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EXAMINATION OF SALT MUSEUMS IN THE WORLD IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TÜRKİYE

KÜLTÜREL MİRAS TURİZMİ BAĞLAMINDA DÜNYADAKİ TUZ MÜZELERİNİN İNCELENMESİ VE TÜRKİYE'YE YÖNELİK ÖNERİLER

Yusuf Ziya AKBAŞ^a

Abstract

Salt has played a significant role for humanity throughout history, not only as a foodstuff but also as an economic, cultural, and social asset. In this context, salt museums stand out as important institutions showcasing salt's historical production methods, cultural significance, and industrial heritage. The aim of this study is to examine the role of salt, which has held strategic economic, social, and cultural value throughout human history, within the tourism phenomenon and, in this context, to reveal the role and functions of salt museums worldwide and how they are utilized as tourist attractions. The study utilized secondary data and included a total of 12 salt museums worldwide as a sample. The evaluation explains how these museums stand out as effective tools in preserving, transferring, and transforming cultural heritage into economic value. The study concludes with evaluations and offers suggestions for sites in Türkiye that could serve as examples of salt heritage.

Keywords: Salt Museums, Cultural Heritage Tourism, Türkiye

Özet

Tuz, tarihsel süreçte insanlık için yalnızca bir gıda maddesi değil, aynı zamanda ekonomik, kültürel ve sosyal bir değer olarak da önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Tuz müzeleri de bu bağlamda, tuzun tarihsel üretim yöntemlerini, kültürel önemini ve endüstriyel mirasını sergileyen önemli kurumlar olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı insanlık tarihi boyunca ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel açıdan stratejik bir değer taşıyan tuzun turizm olgusu içerisindeki yerini incelemek ve bu bağlamda dünyadaki tuz müzelerinin rolünü, işlevlerini ve turistik bir çekicilik unsuru olarak nasıl değerlendirildiklerini ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmada ikincil verilerden yararlanılmış olup, yapılan araştırma sonucunda dünyada toplamda 12 adet tuz müzesi örneklem kapsamına alınmıştır. Değerlendirmeye dâhil edilen bu müzelerin kültürel mirasın korunması, aktarılması ve ekonomik değere dönüştürülmesinde nasıl etken bir araç olarak öne çıktıkları açıklanmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda değerlendirmelerde bulunularak Türkiye’de tuz mirasına örnek teşkil edebilecek yerlere yönelik öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tuz Müzeleri, Kültürel Miras Turizmi, Türkiye

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Corresponding Author: Yusuf Ziya AKBAŞ (yusufziyaakbas@karatekin.edu.tr)

^a Çankırı Karatekin University, Faculty of Tourism, Çankırı/Türkiye (yusufziyaakbas@karatekin.edu.tr), ORCID: 0000-0003-4478-3580

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1. Introduction

Salt, a mineral important in world history, has been used by humans since the earliest periods of economic activity. It has often been a source of oppression, fought over, and sometimes even assumed religious significance, leading to its increasing value (Avcı, 2003). A salt pan has been discovered in Çatalhöyük, Konya, one of the oldest ancient cities of the Neolithic Period (Seçim & Koru, 2024). Salt resources exist in nature in two forms: solid and liquid. Salt is found in liquid form in oceans, seas, salt lakes, and saltwater springs, and in solid form as rock salt (Gölbaş & Başbüyük, 2012: 46). One of three basic methods is used to make salt in these forms economically consumable. These are: the exploitation of rock salt mines, a traditional method of production; the evaporation of seawater or salty lake water; and the extraction and evaporation of highly concentrated waters formed by dissolving underground saltwater or salty sediments. Salt, a vital natural resource for human life and health, can be used for food, health, trade, transportation, and tourism (Nistoreanu, Aluculesei & Dumitrescu, 2024). One way to achieve this is through the various forms of salt display in museums.

