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Analyzing Tea Tourism Products and Experiences From India and Turkey: Supply Proclivities

Abstract

Tea is considered an important symbol of expression of socio-cultural heritage, community bonding, ethnicities, and customs to strengthen local place identity. Tea tourism offers an engaging and enduring gastronomic experience due to the active participation of tourists. This study aims to identify the key destination tea tourism products or experiences. This study uses a qualitative research approach to identify the prime tea tourism products and experiences from two important tea-growing nations, i.e., India and Turkey, ranked second and fifth in global tea production, respectively. The research findings present four main categories: facilities, activities, tours, training, Observation, and twenty-five sub-categories relating to tea tourism products and experiences. This study also strives to discover the contribution of tea tourism products or experiences in the tours conducted by Indian and Turkey travel agencies. This study is one of the first studies to examine the selected elements of tea tourism at the destination. The results will contribute to several theoretical and practical implications concerning tea tourism in tea-producing countries. The study will also offer essential insights into how travel agencies may use tea tourism products and experiences efficiently in packaging their tours.

Keywords: tea tourism, tea tourism products, tea tourism experiences, Assam, Eastern Black Sea region

1. Introduction

Tea is one of the most ancient and popular refreshing drinks worldwide. Tea has a long history traced back to the Chinese Emperor Shen-Nung. Wang (2001), in his book *Chinese Tea Culture: The Origin of Tea Drinking*, mentioned that the history of Chinese tea culture could be traced back to 2,700 B.C. when tea was customarily used as medicinal herbs and tea became a drink in China was not later than 59 B.C. Tea has spread to different countries, giving rise to various tea cultures or traditions.

Drinking tea has become a symbol of artistic conception and etiquette and is more involved in the socio-cultural domain. People relish tea for different reasons: to feel energized, to be attentive, and develop social bonding with each other. Tea production comprises plucking, processing tea leaves, tasting, blending, and creating a tea experience. Belonging to the *Camellia Sinensis* family, tea is a beverage prepared by brewing the leaves of this plant in boiling water. Tea is a beverage, a plant, an art, a meal service, an export, an agricultural product, an industry, a culture, or a religion (Jolliffe, 2003; Standage, 2005). As an agricultural product with rich social and cultural undertones, tea, its production, and consumption are perceived to possess the potential to be integrated with tourism to augment community livelihood sustainability (Bohne, 2021; Cheng et al., 2012; Su & Zhang, 2020).

Local food and drink are important in co-creating enduring travel experiences (Uehara & Assarut, 2020; Mawroh & Dixit, 2022). Modern tourists spend much of their travel expenses on food and drink-related items (Vodeb & Rudež, 2017; Wang, 2015). Tea consumption and culture are recognized as critical gastronomic attractions, products, or culinary heritage. Tourists may want to experience and explore the tea and

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tea culture and visit the natural, historical, and cultural places in a holiday destination (Chen et al., 2021; Fernando et al., 2016; Sohn et al., 2014). Moreover, tea may provide tourists memorable and enjoyable travel experiences (Jolliffe, 2007; Su et al., 2019). Therefore, tea and tea-related products are offered as a specific tourist product or experience at destinations to satisfy tourists' interests.

Several critical research gaps remain in the literature on diverse facets of tea tourism. Firstly, the tea industry is one of the essential elements for regions or countries. Although the tea industry is generally discussed from the perspective of different disciplines such as agriculture (Jayasuriya, 2003), food engineering (Panchariya et al., 2002), public health (Medhi et al., 2006), and so forth, the tea industry is an under-researched area in tourism apart from a few studies (Chen et al., 2017; Cheng et al., 2012; Gupta et al., 2022). Accordingly, tea, a contemporary and new research arena in tourism, should be discussed in more detail. Secondly, beverage tourism is an essential element for tourists and an unforgettable part of a tourist trip (Dixit, 2020). Although there are many studies on beverage tourism types such as wine tourism (Getz & Brown, 2006), coffee tourism (Lyon, 2013), beer tourism (Kraftchick et al., 2014), whisky tourism (McBoyle & McBoyle, 2008), little is known about tea tourism.

Thirdly, although China, India, and Sri Lanka have 65% of total tea production, tea is cultivated in about 40 countries, such as Turkey, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc. (Food and Agriculture Organization [F.A.O.], 2019). Previous studies on tea tourism have predominantly focused on different destinations such as Bangladesh (Sultana & Khan, 2018), China (Cheng et al., 2010), Indonesia (Purwadi, 2016), Korea (Sohn et al., 2014), Sri Lanka (Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009), Taiwan (Lin & Wu, 2016), and Vietnam (Nam & Thien, 2019). According to F.A.O. (2019) statistics, India and Turkey are ranked second and fifth in tea production worldwide. However, although India and Turkey are among the leading countries in tea production and consumption, few attempts have been made to investigate tea tourism in these destinations. Therefore, the present study is one of the first to deal with tea tourism from two different destination perspectives: India and Turkey.

Fourthly, tea tourism is focused on analyses of supply and demand. Previous studies on the demand perspective of tea tourism have examined tourists' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences (Cheng et al., 2010; Gupta et al., 2022), motivations (Su & Zhang, 2020), satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (Nam & Thien, 2019; Sohn et al., 2014). From the supply perspective, tea tourism potential and development of destination (Cheng et al., 2012; Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009), tea tourism marketing and management (Chen et al., 2017; Sultana and Khan, 2018), social effects, and outputs of tea tourism (Su et al., 2019) have investigated. Accordingly, there is limited information about tea tourism products or experiences apart from a few studies.

