

POST COVID-19 AND A FIELD STUDY ON CITTASLOW PERCEPTION IN TURKEY

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Abstract

Today, improving the quality of human life and living in a healthy and calm environment is increasing in importance day by day. Heavy use of resources as if they will never end has become the reason for preference to calm and natural destinations for travelers. Starting from this point the slow city (cittaslow) approach has emerged. This approach started in Turkey in 2009, and as of 2022, 21 cittaslow titles have been registered in our country. It has been observed that the Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged at the end of 2019, deeply affected the demand trends of the tourism industry globally. This study aims to examine the cittaslow perception of tourists and tourism demand for Turkey during Post Covid-19. Within the scope of the field study, data were collected from tourists visiting Turkey, tourism businesses operating in cittaslows, travel agencies, and local governments with survey forms. The obtained data were analyzed with the quantitative method in the SPSS 26 program, and the other part was analyzed with the qualitative method with content analysis. In the conclusion part, necessary evaluations were made.

Keywords: Post covid-19, cittaslow, tourism, demand change, field study.

COVID-19 SONRASI İYİLEŞME SÜRECİ VE TÜRKİYE'DE YAVAŞ ŞEHİR ALGISINA YÖNELİK BİR ALAN ÇALIŞMASI

Özet

Günümüzde insan yaşam kalitesinin iyileştirilmesi, sağlıklı ve sakin bir çevrede yaşamının önemi her geçen gün artmaktadır. Kaynakların hiç bitmeyecekmiş gibi yoğun olarak kullanılması, seyahat edenlerin sakin ve doğal destinasyonları tercih etme nedeni haline gelmiştir. Bu noktadan hareketle yavaş şehir (cittaslow) yaklaşımı ortaya çıkmıştır. Türkiye'de 2009 yılında başlayan bu yaklaşım sonucunda, 2022 yılı itibari ile ülkemizde 21 cittaslow unvanı tescillenmiştir. 2019 yılının sonunda ortaya çıkan Covid-19 pandemisinin küresel bazda turizm endüstrisinin talep eğilimlerini derinden etkilediği gözlemlenmiştir. Bu çalışma, Covid-19 sonrası dönemde turistlerin cittaslow algısını ve Türkiye'ye yönelik turizm talebini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Saha çalışması kapsamında Türkiye'yi ziyaret eden turistlerden, sakin şehirlerde faaliyet gösteren turizm işletmelerinden, seyahat acentalarından ve yerel yönetimlerden anket formları ile veriler toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler SPSS 26 programında nicel yöntemle, diğer kısmı ise içerik analizi ile nitel yöntemle analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç kısmında ise gerekli değerlendirmeler yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Covid-19 sonrası, cittaslow, turizm, talep değişimi, saha çalışması

1. Introduction

From the past to the present, the tourism industry continues to show constant change and development on a global basis. Countries are trying to reveal different aspects of tourism potential in local regions to gain a competitive advantage in tourism. In this case, while countries are looking for more economic growth and development opportunities by using new strategies, it is seen that the interest will increase in terms of tourist arrivals. (Çakır, Çakır,

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Ahmed, & Tokuş, 2014) On the other hand, the uncontrolled increase in tourism activities throughout the world may destroy natural and cultural scarce resources or cause serious damage. To minimize this extinction or damage, towards the end of the 20th century, human conscience and foresight took action, and a sustainable urbanization approach was adopted to transfer diminishing resources to future generations, and the slow city phenomenon, which is a part of the nature concept, emerged from these approaches (Keskin, 2012; Keskin & Formal, 2015:31). The slow city approach is called "Cittaslow" in the world, was put forward by Paolo Saturnini, the former mayor of Greve in Chianti in Italy, in 1999 to improve the quality of life (Ünal, 2016:16). On the other hand, Carl Honore, who is considered one of the pioneers of the cittaslow approach, stated in his book "Praise to Slowness" that speed has negative effects on people's lives and that slow movement begins as a reaction against those who live dependent on speed (Güven, 2011). Cittaslow process has emerged as a reaction to the globalization in tourism, which advocates reducing the pace of daily life where can be enjoyed, being self-sufficient, protecting nature, traditions, and customs, and calm food movements in a quiet environment. On the other hand, this trend has spread to many countries over time (Dviren & Yıldız, 2015; Acar, 2018).

Thus, the slow city approach acts with an understanding of respect for the history, culture, traditions, nature, and environment of the cities. For this reason, cities that have the title of cittaslow can maintain their local culture and traditions with this approach (Özüpekçe, 2021:21). In this context, the slow city approach, which is emphasized with the understanding of sustainable tourism; is aimed to protect natural, historical and cultural features, to raise awareness in tourism to increase the quality of life and employment, to protect the traditions and lifestyles of the local people and to transfer them to future generations (Çakıcı, Yenipınar, & Benli, 2014:27). According to the June 2022 update of Cittaslow International, 287 regions in 33 countries in the world have the title of cittaslow. In our country, the slow city approach started in 2009 with the Seferihisar district of İzmir deemed appropriate, and as of 2022, 21 cities were registered as cittaslow.

It has been observed that the Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged at the end of 2019, negatively affected the demand trends of the tourism industry globally. As a result of the epidemic, which caused intense destruction in terms of tourism in 2020 and 2021, countries closed their border gates to foreign visitors from time to time, visa restrictions were applied and international tourism movements came to a halt due to the suspension of flights for a certain period. By 2022, in the period when the effects of the pandemic were partially reduced, the Post Covid-19 partial recovery period became popular all over the world. In this context, factors such as global demand changes in tourism and the introduction of different and new destinations have started to take place on the agenda by researchers, simultaneously with the significant increase in international tourism mobility with the introduction of the Post Covid-19 recovery.

