did the museum staff confirm that the comments were written by visitors? Each question asked above has been answered and it was accepted that the guestbook notes were reliable and objective. The museum was last visited on 27 July 2021, and the notes written in the guestbook cover the period from 2010, the foundation year of the museum, to 27 July 2021.

Museum guestbooks, although held by almost all museums, are seldom used as a research source. However, guestbooks can provide data that cannot be obtained through methods such as interviews, observations, or surveys. Because guestbooks are composed not by an author/s but consist of numerous individual comments. In other words, the notes written in the guestbook can provide more detailed and comprehensive information to the researchers (Macdonald, 2005). Especially, the fact that the guestbook is not open to the public and does not have a commercial purpose strengthens the writing of comments impartially and sincerely, and therefore, it is considered to be more reliable than online shares. However, there are some disadvantages such as the fact that young people usually write more in the guestbooks and some comments are limited. Macdonald (2005), in her study based on museum guestbook analysis, found that generally young people write more comments. Despite all this, Morris (2011) points out that in an environment where communication and sharing are rapidly digitized, hand-written information in museum guestbooks can offer important opportunities. The information that the notes written in the guestbook will be used in the research was conveyed to the museum staff, and all the notes were photographed and used in the research in line with the permission of the museum director. Each of the 197 notes photographed was transcribed, carefully and focused read and coded over and over again (Saldaña, 2013; Kral, 2020). In the light of the codes reached, the themes were determined. Consequently, it is aimed to determine the experiences of the beekeeping museum visitors in light of the data obtained. Figure 1 shows the data analysis process step by step.



Source: Figure created by the author.

Figure 1. *Data analysis process*

4. Results

In this section, the analysis of the notes written by the visitors of the beekeeping museum in the museum memory book is included. 197 notes were written in the guestbook between 2010–2021. Eight of the notes were written in a language other than Turkish (English, French, German). Meanwhile, the museum has been visited three times at different times by the researcher as a regular visitor and other visitors have been observed in this process. Although the demographic information of those who visit the museum is not certain, it is generally understood from the guestbook notes that young people frequently visit. Visitors to the museum generally consist of people who are interested in the beekeeping profession or have the profession of teachers, academics, and administrators. Visitors to the museum generally visited the museum with their friends or school groups. Photographs 1 and 2 include views from the museum where the research was conducted.

Photos 1 and 2: *Reviving beekeeping activities in the museum according to the local beekeeping.*



Source: Were taken by the author.

As a result of the analysis of visitor notes, 32 codes and six themes were revealed. Shedding light on the past, experiencing intense emotions, information and awareness, being a recreational activity, features of the museum, and finally, the museum staff are the determined themes. Direct quotations, codes and themes were analysed by the researcher without the help of any program. However, the MAXQDA 2020 program was used in the holistic presentation of codes and themes. Figure 2 shows the experiences of visitors and/or tourists visiting the beekeeping museum. Each theme is explained below in sub-titles.

4.1. *Shedding Light on the Past*

The museum's shedding light on the past of beekeeping was emphasised in the notes written by the visitors of Muğla Beekeeping Museum in the guestbook. When the notes are analysed; the codes of the history of beekeeping, the development of beekeeping, being a bridge between the past, and the future and providing cultural transfer come to the fore. It seems that in this age where traditions and old methods are quickly forgotten and mechanisation prevails, it is very important to keep the old beekeeping methods and traditions alive in such museums and to transfer them to future generations. In this context, it can be stated that museums related to beekeeping constitute a tourist attraction, shedding light on the past related to beekeeping, and memorable experiences can be experienced by transferring this past to visitors. In Table 2, direct quotations and obtained codes related to the theme of shedding light on the past are given.

