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Does Tourism Reduce Regional Inequality? Spatial Appearance of Tourism Development in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Interregional development disparities have emerged as one of the most controversial issues in contemporary discourse. Across the globe, disparities in various facets, including social, cultural, tourism, and economic dimensions, are strikingly evident. Turkey, a nation renowned for its importance in the global tourism landscape, is no exception to this phenomenon. The spatial distribution of tourism development in Turkey reveals an inequality. This study aims to examine the variations in interregional tourism development by establishing a comprehensive tourism development index for Turkish cities and subsequently categorizing them based on their distinctive levels of development. To achieve this, a dataset consisting of 18 variables from various public institutions in the year 2017 was compiled. With this data set, Principal Component Analysis was employed to compute the tourism development index for each city, and the Hierarchical Cluster Method was used to categorize cities into distinct development categories. In conclusion, the research underscores the influence of both policy interventions, planning, and the intrinsic characteristics of cities in shaping the spatial disparities in tourism development within Turkey. The implementation of neoliberal policies has notably concentrated capital, investments, and the tourism market in the Mediterranean and Aegean coastal regions, exacerbating spatial inequality in tourism. The implications of this study hold the potential to guide policymakers in narrowing the gaps in interregional tourism development within Turkey, thereby fostering a more equitable and sustainable future.

Keywords: Regional Development, Inequality, Tourism Development Index, Tourism Geographies, Turkey.

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Tourism, an ever-evolving phenomenon that transcends political, ideological, geographical, and cultural boundaries, is the leading industry and has been developing as an important part of the economy of many societies, regions and countries (Cook, Hsu & Marqua, 2014). It is one of the fastest-growing industries in the world as it is the source of economic power and employment (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). In the past, when the global economic impact of tourism was less apparent, the main question related to this industry was whether it has provided less developed and developing countries with an alternative development option (Harrison, 1994). Today, tourism is not merely considered an option for development but is widely acknowledged as a powerful tool for fostering progress in these countries (Lew, Hall & Williams, 2014). It serves as a gateway to the global economy, a pivotal entry point (Aykaç, 2009). Given that tourism contributes to economic development more rapidly than many other sectors, it can attract much-needed financial capital, foster infrastructure development and create new job opportunities (Edgell & Swanson, 2013). Hence, tourism stands as a pivotal component of economic development programs worldwide, with its growth representing a fundamental facet of these initiatives aimed at revitalizing local economies (Harrill, 2004).

The global COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China in early 2020 and eventually swept across the globe, had far-reaching effects on national, regional, and global mobility; however, the most affected among them has been mass tourism (Kervankiran & Bağmancı, 2021). As reported by the World Tourism Organization, before the pandemic, in 2019, the number of international tourists reached 1.5 billion and tourism income reached 1.5 trillion dollars. The onset of COVID-19 led to a significant decline in both the number of tourists and tourism revenue. By 2022, the number of international tourists had plummeted to 963 million, and tourism revenue had decreased to 1 trillion dollars (UNWTO, 2022). However, there is an expectation that tourism revenues, demand and investments will increase in the future. Therefore, the impact of tourism on global, regional, national and local scale is projected to increase further. While the development of tourism is often regarded as a success, it is also criticized for exacerbating inequalities. From the perspective of social sciences, when evaluating the success of developing tourism destinations in specific locales through the practice of placemaking, essential questions arise: "Who holds the authority to define this success?" and "Whose narrative is privileged in the process of placemaking?" Those who have the authority to define success are typically the ones who stand to gain the most from such definitions (Lew, 2017). The underlying challenge lies in perpetuating practices that intensify inequality and the shortcomings of associated policies. In addressing this issue, two pressing topics come to the forefront. The first pertains to the measurement of touristic development, while the second involves the quest to reduce disparities in development levels among various regions or cities.

Inequality, as articulated by Acemoğlu and Robinson (2012) in the phrase 'we live in an unequal world,' remains a central concern for politicians, activists, and academics (Frase, 2016). However, there are few empirical studies on interregional disparities stemming from the development of tourism. Given the variability in theoretical studies on this subject, empirical research might provide more comprehensive insights. A

critical necessity is to empirically assess how development is differentially distributed across various income groups and regions, thus fostering a deeper understanding of tourism development (Alam & Paramati, 2016). This study is dedicated to the empirical analysis of tourism development levels within cities, accompanied by the interpretation of its findings. To achieve this, it is imperative to initially determine the relationship between environmental, economic, and social factors which influence cities' tourism development levels and to put forward spatial patterns that underlie tourism development. The study provides a multivariate dataset aimed at constructing a comprehensive tourism development index for cities. In addition, the data obtained from this study enable the ongoing monitoring, assessment, and comparison of the tourism development performances of cities.