Accordingly, as the high case rates experienced during the pandemic and the risk of transmission decreased, the demand for travel in calmer areas instead of large and crowded cities has increased. Thus, slow cities that act with the understanding of nature and calmness become attractive (Özüpekçe, 2021:21). Cittaslow Turkey website also tries to attract tourists by calling slow cities the center of calm sought during the pandemic (Cittaslow Turkey, 2022). For example; While there was intense tourist activity in the Halfeti district of Urfa at

the beginning of 2019, there were decreases in tourist statistics with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in the post-Covid-19 recovery period, it is predicted that the demand trend for Halfeti will increase in 2022 and the following year 2023, due to the normal level of touristic activities (Cittaslow Turkey, 2022).

Some argue that the cittaslow approach does not contribute to the development of international tourism at the desired level, because it does not cover all activities of tourism activities (Yurtseven & Kaya, 2011:93). In our opinion, a road map that will support economic development and will include the following years, which will provide coordination with accommodation facilities such as hotels, motels, hostels, rental houses, and local restaurants in order to ensure sustainability in tourism in slow cities, as well as giving importance to the publicity activities necessary for slow cities. As a result of this, its effect on international tourism will be seen. Based on this idea, in this research; In the concept of cittaslow, perception of the slow city, studies on the slow city, and slow cities in Turkey have been studied in depth and discussed in a conceptual framework. In addition, the findings obtained from the field research on the cittaslow perception in the Post Covid-19 recovery period, which is the main purpose of the research, are included in the conclusion and evaluation section.

2. Literature Review

There is a lot of research on Cittaslow internationally and in the tr index. Some of them reviewed by us are; (Tosun 2013; Çakıcı, Yenipınar & Benli 2014; Kabacık, 2015; Park & Kim, 2015; Çoban & Harman , 2016; Yalım, 2017; Akman, Akman & Karakuş, 2018; Çiçek & Sari, 2018; Kocaman & Kocaman, 2018; Zengin & Genç, 2018; Batyk & Wozniak, 2019; Özdemir & Köse , 2019; Shi, Zhai, Zhou, & Chen, 2019; Akkoç & Aksöz, 2020; Çiçek, Ulu ve Uslay 2019; Ince, Iscioğlu, & Ozturen, 2020; Jaszczak, Morawiak, & Zukowska, 2020; Shang & Qiao, 2020; Uslu & Avcı, 2020; Yüksel, Esen, Kılıç & Akçay, 2020; Karademir, 2021; Kanbir, 2021; Özüpekçe, 2021).

When some of the above-mentioned studies are examined; Tosun (2013) mentions the philosophy and principles of slow urbanization in his study "Slow Urbanization Movement". In this research, the improvement of the quality of life of the local people and the protection of cultural values are discussed within the scope of principles. Similarly, in the study conducted by Çakıcı, Yenipınar & Benli (2014), the attitudes and perceptions of the people of Seferihisar about the slow city movement were evaluated, and as a result of the study, it was revealed that the perceptions of the local people towards the slow city movement were gathered in four factors. In both studies, the effects of the slow city on the local people were investigated and the result was reached. In our opinion, examining the attitudes of public and private enterprises in slow cities in addition to the local people in both studies is appropriate and will bring a scientific difference to the research.

Kabacık (2015), in his study dealing with the problems faced by the town of Persembe in the process of becoming a slow city, suggests the districts that want to become a slow city. It emphasizes that this proposal will be realized with the participation and adoption of all stakeholders in the cittaslow movement. In their study, Kocaman and Kocaman (2018) emphasized in the results of their research that the preservation and sustainability of deep-rooted traditions and cultural assets will be possible if the local people of Zile district adopt

the cittaslow movement (Kocaman & Kocaman, 2018). Taking visitor/tourist views in both studies will add integrity to the research.

Ince, Iscioğlu, & Oztüren, (2020) analyzed the effects of cittaslow understanding on supporting sustainable tourism development in Northern Cyprus and found that slow cities have a significant impact on sustainable tourism development. Our study is original since it was researched with a more comprehensive sample group, although it is similar to the result that foreign tourists who come to slow cities in Turkey spend their holidays with the principle of respecting the environment and having a positive approach to sustainable tourism.

Jaszczak, Morawiak, & Zukowska, (2020) analyzed how much cycling is used as a means of transport in the towns of Cittaslow, Poland, the necessity of cycling as a means of sustainable tourism, and, in the results of their study, bicycles in Cittaslow towns in Poland as well as in other countries. They provided information on the preparation of the infrastructure.

Çiçek, Ulu, and Uslay (2019) stated that the cittaslow movement is important for destination marketing. This study, which evaluates the information about the international promotion and marketing strategies of the slow city movement, which is an important factor in destination marketing, contains important information.

Özüpekçe (2021), in his study, stated that the Covid-19 experienced in the years 2020-2021 especially affected big cities, and because of the high number of cases and the risk of transmission, people tended to live in small and quiet places. Therefore, it is predicted in the study that the Post Covid-19 recovery period will support the approach of slow cities that adopt calmness with their nature and culture and make these cities more attractive.

When the above studies are evaluated; it seems that the cittaslow approach is quite a popular research area in the academic field. On the other hand, when the content of the studies is examined, it is seen that there is no comprehensive research on the slow city concept for the Post Covid-19 recovery process.

Thus, we have not encountered a similar study related to the "Post Covid-19 recovery period and the perception of the Slow City concept in Turkey", which is the research subject of the study conducted by us. Therefore, our study differs from other original and conducted studies in that it is included in the literature for the first time and that all slow cities in Turkey are included in the field research. With this aspect of our study, we predict that it will fill the gap in the literature and will be an important resource that includes precautions and strategies for slow cities in a global epidemic that may be encountered in the future.