Lastly, research on tea tourism products has generally been conducted in tea factories, gardens, and tea-related accommodations (Aslam & Jolliffe, 2015; Lin & Wu, 2016). In this sense, travel agencies serve, promote, and market tea tourism products and experiences to tourists (Mondal & Samaddar, 2021a). However, to our knowledge, more research is needed to examine tea tourism products and experiences offered in the tours organized by travel agencies. Thus, the study is one of the first to deal with tea tourism's supply-side (travel agencies). The research gaps have provided a basis for determining the tea tourism potential of both destinations, identifying the destination tea tourism products or experiences, and making suggestions for developing and promoting tea tourism products and experiences for each destination. Therefore, this study aims to identify the destination tea tourism products or experiences and how they are used during the tours of Assam (India) and the Eastern Black Sea Region (Turkey) organized by travel agencies.

In this context, the study sought to answer the following questions: i) How does tea tourism develop for both destinations? ii) What are the tea tourism products or experiences offered in both destinations? iii) Do these products and experiences differ by destination? iv) How can tea tourism products and experiences be classified? v) Is tea tourism products offered to tourists by travel agencies? Based on the idea of cross-cultural research in tea tourism mentioned in the study of Mondal and Samaddar (2021a), comparing two similar

destinations (Assam region vs. Black Sea region) regarding tea tourism and related products in this study can contribute to the literature.

2. Literature review

2.1. Tea tourism

Tea cultivation, production, and consumption of tea-related products and attractions have a high potential to be integrated with tourism. The tea factory hotel converted from a tea factory in Sri Lanka or tea gardens tours in China is an excellent example of tea and tourism relationships (Gunasekara & Momsen, 2007). As the tea industry is closely related to tourism, some researchers (Chen et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2010; Mondal & Samaddar, 2021a; Yeap et al., 2021) conceptualize this relationship as tea tourism. Tea tourism is described from different perspectives, such as history and traditions, culture, process, experience or products, and sustainability. Tea tourism is a new and niche tourism based on sustainable and nature-based eco-friendly tourism (Chen, 2018; Cheng et al., 2012; Fernando et al., 2016).

Jolliffe (2003, p. 136) states tea tourism as "tourism motivated by an interest in the history, traditions, and consumption of tea." As defined by Cheng et al. (2012, p. 29), tea tourism is "a kind of cultural tourism with learning tea-related knowledge, tea tasting, sightseeing in gardens, and leisure as major purposes, integrated with leisure activities of sightseeing, business, learning, tea leaf handpicking, and tea shopping." Tourists experience tea products as a process, including growth, production, processing, blending, and consumption. In this study, tea tourism refers to a type of tourism consisting of tea's history, culture, and traditions. Such tourism includes tea production (growing, harvesting, processing, drying, etc.), products or experiences (tea factory, garden, festival, museum, etc.), and consumption. The primary motivation for traveling is tea and tea-related products.

Tea tourism creates many advantages for locals, such as supplying a variety of income-generating opportunities and improving economic conditions. It provides a wide variety of employment opportunities, increasing the living standards of tea producers, boosting the local economy, and improving infrastructure facilities (Cheng et al., 2012; Mondal & Samaddar, 2021a; Sharma & Bhowmick, 2016; Su et al., 2019). For instance, tea tourism offers part-time opportunities, such as running guest houses in their homes for locals (Lin & Wen, 2018). Furthermore, tea tourism can help to preserve tea plantations or gardens, maintain local heritage and culture, and promote the tea industry. Since tea drinking is a social event, the consumption or experience of tea-related products helps to establish a social interaction between tourists and hosts (Bohne, 2021; Mondal & Samaddar, 2021a; Su & Zhang, 2020).

Tea tourism products or experiences in destinations directly affect tourists' satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009; Koththagoda & Dissanayake, 2018; Nam & Thien, 2019). Similarly, it also impacts tourists' motivation (Sohn et al., 2014) and decisions such as destination selection (Cheng et al., 2010), intention to visit (Yeap et al., 2021), and length of stay (Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009). Tea tourism provides a unique and memorable experience that can satisfy the tourists' demands and needs. Tea tourism also plays an essential role in destination marketing and promotion. Many destinations, such as Germany (Bohne, 2021), Bangladesh (Sultana & Khan, 2018), China (Chen et al., 2017), Indonesia (Hamidah et al., 2019), and Sri Lanka (Aslam & Jolliffe, 2015), benefit effectively from tea tourism to market and promote themselves. Tea tourism enables the development of a premium brand, creates a destination or food image, gains a competitive advantage, and strengthens the destination's gastronomic identity (Cheung et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2022).

Finally, it is stated that tea tourism research may be broadly classified from two perspectives, marketing and socio-economic (Mondal & Samaddar, 2021a). From a marketing point of view, topics are the following: threats and barriers to tea tourism development (Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009; Cheng et al., 2012), perceptions of tourists

about tea tourism (Cheng et al., 2010), reasons for low demand for tea tourism (Herath & Munasighe, 2014), tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention (Sohn et al., 2014; Koththagoda & Thushara, 2016), exploring the potential of tea tourism (Sharma & Bhowmick, 2016; Sultana & Khan, 2018), marketing mix of tea tourism (Chen et al., 2017) were investigated. On the other hand, tea tourism as a medium for social change (Lin & Wen, 2018); integration of tea and tourism as an economic value (Su et al., 2019); social and economic inequalities between locals and tourists (Su & Zhang, 2020) were discussed from a socio-economic point of view.

2.2. Tea tourist

Tea could be a significant attraction for tourists, as it is offered as a unique product and experience at a destination (Cheng et al., 2010; Gupta et al., 2022; Su et al., 2019). Tea ceremonies in Japan or tea markets, tea museums, and tea shops in China and India are a few examples of significant attractions for tourists. In this sense, many tourists have become interested in tea-related products, experiences, or attractiveness. Moreover, tea tourists seek unique and authentic experiences regarding the consumption of tea and its related products while traveling abroad (Caber et al., 2018; Cheung et al., 2021; Khaokhrueamuang et al., 2021).