Museums, which play a significant role in people's leisure activities, are among the most important tourist attractions (Frey & Meier, 2003). Museums are spaces where artistic or historical artifacts, such as collections, objects, and artifacts, can be accessed, borrowed, preserved, used, and managed. Collectively, museums function as "spaces for preserving memories" (Zou, Xiao & Yang, 2022). As one of the most powerful types of heritage attractions, museums have become creative, discursive spaces that offer visitors the opportunity to interact with the history of a particular locality or destination and to connect or connect with the place they visit (Park, 2010). Museums, often among the top tourist attractions in the countries they visit (Demir, 2001; cited in Sürücü, Bekâr & Arman, 2017), are considered important symbols and tourist attractions. Therefore, they are among the primary reasons for visiting a destination. Visitors' visits to museums and historical sites are generally based on various reasons, including diverse historical interests, the quality of exhibitions, and special events or programs (Allan & Altal, 2016). The aim of the study is to examine the historical and cultural importance of salt within the framework of the museum phenomenon and to reveal the functions and attractiveness elements of salt museums around the world in the context of cultural heritage tourism. This study is significant because it systematically examines salt heritage tourism and salt museums,

which have received relatively limited attention in the literature, within the context of cultural heritage tourism. By demonstrating the role of salt museums in preserving industrial heritage, strengthening local identity, creating tourist attractions, and contributing to local development, it offers concrete recommendations for salt heritage sites in Türkiye. In this respect, the study not only provides theoretical insights into salt heritage tourism but also produces findings that can guide decision-makers and practitioners in the development of new salt-based tourism products in Türkiye. The following section explains the concepts of museums, salt museums, and the significance of salt for tourism. Examples of salt museums from around the world are presented, along with evaluations.

2. The Concept of Museum and Museology

Museums are permanent, non-profit institutions that research, collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage of society. Open, accessible, and inclusive, museums promote diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally, and with community participation, offering a variety of experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge sharing (International Council of Museums, [ICOM], 2022). Essentially, a museum is an organized, permanent, non-profit institution, staffed by professionals, that possesses, uses, maintains, and exhibits tangible objects to the public on a regular schedule, whether for educational or aesthetic purposes (Alexander, Alexander & Decker, 2017: 1).

As institutions that preserve and interpret the tangible heritage of humanity, human activities, and the natural world, museums have a long and diverse history, rooted in the innate human desire to collect and exhibit, with discernible origins in the large collections created by individuals and groups before the modern era (Lewis, 2024). The word "museion" meaning a place of contemplation or temple to the Muses (Muses) in the Hellenistic period, forms the basis of the word "museum" (Dıvrak, 2020; cited in Abrak, 2024). The word "museum" as a place where both learning and objects were associated, originated in ancient times in the Temple of the Muses, a reference to the Greek sister goddesses. The temple was considered a "place of contemplation" where learning and objects were combined. Art and natural history objects were collected in this institution (Simmons, 2010: 1813). The use of the Latin-derived word "museum" was primarily limited to places of philosophical discussion during the Roman period. The word "museum" was revived in 15th-century Europe to describe Lorenzo de' Medici's collection

in Florence, but this expression conveyed a concept of comprehensiveness rather than a building. By the 17th century, the word "museum" had begun to be used to describe collections of interest across Europe. While there was some ambiguity regarding the use of the term "museum" in the 1753 legislation establishing the British Museum, the idea of an institution designated as a museum, established for the purpose of presenting and preserving a collection to the public, was well established by the 18th century. Indeed, Denis Diderot outlined a detailed plan for a national museum for France in the ninth volume of his *Encyclopédie*, published between 1751 and 1772. Throughout the 19th century and much of the 20th century, the use of the word "museum" denoted a building housing cultural materials accessible to the public. Later, as museums continued to respond to the societies that created them, the emphasis on the building itself became less dominant. Open-air museums, which consist of a series of buildings preserved as objects, and eco-museums, which involve interpreting all aspects of an open-air environment, are examples of this. Additionally, virtual museums are also available electronically on the internet. While virtual museums offer some advantages over existing ones, they remain dependent on the collection, preservation, and interpretation of material objects by the actual museum (Lewis, 2024).

The purposes for which museums are established vary: to serve as recreational facilities, academic venues, or educational resources; to contribute to the quality of life of their local areas; to attract tourism to a region; to foster civic pride or nationalist striving; or even to simply promote ideologies. Given these diverse purposes, museums emerge with remarkable diversity in form, content, and even function (Lewis, 2024). There are numerous types of museums worldwide, including history and art museums, archaeology and ethnography museums, military museums, industrial museums, technology museums, nature museums, science museums, memorial museums, open-air museums, panoramic museums, virtual museums, and museums dedicated to various specialties (glass, tobacco, wine, health, etc.) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2024).

3. Tourism Associated with the Salt Heritage and the Concept of the Salt Museum

Since ancient times, people have used salt for cooking, preserving food, benefiting from its healing properties, and as a means of payment. Therefore, some early settlements were established near water, food, and, preferably, salt, as prerequisites for further social and economic development. Naturally, social development, the healing properties of salt, and

the attractiveness of certain salt landscapes have led to the development of tourism as an essential asset in some regions (Nistoreanu et al., 2024).