The global tourism industry represents not only an economic domain but also a dynamic force for societal and political transformation (Hall, 2011), during which market influence rather than that of the state becomes prominent in tourism development, marked by the prevalence of the neoliberal market model (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Therefore, a holistic, diverse, and critically informed perspective on tourism development and planning becomes imperative (Saarinen, Rogerson & Hall, 2017). In certain conditions and contexts, the role of geography in analyzing tourism development acquires a distinct significance, necessitating a geographical perspective. Moreover, tourism inherently draws from geography. Tourism geography is focused on understanding and interpreting spatial dynamics of tourism development at global, national, and local scales, encompassing its intricate web of relations, networks, distribution and patterns (Pearce, 1995; Lew & Mckercher, 2006; Williams, 2009; Page, 2015; Kervankıran, Eteman Sert & Şardağ, 2019). Therefore, without geography, understanding and interpreting tourism development is a formidable task and tourism research is incomplete (Terkenli, 2018). Geography is an effective discipline for exploring tourism development, dissecting its influences, and comprehending its spatial distribution from an academic perspective (Hall & Page, 2014). Geographers' longstanding engagement in tourism research has deep roots (Hall, 2013). Thus, in addition to the increase in geographical studies on tourism in recent years (Saarinen, 2014), it is seen that the research agenda and academic position of tourism geography as a sub-discipline have changed (Coles & Hall, 2006).

This study delves into the domain of tourism geographies, where the intricate relationships among various tourism variables are scrutinized. With this context in mind, the primary objective of this research is threefold. Firstly, it seeks to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the disparities in tourism development across different regions in Turkey. Secondly, it aims to make substantive contributions to the tourism planning processes for cities, particularly those that are categorized according to their level of development. This includes facilitating a more judicious utilization of tourism incentives, with a specific focus on development-oriented cities. Lastly, the study aspires to establish a regular and ongoing calculation of cities' tourism development indices, enabling the continuous monitoring and evaluation of cities' progress in terms of tourism development. Looking ahead, the overarching aim is to foster the formulation of policies dedicated to mitigating regional disparities, utilizing diverse

analyses and innovative approaches to address this critical issue. The study, therefore, stands as a pivotal step toward a more equitable and regionally balanced tourism landscape in the future.

1. Tourism Development in Turkey.

The development of tourism in Turkey can be divided into two distinct phases: the pre-planned period (before 1960) and the planned period (post-1960) (Yolal, 2016). Although planning for tourism in Turkey started before 1963, planning for tangible targets such as the number of tourists, tourism revenue, infrastructure services, diversification of tourism types, increase of promotion, and foreign investments started together with the planned period after 1963 (Kervankıran, 2015). Although some minor regulations were introduced during the pre-planned era, it was the decisions made in the planned period that exerted a more profound influence on Turkey's tourism landscape. In the initial years of the planned period, a strategic focus was directed towards making substantial tourism investments in regions with immense potential, notably along the picturesque Mediterranean and Aegean coasts. Initiatives such as establishing Organized Tourism Regions and fostering mass tourism in these locales were prioritized (Soyak, 2009). Turkey initiated the process of expanding abroad after 1980 which led to a change and transformation in the tourism policy. While Turkey's tourism management, development, and planning were determined by statist economic policies in the previous period, after 1980 they started to be determined by neoliberal economic policies which are influenced by global capital (Kervankıran, Çiftçi & Çalık, 2022). A pivotal milestone was the implementation of the Tourism Encouragement Law in 1982, with a significant portion of incentives channeled toward the coastal cities of the Mediterranean and Aegean regions. This shift in emphasis led to the concentration of tourism in specific cities. With the introduction of liberal economic policies during this period, numerous state-owned institutions were privatized (Soyak, 2009). The subsequent embrace of neoliberal policies saw the Turkish tourism sector yielding to global tourism conglomerates, particularly in domains like tour operations, transportation services, and agency management, which came under the dominion of multinational corporations. In the following years, although it was targeted to develop new tourism areas in tourism plans and to encourage investments in neglected tourism areas, regional development disparities in tourism could not be reduced. Consequently, the implementation of neoliberal policies led to the concentration of tourism investments and market dynamics in Istanbul and the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, further exacerbating inter-regional development disparities that hinge heavily on tourism.

Both the "Tourism Strategy of Turkey-2023" and the 11th Development Plan emphasize the pivotal role of regional development policies. Within this context, tourism is recognized as a spearhead sector, holding immense potential to alleviate regional development disparities and foster progress in various regions. In pursuit of spatial and social cohesion among cities and regions, a range of substantial financial opportunities

are made available through incentives and funds. Consequently, the effective and efficient utilization of regional incentives, as well as the allocation of funds to specific cities, hinges significantly on the availability and utilization of regional statistics and comprehensive indexes encompassing various tourism-related variables.

2. Literature Review

Within the existing literature, it becomes evident that studies exploring spatial disparities in tourism employ two distinct index approaches. The first approach is the tourism competitiveness index, which evaluates regional disparities in tourism based on a spectrum of economic, environmental, social, and cultural indicators. In competitiveness index studies, the primary emphasis lies in enhancing the competitiveness of various regions. On the other hand, the second approach involves the development index, where the central objective is to highlight regional disparities and actively work towards the reduction of inequalities among different regions.

Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), published by World Economic Forum (WEF) (2019) every two years, consists of 14 fundamental variables and measures tourism development and competitiveness of 140 global economies. Surprisingly, according to this survey, Turkey, despite being one of the top ten countries worldwide in terms of tourist numbers, ranks a mere 43rd on the index. In an evaluation by Kayar and Kozak (2010), 13 significant factors influencing tourism destination competitiveness were meticulously analyzed, juxtaposing the competitiveness of European Union countries with that of Turkey. The study revealed that Turkey continues to position itself as a cost-effective destination in the international tourism market. Numerous other studies have delved into the domain of tourism competitiveness index (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999; Enright & Newton, 2004; Rehman Khan, Qianli, Bo, Zaman & Zhang, 2007; Croitoru, 2011; Croes & Kubickova, 2013; Pulido-Fernández & Rodríguez-Díaz, 2016). Despite the wealth of research in this area, the concept of competitiveness is criticized from various angles. Some argue that discussions of competitiveness are only relevant at the company level (Krugman, 1996) and are, in essence, synonymous with productivity. Furthermore, interventions focused solely on competitiveness may entail risks for the overall economy (Krugman, 1994). While enhancing competitiveness offers the advantages of attracting investments, bolstering regional economic structures, and cultivating a more skilled labor force, it also carries the potential for exacerbating development disparities among regions (Albayrak & Erkut, 2010). Hence, it is argued that employing a development index that centers on tourism across regions is more appropriate for comprehending and reducing regional tourism differences than a competitiveness index.

In the study conducted by Zaman, Shahbaz, Loganathan and Raza (2016), a tourism development index was constructed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Similarly, Liargovas, Giannias and Kostandopoulos (2007) calculated a tourism index of 50 cities by taking into consideration demands of tourists in Greece. Their findings

revealed that cities which received more financial and political support tended to achieve higher scores on the tourism development index. However, it was observed that tourism development did not necessarily contribute to a balanced growth of the regional economy, a situation inconsistent with the European harmony policy's aim of fostering strong connections among different member countries and regions. In the national literature, Seçilmiş and Sarı (2010) conducted a study on the tourism development of Turkish cities using PCA, where they employed six variables related to tourism, including facilities, bed capacity, the number of arrivals and overnight stays, occupancy rates, and the number of travel agencies. Nevertheless, the concept of development demands a multidimensional and comprehensive assessment that encompasses changes in economic, social, political, and cultural structures within cities. Therefore, when creating a tourism development index, it becomes imperative to incorporate different dimensions of tourism and human development, encompassing additional spatial, economic, cultural, and social variables to ensure a more holistic analysis.

In the realm of tourism research, aside from index studies, there exists a body of work that delves into the consequences of tourism development concerning income and regional inequality. Some studies argue that tourism development has the potential to reduce income and regional disparities (Krakover, 2004; Proenca & Soukiazis, 2008; Wen & Sinha, 2009; Jiang, Delacy, Mkiramweni & Harrison 2011; Croes, 2014; Incera & Fernández, 2015; Li, Chen, Li & Goh, 2016). Conversely, other studies contend that tourism may exacerbate regional inequalities (Göymen, 2000; Seckelmann, 2002; Tosun, Timothy & Öztürk, 2003; Zhang, 2009; Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2012; Alam & Paramati, 2016; Raza & Shah, 2017; Kervankıran & Sert Eteman, 2020).

In this study, the investigation went beyond the mere calculation of tourism development index values for cities. It also explored how the data obtained through hierarchical cluster analysis influenced the spatial landscape and assessed the impact of tourism on regional inequality.

3. Data and Method

The study encompasses a total of 81 cities in Turkey, structured in accordance with the current administrative divisions. Within this research, a comprehensive dataset comprising 18 distinct variables was employed, covering various aspects such as economic factors (including the number of tourism-related premises and beds, investment levels, and accommodation availability), social indicators (involving museum initiatives, sports activities, and employment within the accommodation sector), environmental considerations (encompassing recreational areas), transportation data (including airway passenger traffic), and service-related metrics (comprising travel agencies, catering establishments, yacht and beach facilities) (Table 1). The data used in this study were meticulously sourced from authoritative sources, including the Turkish Statistical Institute, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the

Social Security Institution, the Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, the General Directorate of the State Airports Authority, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Table 1: Variables Used in the Tourism Development Index

	Variables	Explanation	Year	Unit size	Data Source
1	NFA	Number of Foreign Arrivals	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
2	NCA	Number of Citizen Arrivals	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
3	NILAE	Number of Investment Licenced Accommodation Establishments	2017	Number	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
4	NILAB	Number of Investment Licenced Accommodation Beds	2017	Number	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
5	NTOLAE	Number of Tourism Operation Licenced Accommodation	2017	Number	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
6	NTOLAB	Number of Tourism Operation Licenced Accommodation Beds	2017	Number	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
7	NM	Number of Museums	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
8	NWM	Number of Works in Museums	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
9	NVM	Number of Visitors in Museums	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
10	NTA	Number of Travel Agencies	2017	Number	Association of Turkish Travel Agencies
11	NB	Number of Beaches	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
12	NMY	Number of Marina and Yachts	2017	Number	Turkish Statistical Institute
13	RA	Recreation Area	2017	Hectare	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
14	AT	Aircraft Traffic (Number of Arrivals-Departures on the Airports)	2017	Number	General Directorate of State Airports Authority
15	NIPWA	Number of Insured Persons Working in Accommodation	2017	Number	Social Security Institution
16	NWFBS	Number of Workplace in Food and Beverage Services	2017	Number	Social Security Institution
17	NWTATO	Number of Workplace in Travel Agency, Tour Operator and	2017	Number	Social Security Institution
18	NWSARA	Number of Workplace in Sports Activities and Recreation Activities	2017	Number	Social Security Institution