Jolliffe (2003, p. 128) defines a tea tourist as "a tourist experiencing history, culture, and traditions related to tea consumption." According to the study, tea tourists could be classified as *accidental or intentional*. *Accidental tea tourists* may experience a traditional tea service while visiting a specific destination. The *intentional tea tourist* may be the tourist who not only experiences a traditional tea service but also seeks other tea experiences such as visiting tea gardens, museums, or factories, shopping for tea-related products, and attending tea festivals. Studies on tea tourists' profiles (Cheng et al., 2010; Cheung et al., 2021; Fernando et al., 2016) showed that tea tourists are generally young and middle-aged, have high incomes, and are predominantly European and American. In addition, women are more interested in attending tea tourism activities than males.

Some studies (Bohne, 2021; Gupta et al., 2022; Yeap et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2012) have identified various motivations for tea tourists, such as experiencing a variety of different tea, visiting tea gardens and factories, learning about tea traditions and culture, attending tea events or festivals, buying tea-related products, and participating tea production activities. For example, tea tasting, cultural education, sightseeing, and personal interest are the main motivations to attend tea tourism for tourists visiting China (Chen et al., 2017). Similarly, learning, relaxation, socio-cultural impacts, and environmental awareness are essential factors in intentions to visit tea tourism plantations (Yeap et al., 2021).

2.3. Tea tourism products or experiences

Tea tourism comprises many experiences and activities offered to tea tourists. Such tourism includes appreciating the tea landscape, visiting shops and museums, tasting tea, demonstrating tea production and processing, and participating in tea ceremonies. Furthermore, it involves mingling with cultural events, staying in a tea heritage bungalow, relishing tea-infused cuisine, and many more (Bohne, 2021; Gupta et al., 2022; Khaokhrueamuang et al., 2021). There are also rich resources for tea-related tourism experiences, such as nature walks in tea gardens, accommodation in tea factories and tea gardens, tea tasting, tea culture demonstrations, and tours of tea production sites (Cheng et al., 2010; Cheung et al., 2021; Jolliffe, 2003). As suggested in previous research, the linkages between tea and tourism are erected through different actors in the tea industry (including tea farmers, producers, retailers, and manufacturers of associated accessories, such as teapots). Therefore, the tourism industry has to create a unique blend of diverse tea tourism experiences. According to Mondal and Samaddar (2021a), tea attractions consist of natural-based, artificially created, special events and social-cultural attractions. Tea gardens and tea factories can be considered examples of nature-based interests. Tea museums and exhibits are among the artificially created attractions, while tea tours and tourism festivals constitute special events. Finally, exploring the village life in the tea production areas is a social-cultural attraction.

There are unique examples of tea tourism products and experiences around the World. Charleston Tea Garden, which offered tea factory tours and trolley rides through the tea fields in South Carolina on Wadmalaw Island, converted into a tourist attraction (Sanchez, 2008). There are teapot trails in the U.K. that include several tea-serving establishments and briefly introduce each town or village where those establishments are located (Hall & Boyne, 2007). In Sri Lanka, tea tourism and tea plantation landscapes have been developed along with heritage tourism, eco-tourism, health tourism, and rural tourism (Gunasekara & Momsen, 2007). Similarly, East Frisian tea culture and traditions are a unique attraction in Germany (Bohne, 2021). Tea tourism in China was developed even more widely, including attractions such as tea festivals in Hunan province (Huang & Hall, 2007) and tea arts and ceremonies in Fujian province (Weber, 2018). Tea can be considered a social pacifier since it has been a universally acceptable beverage in all major religions of India. As a unique Indian relic, tea generates more and more interest in the Indian travel market, significantly impacting international tourism and the country's tea-growing areas (Sharma & Bhowmick, 2016).

2.4. Research setting: Black Sea region and Assam

The Eastern Black Sea region is located in the northeast of Turkey. Tea is grown only in the Eastern Black Sea region, including Rize, Trabzon, and Giresun provinces. For instance, 67% of the total tea is cultivated in Rize. The Eastern Black Sea has around 200 thousand tea producers and 275 tea factories (Çaykur, 2019). Despite having a century-old history in Turkey, tea is highly demanded and consumed by people. Tea in Turkey is a beverage that differs from other countries in various elements such as the drinking time (e.g., drink at all hours of the day), the brewing equipment (e.g., samovar, teapot), serving style (e.g., Turkish style glass), and so forth. Turkish-style tea is brewed with powder and roasted black tea.

Figure 1
İnce Belli tea glasses



Source: Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Moreover, it is served in "İnce Belli" tea glasses (Figure 1), known as the unique slim waist or Turkish-style glass (Güneş, 2012). Although Turkey's tea industry and tourism integration is still in their infancy, various tea tourism products and experiences are offered in the region to attract tourists. Examples are visiting tea factories and museums, taking photos and hiking inside the tea gardens, participating in tea harvesting practices, and purchasing tea-related products.

Tea plantation in India ranges from the Northern Himalayas (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) and North-Eastern Himalayas (Darjeeling, Assam Tea, Meghalaya Tea, etc.) to the Western Ghats (Nilgiri Tea). Indian tea varieties are characterized by their unique attribute, taste, flavor, and aroma. Assam, as the state, is one of the World's largest tea-growing regions. Hence, Assam tea is considered to be one of the finest teas in the World. The tea plantation was started by the British in Assam during the 1930s, after its discovery by Robert Bruce and Maniram Dewan. Assam tea is grown from 45 to 60 meters above sea level. Assam manufactures Orthodox and C.T.C. (Crush/Tear/Curl) tea. The Assam Orthodox Tea is registered with Geographical Indication (G.I.). It has a rich, deep amber color and is famous for its rich, full-bodied, intense, and malty character. Tocklai Tea Research Association, Jorhat (Assam), is the oldest and largest tea research station, established in 1911 for scientific research to improve productivity and quality of

all tea cultivation and processing. Guwahati Tea Auction Centre (GTAC) was founded in 1970 through the Assam State Government's joint efforts and the four tea trade segments: sellers, brokers, buyers, and warehouse workers. Within three decades, the GTAC has emerged as the second-largest C.T.C. tea auction market in the World and second-largest overall, next only to the Colombo auction center in Sri Lanka.