Salt is a staple food in most gastronomy and is associated with a distinctive traditional production (Renard & Ortiz, 2016). Salt also defines the identity of some tourist destinations through sites such as salt flats or salt mines. Given the impact of salt on tourist destinations, shaping landscapes, and influencing gastronomy, salt can constitute a resource that, when used appropriately, can attract significant numbers of tourists in some destinations (Silva & Carneiro, 2023).

Kimic, Costa & Negulescu (2021) note that salt-related or salt heritage tourism encompasses visits to salt mines and salt fields, various forms of participation in production, and the purchase of salt and related food products. Because the importance of salt in the tourism context is associated with various salt-related heritage sites, such as mines and other landscapes related to this food product (e.g., salt pans), as well as gastronomic elements, salt-related tourism can be considered a type of cultural tourism. Researchers such as Wu, Xie & Tsai (2015) also classify it as a subcategory of cultural tourism, industrial tourism, because it is associated with the salt production process. While the literature on salt heritage tourism is scarce, Wu et al. (2015) suggest that the most valued aspects of salt-related tourism include stepping back in time, understanding how people lived and worked in the past, better understanding local history and salt heritage, and including detailed presentations of products to illustrate the salt production process and the commercial importance associated with salt (Silva & Carneiro, 2023). However, the reasons for visiting salt heritage destinations can vary (e.g., participating in certain salt production activities). Tourists motivated by salt prefer to visit salt-related destinations that offer participatory experiences. It can be argued that salt heritage tourism is constantly evolving with the introduction of new products and services. Rediscovered as tourist products, saltwater landscapes offer an opportunity for cultural heritage preservation, education, events, health, and recreation, with the potential to attract diverse demographic groups (Mandelartz, 2018).

There are different tourism products related to salt heritage. Examples include “tours on salt flats, mine visits, museum visits, visits to places with significant salt concentrations such as salt lakes, salt pans, and brine areas, health, beauty, and therapy treatments, themed events, salt routes, the commercialization of salt and its derivatives, and accommodations

with a salt concept” (Silva & Carneiro, 2023).

Salt extraction, one of the most important mining activities throughout history, played a significant role in the economic development and social autonomy of towns in the Middle Ages (Langer, 2013). Today, some mines have ceased extraction and instead been transformed into popular tourist attractions. The Wieliczka salt mine in Poland is a striking example of this transformation. Another example is the Tusa salt mines in Romania. These two mines provide excellent examples of the reuse of abandoned salt mines (Kimic et al., 2021). In some salt mines, production continues, and visitors can visit certain areas of the mine. The best example of such a site in Türkiye is the Çankırı Salt Cave, one of the oldest and largest salt mines in the world, known to have been producing salt for approximately five thousand years (Çankırı Governorship, 2024). This place, home to Türkiye's largest rock salt reserve, is a large cave composed of many galleries (Kara, 2006: 273). Currently, the cave serves as a gallery where artifacts made of salt are exhibited (Kara, 2020: 150). Also known as the "Underground Salt City" this cave welcomed 1.5 million visitors in 2023 (TRT News, 2024). Another destination is the Tuzluca Salt Caves in Iğdır. They are located in the Tuzluca district of Iğdır. The rock salt layers in the caves within the Salt Mountains are thought to have formed 24-37 million years ago. The salt caves, which have a temperature of 12 degrees Celsius year-round, contain many galleries resembling rooms. Known to have been used by the states that ruled this region throughout history to meet their salt needs, the caves have been introduced to health tourism in addition to regular visits with the opening of the Salt Therapy Center in 2021 (Türkiye Culture Portal, 2025). Meanwhile, the Rock Salt Cave in Kırşehir awaits development for cultural tourism. Known to have supplied kitchen salt during the Ottoman and Seljuk periods, the cave's history dates back eight thousand years (Haberler, 2025). Besides rock salt caves, another site in Türkiye where salt is produced and offers tourism potential is Salt Lake. Located within the borders of Ankara, Konya, and Aksaray provinces, this massive salt lake basin is a Class A wetland according to international criteria. Home to a variety of plant, bird, and mammal species, the lake is also registered as a first-degree natural preservation site (TVKGM, 2024).