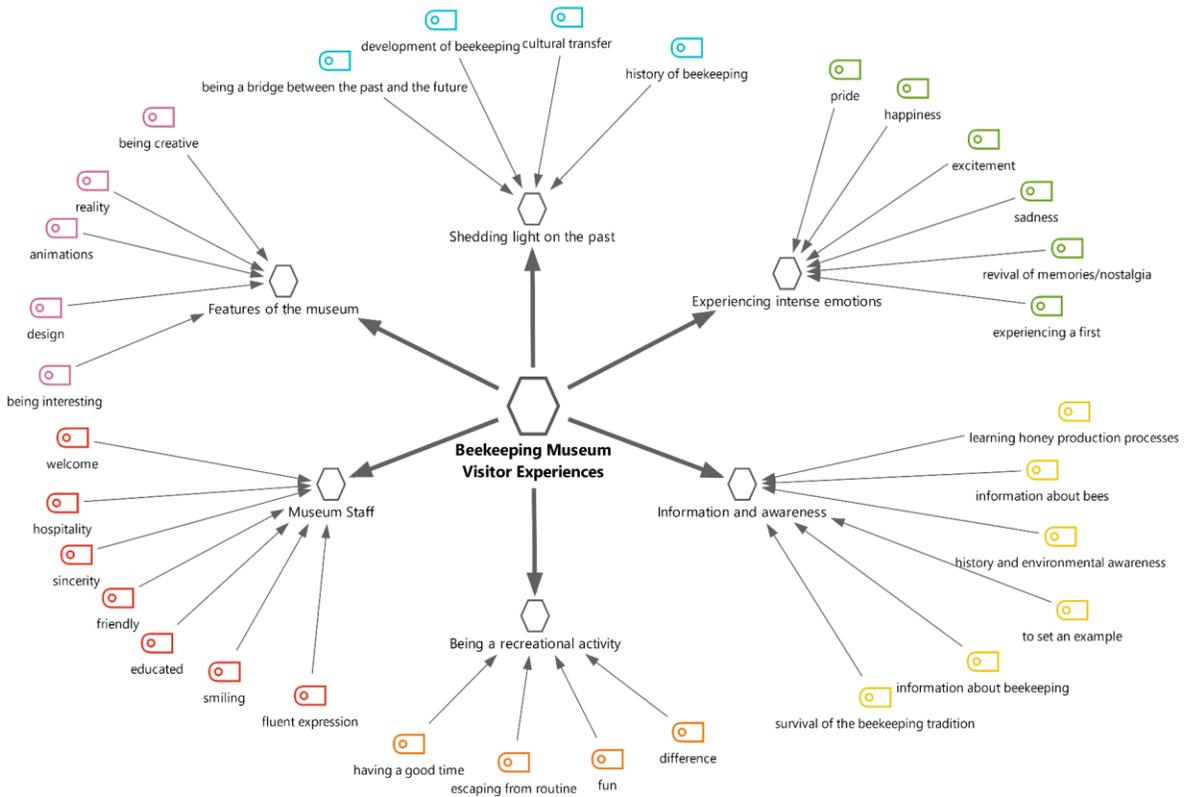


Figure 2: Beekeeping Museum Visitor Experiences

Table 2. Direct quotations, codes, and theme

Guestbook Notes (extracted from the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum guestbook)	Codes	Theme
It has become a very nice museum that tells about the past and present of beekeeping... (Research assistant, 2010). It is a very good idea to create a bridge between the past and the future by opening a museum... (Professor, 2012).	history of beekeeping	Shedding light on the past
We congratulate those who contributed to the formation of this valuable complex, which allows seeing the development of beekeeping from the past to the present (Manager, 2010).	development of beekeeping	
This museum, which is a bridge between the past and the future, should live forever and beekeepers in the future should be taught... (TV presenter, 2012). Thank you for presenting beekeeping works visually (thanks to the museum) from past to present (2012). We have seen the adventure of beekeeping from past to present (Students, 2013).	being a bridge between the past and the future	

...The existence of such a museum in our city is also a history for our children. There is probably nothing better than knowing and keeping our history and traditions alive... (2014).
 I was amazed when I saw the works done years ago and the works of art that were kept alive during our trip (2017).
 ...It is very important that you keep the past alive and protect it. I would like to thank you for your interest and importance (Student, 2017).
 ...It has been a good work to pass it on to future generations (2019).