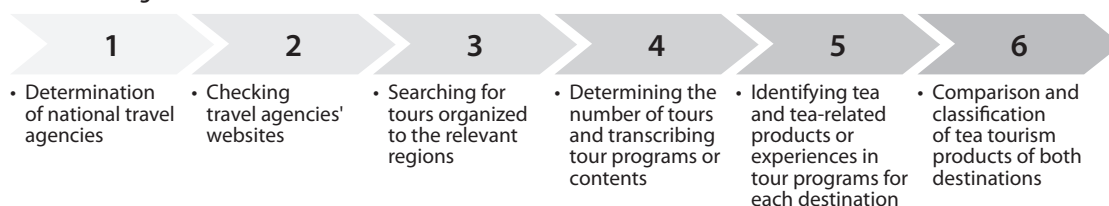
While 10% of tea production in the World is made in the Assam region (Government of Assam, 2021), 4% is harvested in the Black Sea region (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2021). In light of the above information, the reasons for choosing both destinations as research settings are the following: i) the regions are similar to each other in terms of their historical areas, natural beauty, and cultural attractiveness; ii) package tours mainly visit both regions and the tourists are primarily cultural tourists. iii) both the Black Sea region and the Assam region have become tea tourism destinations in recent years, and iv) tea tourism-related products (such as tea factories, gardens, museums, and more) have become tourist attractions in both destinations. Therefore, based on the idea of cross-cultural research in tea tourism mentioned in the study of Mondal and Samaddar (2021a), comparing two similar destinations (Black Sea region vs. Assam region) regarding tea tourism and related products in this study can contribute to the literature.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data collection

Qualitative research was adopted to investigate destinations' tea tourism products or experiences more deeply. The case study was used as the research design (Figure 2). As document analysis is frequently used to examine gastronomic contents such as brochures or guidebooks, websites, media articles, and many more (Okumus et al., 2007; Yilmaz et al., 2020; Yilmaz & Şahin, 2021). Therefore a data-gathering method is used in this study. Document analysis systematically examines existing records or documents (Bowen, 2009). Documents on tea tourism were collected from the travel agencies' websites between September 2019 and October 2020. National travel agencies leading in the number of customers for India and Turkey were included in the study sample. It has reached 9 and 15 federal travel agencies, respectively, for Turkey and India (see Appendix). Travel agencies' websites were checked and investigated whether they organize tours related to tea tourism. Then, 37 tours in the Eastern Black Sea Region for Turkey and 56 tours in Assam for India were accessed, and each tour accessed was determined as the unit of analysis. Classic Black Sea Tour for Turkey and Tea Tour in Assam for India can be an example. A special tour for tea tourism is not offered in Turkey by contrast with India; tea tourism products or experiences are included in cultural tours.

Figure 2
Research design



3.2. Data analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data acquired from the documents. Content analysis is one of the most frequently used methods in qualitative research. Content analysis is a technique that involves gathering texts, pictures, videos, symbols, thoughts, and messages and analyzing them as a whole (Patton, 2015). As content analysis can be carried out manually or with the help of computer-based analysis programs (Burnard et al., 2008), it was performed manually in the study. Content analysis steps recommended by researchers

(Corbin & Strauss, 1990) were followed: coding, identification of the categories, naming the categories, and identifying the characteristics of the categories. Firstly, documents were pre-read several times so that the researchers could get more familiar with the content and take preliminary notes. A coding scheme was developed based on pre-reading and previous research findings. The coding scheme was applied to the documents by two independent researchers, and then the results were compared. By combining the codes, categories were created, and the main types were designated by merging related categories.

3.3. Reliability, validity, and trustworthiness

The following stages are recommended to ensure reliability, validity, and credibility in qualitative research. i) Providing detailed information about the research and data analysis process (Elo et al., 2014). The researchers explained what methodology was followed at which stage and provided detailed information about the data analysis process. ii) Coding by two different encoders using a coding scheme (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). A coding scheme was developed, and two independent researchers coded via code schemes. iii) Directly quoting analyzed texts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Direct quotations pointed out the relations between data and findings. iv) Discussions among researchers in analyzing and seeking common ground (Elo et al., 2014). Researchers' discussions were directed throughout the analysis to reach a common understanding. v) Calculating Cohen's kappa coefficient to explore internal and inter-thematic reliability (Cohen, 1960). Cohen's kappa coefficient was 83.3, and the validity was verified as the recommended value was above 0.80. vi) Sharing the findings with expert opinions (Hall & Valentin, 2005). The findings were shared with a Black Sea and Assam travel agency manager. The manager stated that the findings reflect the current situation and the trueness they experience.