Salt production sites attract visitors interested in cultural heritage. These sites often possess cultural values related to salt production and are represented by tangible assets such as buildings or artifacts/tools, the salt itself, and intangible assets such as traditional

knowledge, customs and practices, history, and the social life associated with salt workers (Gauci, Schembri & Inkpen, 2017). Buildings and outdoor facilities once used for salt production can be used for alternative purposes such as educational activities, cultural events, workshops, and others. Many active and inactive salt production sites have museums, interpretation centers, or eco-museums. Tourism related to salt heritage includes tours such as guided tours or school visits, participatory experiences observing or actively participating in the artisanal salt production process, and purchasing salt-related products such as soap, bath salts, or gourmet salts. Visitors can also enjoy health and well-being experiences such as health treatments based on the beneficial properties of saltwater and mud. Alternatively, some visitors are interested in the culinary aspects of salt, such as recipes that use salt as a key ingredient and incorporate local flavors (Martins et al., 2020). Salt heritage tourism is seen as a viable way to preserve traditional salt-making practices as a commercial activity and increase the market impact of salt as a natural and industrial heritage. Transforming the salt industry into a leisure and tourism business serves to promote indigenous identity and preserve traditions, while tourist visits to salt destinations generate employment and awareness of local cultures (Wu et al., 2015).

4. Methodology

The study was designed as a descriptive study based on a qualitative research approach. The primary objective of the research is to reveal how salt has become a tourist attraction within the context of cultural heritage tourism and, within this context, to develop recommendations for Türkiye by examining the role and functions of salt museums worldwide. To this end, a document review-based design was chosen, which allows for the description of the current situation and the comparative analysis of different examples.

The research utilized secondary data. First, national and international literature on salt heritage, salt tourism, industrial heritage, cultural heritage tourism, and museums was examined. Data on the salt museums included in the study were obtained from the museums' official websites, relevant tourism and culture portals, local promotional texts, brochures, tour content, and promotional materials with photographs.

The research population consists of salt museums worldwide. For the purpose of the study, a total of 12 salt museums were selected from this population using a purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling allows for in-depth study of situations considered to be rich in information. Criteria considered important for selection are determined in this sampling

process. Based on these criteria, the selected sample is considered to be fully representative of the research population (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000; Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001, as cited in Bülbül, 2003). The following criteria were considered in the selection of museums to be included in the sample: the museum's focus directly on salt production, salt mining, or salt-related cultural/industrial heritage; and the museum's availability for visits or active promotion.

5. Findings

Salt museums dedicated to cultural heritage are being established worldwide as tourist attractions in mines, fields, or settlements where salt is mined. Examples of such museums from around the world are listed below in alphabetical order.

6. Salt Museums in the World

6.1. Bucovina Salt Museum, Romania

The Bucovina Salt Museum, located within the Cacica Salt Mine, opened in 2011. Located at a depth of 40 meters, it is the only underground museum in Romania. Along the museum's route, there is also a chapel, gym, artificial lake, ballroom, and recreation room. The route is approximately 500 meters long, and the first underground destination is reached by 150 stairs. The Cacica Salt Mine has been in operation for over 220 years. The temperature underground is around 10° C (Muzeedelasat, 2024).



Figure 1. Bucovina Salt Museum

Source: Muzeedelasat, 2024

6.2. Cracow Saltworks Museum in Wieliczka Salt Mine, Poland

The Salt Museum in Wieliczka is located on the third floor of the mine, at a depth of 135 meters, and extends along a 1.5 kilometer route. The museum offers visitors historical and scientific information, as well as works of art. The museum's 19 rooms present comprehensive information about the saltworks in a chronological and thematic order, allowing visitors to explore in a tranquil atmosphere. The geological exhibition explains in detail how the salt deposits were formed in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Visitors can also see archaeological finds from different periods and learn how salt processing began here 3,500 years ago. The historical exhibition displays the most important documents related to the mine, dating from the 13th and 14th centuries. The museum houses old tools and mining equipment, both completely original and taken from the mine itself. Artifacts on view along the museum route include: simple shovels, pickaxes, giant horse-powered lifting machines, huge electric drills, wheels, cranes, crystalline salt samples, salt stalactites, petrified plant and animal fragments, small objects and paintings depicting the work of the Wieliczka miners, as well as their traditions and daily life (Cracow Saltworks Museum, 2022; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2024).



The exhibition displays all types of salt mined at the mine, including salt loaves weighing between one and two tons, which are a characteristic feature of the Krakow Saltworks and were mined and sold from the mine's opening until the 19th century.



Before entering the vast Maria Teresa II Chamber, you can marvel at the otherworldly results of secondary crystallisation of salt, commonly known as 'cauliflowers'.