Source: The table was created by the author.

4.2. Experiencing Intense Emotions

When the visitor notes of the Muğla Beekeeping Museum are examined, it is understood that the visitors experience intense emotions in the museum. The codes of pride, happiness, excitement, sadness, revival of memories/nostalgia, and experiencing a first come to the fore in the notes. Especially in most of the notes, it is seen that those who contributed to the construction of the museum are thanked and that the visitors are proud of the construction of such a museum. Furthermore, it is understood that the animation and beekeeping items in the museum take the visitors to the past, make them sad, experience a first, and as a result, they leave the museum happily. It can be understood from the notes written in the guestbook that such feelings can turn into memorable experiences for visitors. In Table 3, direct quotations and the codes that enable reaching the theme of experiencing intense emotions are given.

Table 3. *Direct quotations, codes, and theme*

Guestbook Notes (extracted from the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum guestbook)	Codes	Theme
I visited the museum and the union building with my foreign guests. That means it expresses the honor I feel in front of them. Such a building is really important in terms of museology and it made me very emotional (2010). The bee is life and the bee is honey... I am very honored to be here... (Student, 2019).	pride	Experiencing intense emotions
When I see such places abroad, I always regret why we can't keep our past alive. After seeing this place, I was very happy and proud that this thought came to life (2014). I was especially touched when I saw the historical tools and materials in the museum... (Director, 2010).	happiness	
...This information we received about beekeeping made us very satisfied and excited (2011). We were touched by the corners you devoted to bee and the art of beekeeping and what you exhibited... (2012).	excitement	
...And I got goosebumps. In the past, our grandparents' eating and drinking in natural environments... I couldn't think of anything to say or write in the face of what I saw. When I went back to the old days, I realized that these days are very fake and everything is empty. My eyes filled with tears... (2014).	sadness	
It was so perfect that I lived again the honey I ate when my grandfather took me to the beehive and get honey from bees here (Beekeepers, 2014).	revival of memories/ nostalgia	
The first in Turkey... I visited this place, which was opened as a beekeeping museum. Actually, I was very happy. I observed the history of beekeeping here (Beekeeper, 2014). For the first time, we had a picture with bees. I am very happy (Teacher, 2013).	experiencing a first	

Source: The table was created by the author.

4.3. Information and Awareness

According to the findings, the beekeeping museum is very important in terms of informing and raising awareness about bees and beekeeping. Visitors to the museum can obtain unique information about bees and beekeeping and learn about honey production processes thanks to the museum. Moreover, it has been determined that thanks to the museum, historical and environmental awareness are formed, the museum sets an example for different regions and contributes to the survival of the beekeeping tradition. Such knowledge and awareness gained by visitors can provide permanent learning and turn into a memorable experience. Table 4 includes direct quotations and coding within the scope of the theme of information and awareness.

Table 4. Direct quotations, codes, and theme

Guestbook Notes (extracted from the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum guestbook)	Codes	Theme
... Beekeeping museum informed us and prevented us from being afraid of bees... (2016). ...I've seen that bees are really perfect and making honey is so laborious in this way... (2014).	information about bees	
We returned home from the museum learning very practical things. We realized that this kind of honey can be produced in Tanzania as well... (Tanzanian, 2012). We learned about the history of beekeeping (2013).	information about beekeeping	Information and awareness
We learned about bees and honey. We learned the history of honey (Istanbul, 2015). When I said that we will go on a trip to the beekeeping museum, my students didn't believe that there would be a beekeeping museum... Permanent learning took place with astonishment and curiosity in the face of what they saw (Teacher, 2017).	learning honey production processes	
We witnessed a very valuable production adventure, a historical adventure, in which our Anatolian people blended with hand labor (2017). ...Everything is so natural that I learned things that I never really knew. I hope everything stays this natural (2014).	history and environmental awareness	
This is the only way to increase the prestige of a sector by creating a beautiful museum and environment and to set an example (2017).	to set an example	
In this age when we started to break away from our traditions and nature; we thank you for reminding and keeping the beekeeping tradition in Muğla and Turkey alive (2015).	survival of the beekeeping tradition	

Source: The table was created by the author.

