

A RESEARCH ON MYTHS, LEGENDS AND STORIES WITH HERITAGE VALUE IN FOLKLORE-BASED TOURISM

UMA PESQUISA SOBRE MITOS, LENDAS E HISTÓRIAS COM VALOR PATRIMONIAL NO TURISMO BASEADO NO FOLCLORE

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Gizem Özgürel*

*Balıkesir University, Balıkesir, Türkiye

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1161-3721>
gizem.ozgurel@balikesir.edu.tr

Oğuzhan Dülgeroğlu*

*Balıkesir University, Balıkesir, Türkiye

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1992-0531>
oguzhan@balikesir.edu.tr

Songül Kılınc Şahin**

**Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Muğla, Türkiye

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3510-9220>
eliferdem@posta.mu.edu.tr

Emre Çilesiz***

***Sinop University, Sinop, Türkiye

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8353-2640>
ecilesiz@sinop.edu.tr

Aydın Ünal***

***Sinop University, Sinop, Türkiye

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6377-8587>
aunal@sinop.edu.tr

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Abstract

This study aims to reveal the value of myths, legends, and stories in folklore-based tourism in destinations. To this end, the study focuses on myths, legends and stories, which are important components of folklore-based tourism, and attempts to determine the opinions of participants from the local population of Edremit Bay regarding folklore-based tourism. Using a qualitative research method, field research was conducted after obtaining permission from the Balıkesir University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee dated December 30, 2024, and numbered 2024/12-17. In this context, researchers reached the local population in Edremit Bay between January 2, 2025, and January 21, 2025, using snowball sampling and conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. The data collected in the research were grouped and interpreted using thematic content analysis. The resulting 502 codes were grouped under 8 sub-

Resumo

Este estudo tem como objetivo revelar o valor dos mitos, lendas e histórias no turismo baseado no folclore em destinos turísticos. Para isso, o estudo concentra-se em mitos, lendas e histórias, que são componentes importantes do turismo baseado no folclore, e tenta determinar as opiniões dos participantes da população local da Baía de Edremit em relação ao turismo baseado no folclore. Utilizando um método de pesquisa qualitativa, a pesquisa de campo foi realizada após a obtenção da permissão do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais e Humanas da Universidade de Balıkesir, datada de 30 de dezembro de 2024 e numerada 2024/12-17. Nesse contexto, os pesquisadores entraram em contato com a população local da Baía de Edremit entre 2 e 21 de janeiro de 2025, utilizando amostragem em bola de neve, e realizaram entrevistas presenciais aprofundadas utilizando um questionário semiestruturado. Os dados coletados na pesquisa foram agrupados e



themes and 3 main themes. One of the notable findings of the research is that participants found historical, cultural and natural stories interesting. Furthermore, it was determined that Sarıkız Hill, Mount Ida (Kaz Dağları), legends of Zeus, and the heroic stories of the National Forces in the Edremit Bay are the most attractive places in the region, and that folklore-based tourism encompasses intangible cultural heritage areas. In this context, it was concluded that myths, legends and stories, as well as natural experience sites (Sarıkız Hill, Mount Ida, Hasan Boğazi Waterfall, etc.), should be considered important resources and carefully evaluated in the development of folklore-based tourism in the Edremit Bay. It was also concluded that focusing on the development of folklore-based tourism by decision-makers and implementers could contribute to the diversity of tourism products in the region.

Keywords: Local People. Folklore-Based Tourism. Oral Culture. Intangible Cultural Heritage. Türkiye.

interpretados utilizando análise de conteúdo temática. Os 502 códigos resultantes foram agrupados em 8 subtemas e 3 temas principais. Uma das conclusões notáveis da pesquisa é que os participantes consideraram interessantes as histórias históricas, culturais e naturais. Além disso, determinou-se que a Colina Sarıkız, o Monte Ida (Kaz Dağları), as lendas de Zeus e as histórias heróicas das Forças Nacionais na Baía de Edremit são os locais mais atraentes da região e que o turismo baseado no folclore abrange áreas de patrimônio cultural imaterial. Nesse contexto, concluiu-se que mitos, lendas e histórias, bem como locais de experiência natural (Colina Sarıkız, Monte Ida, Cachoeira Hasan Boğazi, etc.), devem ser considerados recursos importantes e cuidadosamente avaliados no desenvolvimento do turismo baseado no folclore na Baía de Edremit. Concluiu-se também que o foco no desenvolvimento do turismo baseado no folclore por parte dos tomadores de decisão e implementadores poderia contribuir para a diversidade dos produtos turísticos na região.