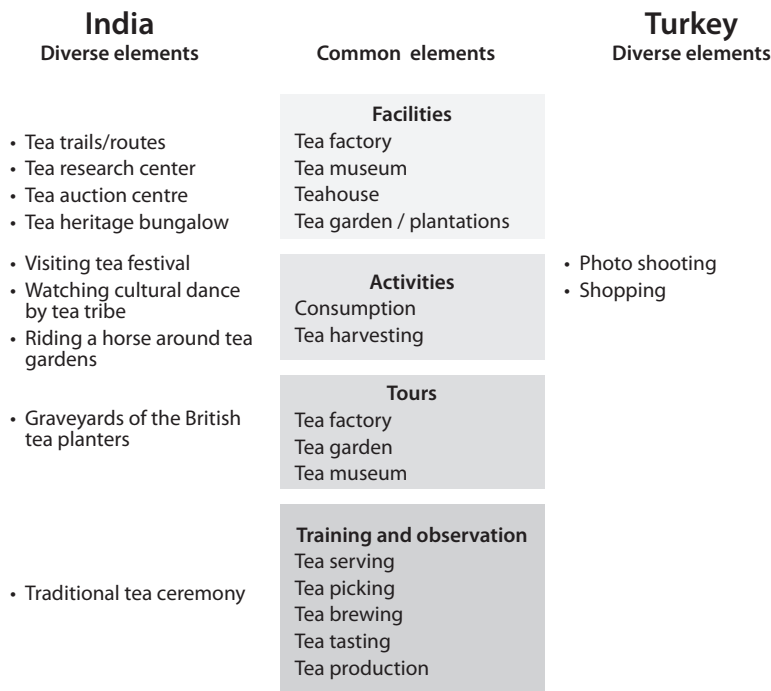
4. Results and discussion

Findings suggested a total of 25 elements of tea tourism, including 16 for Turkey and 23 for India (Figure 3). When these are combined, the standard tea tourism products or experiences are obtained as follows: tea factory, tea museum, tea garden or plantations, tea house, tea harvesting, consumption, tea factory tours, tea garden tours, tea museum tours, tea serving, tea picking, tea brewing, tea tasting, and tea production. On the other hand, photo shooting and shopping are the elements that only occur in Turkey. At the same time, tea trails or routes, tea research centers, tea auction centers, heritage tea bungalows, visiting tea festivals, watching cultural dance by ethnic tea workers, riding a horse around tea plantations, graveyards of the British tea planters and traditional tea ceremony are the elements only obtained in India. The standard and diverse aspects of tea tourism are also reflected in a Figure 4.

Figure 3
Word cloud for tea tourism elements



Figure 4
Tea tourism products or experiences for both destinations



Findings revealed that there were four main categories and twenty-five sub-categories. The main categories are facilities, activities, tours and training, and Observation (Figure 5). The main category of *Facilities* includes eight sub-categories: tea factory, tea museum, tea garden or plantations, tea house, tea trails or routes, tea research center, tea auction center, and tea heritage bungalow. Tea consumption, harvesting, shopping, photo shooting, visiting tea festivals, horse riding, and watching cultural dances by ethnic tea workers constitute the main category of *Activities*. The main category of *Tours* consists of four sub-categories: Tea factory, tea garden, tea museum, and graveyards of the British tea planters. Finally, serving, picking, brewing, tasting, production, and traditional tea ceremony constitute the main category of *Training and Observation*.

Figure 5
Tea tourism products or experiences



The main and sub-categories are explained in detail, and some direct quotations are given for each in the following parts:

4.1. Facilities

The main category of *Facilities* consists of eight sub-categories: the tea factory, tea museum, tea garden or plantations, tea houses, tea trails or routes, tea research center, tea auction center, and tea bungalow. According to the findings, many tea factories produce different tea types in India and Turkey. Some tours clearly state this: *"We are going to Tirebolu 42 Tea Factory, which is famous for its quality tea due to its microclimate climate" (E.T.S. Tour-Turkey)*. *"We also visit Mukul Tea Estate, known for its green tea" (Purvi Discovery-India)*. Similar products or experiences for tourists are observed in Sri Lanka (Aslam & Jolliffe, 2015) and Bangladesh (Sultana & Khan, 2018). It even shows similarities with the findings of past studies (Gupta et al., 2022; Mondal & Samaddar, 2021b; Sharma & Bhowmick, 2016) conducted in India. It is understood from tours that an old mansion or a historical building has been transformed into a tea museum, where tea and tea-related products are exhibited. *"There is a tea museum in the historical building built by Paşaoğlu Hüseyin Efendi in 1896 in Rize" (Tatilbudur.com-Turkey)*.

Similarly, many tea museums exist in different countries, such as the China National Tea Museum, the Tea Museum of Korea, and Drink Vietnam (Cheng et al., 2012; Nam and Thien, 2019; Jolliffe, 2003; 2007). Many tea houses offer services for local tea varieties and social interaction opportunities to tourists. We can deduce this clearly from the tours organized to tea cultivating destinations. *"One of the must-visit tea houses in the bylines of Uzan Bazar is The Tea Story" (Architecture Design Travel-India)*. The finding parallels previous studies (Chen et al., 2017; Gunasekara & Momsen, 2007; Weber, 2018). With the development of tea tourism in the region, local tea producers have turned their tea gardens into a product to experience for tourists. *"We will pass through the tea gardens on our journey that will take about 15-20 minutes" (Ani Tour-Turkey)*. Findings support the results of previous studies (Leung, 2007; Lin & Wu, 2016). In addition to the facilities mentioned above, India offers different tea tourism products such as tea trails or routes, tea research centers, and auction centers. However, Turkey's tea tourism products are not yet offered as tourist products. *"Following the Eastern Tea Trails will bring you to some surprising destinations, beginning with the tumultuous streets, the clamor, and the faded majesty of the Raj in Kolkata" (Ultimate Travel-India)*. *"You can visit the Tocklai Tea Research Center, the world's largest and oldest tea research station established in 1911" (Truehab-India)*. *"Afternoon visit the Tea Auction Centre – the largest auction center for C.T.C. tea in the world and also visit a Tea Brokerage firm to know more about Tea tasting and quality" (Avani Travel-India)*. Previous findings state that products such as tea routes (Gunasekara & Momsen, 2007; Sultana & Khan, 2018), research centers, and institutions (Aslam & Jolliffe, 2015; Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009) or auction centers (Chen et al., 2017) are offered to tourists. Accommodation in tea bungalows or tea tasting in these hotels is only provided on tours organized in India. It is seen in the programs of tours organized to tea tourism destinations. *"Stay in heritage tea bungalows" (Eastern Odyssey-India)*. Similarly, tea-related lodging is one of the most important attractions for destinations (Gunasekara & Momsen, 2007; Su et al., 2019).