4.4. Being a Recreational Activity

Although beekeeping museums are evaluated within the scope of apitourism, they can turn into an important recreational activity area in the region they are located. In the visitor notes of the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum, it is understood that the museum has turned into an important recreational activity for the visitors. So, when the notes are analysed; codes of fun, having a good time, difference, and escaping from routine come to the fore. Visitors to the museum; they can get rid of the routine of daily life, get a different experience, have a good time with their relatives or friends thanks to the museum. In this context, visiting beekeeping museums provides an important recreational experience for both tourists and local people living in the region. Table 5 includes relevant quotes, codes and themes.

Table 5. *Direct quotations, codes, and theme*

Guestbook Notes (extracted from the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum guestbook)	Codes	Theme
An unforgettable fun beekeeping museum... (Tanzania, 2012).	fun	Being a recreational activity
We had a great time at the museum thanks to you. We studied the bees with the students, asked questions, sang songs, and put on the bee costumes we made with our friends. Everything was beautiful... (Teacher, 2016).	having a good time	
Today, we found ourselves here when we left the statistics class and said to go to the restaurant for breakfast and do different things. Very nice place, we liked it very much (Students, 2016).	difference	
Today I went out because I was bored at home and I'm glad I did. This museum taught me how much difference there is between today's beekeeping and past beekeeping. Now our work has become so easy... It was a different and beautiful experience (2019).	escaping from routine	

Source: The table was created by the author.

4.5. Museum Staff

When the notes in the guestbook are examined, the experiences of the visitors towards the museum staff draw attention. In this context, the codes of welcome, hospitality, sincerity, friendly, educated, smiling, and fluent expression were determined for the museum staff. In this context, it can be claimed that the experiences with the museum staff can be memorable for the visitors. In Table 6, direct quotations and codes that provide the emergence of the theme of museum workers are given.

Table 6. *Direct quotations, codes, and theme*

Guestbook Notes (extracted from the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum guestbook)	Codes	Theme
In the museum we came to by chance, we were very pleased with the welcome of the staff first and then the adequate and valuable explanations. This was one of the most beautiful points of our trip, which continued on the Sivas-Konya-Manisa-Muğla route for me and my family... (2013).	welcome	Museum Staff
We came today as a foreign group and we were very pleased with the hospitality shown to us (2011).	hospitality	
Desire is a guide in good deeds. In this museum, I realized how true Mevlana's words were... (Doctor, 2014).	sincerity	
The behavior of the friendly and educated staff is also a privilege (Doctor, 2014).	friendly	
The behavior of the friendly and educated staff is also a privilege (Doctor, 2014).	educated	
...It became completely enjoyable with the information we received visually and the smiling face of the Nurşen lady. It is good to see that human beings can organize to promote and spread such a large systematic organisation (bees)... (2014). This is my 3rd visit to this museum and every time I come, I was greeted with a smiling face. Many thanks for this (student, 2017).	smiling	
Endless thanks to Mr Yasin for her nice explanations and to everyone who contributed to the construction of this museum (2017).	fluent expression	

Source: The table was created by the author.

4.6. Features of the Museum

When the notes written in the guestbook were analysed, the theme related to the general features of the museum was determined. In this context, being interesting, animations, design, being creative, and

reality codes are the most memorable features of the museum. Such distinctive features of the museum can turn into a memorable experience for visitors. Direct quotations and codes emphasizing the general features of the museum are given in Table 7.