The study is structured around three key stages. In the initial phase, tourism development indexes for each city were computed using a dataset comprising 18 distinct variables drawn from the 81 cities under consideration. The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method was employed for this index calculation. Given the variations in measurement units and variances among the variables in the dataset, a correlation matrix was utilized to calculate the eigenvalues. To determine the number of principal components, the eigenvalues (m) that satisfy the condition $\frac{\sum_{j=1}^m \lambda_j}{p} \geq \frac{2}{3}$ (Jolliffe, 2002) were identified. Additionally, to assess the suitability of the dataset for PCA, both the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett tests, which are tests for sphericity, were conducted.

In the second stage of the study, hierarchical cluster analysis was performed utilizing the previously calculated index values. The analysis applied Ward's method, which is a hierarchical clustering technique aimed at minimizing the total within-cluster variance (Ward, 1963). As a consequence of this clustering analysis, distinct clusters were formed based on the tourism development levels of cities, and these clusters were given specific names. In the final stage of the study, cities grouped according to their index values were mapped using a Geographic Information System (GIS) and subjected to interpretation.

4. Findings

In the study, a city-specific tourism development index was created by applying Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to 18 different variables related to tourism. Before conducting the PCA, a series of tests for sphericity were performed. The KMO value was calculated as 0.853, and the Bartlett test yielded a p-value of 0.00, indicating that the correlation matrix of the variables significantly deviates from the unit matrix. These test results confirm that the dataset is well-suited for PCA.

Given the variation in measurement units across the variables, the correlation matrix was employed to determine the eigenvalues. The resulting eigenvalues are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Eigenvalues and Variance Explanation Rates

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.939	71.883	71.883	10	.020	.111	99.836
2	3.581	19.895	91.777	11	.013	.072	99.908
3	.704	3.911	95.689	12	.008	.043	99.952
4	.299	1.663	97.352	13	.003	.017	99.969
5	.227	1.263	98.614	14	.002	.013	99.982
6	.086	.480	99.095	15	.001	.008	99.989
7	.051	.286	99.381	16	.001	.006	99.995
8	.041	.230	99.611	17	.001	.004	99.999
9	.021	.115	99.725	18	.000	.001	100.000

The first eigenvalue, computed as 12.93, meets the criterion $\frac{\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_j}{p} \geq \frac{2}{3}$ with a 71.88% variance explanation ratio. Therefore, the tourism development index of cities was constructed using only the first principal component. The explained ratios of the variables by the calculated principal component are as follows (Table 3).

Table 3: Explained Variance Ratio by First Principal Component

Variables	Variance Explained (%)	Variables	Variance Explained (%)
NILAE	0.978	AT	0.863
NIPWA	0.949	NWFBS	0.855
NTOLAE	0.946	NTA	0.845
NFA	0.915	NWM	0.825
NCA	0.905	RA	0.786
NILAB	0.891	NTOLAB	0.776
NWTATO	0.888	NM	0.686
NVM	0.874	NMY	0.674
NWSARA	0.872	NB	0.641

In the study, the variables were sequentially listed based on their explanation by the first principal component, representing the variance explanation by the tourism index. In this context, it can be deduced that the formed index accounts for approximately 97.8% of the premises with tourism investment licenses, while 2.2% can be attributed to information loss (Table 4).

Table 4: First Principal Component Loadings

Variables	Loadings	Variables	Loadings
NILAE	0.2718	AT	0.2400
NIPWA	0.2638	NWFBS	0.2377
NTOLAE	0.2629	NTA	0.2350
NFA	0.2544	NWM	0.2293
NCA	0.2516	RA	0.2184
NILAB	0.2477	NTOLAB	0.2158
NWTATO	0.2468	NM	0.1908
NVM	0.2430	NMY	0.1874
NWSARA	0.2423	NB	0.1781

The coefficients used in the calculation of cities' index values are detailed in Table 4. With these coefficients in mind, the equation utilized to compute the index values of the cities can be expressed as follows:

$$Y_i = 0.2718Z_{1i} + 0.2638Z_{2i} + \dots + 0.1874Z_{17i} + 0.1781Z_{18i}$$

In this equation, "Y_i" represents the index value of city "i", and Z_{1i} signifies the standardized observation value for the premises variable with tourism investment licenses (NILAE) for city "i".