Figure 2. Cracow Saltworks Museum

Source: Tatomir, 2024



Figure 3. Cracow Saltworks Museum

Source: Cracow Saltworks Museum, 2022



Figure 4. Winch System, Cracow Saltworks Museum
Source: Wikipedia, 2025



Figure 5. Cracow Saltworks Museum
Source: Aronson, 2025

6.3. German Salt Museum Lüneburg, Germany

Known as the "Salt Town" Lüneburg was home to one of Europe's oldest and largest industrial enterprises, the saltworks, which flourished economically until 1980. Since then, the German Salt Museum has reminded Lüneburg of this glorious past. Two special exhibitions are currently on display in the museum area, where visitors can learn interesting and exciting facts about salt. One, made of 16 large containers, explains the important role salt played in Lüneburg's history. The other, "Lüneburg in the 1950s" showcases the culture of that time (Lüneburger Heide, 2022).



Figure 6. German Salt Museum

Source: Lüneburger Heide, 2022

6.4. MUSA-Salt Museum of Cervia, Italy

In the mid-1980s, a group of enthusiasts, led by former salt worker Agostino Finchi, began collecting materials related to the history of the Cervia salt flats. These efforts evolved into a permanent exhibition in the late 1980s showcasing the lives and activities of the salt flats. In 2004, this exhibition was transformed into a museum called MUSA (Cervia Salt Museum), showcasing all aspects of the salt flat civilization. One of the museum's most valuable assets is the Camillone salt flat, restored in 1959. The salt produced in this salt flat is synonymous with local artisanal production and won the Slow Food Presidium Award in 2004. The materials on display in the museum offer significant insights into the history of salt production and the lives of the salt flatworkers. Among these artifacts are rare and interesting pieces, such as the iron boats called "burchiella" used for salt transportation. Each September, these boats are removed from the museum and set sail on the traditional route carrying cargo to the salt flats. The tools and equipment displayed in the museum are still used in the Camillone salt flats, offering visitors the opportunity to observe how the equipment was used. Tens of thousands of visitors visit the museum each year to explore this historical and cultural heritage (Cervia Salt Museum, 2025; Musa-Salt Museum, 2025).



Figure 7. MUSA-Salt Museum of Cervia

Source: Cervia Salt Museum, 2025

6.5. Museum of Saline Culcasi, Italy

The Trapani Salt Museum is located within an ancient rural farmstead in Sicily, Italy. Within the stone walls is a well-preserved windmill used to grind crystals. The 18th-century building, open year-round, houses brochures on operations and panels illustrating the processes of the work cycle, as well as antique salt workers' tools. After visiting the museum, tourists can stroll through the surrounding salt pans (Saline Culcasi, 2024).



Figure 8. Museum of Saline Culcasi

Source: Saline Culcasi, 2024



Figure 9. Museum of Saline Culcasi

Source: Tripadvisor, 2024

6.6. Museum of Salt Making, Sečovlje, Slovenia

The Salt Museum, located at the Sečovlje Salt Pans, comprises a total of four restored areas. One of these encloses the salt pans, designed for salt storage in the post-war period. The remaining three were built as residences for the salt workers' families. Using written and

visual sources, the museum depicts the history of the pans and the life and work of the salt workers. The site also includes a salt pond. The idea of establishing the Salt Museum arose in the early 1960s, before the closure of the Sečovlje and Lucija salt pans. The site for the Salt Museum was chosen for its location, which is easily accessible by land and sea, as well as for the surviving architectural heritage of the salt pans (Pomorskimuzej, 2024).



Figure 10. Museum of Saline Culcasi

Source: Pomorskimuzej, 2024

6.7. Pomorie Salt Museum, Bulgaria

The museum, which opened its doors in 2002, is located in the town of Pomorie. It showcases ancient salt production methods. Salt production has provided the local population with a livelihood for centuries. According to historical sources, salt pans existed in Pomorie before the city's founding (circa 5th century BC). In ancient times, salt was extremely valuable, rare, and expensive, sometimes referred to as "white gold". The Pomorie Salt Museum is a private open-air museum. Visitors can see both the museum building and the adjacent 20-acre salt pans, where salt is still produced. The salt pans consist of a series of basins separated by wooden and earthen dams. Salt is produced here using technology used centuries ago. The museum's exhibition represents the development of ancient salt production technology. Some of the most interesting exhibits in the collection are authentic salt processing tools, such as wooden salt carts and rakes. Lake

Pomorie, where the museum and salt pans are located, is a protected area (Bulgaria Travel, 2024).