4.2. Activities

Activities are subcategorized as consumption, tea harvesting, shopping, photo shooting, visiting tea festivals, horse riding, and watching cultural dance by ethnic tea workers. Consumption experience refers to the experiences occurring in tea-related places such as tea houses, botanical gardens or parks, villages, lakeside, castle, mountain house, tree house, and so forth, focusing on tea consumption or tasting. It is mentioned that tea houses are an integral product of tea tourism. *"Considering we are talking about an itinerary that involves all things tea, try out the specially designed tea menu at the Novotel Guwahati's restaurant, The Square. The team designs a five-course global menu using various types of tea leaves and brews" (Architecture Design Travel-India)*. Botanical gardens, parks, or tree houses serve as tea consumption areas in both destinations. *"We are going to Rize Botanical*

Park to have a bird's eye view and drink Rize tea" (Ami Tour-Turkey). "Enjoy picnic lunch and taste a tea on a tree house" (Purvi Discovery-India). Similar consumption experiences in different settings also emphasize in previous studies (Jolliffe, 2003; Sohn et al., 2014; Su & Zhang, 2020). When tourists go on a tour organized to tea destinations, they can go to the tea plantations or gardens and collect tea with tea scissors. The tours during which tourists learn about tea, like its origin and how it is grown, are stated in the tours. "Today, your ride takes you through the lush green tea plantations of Ethelwold and Jalannagar Tea Estate. Later we take a tour around a tea estate known for producing high-quality C.T.C. teas. Learn about tea - its origin, how it is grown, and tea tasting and quality" (Purvi Discovery-India). Findings are similar to previous studies (Cheng et al., 2010; Hamidah et al., 2019; Sultana & Khan, 2018). Tourists want to take photographs during activities such as collecting tea and visiting tea gardens, especially for reasons like memories and the desire to share them on social media.

For this reason, a special place is arranged, and time is allocated for photography on tours. Details about the photo shoot are seen in a tour by Jolly Tour. *"After our shopping break, we go to the tea garden and pick tea. Then, we take our souvenir photos in the garden".* In a study conducted in Sri Lanka, photo shooting within tea gardens were found to be one of the main experiences for tourist (Fernando et al., 2016). It is briefly stated that special tours are organized for contracted businesses during the tour to purchase local food and beverages, especially tea and its related products. *"After the tea and hazelnut introductions, we drink our tea and give a short shopping break for local products in the tea factory" (Coraltravel-Turkey).* Previous studies also emphasize that tourists purchase tea-related products such as fresh teas in Indonesia (Hamidah et al., 2019), tea with milk in Malaysia (Han, 2007), or tea producing and serving equipment in China (Su et al., 2019) while traveling. Visiting the tea festival is one of the main activities in tea tourism destinations. By visiting the tea festival, tourists can learn about the local people's culture, traditions, and history, experience local tea varieties, and participate in tea-related activities. It can be concluded from tours organized in India: *"Guwahati is the venue for the festival. This Tea Festival attracts many tourists from far and wide and hence plays a significant role in the economy of Assam. Visitors take back home several packets of tea leaves to relish the tasty tea of Assam for months together. So many opportunities rolled into one Tea Festival" (Incredible-India).* Visiting tea-related festivals are mentioned in some studies (Chen et al., 2017; Jolliffe, 2003; Sultana and Khan, 2018). It is understood that watching cultural dance performance performed by ethnic tea workers in tea gardens or the heritage bungalow is also a critical tea tourism product. *"Watch a traditional dance performance by the local tea workers in the evening sipping the garden-fresh tea" (Explore North East-India).* Lastly, riding horse activities are offered to tourists in India. *"Later post breakfast, your ride takes you around the tea plantations of Limbuguri Tea Estate" (Purvi Discovery).*

4.3. Tours

Tea factory, tea garden, tea museum, and graveyards of British tea planters constitute the main category of Tours. Tour tours are organized to tea factories, which are an essential attraction of tea tourism for both destinations, and tourists learn all the processes of tea in these tours. *"We visit the tea estate to get information about tea" (Jolly Tour-Turkey). "After breakfast, take a short drive to visit the factory of Mancotta Tea Estate and witness processing of Assam tea" (Arkaya Holidays-India).* Similarly, the gardens where tea is grown frequently stand out in tours organized for the region. Previous studies (Gunasekara & Momsen, 2007; Jolliffe & Aslam, 2009; Su et al., 2019) indicate that visiting a tea factory is one of tourists' most essential products or experiences. It is clearly stated in the tour programs that either walks in the tea gardens can be taken or locals picking tea can be watched. *"Take a peek into the life of the tea estate. See the colorful women pluckers as they chatter and sing while meticulously plucking the delicate tea leaves and a bud" (Koyeli Travels-India).*

Similarly, visiting tea gardens or plantations is observed in China (Leung, 2007) and Indonesia (Purwadi, 2016). Tea museums offer many opportunities for tourists, such as learning about the local culture based on tea, experiencing tea varieties, purchasing tea and tea-related products, and learning about tea. Some tours indicate this: *"We are visiting the tea museum in Rize" (Tatilbudur. com-Turkey).* Findings showed a link with

previous studies (Nam & Thien, 2019; Su et al., 2019). Finally, it is seen that British Tea planters, an important cultural attraction for India, are visited. *"After an early breakfast, we shall visit the Cinnamora Tea Estate, Assam's first tea estate established in 1850. You can also visit the near the graveyards of the British Tea planters and burial ground of Maniram Diwan, the first Indian commercial tea planter"* (Clubsides Tours-India).