Palavras-chave: Povo Local. Turismo Baseado no Folclore. Cultura Oral. Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial. Turquia.

1 INTRODUCTION

Cultural products and production processes shaped by the accumulated knowledge of humankind since its existence, such as oral narratives and traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festivals, practices related to the universe and nature, and handicraft traditions, are included within the scope of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) (URL-1). Myths, legends, and stories, which are among the ICH treasures of destinations, are folk tales passed down through generations and changing over time with the imagination of the local people. Folk culture and its various expressions, namely myths, legends, and folk tales and stories, are considered as ICH or living heritage, designed based on the three concepts of people, nation, and tradition (Lyngdoh, 2020: 328).

Folklore-Based Tourism (FBT) is a responsible tourism activity that draws upon the oral culture of societies, such as folk songs, fairy tales, legends, riddles, and proverbs, as well as their rituals, cultural celebrations, and traditional dances, without distorting the

essence of cultural heritage. Emerging as a product of the close relationship between folklore and tourism, the development of FBT requires identifying the potential of the destination and determining the components that contribute to it. This study aims to identify the myths, legends, and stories that constitute the FBT potential of the Edremit Bay and to emphasize their importance from a tourism perspective. Under the relevant literature review, the concepts of myth, legend, and story are explained, and their similarities and differences are highlighted. The following section attempts to explain the place of myths, legends, and stories within the context of cultural heritage and their importance for tourism under the umbrella of FBT. The methodology section presents the research method and findings obtained from the local people of the Edremit Bay and the study concludes with results and recommendations.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 A look at the concepts of myth, legend, and story

For generations, humankind has strived to understand and interpret the objects, events, and situations it encounters. Among the cultural products resulting from these efforts are myths, legends, and stories. These cultural products constitute both the belief and meaning worlds of societies, as well as their national and cultural codes (İlhan, 2014: 1). The dictionary definition of the concept of myth is; “A folk tale with an allegorical narrative that is traditionally spread or reshaped by the imagination of the society; a mythos” (URL-2). Myths are seen as the genetic codes of societies and contain many elements, from the existence of a society to the actions in their lives, from their historical and cultural values to stories of the divine, social norms, and moral rules (İlhan, 2014: 29; Karaduman, 2023: 60). The dictionary definition of the concept of legend is; “An imaginary story, passed down since ancient times, dealing with extraordinary beings and events; a myth” (URL-3). Myths and legends, originating from oral traditions and nourished by cultural realities, involve an event considered extraordinary and miraculous. While sacredness is an inseparable part of myths, some legends also contain sacred elements (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 370-372). The similarities and differences between myths and legends are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1*Similarities and Differences Between Myths and Legends*

Similarities	Differences	
Myths & Legends	Myths	Legends
<p>*It is a matter of belief in reality. Both the narrators and the listeners believe it is real (İlhan, 2014: 25).</p> <p>*They arose from humanity's attempts to explain a series of extraordinary events whose causes cannot be scientifically clarified.</p> <p>*They have gained sanctity within society, they fulfill the function of preserving and carrying the spiritual values and culture of that society (Yılar, 2005: 386).</p>	*Imagination has a strong connection with fantasy (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372).	*It is realistic and strongly linked to reality (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372).
	*Their heroes are gods or demigods (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372; İlhan, 2014: 25).	*The heroes are real, historical figures with extraordinary qualities. (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372).
	*It relates to what happened before or during creation (İlhan, 2014: 25; Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372).	*It is related to what happened after creation (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372).
	*It extracts time from history, and according to legends, includes an even older past, another world, the world before (İlhan, 2014: 25; Karadeniz & Yağmur, 2018: 320).	*The recent past includes the present world (İlhan, 2014: 25; Karadeniz, 2018: 320).
	*No new myths are created (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372; İlhan, 2014: 25).	*New legends are formed. (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 372; İlhan, 2014: 25).
	*It describes the extraordinary and the sacred (Tökel, 2000: 20; İlhan, 2014: 25).	*Generally, it is more secular than myths because it talks about wars, heroes, victories, successful commanders, or virtuous people. It narrates a historical event (Tökel, 2000: 20). Some have a sacred connotation, while others do not (Tökel, 2000: 20; İlhan, 2014: 25).
	*The location where the incident took place is unknown (Tökel, 2000: 20).	*The location where the incident took place is known (Tökel, 2000: 20).
	*The origins of what are still considered superstitions or unfounded beliefs among the people should be sought in myths. Things that have been considered nonsense, condemned, and sought to be eliminated from social life until today can be evaluated more accurately through myths (Yılar, 2005: 390).	*It instills values, maintains social order, and guides society towards good (Yılar, 2005: 389).