3. Slow Cities (Cittaslows) in Turkey

For a city to receive the title of "slow city", the population of the town or region must be below 50,000. The elements of nature must be dominant, the environment, infrastructure, urban life quality, agriculture, tourism policies, and similar criteria must be met (Acar, 2018: 131- 132). In addition, the following six stages must be completed to receive the slow city title. (Çakır, Çakır, Ahmed, & Tokuş, 2014):

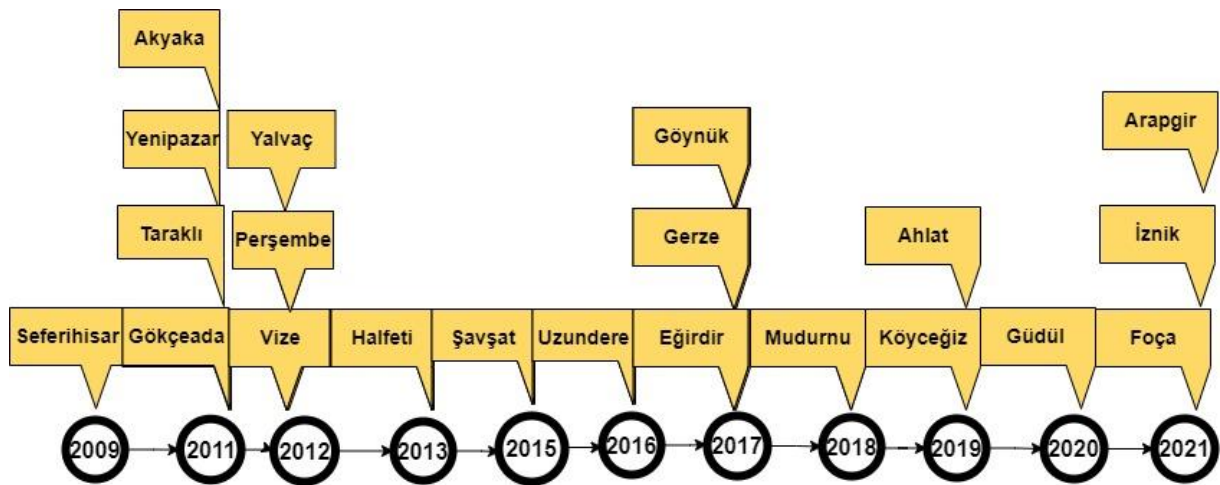
- Stage 1: Preparation of Application Letter
- Stage 2: Evaluation of the Application Letter

- Stage 3: Briefing Meeting and Evaluation Visits
- Stage 4: Preparation and Delivery of the Application File
- Stage 5: Evaluation of the Application File
- Stage 6: Transferring the Application File to the Headquarters and Membership Statement.

When the contents of the above stages are examined, the first stage is the preparation of an application letter, which includes the natural, cultural, and human characteristics of the town, as well as prospective studies. The second stage is the preliminary evaluation process of the application letter. The third stage is the submission process of the application file prepared in detail by the relevant town. The fourth stage is the process of examining how much the applicant city meets the slow city criteria by Cittaslow Turkey. The fifth stage includes the approval process of the slow city title if the application file is found to meet the criteria by Cittaslow Headquarters. The final stage is the announcement of the city's admission to Cittaslow membership and the certification process (Cittaslow Turkey, 2022).

There are 264 members from 30 countries in the world that have been awarded the title of cittaslow (Sandıkcı & Albayrak, 2020:1709). The number of slow cities in 33 countries in the world is 287 by 2022. There are 84 cittaslow in Italy. Germany follows it with 23 cities. It is a great honor that Turkey is in third place with 21 slow cities on the list. Our country should use this advantage most accurately and announce it to all countries of the world. In Turkey, the first slow city movement started in 2009 when İzmir, Seferihisar joined the "Cittaslow" union, and the "Turkey Cittaslow Coordinatorship" was established right after (Ünal & Zavalı, 2016:903). Although Vize, Yalvaç, and Yenipazar applied in 2010, they were accepted two years later. Aydın, Yenipazar was accepted with a rate of 78%, while Isparta, Yalvaç 61% Vize in Kırklareli fulfilled the criteria by 50% and all three towns have been announced as cittaslow. (Akman, 2018: 85). Thus, by 2022, the number of cittaslows in our country reached 21. It is predicted that the number of slow cities in our country will increase even more in the coming years. The below figure shows the list of slow cities in Turkey by fulfilling the Cittaslow criteria and their acceptance dates.

Figure 1: Slow Cities of Turkey and Their Acceptance Dates.



Source: Akman, 2018:86; Oter & Yumuk, 2022; It has been compiled by the author in the light of Cittaslow Turkey, 2022, and the web pages of the relevant municipalities.

The slow cities in Turkey are listed below:

Seferihisar: As the first slow city of Izmir, Seferihisar was accepted to membership in the same year as it fulfilled the Cittaslow criteria at a rate of 70% with the application of the district municipality in 2009 (Akman, 2018: 85). Seferihisar is a very rich district with its important tangible assets in terms of tourism and cultural values, Sığacık Castle, Karaköse Ruins, Teos and Lebedos Ancient Cities, Myonnesos Island, Güneşlikent Tumulus, mosques, baths and fountains (Koba, 2022:248-252).

Gökçeada: Gökçeada, the largest island in Turkey, is a tourism destination with a rich cultural appeal as well as important landscape features. Gökçeada, the first and only island of the Cittaslow Union, received the title of slow city in 2011 (Özdemir & Ayhan, 2019:29).