The primary objective of this study, which utilized the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) technique, was to generate development rankings for the 81 cities in Turkey. The index values, which serve as the foundation for these rankings, are showcased in Table-5. Therefore, the outcomes were shaped by the variables representing tourism in these cities and their respective weights. Based on the results of the analysis, the tourism development index values for the 81 cities in the study range from -1.426 to 23.409. Istanbul and Antalya stand out as the cities with the highest index values. It is notable that the index values for these two cities are notably higher and distinct from the

others. These two cities are followed by Muğla, İzmir, Ankara, Aydın, Konya, Bursa and Mersin, respectively. Notably, the index values for these nine cities all exceed 1. All of them hold metropolitan status, and, as of the year 2018, except for Muğla, each of these cities has a population exceeding 1 million. Interestingly, while Antalya has the highest tourism demand, it ranks second based on the index value. In contrast, Istanbul has the highest index value even though it holds the second position in terms of tourism demand. The city with the lowest index value is Hakkari (Table 5).

Table 5: Tourism Development Index Values of Cities

Rank	City Name	Index Value	Cluster	Rank	City Name	Index Value	Cluster	Rank	City Name	Index Value	Cluster
1	Istanbul	23.409	1	28	Bolu	-0.735	4	55	Sinop	-1.090	5
2	Antalya	17.718	1	29	K.maraş	-0.738	4	56	Kars	-1.131	5
3	Muğla	7.669	2	30	Ordu	-0.752	4	57	Karaman	-1.172	5
4	İzmir	5.937	2	31	Erzurum	-0.813	5	58	Osmaniye	-1.175	5
5	Ankara	3.320	3	32	Karabük	-0.868	5	59	Bilecik	-1.204	5
6	Aydın	1.584	3	33	Şanlıurfa	-0.872	5	60	Niğde	-1.218	5
7	Konya	1.470	3	34	Isparta	-0.876	5	61	Kırşehir	-1.227	5
8	Bursa	1.169	3	35	Uşak	-0.895	5	62	Bitlis	-1.235	5
9	Mersin	1.135	3	36	Adıyaman	-0.899	5	63	Erzincan	-1.242	5
10	Nevşehir	0.782	3	37	Yalova	-0.926	5	64	Bartın	-1.252	5
11	Balıkesir	0.725	3	38	Amasya	-0.935	5	65	Ağrı	-1.256	5
12	Denizli	0.278	4	39	Kastamonu	-0.938	5	66	Batman	-1.260	5
13	Adana	0.247	4	40	Van	-0.944	5	67	Gümüşhane	-1.269	5
14	Kocaeli	0.186	4	41	Edirne	-0.955	5	68	Yozgat	-1.293	5
15	Çanakkale	-0.023	4	42	Aksaray	-0.956	5	69	Artvin	-1.295	5
16	Gaziantep	-0.079	4	43	Mardin	-0.984	5	70	Çankırı	-1.308	5
17	Trabzon	-0.110	4	44	Malatya	-0.990	5	71	Kilis	-1.323	5
18	Afyon	-0.300	4	45	Sivas	-1.012	5	72	Muş	-1.334	5
19	Kayseri	-0.320	4	46	Tokat	-1.016	5	73	Bingöl	-1.359	5
20	Hatay	-0.323	4	47	Zonguldak	-1.016	5	74	Tunceli	-1.372	5
21	Eskişehir	-0.394	4	48	Düzce	-1.024	5	75	Ardahan	-1.395	5
22	Manisa	-0.506	4	49	Giresun	-1.045	5	76	İğdır	-1.399	5
23	Samsun	-0.546	4	50	Burdur	-1.045	5	77	Siirt	-1.400	5
24	Sakarya	-0.566	4	51	Çorum	-1.057	5	78	Şırnak	-1.403	5
25	Tekirdağ	-0.650	4	52	Elazığ	-1.065	5	79	Bayburt	-1.407	5
26	Kütahya	-0.714	4	53	Kırklareli	-1.078	5	80	Kırıkkale	-1.410	5
27	Diyarbakır	-0.725	4	54	Rize	-1.087	5	81	Hakkari	-1.426	5

In Table 5, in addition to the calculated index values, the clusters to which the provinces belong are listed based on these index values. Clustering algorithms are typically employed in the analysis of multivariate data sets rather than univariate applications. This is because in univariate applications, researchers can analyze variables by simply examining the data set distribution or utilizing visualization techniques. It is also widely believed that clustering applications with a single variable may not be sufficiently generalizable. However, it is essential to recognize that the index values computed in the present study are derived from 18 different variables, and descriptive statistics for this variable alone may not adequately address the research questions. One of the main objectives of this study is to group the provinces according to their tourism development levels. Although grouping cities could be done simply by using manually determined threshold values, we opted for the hierarchical

clustering algorithm to avoid subjective consequences and due to the lack of an accepted method for establishing these threshold values. Therefore, we leveraged the hierarchical clustering algorithm on the calculated index variable to identify provinces with similar tourism development levels.