Figure 11. Pomorie Salt Museum

Source: Daytripsbulgaria, 2024

6.8. Salt Museum New York, USA

It tells the story of Syracuse, New York's once-prominent salt industry. This industry was so important that the city is still known today as the "Salt City". The museum is located near Onondaga Lake. The Salt Museum was constructed in the 1930s from lumber salvaged from former salt mills after production ceased in the 1920s. Salt produced on the shores of Onondaga Lake was typically obtained by evaporating water collected from springs, not by mining. The largest exhibit area illustrates the process of extracting salt by evaporating water. This process was accomplished by various methods, and a large portion of the museum is dedicated to a section displaying the boiling kettles used in the process (Cheney, 2024).



Figure 12. Salt Museum New York
Source: Discover Upstate NY, 2024



Figure 13. Salt Museum New York
Source: Uncovering New York, 2024



Figure 14. Salt Museum New York
Source: Iloveny, 2024



Figure 15. Salt Museum New York
Source: Roost Web, 2006

6.9. Salt Museum Salinas del Carmen, Spain

Located within the Salinas del Carmen Salt Flats, the museum is one of the most visited on the island due to the allure of its salt ponds and white salt flats. The museum features an exhibition showcasing the cultural complex of the Salinas del Carmen Salt Flats and the importance of salt production to the island. The museum tour consists of two routes: one inside and one outside. Inside, visitors can view an educational exhibit explaining the formation and history of salt, saltwater ecosystems, and the culture and various applications of salt production. The modern building also houses audiovisual materials related to salt production in the Salinas del Carmen Salt Flats. In the outdoor area, a guided tour can observe the traditional process of extracting salt from the sea to the table (Barcelo Group, 2024).



Figure 16. Salt Museum Salinas del Carmen

Source: Fuerteventura, 2024

6.10. Solana Nin Salt Museum, Croatia

More than 100,000 people visit the Nin Salt Pans every year. The entire salt pan is like a museum. The salt pan tells the story of salt through wars, celebrations, love, and labor. A small museum is located within the salt factory. Visitors have the opportunity to participate in the manual extraction and production process. Walking through the salt fields is permitted only on organized tours with guides. The museum features numerous exhibits depicting traditional salt harvesting and production, some of which are still in use today. Among the tools used are rakes for collecting salt, wheelbarrows for transporting salt around the salt pans, and wooden packing devices (Solana Nin, 2021).



Figure 17. Solana Nin Salt Museum

Source: Solana Nin, 2021

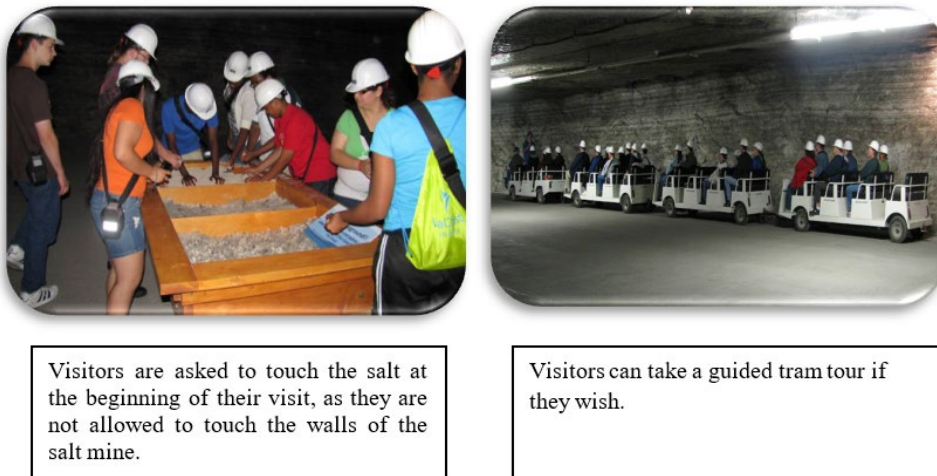
6.11. Strataca, Kansas Underground Salt Museum, USA

The underground salt museum in Hutchinson, Kansas, USA, is located approximately 200 meters below ground in a cave formed 280 million years ago. The tour begins with a short informational video. Everyone entering the mine is required to wear a white hard hat, while museum staff wears different colored hard hats. After donning safety equipment, visitors descend to a depth of 200 meters via a double-decker elevator, following the same method used by miners. The salt mine is still actively operating. A guided tour of the cave is also offered on a specially designed tram. The tour includes frequent stops to show natural geological formations, exhibits, and equipment left behind by miners over an 85-year period. At the end of the tour, visitors have the opportunity to wander among the rock piles extracted from the active salt mine and collect a salt rock as a souvenir. A one-hour safari tour is also available. This tour offers the opportunity to explore areas of the mine that were not previously open to the public (Kansas Sampler Foundation, 2023; Kansas Travel, 2020).