Taraklı: Located 65 km from Sakarya province, Taraklı was one of the first settlements of the Ottoman Empire and is located in a narrow valley surrounded by mountains. Taraklı, which received the title of slow city in 2011, stands out with its rich cuisine, historical houses, natural beauties, and traditional handicrafts (Ünal, 2016:23).

Yeni Pazar: It is connected to the province of Aydın, which contains important remnants of the Lydian and Cimmerian civilizations. Local people continue their lives depending on their traditions and customs by dealing with agricultural activities such as cotton, citrus, and olives (Acar, 2018: 135). In 2011, it had the Cittaslow criteria and received the title of the slow city (Ünal, 2016:23).

Akyaka: Located in Muğla, Akyaka is an important tourism destination. Due to the natural attractions and cultural elements in the region, it is in high demand by tourists. In 2011, it achieved the criteria of 50% and received the title of the slow city (Kurnaz & İpar, 2020:43).

Visa: Located in the Thrace region of Turkey, Vize is a district of Kırıkkaleli province. Visa has a very rich cultural and historical value in terms of tourist attractions. It also has a rich spectrum in terms of tourism diversity. It has many alternative tourism types such as cave tourism, bird and butterfly watching, trekking, sport fishing, mushroom picking, cycling, and botanical tourism. (Çakır, Çakır, Ahmed, & Tokuş, 2014: 94-104). It received the title of slow city in 2012 (Özüpekçe, 2021:22).

Perşembe: Perşembe is located in the town of Ordu in the Black Sea Region of Turkey, received the title of the slow city on November 2, 2012. After the city received the title of a slow city, a sewage treatment plant was established as infrastructure, and many studies were carried out such as bicycle and nature walking paths, and bird watching places (Yıldırım & Karahmet, 2013:17). In addition, many initiatives are carried out in order to minimize noise and air pollution on Perşembe (Acar, 2018: 134).

Yalvaç: Yalvaç is the district of Isparta that applied to the Cittaslow Association in 2010, but completed the criteria in 2012 and received the slow city certificate in the organization held in Italy. After joining the Cittaslow Association, Yalvaç established a women's market and worked for the sustainability of traditional handicrafts and culture (Çakır, Çakır, Ahmed, & Tokuş, 2014:70). Yalvaç, which has rich cultural assets in terms of faith tourism and is considered sacred by Christians, welcomes 50 thousand tourists every year (Canlı, 2016:59).

Halfeti: Halfeti, which is very rich in terms of local history, is a district of Şanlıurfa province in the Southeastern region of Turkey. With the Birecik Dam coming into operation in 2000, 3/5 of Halfeti was submerged and gained its current appearance (Ünal & Zavalı, 2016: 907) Halfeti, which is called a hidden paradise with its cultural and historical attractions, received the title of slow city in 2013. (Olca, Giritliođlu, & Özekici, 2017:1332-1333).

Şavşat: Şavşat is located in the province of Artvin, and received the title of slow city in 2015 (Çoban & Harman, 2016:244). A snowboarding event was held in Şavşat, Karagöl National Park in March 2021 (Cittaslow Turkey, 2022).

Uzundere: Uzundere, located in Erzurum province, contains various tourism potentials with its history, culture, nature, and springs. In addition to the special tracks organized for bicycles and ATVs, mountain, village, and highland roads offer a suitable alternative track for this activity. In addition, the region offers various alternatives in terms of bird and butterfly watching. Thanks to its calmness and natural richness, Uzundere district met the Cittaslow criteria and was awarded the title of slow city in 2016 (Çetinkaya, Serçeođlu, & Uzan, 2016:1065-1066).

Eđirdir: The district of Eđirdir, located within the provincial borders of Isparta, joined the slow city by meeting the Cittaslow criteria in 2017. It has high tourism potential, local handicrafts such as carpet weaving and cultural values are important riches in terms of history and alternative tourism (Alagöz, 2018:142).

Gerze: Gerze, a district of Sinop province, joined the "Cittaslow" network in 2017. Gerze, where tradition and customary structure continues, is a quiet city that contains local cuisine, traditional handicrafts, magnificent nature, cultural values , and unspoiled surroundings (Karaçar, Bayram, & Bayram, 2017:187).

Göynük: Göynük is in Bolu province, which is an important tourism destination, adopted the slow city approach and was accepted by the Cittaslow Association in 2017 and received the title of the slow city (Zengin & Genç, 2018: 586).

Mudurnu: Mudurnu apart from Göynük is the second district of Bolu province, which received the title of slow city in 2018 (Coşar, 2019:41).

Köyceđiz: Despite being one of the touristic attraction centers of Muđla province, Köyceđiz was granted the title of slow city by accepting its application in 2019 because it preserves its natural and cultural values and meets the Cittaslow criteria (Uslu & Avcı, 2020: 118).

Ahlat: Ahlat, located in the province of Bitlis in the Eastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, took two years for the application process and acceptance by the Cittaslow Association and was officially awarded the title of a slow city on March 23, 2019 (Alkan, 2020:269).

Güdül: With the announcement as a slow city in 2020, there have been 18 slow cities in Turkey. Güdül is an important touristic destination with its many cultures, traditions, local dishes, and unique house structure. (Baikal & Ataberk, 2020:305).

Foça: After Seferihisar, Foça is the second slow city of İzmir province, applied to the Cittaslow Association in 2020 and received the title of the slow city at the "Cittaslow International Coordination Committee meeting" on 27 November 2021 at the end of a year.

Foça, with its Athena and Kybele Open Air Temple, Devil's Bath, City Wall and head gates, castle, windmills, and blue flag beaches, is a coastal city that offers cultural and natural riches and a clean environment (Kargiglioğlu, 2022: 263-265).