Folk tales are stories that carry the traces of the period to which they belong, contain clues about the social structure, and are conveyed based on the narrative principle of love, heroism, realism, education, and personal adventures/memories (Acar, 2021:

309-311). Similarities between legends and folk tales include the combination of real and extraordinary situations, their formation in the vernacular language, and their being anonymous works. Myths, which are fictional stories, when compared to folk tales, contain symbolic, distantly historical, supernatural beings related to the origins of a people, their world, and natural events. They may have very little connection to historical reality, and may even lack any basis or origin (URL-4).

2.2 The place of myths, legends, and folk tales in ICH and their importance for FBT

Culture is considered a significant source of differentiation and innovation, particularly in marketing efforts, due to its high impact on the promotion of cities (Riza, 2015: 269). Myths, legends, and folk tales, which act as a bridge from the past to the future, are the ICH products of regions. Places with myths, legends, and stories can present their oral culture traditions, in other words, ICH products, as a tourist product. ICH products include accessibility, attractiveness, activities, and image, which are components of FBT products.

Myths, legends, and stories have played a crucial role in preserving the identity and culture of the society/community to which they belong, in the adoption and application of their values, and in fulfilling the individual's need to approach the sacred and supernatural, both in the earliest periods of history and in the present day (İlhan, 2014). Myths, legends, and stories, with their wide dissemination potential, are as free as the human spirit and as mobile as the human body (Eser & Asmadili, 2021: 1575). In the promotion and transmission of culture, these values should be considered as resources, and various efforts should be made to carry them into the future. One of these efforts is their evaluation within the framework of FBT.

In tourism literature, it is argued that local myths, legends, and stories add value to a region's core product and can differentiate it from competitors (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2015: 65). There are numerous destinations associated with myths, legends, and/or folk tales: Glastonbury (United Kingdom), known as the City of Myths and Legends; Scandinavian myths, legends, and stories encompassing Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Northern Iceland (Viking Age legends, the Curse of the Andvari Ring, Thor's Hammer Theft, Odin's Runes, a Passionate Love Triangle: Gudrun, Kjartan, and Bolli...); Romeo

and Juliet: Juliet's House (Verona); the Kingdom of the Fairies; Knockma Hill (Ireland); the UNESCO World Heritage site of the ancient city of Letoon (Muğla), founded by the Lycians in Anatolia for the gods – the Legend of Leto; the ancient city of Pergamon (İzmir) – the Legend of Pergamon; the ancient city of Troy – the Trojan War (Çanakkale); and the ancient city of Olympos (Antalya) – the Legend of the Olympos Chimera (Yanartaş). (Legend), Priene Ancient City-Priene Legend, etc.

FBT aims to increase tourism revenue and support the local economy by presenting local cultures and traditions to tourists. It offers tourists folkloric experiences such as local stories, regional dances, folk music, traditional handicrafts, and regional cuisine. In this context, tourists are offered the opportunity not only to explore beautiful scenery and historical structures, but also to experience the authentic culture of that region. Curiosity, a fundamental motivation for tourists' travels, can bring them closer to myths, legends, and folk tales. On the other hand, myths, legends, and stories attract tourists' interest, stimulating their imagination and sense of escapism (Everett & Parakootathil, 2016), thus increasing the attractiveness of the destination (Sezer, 2019: 2170). FBT tourists who visit mythical, legendary, and/or story-related locations within the destination's ICH values have the opportunity to get to know the local people more closely and understand their past.