Table 7. *Direct quotations, codes, and theme*

Guestbook Notes (extracted from the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum guestbook)	Codes	Theme
...I found it very interesting. I liked it very much (Manager, 2014).	being	
...It was really interesting and beautiful. Real beehives and items caught my attention. I recommend everyone to come and see (Student, 2017).	interesting	
We took lots of photos. The animation is great (Students, 2016).	animations	
We visited the beekeeping museum with my family and everything is so beautiful and they did everything with such truth that it is unexplainable. We had such great pleasure while traveling... (2014).		
A museum in which the province of Muğla, which forms a large part of our rich culture, and the beekeeping, which is one of the most demanding business lines in the agricultural field, is explained so well... The museum was very well thought out in its design and planning (2014).	design	Features of the museum
...It is a really beautifully designed museum. Memories of my childhood were revived (2017).		
It was really a different impression for me. The layout of the museum, the sculptures inside, and their design impressed me. I plan to come again with my friends who do not know about this place as soon as I can. A really interesting museum... (2015).	being creative	
I really liked the bee museum and all the things here caught my attention. Everything here is very interesting and creative... (2016).		
... Beekeeping museum exhibited nature, the bee, and the old as if they were alive (2014).	reality	
It's my first time going to this museum, but I loved the figures here and the materials used in beekeeping. It added a little something to my life... (Student, 2017).		

Source: The table was created by the author.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Bees are one of the most important creatures in the ecosystem and beekeeping is considered one of the most sustainable agricultural activities. Moreover, beekeeping activities have been evaluated within the scope of tourism in recent years, and the mystery and nature of bees lead many tourists to apitourism products offered in this direction. One of these touristic products is beekeeping museums. Museums provide the possibility of immersing visitors and making them a part of the experience through using different tools and techniques (Jelinčić & Senkić, 2017). Beekeeping museums are one of the museums that can offer rich experiences in this context. It is claimed that in many countries (Slovenia, Turkey, Mexico, etc.) where beekeeping activities are developed, beekeeping and tourism are integrated and will be even more important in the coming years (Woś, 2014; Suna, 2019; Lemelin, 2020). In this study, the experiences of those who visited the beekeeping museum were examined. According to the results obtained, the experiences in the beekeeping museum were grouped into 32 codes and six themes. In the light of the results obtained in this context, some suggestions were presented to the relevant persons, institutions, and organisations.

First of all, it was seen that the themes obtained overlap with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience areas (entertainment, education, esthetics, and escape) and Schmitt's (1999) experience areas (sensory,

affective, cognitive, behaviours, relate). Visitors who visited the Private Muğla Beekeeping Museum expressed that they were very impressed by the museum's shedding light on the history of local beekeeping and the transfer of this culture to future generations. Informing and raising awareness about bees and beekeeping, especially through the museum, has an important place in their experiences. Therefore, in beekeeping museums, the education expressed by Pine and Gilmore or the cognitive experiences expressed by Schmitt can be intensely experienced by the visitors.

In almost all of the notes in the guestbook of the beekeeping museum, the visitors wrote about the emotions and moods they felt in the museum. Here, it is understood that the emotional experiences expressed by Schmitt (1999) can be intensely experienced by the visitors in the beekeeping museum. Another theme extracted from the visitor notes examined is that the museum is a recreational experience area. It can be seen that the museum can turn into a recreational activity, especially for those living in the region and nearby. It has been determined that this theme fits perfectly with Pine and Gilmore's entertainment and escape experience. Considering that entertainment experiences are an integral part of tourism (Ali et al., 2016), this conclusion is appropriate in the beekeeping museum. On the other hand, it was determined that the staff working in the beekeeping museum contributed to the museum experience of the visitors. It is seen that this obtained theme coincides with Schmitt's relational experiences. Finally, although it is related to all other themes, the notes written about the general features of the museum necessitated the emergence of a separate theme. Especially, thanks to the beekeeping museum being an unusual museum, its general characteristics have attracted a lot of attention. It can be said that this theme is closely related to the esthetic experience of Pine and Gilmore. As a result, apitourism can offer rich opportunities for people who are interested in nature and culture and want to live extraordinary experiences. Especially with globalization, it is seen that people's lifestyles, clothing, eating habits, behaviours, etc. start to be the same in many topics and therefore the dominance of a single type of culture is increasing day by day. With the rapid increase in technology, the effect of globalization emerges more especially in big cities, and people travel to rural areas or places that will remind them of rural areas to get away from the artificial environment of these big cities for a moment and to satisfy their longing for nature and traditions (Özdemir & Akyürek, 2017). Therefore, the longing for nature and the past makes it possible for even a small museum about beekeeping to have such a rich experience. There is no doubt that the interest in apitourism will increase in the coming years, especially considering that nowadays tourists generally travel to have memorable experiences (Ritchie et al., 2011; Chandralal et al., 2015).