The cities with high index values in this study are predominantly situated in the western and coastal regions of the country, while cities with low index values tend to be located in the eastern and inland areas. These findings align with the results of a previous study conducted by Kervankiran and Aktürk (2017), which focused on spatial clustering analysis of Turkey's tourism. Additionally, according to this study, the spatial clustering of tourism in Turkey has experienced significant changes. In 1980, tourist demands were primarily centered around Istanbul, whereas by 2015, there was a shift in preference toward the southern and southeastern coasts of Turkey. This shift led to an increase in the tourism development level in these areas, driven by greater supply, investment, demand, and employment related to tourism, particularly in Istanbul. However, the study also highlights that tourism development indexes of cities in the eastern and central parts of Turkey have remained low. This could be attributed to inadequate support for variables related to tourism in these regions.

Figure 1: Cities Clustered According to Tourism Development Index Values

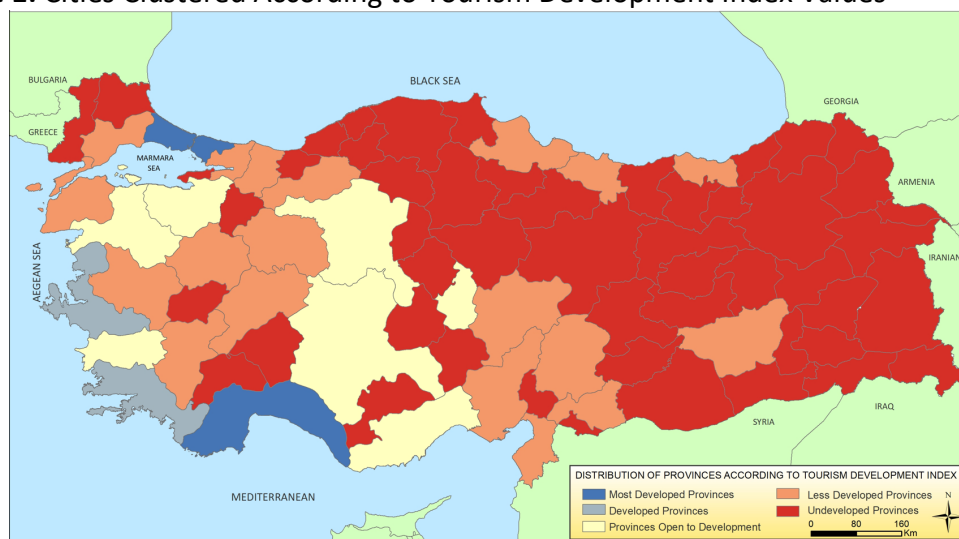


Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

Clusters	Frequency	Mean	Range		Standard Deviation
	N	μ	Min	Max	σ
1	2	20.56348	17.718	23.409	4.0237
2	2	6.8031	5.937	7.669	1.2243
3	7	1.45518	0.725	3.32	0.8818
4	19	-0.35618	-0.752	0.278	0.3507
5	51	-1.14024	-1.426	-0.813	0.1824

In the last part of the study, cities in Turkey were categorized into five clusters based on tourism development index values by hierarchical cluster analysis (Figure 1).

Descriptive statistics of these five clusters resulting from this categorization were calculated (Table 6), and five clusters were defined based on their tourism development levels. According to this categorization, the first cluster was labeled as "The Most Developed Tourism Cities", the second cluster as "Developed Tourism Cities", the third cluster as "Tourism Cities Open for Development", the fourth one as "Underdeveloped Tourism Cities", and the fifth one as "Undeveloped Tourism Cities".

In the first cluster, "The Most Developed Tourism Cities," two cities stand out: Istanbul and Antalya. Istanbul holds a special place in Turkish tourism history, being the city where tourism in Turkey first began and has since continued to flourish (Kervankıran, Sert Eteman & Çuhadar, 2018). Additionally, Istanbul consistently ranks first in various index studies covering socio-economic, income, and cultural aspects in Turkey. Antalya, on the other hand, witnessed the initiation of tourism development in the 1960s. The South West Antalya Tourism Development Project, initiated by the central government in the 1970s and supported by the World Bank, played a pivotal role in boosting tourism in the region. Over time, the rapid development of tourism in Antalya led to a significant increase in the number of tourism investments and establishments, and this region began attracting a growing number of international tourists, further enhancing its global reputation as a tourism destination (Erkuş-Öztürk, 2016). The advantages derived from tourism investments and the surge in tourism demand have collectively propelled Istanbul and Antalya to the status of prominent global tourism cities.

The second cluster, "Developed Tourism Cities," comprises two cities: Muğla and İzmir. Muğla is known for its favorable climate conditions, natural resources, and well-developed infrastructure, making it an attractive destination for international visitors (Kozak, Uysal & Birkan, 2008). The establishment of Dalaman and Milas-Bodrum Airports facilitated direct travel to Muğla, particularly for tourists from European countries. This accessibility led to an influx of tourists who not only visited but also chose to settle in the region, fostering tourism-driven migration (Balkır & Südaş, 2014). In İzmir, the presence of the sea, thermal waters, historical sites, and cultural attractions creates a conducive environment for the continuous development of tourism. Unlike the cities in the first cluster, the cities in this category are not as heavily congested. Therefore, it is essential to identify the challenges faced during the development of tourism in Istanbul and Antalya and to devise new strategies to prevent Muğla and İzmir from encountering similar issues as they continue to grow as tourist destinations.