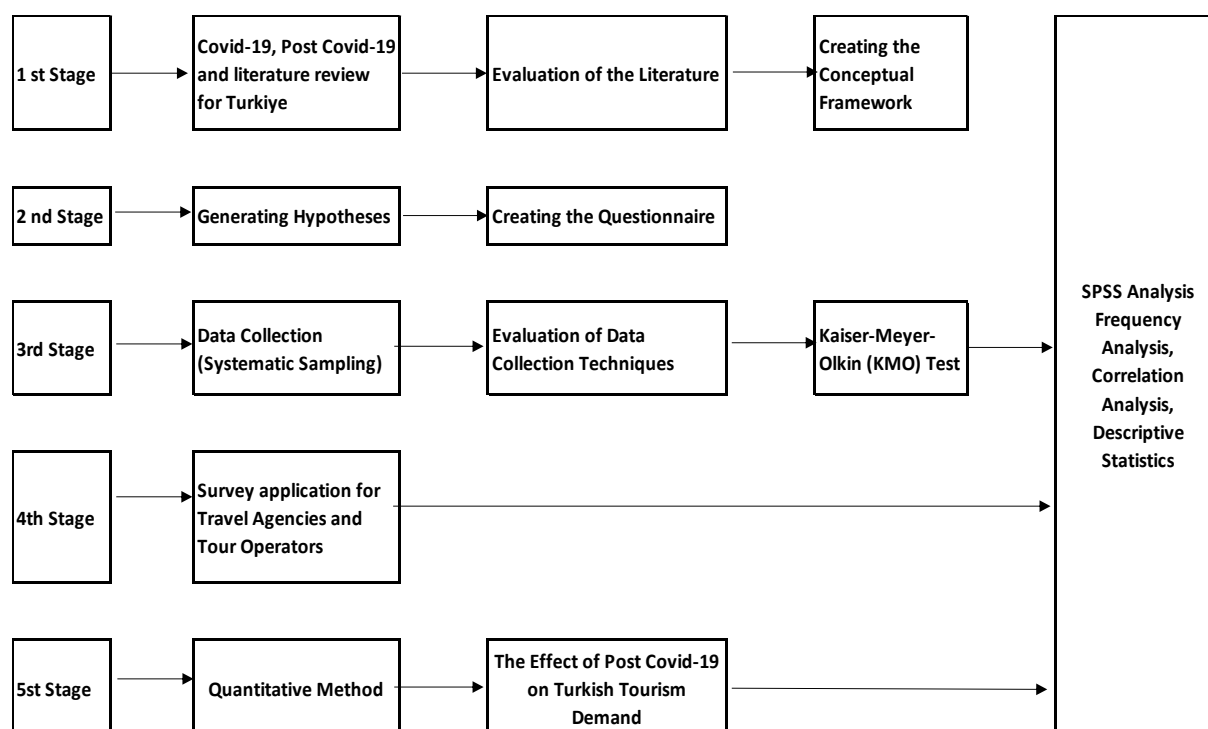
Iznik: It is a district of Bursa, located in the Marmara Region. Iznik, formerly known as Helikore, has hosted many cultures throughout history and became an important city, especially during the Ottoman period. Surrounded by a 4970-meter-long wall, the city is internationally known for its Iznik tiles. It offers a cultural feast to tourists with its cultural and natural beauties, charming villages, lakes, and bicycle paths. Iznik made an application in 2019 to join the Cittaslow network and was accepted as a member in 2021 and received the title of the slow city (Köksalanlar, 2022:531-537).

Arapgir: Arapgir is in the district of Malatya province, and has an important tourism potential that includes its history and food culture, traditions, and natural riches. Since it is home to different civilizations, it has special importance in terms of culture and history. It has the potential and quality for different types of alternative tourism, especially faith, nature, sports, and festival tourism. Arapgir, who applied to the Cittaslow International Coordination Committee in 2017, received the title of slow city in 2021 (Kodaş, 2022: 546-549).

4. Fieldwork and Methodology

The mixed design method is a research method that includes the use of qualitative and quantitative methods together in the same research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018:325). The study aimed to determine the relationship between the perception of the Post Covid-19 recovery period towards slow cities and the intentions of tourists to travel by using the explanatory design within the scope of the mixed method. In this context, all stages of the design model are shown schematically in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Five stages of Post Covid-19 and Slow City Approach.



As shown in the above figure, in the first stage of the study, a conceptual framework was created by examining databases and literature such as the TR index, web of science, and scopus related to Post Covid-19 and slow city perception. In the second stage, hypotheses were formed in the research and a questionnaire was prepared for data collection, which was determined to be suitable for the subject. During the formation process of the questionnaire, scientific studies related to Covid-19 and the slow city approach in the literature were used. In the third stage, the convenience sampling method was chosen by evaluating the suitability of data collection techniques for the research. During the data collection phase; It was planned to obtain data from tourists visiting our country by survey study and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was applied to prove the adequacy and reliability of the quantitative sampling number. In the fourth stage, quantitative data were collected in the form of face-to-face interviews and single and multiple answers obtained from the data related to the findings were grouped separately and examined within the scope of the SPSS 26 program, which is a quantitative method, and qualitative findings were studied with content analysis. Quantitative data were supported by qualitative findings in order to avoid gaps in the research. At the last stage, a qualitative interview form was prepared and applied to 8 slow city municipalities, 15 travel agencies, and 11 hotel managers.

4.1 Sample and Universe

The field research of the study was carried out both face-to-face and online via the internet. Businesses operating in 21 slow cities in Türkiye and tourists visiting Türkiye over the age of 18 constitute the universe of the research. For this reason, multiple perspectives were tried to be obtained by preparing separate questionnaire forms for foreign tourists, and businesses operating in slow cities. The tourists who came to our country through Mercan Turizm DMC for holiday purposes were given questionnaire forms on the day they returned to their country and they answered the questions based on their experiences in our country. In the other study,

data were collected by sending the questionnaires through Google forms to tourism service providers and local administrators operating in the public and private sectors in slow cities.