The note of a visitor, "*the bee is life, the bee is honey*" reminds us how important beekeeping is. Thanks to the museums related to beekeeping, awareness about beekeeping are created and bee products can be promoted. Especially in beekeeping museums, the use of bee products as souvenirs is increased and additional income areas are created in this direction. As stated by Pantoja et al. (2017), in many developing countries beekeeping plays an important role in overcoming poverty in rural areas thanks to the additional income generated from the sale of bee products. In this context, relevant stakeholders have important duties to develop apitourism, especially in rural areas where beekeeping is intense.

For apitourism, which has started to attract attention in recent years, to be carried out successfully, first of all, it is necessary to determine the experiences of the tourists who are interested in this type of tourism and to offer services and experiences in this direction. In the light of the results obtained in this context, some suggestions are offered to the relevant stakeholders. First of all, it is important to develop products within the scope of six themes, whether it is a beekeeping museum or a different apitourism activity. It is necessary to provide comprehensive information about the past, present, and future of beekeeping activities to the tourists participating in apitourism activities and to provide satisfactory

explanations to raise awareness about beekeeping. In this context, beekeeping museums offer an important opportunity. As a matter of fact, in addition to museums, it is essential to train staff who have tourism awareness and education, who can convey sufficient information about beekeeping, and who can practice. In addition to this, within the scope of apitourism, it is important to increase and diversify the environment and activities where tourists can learn while having fun and experiencing positive intense emotions. There is a need for compulsory cooperation, especially because of apitourism including many different branches such as agriculture, food, forest, rural life and not being held for 12 months in the same region.

As a result, this research is important in terms of contributing to both theory and practitioners. The fact that it is the first research to examine the experiences of tourists participating in tourism activities related to beekeeping and the determination of the experiences of tourists within the scope of the beekeeping museum reveals the importance of the research. However, this research reveals the experiences of tourists about beekeeping activities in the light of visitor notes and supports that visitor notes can be used as a data collection source in tourism research. In addition, the results obtained can help practitioners (such as destination managers and marketers, related entrepreneurs, beekeepers, local governments) within the scope of the development of apitourism. Finally, it is thought that this study is important in terms of bringing different perspectives to future research on the subject.

6. Limitation and future research

In qualitative studies, there is no generalization concern. Instead, qualitative research aims to provide readers with a perspective on the subject (Merriam, 2009; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016; Berg & Lune, 2017). For this reason, 197 visitor comments analysed within the scope of the research were supposed sufficient in terms of providing insights to relevant stakeholders. However, the main purpose of visiting the museum at different times by the researcher is to get a general idea about the museum. Despite all this, the use of a single data collection technique represents a limitation of this research. Although the document analysis provided a rich source of data on the subject studied, it has some limitations and difficulties (such as insufficient detail, bias/inclination, lack of a standard format, coding difficulty). Although the data obtained through unstructured participant observations are supported, it may be suggested to researchers to conduct similar studies by collecting data through interviews and/or questionnaires for future studies. However, this research was carried out on the sample of visitors/tourists visiting the beekeeping museum. In future studies, it may be suggested to researchers to research within the scope of tourists participating in different apitourism activities (festivals related to beekeeping, tours, fairs, workshops, etc.). Because beekeeping museums are not common, the research was limited to one museum. However, the documents analysed are limited to 197 comments written in the museum's guestbook. Due to the sample size, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the wider beekeeping museum visitor population. So, for future studies, it may be recommended to examine the online interpretations of different beekeeping museums in the world and make comparisons between them. Finally, future research can be conducted on how cooperation between stakeholders should be to develop apitourism.

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