Myths, legends and folk tales, considered within the context of tourism, can create various economic, social, and psychological impacts in destinations possessing these ICH products. The myths, legends and stories of destinations can serve as a unique resource in the creation of local identity, image building, and branding efforts. As part of ICH, these myths, legends and folk tales have the power to strengthen destination image (Razak, 2012), differentiate and enhance the attractiveness of tourist destinations (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2015), increase income, and preserve and pass on local traditions, culture, and cultural heritage elements to future generations (Eser & Asmadili, 2021). When myths, legends, and stories are considered as a tourism product, they have the potential to provide tourists with a unique experience, create unforgettable memories and competitiveness for destinations, differentiate tourism businesses by showcasing authenticity with unique regional values, and foster a sense of belonging and place attachment for local people through feelings of honor and pride. It should not be overlooked that when decision-makers and implementers create experiential

environments for tourists by drawing on ICH resources, especially myths, legends, and stories, it will mean tourists who satisfy their curiosity with consistent narratives, accumulate unforgettable memories, feel fulfilled, and have the intention of revisiting. It is known that myths, legends, and stories, especially those products of oral culture, are fundamental components of FBT and are directly related to cultural, religious, and health tourism (Aktaş & Batman, 2010: 374). In this context, it would be appropriate to state that destinations can offer myths, legends, and stories as enhanced or enriched products that are directly or indirectly related to various types of tourism, in order to diversify their tourism products.

In destinations aiming to stand out through tourism activities, it is possible to significantly increase both visitor numbers and the expected positive social, cultural, environmental, and economic impacts of tourism through destination management organizations where all tourism-based activities are managed under a single authority. Destination management organizations aim to effectively utilize the attractions that constitute the source of tourism in their marketing efforts. Promoting and advertising a destination with a story, and creating a strong image, seems possible through both the power of oral culture and the efforts of the destination management organization. Additionally, tourism offices, associations, foundations, appointed and elected administrations focused on tourism development can also influence their share of the tourism market by utilizing the power of stories in their slogans, promotional materials, and marketing communications. In this context, they can use myths, legends, and folk tales as word clouds to help communicate about the destination (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2015).

When examining studies on tourism and culture, it can be said that research focusing on the relationship between myths, legends, and folk tales and tourism is limited. Studies found in the relevant literature focus on: the effects of legends on tourist attraction (Aktaş, 2009; Sezer, 2019); their evaluation as an attraction in tourism (Şahin, 2009; Cesur & Çeken, 2023); their evaluation in religious tourism (Cengiz, 2019); legends as an element of cultural tourism (Karaçelik & Tekin, 2024); the use of myths and legends in tourism communication (Pérez-Aranda et al., 2015), their place in tourism (Gül, 2017); and the use of mythological narratives in cultural tourism (Eser & Asmadili, 2021). It has been determined that studies focus on the role of myths, legends, and fairy tales in

"spiritual" (Bîca & Schuster, 2021) and "cultural tourism" (Lyngdoh, 2020). The study highlights the tourism value of the myths, legends, and folk tales of the Edremit Bay, underscoring its importance. Additionally, the lack of a study in the literature on the views of the local population regarding FBT and the FBT potential of the Edremit Bay based on myths, legends and stories demonstrates the originality of this study and its potential contribution to tourism literature by filling a gap identified in the relevant literature.

3 METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is considered one of the ways in which humankind produces knowledge to understand its potential, unravel its secrets, and explore the depths of the social structures and systems it has built through its efforts (Baltacı, 2019: 370). In line with the research objective, semi-structured research questions were formulated by reviewing the relevant literature, and the interview form was finalized based on the opinions and suggestions of two expert academics. The interview form is divided into two parts. The first part contains 6 questions aimed at revealing the demographic characteristics of the participants, and the second part contains 12 questions that will enable the achievement of the research objectives. Research data was collected between January 2nd and January 21st, 2025, from the local population of the Edremit Bay using the snowball method. The snowball method is a method that allows contact to be established with one person in the research population, and then, with the help of that person, to reach another, and then another in the same way, thus allowing the sample to grow in a chain reaction. Participants were given a brief explanation of the purpose of the study on FBT, myths, legends and stories, and after signing consent forms, face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the 21 participants (P1, P2.....P21) for approximately 30-45 minutes. Interviews with participants who agreed were recorded using an audio recorder, and the answers given by all participants to the questions on the interview form were noted by the researchers. At the end of the interviews, the notes were presented to the participants, and any missing, erroneous, or misunderstood points were identified to ensure the internal validity of the research. The obtained research data was transferred to a computer environment, and the authors used open coding to overcome the limitations in measurement validity (Metin &

Ünal, 2022: 277). Based on the resulting codes, categories and main themes were created, and the obtained data were presented to the reader in tabular form with calculated frequencies and percentages.