Figure 18. Strataca, Kansas Underground Salt Museum

Source: Kansas Sampler Foundation, 2023



Visitors are asked to touch the salt at the beginning of their visit, as they are not allowed to touch the walls of the salt mine.

Visitors can take a guided tram tour if they wish.

Figure 19. Strataca, Kansas Underground Salt Museum

Source: Kansas Travel, 2020



During the tour, visitors look for salt chips to take home as souvenirs (free of charge).

Figure 20. Strataca, Kansas Underground Salt Museum

Source: Kansas Travel, 2020

6.12. Taiyen Museum, Taiwan

The shape and appearance of the salt piles at the Taiwan Salt Museum were strategically designed to make the two piles appear like two white pyramids rising from the salt field. Inspired by the appearance of the Salt Mountain and the idea of salt crystal structure, the Salt Museum is an integration of two pyramid-shaped towers and a rectangular factory. The museum showcases the 338-year history of salt production in Taiwan (Taiwan Salt, 2007). The Taiwan Salt Museum introduces visitors to the salt production process and modern technology used today, as well as the different types of industrial and edible salts and their uses and benefits in food, human health, and daily life. The facility offers exhibits, hands-on activities, and scientific experiments to provide visitors with immersive experiences that reinforce the educational element. Guided tours of the factory also demonstrate the production and packaging of salt products and new biotechnology products such as alkaline ion drinking water (Her, 2024).



Figure 21. Taiyen Museum

Source: TravelKing, 2024



Visitors to Taiyen Museum can learn about industrial and edible salts and their roles in food and industry through multimedia and interactive displays.



Hands-on activities, such as placing colored salts in small glass bottles, are also included, making them a fun and engaging way to create souvenirs for guests of all ages.

Figure 21. Taiyen Museum

Source: Taiwan Today, 2024

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In the 21st century, it is widely accepted that almost all types of museums play a role in tourism. Museums are important institutions that enable tourists to learn about cultural heritage during their travels (Hsieh et al., 2015; Dağdeviren, 2021; Trinh & Rayan, 2016; Sürücü, 2024). Salt heritage is highly influential in shaping a destination's image, and its ownership offers countries significant opportunities in tourism. Salt can be evaluated in terms of cultural tourism, agricultural tourism, ecotourism, educational tourism, health tourism, and gastronomy tourism (Nistoreanu et al., 2024). The use of the salt industry in tourism and tourist visits to salt heritage destinations not only contribute to employment but also increase awareness of local cultures. The success of salt heritage-based tourism is paralleled by the embrace of this heritage by local residents and local governments. The development and proper management of salt heritage sites facilitates better marketing of salt. Interactive programs and diverse themes offered in salt museums enhance the value of the attraction, help tourists better understand the salt heritage, and strengthen their connection to the destination. Furthermore, increasing the attractiveness of salt production

in these areas can provide tourists with unforgettable memories through unique experiences (Wu et al., 2015). This study examines how salt can be transformed into a tourist asset as a cultural heritage and the role of salt museums in this transformation. Research findings reveal that salt museums go beyond being simple exhibition spaces; they serve the functions of preserving industrial heritage, providing education, and offering rich participatory experiences (guided mine tours, artisanal workshops, interactive experiences, etc.). Salt museums provide visitors with valuable educational and aesthetic experiences by presenting exhibits that highlight the role of salt in human history, both historically and culturally. These museums offer a wide range of tourist experiences, from salt production processes to gastronomy, health, and environmental issues. They are also key players in salt heritage tourism, which can be considered a sub-branch of cultural tourism. The study determined that the success of such destinations is directly related to integrating with local identity, offering authentic experiences, and marketing heritage sustainably. Furthermore, it was concluded that supporting salt fields with active production or historical significance (Çankırı, Iğdır, Kırşehir Rock Salt Caves, and Salt Lake) with similar museum practices can significantly increase destination attractiveness and visitor numbers. In light of this theoretical framework and global examples, the Çankırı Salt Cave, as a concrete application area in Türkiye, can be said to constitute a significant example of cultural heritage tourism potential. Çankırı Salt Cave (Underground Salt City), which holds strategic and economic importance as home to one of Türkiye's largest and the world's few natural rock salt reserves, is one of the city's most important tourist assets. The cave is currently being opened to health tourism, increasing visitor numbers through projects such as the Salt Festival and the Touristic Salt Express. The Tuzluca Salt Caves in Iğdır, with their Salt Therapy Center, are important not only for regular visits but also for health tourism. The Rock Salt Cave in Kırşehir, with its eight-thousand-year history, is waiting to be developed for cultural tourism. Lake Tuz, located within the borders of Ankara, Konya, and Aksaray provinces, attracts a large number of tourists not only for its salt production but also for its diverse flora and fauna. As a result of the research, the following recommendations have been developed regarding the aforementioned salt heritage sites in Türkiye:

- Salt museums should be established within or near salt caves. Museums within the caves should include interactive models and visual diagrams on the rock salt formation process, the geological layers of the cave galleries, and the methods of

salt extraction.

- Hands-on workshops, interactive digital displays, play areas for children, and tasting experiences should be created where visitors can participate in processes such as salt extraction, handmade salt production, or the creation of art objects from salt (the manual salt extraction practice at the Solana Nin Museum is a good example).
- A "Salt Library" could be established in museums, where, in addition to lake salt and rock salt, different types of salt from Türkiye and around the world could be exhibited, tasted, and purchased.
- Museum collections should include local traditions related to salt and cultural elements related to salt. Local salt production tools and old salt processing machines specific to the region should be exhibited. As in Bucovina and Wieliczka, original mining equipment (pickaxes, shovels, wagons) should be displayed in salt caves, and some can be experienced interactively.
- The millions-of-year process of salt formation should be illustrated and illustrated with natural formations and informative panels, as in Strataca.
- Re-enactments should be used to demonstrate the use of salt during the Hittite, Roman, Seljuk, and Ottoman periods, starting with the salt cellar at Çatalhöyük in Konya.
- As in examples from around the world (Wieliczka and Strataca), tours and activities should be designed in salt caves that transform visitors from passive observers into part of the process. This could include trying out the tools miners used or witnessing a historical salt production scene in virtual reality.
- The gastronomic value of salt could be emphasized, creating areas or short courses where regional salt varieties can be tasted and local delicacies prepared with salt are presented. Additionally, the variety of souvenirs sold in stores could be expanded to include high-value-added products.
- Thematic guided tram tours (e.g., geological formations, mining history, legends), light and sound shows, or interactive routes supported by virtual reality applications could be created, as in the Strataca example, to enrich the visitor experience. At the end of the tour, visitors could receive a small piece of rock salt as a souvenir.
- Salt caves in Çankırı and Iğdır should be supported with accommodation facilities.

- Like the Pomorie Museum, a small "open-air salt pan" should be created right next to the Salt Lake to provide a live demonstration of traditional salt production methods. Visitors should observe the salt's journey from the sea/lake to the table. This design should emphasize the theme of "conservation use", prioritizing the sustainability of salt deposits, their impact on the ecosystem, and environmental awareness.

Implementing these recommendations will transform salt-producing areas from mere tourist destinations into cultural and tourism centers offering rich, diverse, and unforgettable experiences, significantly increasing both visitor satisfaction and economic contribution. Consequently, salt museums and salt-related tourism activities offer significant opportunities for the preservation of cultural heritage and the economic development of local communities. Integrating salt, both as an industrial and cultural heritage, into tourism not only contributes to local economies but also fosters cultural awareness and facilitates the preservation of cultural heritage at a global level. In this context, for salt heritage to gain greater value in the tourism sector, local communities and local governments must embrace and effectively manage this heritage. This study is believed to provide a foundation for research that will further explore the potential of salt museums and salt heritage tourism. This study, which examines salt museums through a literature review, can contribute to the literature in this regard.

8. Limitations and Future Research Implications

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and the small number of museums in the sample. Primary field data on visitor profiles, motivations, local population perspectives, economic impacts, and environmental dimensions were not used in the study. Future research, particularly in salt heritage areas in Türkiye, will be crucial in conducting field studies based on surveys and interviews with visitors, local residents, and stakeholders. Studies comparing salt museums in different countries can provide a comparative perspective on different models, visitor experiences, and sustainability practices. Furthermore, quantitative studies examining the economic contribution, employment impact, and environmental sustainability of salt heritage tourism, as well as research examining the impact of digitalization and new technologies (e.g., virtual/augmented reality) on the visitor experience, are expected to make significant contributions to the literature.

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