Model and Hypotheses

Our study was determined within the framework of two hypotheses.

Figure 3: Model and Hypotheses.



H1: Post Covid-19 affects the slow city perception.

H2: Slow city perception affects the intention to travel.

The research aims to measure the impact of the Post Covid-19 recovery on the cittaslow perception and the intention of tourists to travel to slow cities in Türkiye. In addition, it aims to reveal strategies such as slow city promotion and marketing by public officials, local hotel operators, and travel agency managers operating in 21 slow cities in our country and to determine the factors affecting the foreign tourist tendency. The data obtained from the groups within the scope of the field study are presented in the tables below by multi-frequency distribution analysis.

4.2 Findings and Analysis

The findings were collected in two parts. In the first part, the data and analyzes were obtained as a result of the quantitative method, and in the second part, the content analysis of the data was collected through the interview form in the qualitative method.

4.2.1 Quantitative findings

The data obtained by the quantitative method have been tabulated in detail with the field study on the perceptions of Post Covid-19 and travel intentions of foreign tourists in slow cities in Türkiye. Questionnaires for the field research were analyzed separately by entering the data of multiple and single questions in the SPSS 26 program. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics were used to test the consistency of the research sample and data. As a result of statistics, it was determined that the research was at a good level with a KMO value of 0.716. In Table 1 below, the demographic information of foreign tourists participating in the fieldwork and the number of slow city visits are examined.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Foreign Tourists.

Variable		n	%			n	%
	Female	90	57,0		None	48	

Gender				Cittaslows Visit			30,4
	Male	68	43,0		1	44	27,8
Education	High school	36	22,8		2	27	17,1
	Associate degree	23	14,6		3	5	3,2
	Undergraduate	24	15,2		4	23	14,16
	Graduate	75	47,5	5 or more	11	7,0	

As shown in the table above, the majority of tourists participating in the research consisted of 90 (57.0%) women and 68 (43.0%) men. It is very important that the number of women who participated in this study was at a high level. Considering the educational status of tourists, the density is 75 people and 47.5% are in the postgraduate education group. When the number of visits by foreign tourists to slow cities is examined, it is seen that 48 people have never visited and 44 people have visited slow cities once.

Regarding the Post Covid-19 recovery period, the opinions of tourists about our country are given in the table-2 below.

Table 2. Post Covid-19 and Turkey Tourism Perceptions.

How do you evaluate the effects of the Post Covid-19 on Turkish Tourism?	Responses	
	N	Percent
Safe	120	30,6%
Unsafe	12	3,1%
Cheap	13	3,3%
Expensive	78	19,9%
Poor Service	14	3,6%
Good Service	87	22,2%
Dirty Environment	8	2,0%
Clean Environment	60	15,3%
² Total	392	100,0%

When the table above is examined, 120 (30.6%) of the tourists visiting Turkey think that Turkey's tourism is safe in terms of Post Covid-19. The other highest distributions among multiple answers are: 22.2% stated that they met “good service” and 15.3% stated that “clean environment”. On the other hand, although 19.9% stated that tourism in Türkiye is “expensive”, even so, It is seen that there will be an increase in the total number of foreign tourists coming to Turkey in 2022 and 2023.

Table 3. Correlation between knowledge about Cittaslow and willingness to travel to slow cities.

	Do you know 18 Cittaslows in	Accept Turkey did you visit any	Visit one of the Cittaslows in
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² In Multiple Responses, N exceeds the Sample Size.

		Turkey	Cittaslows	Turkey
Are you aware that there are 21 cittaslows in Turkey?	Pearson Correlation	1	,516**	,294**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	99,930	44,899	22,389
	Covariance	,636	,286	,144
	N	158	158	157
Accept Turkey have you visited any Cittaslows in any other countries?	Pearson Correlation	,516**	1	,315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	44,899	75,671	21,006
	Covariance	,286	,482	,135
	N	158	158	157
Visiting one of the Cittaslows in Turkey	Pearson Correlation	,294**	,315**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	22,389	21,006	58,803
	Covariance	,144	,135	,377
	N	157	157	157

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The table above shows that foreign tourists' knowledge of 21 slow cities in Türkiye and their desire to travel to all slow cities in the world have a moderate relationship with a value of 0.516, while the desire to travel to slow cities in Türkiye has a weak relationship with a value of 0.294. There is a weak correlation between the desire to travel to any slow city, including Türkiye with a value of 0.315. In this case, it has been concluded that the desire to travel to slow cities in other countries except Türkiye has little effect on the desire for slow cities in Türkiye.

Table 4. The recognition percentage of 21 slow cities in Türkiye by tourists.

Cittaslows Name	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
İzmir-Seferihisar	67	25,9%	43,5%
Muğla-Akyaka	16	6,2%	10,4%
Isparta-Eğirdir	5	1,9%	3,2%
Çanakkale-Gökçeada	4	1,5%	2,6%
Sinop-Gerze	4	1,5%	2,6%
Bolu-Göynük	7	2,7%	4,5%
Kırıklareli-Vize	3	1,2%	1,9%
Isparta-Yalvaç	3	1,2%	1,9%
Bitlis-Ahlat	3	1,2%	1,9%
Şanlıurfa-Halfeti	5	1,9%	3,2%
Bolu-Mudurnu	1	0,4%	0,6%
Ordu-Perşembe	7	2,7%	4,5%
Artvin-Şavşat	2	0,8%	1,3%
Sakarya-Taraklı	8	3,1%	5,2%
Erzurum-Uzundere	2	0,8%	1,3%
Aydın-Yenipazar	8	3,1%	5,2%
Muğla-Köyceğiz	9	3,5%	5,8%
Ankara-Güdül	51	19,7%	33,1%
İzmir-Foça	-	-	-
Bursa-İznik	-	-	-
Malatya-Arapgir	-	-	-

None	54	20,8%	35,1%
Total	259³	100,0%	168,2%

As shown in the table above, the towns that met the Cittaslow criteria and received the title of the slow city are given in order. Among the towns, İzmir-Seferihisar has 25.9%, and Ankara-Güdül has 19.7% in terms of awareness by the tourists. 20.8% of the tourists have no information about the slow cities in Turkey. In our opinion, the fact that only Seferihisar and Güdül are known by tourists is that these two cittaslows are located in two big and well-known cities such as İzmir and Ankara.