4 FINDINGS

The findings obtained from the local population of the Edremit Bay are presented in tabular form in this section. Table 2 below contains the findings regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 2

Demographic Findings Regarding Participants

Variables	f	%	
Age	Ages 18-27 (P16, P19)	2	9,52
	Ages 28-37 (P2, P6, P7, P10, P13, P14, P17, P20, P21)	9	42,86
	Ages 38-47 (P1, P5, P9, P11, P12)	5	23,81
	Ages 48-57 (P3, P4, P8, P15, P18)	5	23,81
Gender	Female (P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19)	14	66,67
	Male (P2, P6, P8, P9, P12, P20, P21)	7	33,33
Education Level	Secondary Education (P13, P15)	2	9,52
	Associate's Degree-Bachelor's Degree (P1, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P14, P16, P17)	11	52,38
	Postgraduate (P2, P4, P5, P12, P18, P19, P20, P21)	8	38,10
Average Monthly Household Income	Less than 10,000 TL (P10)	1	4,75
	Between 10,000 and 19,999 TL (P9, P16, P17)	3	14,29
	Between 40,000 and 69,999 TL (P1, P2, P3, P12, P13, P15, P19, P20, P21)	9	42,86
	70,000 TL and above (P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P11, P14, P18)	8	38,10
Place of Birth	Balıkesir (P1, P6, P13)	3	14,29
	Outside of Balıkesir (P2-Zonguldak, P3-Hannover, P4-Bursa, P5-Trabzon, P7-Eskişehir, P8-Çankırı, P9-Adana, P10-İstanbul, P11-Tokat, P12-Kütahya, P14-Edirne, P15-İzmir, P16-Ağrı, P17-Bursa, P18-Aydın, P19-Elazığ, P20-İstanbul, P21-İzmir)	18	85,71
Duration Residence of in Edremit Bay	1-5 Years (P2, P5, P10, P18, P19)	5	23,81
	6-10 Years (P6, P7, P8, P9, P11)	5	23,81
	11-15 Years (P12, P17, P20)	3	14,29
	16 Years and Older (P1, P3, P4, P13, P14, P15, P16, P21)	8	38,10
	Total	21	100,00

Table 2 shows that the majority of participants are between 28-37 years old (%42.86), female (%66.67), and hold a higher education degree (%90.48). Regarding the distribution of average monthly household income, the majority have an income between 40,000 and 69,999 TL. The majority of participants were born outside of Balıkesir province (%85.71), and %52.39 have resided in the Edremit Bay region for 11 years or more.

The research data, analyzed for content, revealed "502" codes, "8" categories ("Perspectives on the Concept of FBT (n=68)", "Stories Found Interesting within the Scope of FBT" (n=29), "Possible Environmental Contributions of FBT (n=96)", "FBT Activities (n=82)", "Preservation of Folkloric Elements [Myths, Legends, etc.] (n=77)", "Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Areas within FBT (n=50)", "FBT Attractions of Edremit Bay (n=50)", "Products That Can Be Offered within the Scope of FBT in Edremit Bay (n=50)" and "3" main themes ("Perception of FBT" (n=275), "FBT and Sustainability", "FBT in Edremit Bay"). Table 3 below presents the findings obtained from the local population of Edremit Bay.

Table 3

Findings Regarding the Edremit Bay FBT

FBT Perception	275	54,78	An Overview of the FBT Concept	68	13,55	-Tourism related to the culture and elements of a region/society ((P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, K7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P21)	21	4,18
						-Tourism that aligns with socially accepted ICH values [customs, traditions, and practices]. (P2, P6, P10, P11, P12, P14, P16, P17, P18, P19, P21)	11	2,19
						-Utilizing cultural heritage for tourism purposes. (P2, P5, P8, P9, P11, P12, P14, P16, P18, P19, P21)	11	2,19
						-Tourism fueled by legends, myths, and stories. (P3, P5, P7, P8, P20)	5	0,99
						-Creating tourist attractions through heritage (P2, P9, P10, P21)	4	0,80