The third cluster, "Tourism Cities Open for Development," consists of seven cities: Ankara, Aydın, Konya, Bursa, Mersin, Nevşehir, and Balıkesir. Interestingly, while all the cities in the first two categories are coastal, three cities in this category (Ankara, Konya, and Nevşehir) are located in the interior regions of the country (Figure 1). Although these cities may not be as developed in tourism as those in the first two categories, it is evident that their potential for development is substantial. Therefore, these development-oriented cities deserve greater attention and should be supported through incentives, investments, and policies. This strategic approach will enable tourism in Turkey to expand into interior regions and additional coastal areas,

establishing alternative tourism centers that are development-oriented. Each city in this category possesses one or several touristic products that have the potential to drive tourism development. As such, in the tourism planning for these cities, it's crucial to focus on the product or products with the most tourism potential and explore ways to promote and connect with these offerings effectively.

The fourth cluster falls into the category of "Underdeveloped Tourism Cities," encompassing 19 cities. When examining the geographical distribution of these cities across the country, it becomes evident that they are dispersed throughout various regions. In these cities, the number of local tourists tends to outweigh that of foreign tourists. In some of them, the percentage of foreign tourists is lower than 10%, highlighting that tourism predominantly caters to the domestic market. Furthermore, in most of the cities within this category, tourism relies on just one product or attraction to draw tourists. To promote tourism development in these cities and elevate them to a more advanced level, it is imperative to conduct research aimed at understanding the reasons behind their underdeveloped tourism sectors and identifying the barriers that hinder their growth.

The final cluster, Undeveloped Tourism Cities, consists of the majority of cities in Turkey (51 cities). These cities are primarily located in the eastern part of Anatolia. Several factors contribute to the underdevelopment of tourism in these areas, including insufficient tourism resources, limited demand, transportation challenges, and security concerns in certain cities. Furthermore, many of these cities exhibit lower levels of development across various indices, encompassing socio-economic, education, health, and investment. This suggests that, beyond the realm of tourism, these cities face broader socio-development challenges.

5. Discussion

In recent years, the issue of global and regional inequality has been a topic of significant discussion, with various forms of inequality, including economic, social, cultural, and spatial, contributing to unrest and disorder worldwide. One area where inequality is particularly visible is in the disparities in interregional tourism development. To address these disparities, promote investment in specific regions, and ensure regional development levels are harmonized, it is crucial to first understand the tourism development levels of these regions. Therefore, the five different categories that emerged in this study are of utmost importance for policymakers, academics, and planners. It is not practical to apply the same tourism planning to provinces with high and low index values. Rather, it is more appropriate to tailor policies to the specific needs, potentials, and opportunities of cities in different categories. Cities in each category share similarities, and thus, similar tourism policies should be considered for them. For the most developed cities, İstanbul and Antalya, which have reached their carrying capacity and compete with global tourism destinations, it is essential to consider both global competitiveness and local sustainability in tourism planning.

These cities face unique challenges stemming from Turkey's political, social, and economic fluctuations, including political tensions with Europe, the plane crisis with Russia in 2015, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022, and global economic issues. While other cities' tourism markets may not be as severely affected by these events, "The Most Developed" and "Developed" tourism cities are more vulnerable to such disruptions. To ensure the continued development of tourism in these cities, it is imperative to devise alternative policies to address anticipated problems, foster collaboration with different sectors, enhance the quality of tourism services, take precautions against over-tourism, improve environmental structures, safeguard tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and develop projects that benefit the public.

In tourism cities categorized as "Open to Development" and "Underdeveloped," it is crucial to enhance tourism incentives by considering the unique tourism attractions, local dynamics, social capital, and demand in each of these cities. This can involve increasing incentives for tourism development, producing policies that promote domestic tourism, and offering support to local investors who can contribute to the growth of the tourism sector. For tourism cities classified as "Underdeveloped," it is essential to address socio-economic issues as a priority. This includes devising policies and initiatives to tackle these problems effectively. In addition to socio-economic solutions, there should be a focus on creating recreational areas, sports facilities, museums, and other attractions that can bolster tourism (Sop & Kervankıran, 2023). Improving infrastructure and raising awareness among local residents about the benefits of tourism can also significantly elevate the tourism development levels in these cities.

The study has a few limitations that should be acknowledged. First, there were challenges in obtaining comprehensive data at the city level, which can affect the accuracy and completeness of the analysis. Additionally, the study calculated the tourism development level for a single period, which does not imply that interregional development differences can be completely eliminated. Even with substantial investments in regions with limited development potential, tourism may not thrive in those areas. Differences in natural characteristics and tourism policies across regions make it challenging to achieve equal levels of tourism development. The study suggests that interregional development differences can be mitigated through well-designed and practical tourism policies. The findings provide a foundation for reducing these differences and monitoring future development trends. Moreover, the study explores ways to address spatial disparities in tourism in Turkey. There are two possible paths for tourism in Turkey: providing state-funded incentives to development-oriented or less-developed regions, which will foster tourism growth in diverse areas, and allowing interregional development differences to persist and potentially widen.