Table 5. Lack of Information on Slow Cities in Türkiye.

Which of the following reasons do you attribute your lack of knowledge about Cittaslows in Turkey?	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Lack of promotion activities on an international scale	49	17,4%	31,4%
Incorrect marketing strategies on an international scale	73	26,0%	46,8%
Ineffective use of the internet	19	6,8%	12,2%
Inadequate websites of local governments	9	3,2%	5,8%
lack of knowledge about the cittaslows	102	36,3%	65,4%
Inability to create tourist perception	14	5,0%	9,0%
Failure to complete the branding process of cittaslows	15	5,3%	9,6%
Total	281	100,0%	180,1%

As seen in Table 5, Why tourists do not have information about the 21 registered slow cities in Türkiye due to "the lack of information about the slow city" which has a rate of 36.3%. 26.0% stated that "inadequacy of marketing strategies" and 17% stated that "lack of promotion on an international scale". Therefore, our country should focus heavily on international strategy and promotional activities that can highlight slow cities in tourism activities for the foreign market.

Table 6. Post Covid-19 service expectations in slow cities.

What kind of service do you expect when you visit a Cittaslow in Turkey on Post Covid-19?	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
High-quality service	56	12,1%	35,4%
Medium quality service	38	8,2%	24,1%
Low-quality service	42	9,1%	26,6%
To be distant from others	25	5,4%	15,8%
Clean environment and good air	95	20,6%	60,1%
Safe environment	108	23,4%	68,4%
Local customs and traditions	34	7,4%	21,5%
Away from city noise	64	13,9%	40,5%

³ In Multiple Responses, N exceeds the Sample Size.

Total	462 ⁴	100,0%	292,4%
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When examining what kind of service expectations tourists expect during their visit to slow cities in Turkey, it is seen that tourists concentrate on two criteria. 23.4% stated that they want to have a holiday in a "safe" country and 20.6% stated that "clean environment and good air". In this context, foreign marketing strategies that Türkiye offers a clean and safe holiday should be taken into consideration when preparing and confirming that it meets the above-mentioned criteria at a high rate.

Table 7. Tourism Activities in Slow Cities.

Which of the following activities do you think is important in choosing Cittaslow during your holiday in Turkey?	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Trekking	58	8,0%	36,7%
Bird/butterfly watching	49	6,8%	31,0%
Sport fishing	65	9,0%	41,1%
Plant Inspection-mushroom picking	39	5,4%	24,7%
Cycling	62	8,6%	39,2%
Camping	69	9,5%	43,7%
Cave tourism	73	10,1%	46,2%
Cultural relics	70	9,7%	44,3%
Traditions and customs	88	12,2%	55,7%
Local handicrafts	78	10,8%	49,4%
Local dishes	72	10,0%	45,6%
Total	723 ⁵	100,0%	457,6%

In Table 7, it is understood that when the percentage rates of each activity are examined there is no tourism activity that tourists especially want to do during their holidays in Cittaslow cities in Türkiye. The activities that are most desired and experienced are 12.2% traditions and customs, 10.8% local handicrafts, 10.1% cave tourism, and 10.0% local dishes. As a result, it shows that the slow cities in Türkiye have different tourism potential.

4.2.2 Qualitative findings

The findings of the analysis of the data obtained from the survey form made within the scope of the field study are explained above. In order to fill the gaps that emerged as a result of the analysis and to reveal the perspectives of different groups on the literature, a total of 10 questions were prepared by creating an item pool. In this context, data were collected from 8 slow city municipalities, 11 hotel businesses, and 15 travel agency managers in Türkiye through Google forms. The obtained qualitative data were analyzed by the content analysis method.

Table 8. Demographic information of tourism service providers in cittaslows.

Variable		n	%			n	%
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⁴ In Multiple Responses, N exceeds the Sample Size.

⁵ In Multiple Responses, N exceeds the Sample Size.

Education	High School	5	14,7	Experience	1-5	4	30,4
	Associate degree	5	14,7		6-10	3	27,8
	Graduate degree	18	52,9		11-15	27	17,1
	Postgraduate degree	6	17,6		15 years and more.	15	44,1
Tourism Service Providers	Travel Agency Executives/Managers	15	44,1	Years of Operation	1-5	5	14,7
	Hotel Executives/Managers	11	32,4		6-10	3	8,8
	Municipality Directors	8	23,5		11-15	11	32,4
					15 years and more.	15	44,1

The data obtained through a semi-structured questionnaire from 8 municipalities, 15 travel agencies, and 11 hotel managers in 21 slow cities in Türkiye were examined based on 5 main themes. Each participant was coded from Y1 to Y34. In addition, some of the views of the participants are given below as excerpts.

4.2.2.1 Post Covid-19 and pre-demand status

Eight slow city municipal managers expressed the opinion that tourist demand was moderate before and after the pandemic.