4.4. Training and observation

Training and Observation comprise six sub-categories: serving, picking, brewing, tasting, production, and traditional tea ceremony. These components of tea tourism provide educational and Observation opportunities for tourists. Some studies (Aslam & Jolliffe, 2015; Jolliffe, 2003; 2007; Su & Zhang, 2020) emphasize that tourism offers facilities to learn tea-related elements. Tourists can have the opportunity to get detailed information about how tea should be served while traveling to tea tourism destinations. Black Sea tour organized by Jolly-Tour might be an excellent example of a tea serving. *"After our shopping break, we visit the tea factory. We find the opportunity to learn many things we do not know about tea"*. It is a frequent phenomenon in previous research (Cheng et al., 2010; Lin & Wu, 2016). It draws attention to tour programs in both destinations where the experts give information about tea, participants learn how the tea is picked, and even they pick tea with tea scissors in tea gardens. *"After a leisurely breakfast, we will meet the tea-garden manager or any concerned personality from this industry to know, to ask and to see anything related to tea plantation"* (Caper Travel-India). Results show parallelism with past studies (Leung, 2007; Sultana & Khan, 2018). Training and Observation also provide elements such as how the tea should be brewed and its sensory properties, such as aroma, appearance, taste, etc., during and after brewing. *"After drinking our tea and listening to our experts about how to brew and distinguish between quality tea"* (Jolly Tour-Turkey). Other studies (Hamidah et al., 2019; Weber, 2018) state that learning activities related to tea brewing are a good experience or product for destinations to attract tourists. It is explicitly stated in the tour program that experts or food engineers explain all processes related to tea production. *"After breakfast, we will visit the Addabarie Tea Factory to learn the process of tea making. In the tea factory, you will get a chance to see the full manufacturing process, like crushing, tearing, and curling of tea"* (Tour my India). Previous studies (Su et al., 2019; Su & Zhang, 2020) also emphasize that tourists want to learn about the tea production process. Lastly, it is understood that there was a tea ceremony as a tea tourism experience in India. *"Evening enjoy a Tea Ceremony with traditional Assamese snacks' Pitha' or rice cakes"* (Avani Travel-India). Similarly, a traditional tea ceremony is accepted as one of the most important experiences for tourists (Su et al., 2019), England (Weber, 2018), Korea (Sohn et al., 2014), and Taiwan (Lin & Wu, 2016).

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1. Conclusion

This study aims to identify the destination tea tourism products or experiences and to determine whether these tea tourism products or experiences are getting due recognition in the tours organized by the national travel agencies of the Eastern Black Sea Region in Turkey and Assam in India. The qualitative analysis of tea tours offered by travel agencies from India and Turkey was undertaken to achieve the study objectives. Thus, it was determined what tea tourism products and experiences could be from a supply perspective. In light of these, this study is one of the few empirical studies examining tea tourism.

The present study also searched for an answer to the following research questions. i) How does tea tourism develop for both destinations? While in the Assam region, there are unique or private tours for tea tourism; in the Black Sea region, some tea-related products and experiences are offered only through cultural tours. Moreover, while tea tourism promotes and markets destinations in the Assam region, the eastern Black Sea region is considered a cultural attraction. From this point of view, it can be concluded that tea tourism in the Assam region is a type of tourism. ii) What are the tea tourism products or experiences offered in both

destinations? In answer to this research question, the tea tourism products and experiences offered in the destinations are as follows: tea factory, tea museum, tea house, tea gardens or plantations, tea trails or routes, tea research center, tea consumption, tea harvesting, shopping, tea festival, photo shooting, graveyards of tea planters, tea-related courses, and workshops such as serving, picking, brewing, tasting, and production. iii) Do these products and experiences differ by destination? Tea-related products and experiences differ according to destinations, and different products can be offered in the Black Sea and Assam regions. Since the Black Sea region is still in its infancy in tea tourism, the lack of some products is noticeable. For instance, tea trails or routes, tea-related accommodation establishments, tea festivals, ATV or horse tours in tea plantations, and traditional tea ceremonies are some of the products and experiences that are not offered. iv) How can tea tourism products and experiences be classified? In this context, it is possible to classify tea tourism products and experiences into four categories: facilities, activities, tours, and training/observation. v) Is tea tourism products offered to tourists by travel agencies? Although tea tourism products are offered in both regions, the level and intensity of offering tea-related products by travel agencies differ according to the Black Sea Region and Assam Region. While tea tourism products are limited to tours organized by travel agencies in the Black Sea region, it is offered more intensively in the Assam region.

5.2. Theoretical implications

The present article is conceived to identify the tea-related products offered in the tour packages of travel agencies. The researchers reviewed the products offered in existing tea tours by the leading travel agencies of India and Turkey's two important tea cultivating regions (Eastern Black Sea Region and Assam). The study revealed tea tourism's comparative demand and supply orientations in the selected destinations. The prime implications of the present study can be summarised (see Figure 6) below: The contribution of tea tourism to the overall development of the destinations was found to be very high for Assam (India), whereas moderate for the Eastern Black Sea Region (Turkey). Tea tourism, therefore, posit a significant role in tourism destination development using tea products and experiences.

Tourism planners, travel agents, and stakeholders must package tea tourism products and experiences as core or supplementary attractions. The study has identified 25 core elements of tea tourism presented in Figure 4, where several elements are common, and others are unique. The study results also revealed that the Assamese travel agencies successfully use core tea tourism products and experiences in their tour packages. In contrast, Turkish travel agencies use these experiences in their cultural tour packages.

Figure 6
Destinations' tea tourism for supply and demand perspective

Turkey	Destination	India
moderate	Potential of tea tourism	high
low	Contribution in overall destination development	high
moderate	Products or experiences for destination's tea tourism	high
non-availability	Availability of special tours for tea tourism	availability
availability	Availability of tea tourism products in cultural or other tours	availability
partially	Supply level of tea tourism by travel agencies	high
low	Demand level of tea tourism by tourists	high
supporting experience	Experience of tea tourism	core experience

Hands-on experience while immersing in tourism activities are the most significant dimension of contemporary travelers' experience. Visitors looking for diverse gastronomic experiences are extremely enthused to partake in gastronomy-related activities (Dixit, 2019). The various tea tourism products and experiences motivate tourists to visit destinations besides making them learn about the local culture, traditions, socio-cultural practices, and dietary and consumption systems at a destination. Tea tourism development also preserves the natural environment, sustains the local heritage and culture, and subsequently benefits the tea-growing regions by generating employment opportunities and boosting the rural economy. There is growing concern about updating the literature on tea tours; promoting tea tourism as a supplementary or core tour attraction will familiarize travel agencies with the potential of tea tourism in India and Turkey.