FBT in Edremit Bay	100	19,92	Edremit Bay FBT Attractions	50	9,96	<i>-Legends and heroic stories of the National Forces [Sarıköz, Hasan drowned, Altar of Zeus, Mount Ida/Kaz Dağları, Martyr Hamdi Bey of Edremit, Borazan İsmail Çavuş of Burhaniye, Ali Çetinkaya of Ayvalık, Koca Seyit of Havran] (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20, P21)</i>	20	3,97
						<i>-Local performing arts [Edremit Güvende, various Zeybek dances, Harmandalı, Edremit folk songs-Edremit Gelini, İki Keklik, etc.] (P1, P8, P12, P14, P16, P17, P18, P19)</i>	8	1,59
						<i>-Archaeological sites [Antandros, Adramytteion, etc.] (P9, P11, P14, P18, P20, P21)</i>	6	1,20
						<i>-Birth, wedding, and death traditions and social rituals [Flag raising, banner carrying, bride's head ceremony, groom's night, dowry bundle, chieftain, village charity events, Turkmen, Alevi rituals, yazgara, etc.] (P1, P2, P12, P14, P15, P18)</i>	6	1,20
						<i>-Local handicrafts [Weaving, spinning, woodworking, Kızıklı knife making, etc.] (P9, P10, P12, P14, P16, P18)</i>	6	1,20
						<i>-Local cuisine and regional delicacies (P9, P10, P11, P18)</i>	4	0,80
			Products that can be offered within the scope of FBT in Edremit Bay	50	9,96	<i>-Natural experience locations [Sarıköz Hill, Kaz Mountains, Hasan Boğuldu Waterfall, etc.] (P1, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18)</i>	12	2,39
						<i>-Museums with myth/legend themes [Tahtakuşlar Museum, Private Kazdağı Museum, Ayşe Sıdika Erke Ethnography Museum, etc.] (P1, P4, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15, P16, P18, P20, P21)</i>	11	2,19
						<i>-Events/festivals where stories/legends and their characters are presented [e.g., Koca Seyit commemoration event] (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P12, P18)</i>	9	1,79

						-Statues of mythical/legendary characters (P1, P4, P6, P7, P9, P14, P18)	7	1,40
						-Routes and tours to regions steeped in legend. (P2, P3, P5, P8, P9, P12, P18)	7	1,40
						-Activities related to shamanic rituals in Tahtakuşlar village. (P18, P19)	2	0,40
						-Camping activities (P18, P19)	2	0,40
Total	502	100				Total	502	100

An analysis of the participants' answers to the question, "Have you ever heard of the concept of Folklore-Based Tourism? How much do you know about FBT?", revealed that the majority had heard of the concept before (P2, P4, P10, P13, P14, P15, P16, P17, P18, P20, P21) and had some knowledge of it ["I have some knowledge (P2, P10, P13, P17); I have moderate knowledge (P4, P14, P15, P16, P18, P20, K21)"]. Additionally, it was found that all participants agreed that folkloric elements (myths, legends, and folk tales) can positively contribute to tourist destinations, that their preservation and sustainability are important, and that there is potential for FBT in the Edremit Bay region.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Tourism plays a significant role in preserving and disseminating culture, which is defined as the cultural heritage passed down through generations and considered as ICH, enabling societies to be distinguished. FBT is a type of tourism that draws upon the cultural products of peoples, encompassing myths, legends, and folk tales that are integral parts of oral culture, and serves the purpose of cultural preservation.

This study reveals the place and importance of myths, legends, and folk tales as components of FBT, which arises from the relationship between ICH and tourism. While there are few studies in the tourism literature that include myths, legends, and folk tales in different types of tourism and examine their relationship [culture (Eser & Asmadili, 2021); faith (Cengiz, 2019), spiritual (Bîca & Schuster, 2021)], the lack of a study specifically examining FBT within the context of tourism supports the originality of this study and its potential to offer a new perspective to tourism stakeholders.