On the other hand, as a result of the interviews with 15 travel agencies, 7 managers who did not give any opinion before the pandemic stated that the demand for the city would be high and 4 of them indicated that there would be a very high demand, while the other 4 of them stated that the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic was reduced, but that individuals' holiday preferences were mostly their own. The fact that there will be no demand due to the domestic tourism movements in their countries and their preference for nearby destinations shows that no research has been conducted so far, especially on the tourism demand of the travel agencies regarding the slow city. On the other hand, out of 15 travel agency managers, 7 managers stated that the demand would be high, 4 said that the demand would be very high, and 4 of them stated that even though the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic will lessen, the holiday preferences of tourists will be in their own country or in a country close to their country. As a result of this study, it shows that no serious research has been done so far, especially about the tourism demand of travel agencies related to slow cities.

Statement of participant with code Y32:

“Although the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic still remain, the demand for our slow city is increasing”

4.2.2.2 Slow city knowledge levels of tourists

In general, municipalities, travel agencies, and hotel managers stated that tourists have partial knowledge of slow cities. On the other hand, 1 municipality, 3 hotels, and 2 travel agency executives stated that tourists have information about 21 slow cities in Türkiye. The number of participants who say that “tourists do not know” is too high to be underestimated.

According to the result, it is seen that the interest and promotional activities of the travel agencies operating in slow cities are insufficient.

Statements of participant coded Y15:

“More tourists can be attracted to slow cities by carrying out more promotional activities abroad.”

4.2.2.3 Marketing and promotion

A question was asked to the municipality and tourism service providers in the slow cities “What do you think about the overseas promotion and marketing activities?” The answers given to the question were; 18 participants stated that their promotional and marketing activities were neither sufficient nor insufficient, and 14 participants stated that they were not sufficient. On the other hand, 4 participants emphasized that international promotion and marketing activities are relatively sufficient, however, they added that Türkiye must carry out a special international promotional campaign about slow cities.

4.2.2.4 Communication between tourists, economic, environmental, and local people

It is seen that the majority of the participants agreed that the economic effects of tourists on the slow city are neither sufficient nor insufficient. However, the number of participants is not to be underestimated stating that the economic contribution of tourists is not sufficient. When the perceptions of the tourists towards the environment are examined, the participants stated that tourists generally do not pose any threat to the environment, and they wish to have a nature-friendly holiday. On the other hand, it was determined that 10 participants emphasized that some tourist groups had negative attitudes and behaviors towards the environment. When the perceptions of the managers regarding the relationship between the tourists and the local people are examined, 8 agency officials and 2 hotel managers stated that the tourists usually try to communicate with the local people for a short time in some cases. However, according to the opinions of 6 municipalities, 3 travel agencies, and 5 hotel executives, in total 14 participants claimed that there is no communication between tourists and local people. The remaining 8 participants stated that the tourist varies according to the different profiles and there is usually a tight bond between tourists and the local people.

Question was, “What is the most important factor for tourists to prefer slow cities?” When the answers given to this question are examined, 12 participant managers said "trekking", 8 said "bike tour routes", 3 said "historical ruins", 7 said "traditions-customs" and 4 participants said "local handicrafts". What is understood from the answers is; the slow cities approach is a very important factor in terms of tourism. According to the results, many activities can attract the attention of tourists in slow cities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The slow city approach, which emerged in 1999 to improve the quality of life, has become increasingly important today. This approach, which started in Turkey in 2009, has reached 21 slow cities by 2022. The number of slow cities in 33 countries in the world is 287 by 2022. There are 84 cittaslow in Italy. Germany follows it with 23 cities. It is a great honor that Turkey is in third place with 21 slow cities on the list. Our country should use this advantage most accurately and announce it to all countries of the world.

As it is known, the slow city approach in the world has been handled within the scope of sustainable tourism in scientific research issues and has gained even more importance with the adoption of this philosophy. When the studies on the slow city are examined; The criteria of being a slow city, its effects on the local people, the attitudes and perceptions of the people of the city, their satisfaction levels, financial regulations, the effect on repeat visits, and similar issues draw attention. In addition, it is seen that the slow city concept as a research subject in scientific studies is increasingly taking place every year.

During the Post-Covid-19 recovery period, tourists find Türkiye which offers safe, good service, and fresh air to breathe, however, the information of tourists in their country about slow cities is not at the desired level. It was found that they know Seferihisar and Gdl as slow cities in our country, because of well-known cities such as Izmir and Ankara. Therefore, considering these findings from the field research, it is seen that oversea promotion and marketing strategies are insufficient. In addition, while preparing foreign marketing strategies, it should be taken into account that Trkiye offers a clean and safe holiday in the light of the necessary studies on the lack of knowledge of tourists about slow cities, and advertising and promotion activities that confirm that it meets these criteria at a high rate should be carried out intensively.

In our study, when the qualitative and quantitative data are compared, it is seen that the qualitative findings support the quantitative findings. Especially in the quantitative findings, the activities preferred by the tourists during their holidays in the slow city and the views of the tourism service providers on the slow city preference factors of the tourists in the qualitative findings are similar. In addition, slow city municipalities, travel agencies, and hotel managers also express the fact that they do not have information about slow cities in Trkiye, and that the promotion and marketing activities of these cities abroad are insufficient. Therefore, it has been tried not to leave any space in the research by trying to reveal multiple perspectives with the field study.

In our opinion, foreign visitors are generally partially aware of slow city perception internationally, but they are almost unaware of the slow cities in our country. People who visit slow cities in Trkiye should feel like guests rather than tourists. They would discover their own values in the slow city environment and absorb the natural food and the intimate feelings offered by the local people. Therefore, the touristic demands for slow cities in Trkiye should gain positive results in the coming years with effective promotional activities abroad.

Consequently, we believe that the examination of our research with a field study on the citta slow perception and the Post Covid-19 will contribute to the tourism literature and shed light on future studies.

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