5.3. Practical implications

This study indicates the importance of travel agencies in promoting tea tourism products or experiences to attract tourists. Travel agencies play an essential role in serving products and shaping the knowledge of local and international tourists in tea tourism destinations for both destinations. Similarly, several destination marketing and management organizations, especially travel agencies, try to meet the needs of tourists searching for information about tea tourism destinations. Moreover, it is also known that travel agencies impact tourist satisfaction and behavioral intention (Millán & Esteban, 2004; del Bosque et al., 2006). In this sense, suggestions may be given to the local travel agencies operating to adopt the best practices from one another. The list of identified tea tourism products and experiences may be enlarged by replicating a similar study in other analogous tea-growing regions. The result of the study may further bridge and widen the horizon of tea tourism products and experiences. It can be undertaken by identifying novel products and promoting them as a part of packages. The travel agencies may further be advised to link with other stakeholders, service providers, museums, and allied tea attractions to devise appropriate tea tour packaging and marketing strategies. Tea plantation visits, tea pairing sessions, bird watching, cycling, pottery classes, knowledge seminars, promoting local tea varieties, and other products involving active tourist participation and involvement may enhance the overall destination tea tourism experiences.

Tea drinking habits, attitudes toward tea drinking, and willingness to travel were closely associated (Cheng et al., 2010). The quest to know more about tea production/processing and the positive attitude towards tea drinking/tea culture incite travelers to become tea tourists. Tea tourism destinations should comprehend this linkage and devise their marketing strategies accordingly. Therefore, tea tourism products may be offered as a special tour, as prevalent in many Indian travel agencies' packages, and as a constituent of other cultural tour packages in Turkish travel agencies. Travel agencies should further study the tastes and preferences of tea tourists and offer customized tours per their interests. Therefore, tea tourism is an emerging niche, developing globally with a specific focus on tea-growing regions. Tea tourism products should be included in mainstream tour packages. Local tea customs can be conveyed through activities promoting sightseeing and other entertainment and tourism experiences. Proper planning is required to make tea tourism more attractive, productive, and flourishing in India and Turkey.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has compelled tourists to think about their travel differently; for example, most travelers feel about virtual tours, but online experiences are no substitutes for real-life activities. In addition, post-pandemic travelers seem more concerned about sustainability and the need to support local businesses. Hence they avoid shared group activities or museum visits and prefer traditional accommodation options to visit more prominent hotels.

6. Limitations and future research

Although this article delivered several important contributions to the existing body of knowledge, it has a few limitations which need to be addressed by future research. Firstly, the study is undertaken by reviewing

the website contents of select travel agencies in the study areas. However, it would have been more impactful if the travel agents' interaction could have been undertaken simultaneously. In other words, individual or focus group interviews can be conducted with travel agency representatives or tourist guides to reveal the tea tourism products and destination experiences more clearly. Secondly, the study targeted only one region from India and Turkey; it would have been more pervasive if the representations from other tea-growing areas could have been studied.

Furthermore, other countries, which are in first place in tea production in the World, can be included in the study, and thus it can be determined how tea tourism products may differ according to country. Thirdly, the present study is conceived to comprehend the supply perspectives of tea tourism; it can further be strengthened if the demand perspective, i.e., feedback from the tea tourists and input from other stakeholders, may also be considered in other studies. Additionally, studies might collect the data over several time phases and at different locations to include the influence of seasonality and diverse local cultures on tourists' tea preferences and buying behavior.

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Appendix

Study sample

Turkey		India	
Travel agencies	Website	Travel agencies	Website
ETS Tour	www.etstur.com/	India Tours	www.india-tours.com/
Jolly Tour	www.jollytur.com/	Purvi Discovery	www.purvidiscovery.com
Ani Tour	www.anitur.com/	Truehab Pvt. Ltd.	www.truehab.com/
Tatilbudur.com	www.tatilbudur.com/	Koyeli travels	www.koyelitravels.in/
Tatil.com	www.tatil.com/	Caper Travel Company (P) Ltd.	www.capertravelindia.com/india
Coraltravel	www.coralatil.com/	Avani Travel Services	www.avanitravels.com/tea-tour-in-india
Touristica	www.touristica.com.tr/	Tour my India	www.tourmyindia.com/
İrem Tour	www.iremtur.com.tr/	Arkaya Holidays	www.arkayaholidays.com/northeastindiaassamteatour.html
Pronto Tour	www.prontotour.com/	Eastern Odyssey	www.easternodyssey.in/tea-tour-of-darjeeling-and-assam
		Explore North East India	www.explorenortheastindia.com/tours/tea-tour-of-assam/
		Clubside Tours and Travels Pvt. Ltd.	www.clubside.in/package-detail/tea-tour-in-assam
		Arin Tea Pvt. Ltd.	https://arinteapvtltd.com/index.php#
		Travel + Leisure India and South Asia	https://travelandleisureindia.in/tea-trail-in-assam/
		The Ultimate Travel Company	www.theultimatetravelcompany.co.uk/indian-subcontinent/india/kolkata-darjeeling-assam/eastern-tea-trails/
		Indian Holiday Pvt. Ltd.	www.indianholiday.com/fairs-and-festivals/assam/tea-festival.html

Number of tours	Examples of tour names	Number of total tours	Examples of tours
37 tours	Classic Black Sea Tour	56 tours	Tea Tasting tour Assam
	Black Sea and Batumi Tour		Tea Tour in Assam
	Classic Black Sea Plateaus and Batumi Tour		Tea Experience, Heritage Tea Ride,
	Black Sea Plateaus and Batumi Tour		Tea Holidays Assam – Darjeeling
	Classic Black Sea and Plateaus Tour		Tea Tours
	Black Sea Plateaus and Batumi Tour		Tea Country Tour
	Green Black Sea and Batumi Tour		Tea Tour in India
	Black Sea Dream and Batumi Tour		Tea Tasting Tour Assam
			Assam Tea Tours
			Tea Tour of Darjeeling and Assam
	Pabhojan Tea Tour		
	India's Eastern Tea Trails		

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