The Edremit Bay, located between the provinces of Balıkesir and Çanakkale, and especially the Kaz Mountains, possesses ICH products with its myths, legends and stories. All research participants agree that this region has high potential to both differentiate the destination and increase its attractiveness. This finding is supported by the work of Karaçelik & Tekin (2024). As a result of the documentary research, it was determined that the region contains the Sarıkız Legend, the Beauty Contest (Three Graces) in Greek Mythology, the Ida Mountain Myths, and the Hasan Boğuldu Legend. Additionally, İlhan (2014: 92-93) and the Private Ethnography Museum-Alibey KUDAR have prepared a "Sarıkız Legend Guide". The guide details the Legend of Sarıkız, the preparations for climbing the mountain to visit Sarıkız, the mountain journey, Sarıkız, Cılbak Baba, and Karataş peaks, and other places in the surrounding area considered sacred. There are paintings and sculptures by artist and sculptor M. Selim Turan related to the Legend of Sarıkız. Two statues of Sarıkız, depicted with her geese, stand in front of the Edremit Municipality building and in Akçay Square. Sarıkız figurines are sold as souvenirs and gifts, particularly in Akçay, a prominent tourist destination, and the surrounding Edremit area. Serhan Keresticioğlu's painting of Sarıkız is on display at the Bahar Restaurant in Edremit. In the Edremit Bay and throughout the Balıkesir province, the names "Hasan Boğuldu" and "Sarıkız" are used in geographical areas, businesses, places, or food products. For example; Hasan Boğuldu Pond, Sarıkız herb, Sarıkız tea, Sarıkız Hill, Sarıkız Kazdağı Ethnography Gallery, Sarıkız Cooperative, Sarıkız Honey Lokma Dessert, Sarıkız Olives, Sarıkız Motel, Sarıkız Fruit Juices, Sarıkız Ayran, etc. This is important because it shows that myths, legends and folk tales have commercial functions.

It is common practice for myths and folk tales to transform into legends through numerous "by-products" and derivatives in order to survive to the present day (Karaduman, 2023: 59), and they are known to attract considerable tourist interest to the places where they originated (Nilson & Blom, 2018: 359). With ICH products, destinations offer visitors the opportunity to imagine and connect with the past through stories from the past, regardless of whether they are true or not. On the other hand, myths, legends, and stories can become a unique strategic tool that enables the powerful promotion of a destination.

The myths, legends, and stories that emerge as the emotional and symbolic aspects of the Edremit Bay destination should be presented to the tourism market as an ICH

product or an expanded product, to satisfy the curiosity and provide spiritual fulfillment for both current and potential tourists. In today's world where "stories sell," the Edremit Bay should be presented through storytelling in both domestic and international markets. In this context, the region's myths, legends, and stories should be visualized in promotional materials for the Edremit Bay, and slogans should be created. It should be considered necessary for the local administrations, tourism businesses, and those preparing promotional materials for the region to include elements and symbols from the region's myths, legends, and folk tales in their logos to increase visibility.

Studies should be conducted on the folklore of the region to ensure the development of the Edremit Bay ICH. Within this scope, efforts should be made to recreate folkloric characters (using wax figures, hologram technology, or staging) and to produce traditional clothing (such as embroidered headscarves, bellows boots, saddlebags, cloaks, and wooden sandals). To preserve and pass on these folkloric values to future generations, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Balıkesir Governorship, district governorships, Balıkesir University, the Southern Marmara Development Agency, Public Education Directorates, municipalities, and relevant Civil Society Organization should organize projects, courses, workshops, and awareness meetings to keep the cultural heritage alive.

The use of symbols related to myths, legends, and stories, and the inclusion of texts explaining ICH values, in tourism businesses in Balıkesir, especially in the Edremit Bay, is of great importance. For example, promotional materials containing myths, legends, and folk tales should be placed on tables and in hotel rooms, and food and beverage menus should be named after myths, legends, and stories from the Edremit Bay. Brochures containing information about the values that form the basis of the FBT in the region should be urgently prepared in multiple languages, both in print and electronic format.

In the region, product diversification efforts should be undertaken within the scope of cultural tourism and its sub-branch, FBT, focusing on mythology or legend tourism with concepts such as "time travel" or "journey to the past." Tourist routes should be created within the framework of concepts that include the locations where legends take place in tour programs covering the Edremit Bay and efforts should be accelerated to bring myths or stories to tourists in both indoor and outdoor settings through various art

forms (painting, music, theater, sculpture, gastronomy, etc.). Additionally, the consideration of transmedia storytelling and the recognition and awareness of myths, legends, and stories through different media should be taken into account to ensure their reach to a wider audience. It should not be overlooked that transmedia storytelling will enrich the experience, foster identification and belonging among the target audience (existing and potential tourists), and increase the depth of the narrative (Guliyeva & Guliyev, 2021: 97). In the Edremit Bay, The development of FBT should be planned in a way that spreads throughout the year by increasing the number of events that highlight natural and built museum spaces, museum activities, local food fairs, and ICH (Inclusive Culture, Coffee, Olive Culture, Keşkek, Thin Bread, etc.) values.

ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL

Since the study required ethics committee approval, the field research was conducted with the permission obtained from the Balıkesir University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee at its meeting dated 30.12.2024 and numbered 2024/12-17.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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