6. Conclusion

This study adopts a tourism geography approach, which focuses on understanding the interrelationships and distinctions among various tourism destinations. Its primary objective is to assess and categorize the levels of tourism development across cities in Turkey. By creating a tourism development index based on various tourism-related variables, this study aims to reveal the spatial disparities among cities. This, in turn, contributes to more informed and sustainable tourism planning at both regional and national levels. Additionally, understanding the spatial patterns of tourism development equips policymakers, planners, business leaders, investors, and other industry stakeholders to make more informed, robust decisions. As we delve into the tourism development index values, the resultant categories, and their geographical distribution across Turkey, several significant findings emerge.

The first noteworthy observation is the substantial disparity between cities with high tourism development index scores and those with lower ratings. Analysis reveals that the index values in the "The Most Developed Tourism Cities" and "Developed Tourism Cities" categories are notably high, displaying significant distinctions among them. In contrast, the index values of the remaining 77 cities in different categories are relatively low and exhibit relatively minor differences between them. This discrepancy results in accelerated tourism growth in cities such as İstanbul, Antalya, Muğla and İzmir. However, in these leading cities, where global conglomerates with substantial capital are increasing their investments, smaller domestic enterprises face challenges in competing. This trend can be attributed in part to the Tourism Encouragement Law of 1982, which aimed to reduce state investments and stimulate private sector involvement in tourism (Tosun 2001; Yüksel, Bramwell & Yüksel, 2005; Yüksel, Çulha & Yüksel, 2009). These policies are reflections of neoliberal practices, particularly evident in developing countries (Desforges, 2001). While initial plans emphasized spreading tourism across all regions and all seasons in Turkey, government incentives directed foreign investors toward the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts, designating them as "Tourism Development Regions," resulting in concentrated tourism activity in these areas. Subsequently, due to the adoption of neoliberal policies in Turkey after 1982, private sector investments in tourism saw a steady increase, while public investment decreased. The allocation of only 0.3% of total public capital to tourism in the 11th Development Plan (2019-2023) signifies a shift towards private sector-led investments, ultimately leading to the dominance of global tourism companies in Turkey, paralleling the situation in developing nations. To address this issue, the central government must provide support to local and smaller-scale enterprises to ensure their competitiveness in this evolving landscape.

The second key finding underscores the pronounced regional disparities evident in Turkey's tourism landscape, with all developed cities located in the western regions and underdeveloped cities concentrated in the east. This geographical divide reinforces the significant regional inequalities observed in various sectors such as industry,

education, and healthcare (Tekeli, 2008), extending their influence to the tourism industry. Therefore, the development of mass tourism in these western regions exacerbates regional disparities, creating an unsustainable pattern in both supply and demand (Göymen, 2000; Seckelmann, 2002). The unequal distribution of tourism investments intensifies the inequitable development by concentrating tourism demand in specific regions, thereby amplifying existing regional disparities. This outcome aligns with existing literature, suggesting that tourism exacerbates regional inequalities in developing economies (Tosun, Timothy & Öztürk, 2003; Zhang, 2009; Alam & Paramati, 2016; Raza & Shah, 2017). The structural changes brought about by tourism development and its impact on economic growth may exhibit regional differences, influenced by distinct economic development levels (Li et al., 2016). Nevertheless, an escalation of regional disparities poses unique challenges for both developed and underdeveloped cities. In cities with high tourism development levels, issues like over-tourism, exceeding the carrying capacity, environmental degradation, disruption of natural and cultural landscapes, heightened pressure on local communities, and unplanned urbanization emerge as critical concerns. Conversely, in cities with low tourism development levels, challenges include inadequate tourist demand, inactive tourism investments, insufficient infrastructure and service sectors, challenges in preserving natural and cultural heritage, and the inefficient utilization of tourism resources.

The third important finding of this study highlights a significant issue within the country's tourism planning framework. Rather than focusing on short-term gains, there is a pressing need for long-term plans and investments to foster sustainable tourism development. Developing nations must adopt sustainable tourism approaches that consider their socio-economic, spatial, political, and legal conditions to overcome unplanned and uncontrolled tourism development (Tosun, 2001). The process of tourism planning must take into account economic, environmental, and socio-cultural factors and their relationships with future sustainability needs. Effective regional and destination planning should encompass policies that are both competitive and sustainable (Edgell & Swanson, 2013). The 11th Development Plan, covering the 2019-2023 period, designates the tourism sector as a primary development area with the goal of achieving integral planning for tourism development. The 2023 Turkey Tourism Strategy outlines key objectives, including identifying regions for tourism development, employing tourism as a potent planning and implementation tool to reduce regional disparities, designating cities with strong tourism potential as primary destinations, and planning essential infrastructure investments for these cities. The overarching aim of the national-level regional development strategy is to mitigate regional inequalities, fostering economic and social harmony. However, it is evident that the objectives outlined in both development and tourism plans have not been fully realized, as regional development disparities continue to widen within Turkey.

7. References

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