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# Slow City and Tourism Coexistence

## *Sakin Şehir ve Turizm Birlikteliği*

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### ABSTRACT

Certain slow cities are found to host a demand for tourism well in excess of their population. This situation being experienced in destinations whose unique features entitle them to be part of the Cittaslow movement has raised debates. Within this context, this study aims to evaluate the coexistence of tourism and slow cities based on the opinions of experts on the subject who reside in slow cities for business or personal reasons. The study has consulted within its scope the opinions of 18 academicians from nine slow cities. The results show destinations that are part of the Cittaslow movement and that also appeal to mass tourism to have lost their calm. Another important conclusion of the study is that local administrators see joining the Cittaslow movement as a marketing strategy for the destination. In the face of the existence of exemplary destinations that have lost their calm and of the marketing-oriented perspective of local administrators, the interviewees stated that relevant criteria should be used as a balancing mechanism and that sustainable tourism goals can be achieved through tourism activities that are carried out by adhering to these criteria.

**Keywords:** Slow Cities, Cittaslow, Tourism, Sustainable Tourism

### ÖZ

Bazı sakin şehirler bulunmaktadır ki nüfusunun çok üzerinde bir turizm talebine ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Kendine özgü özellikleri ile sakin şehir unvanını almış destinasyonların böyle bir durumla karşılaşması beraberinde tartışmaları da gündeme getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu araştırma ile sakin şehirler ile turizm birlikteliğinin sakin şehirlerde iş ve ikamet amaçlı bulunan ve uzmanlık alanı olarak konuya hakim olan kişilerin görüşleri ile değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında dokuz sakin şehirden on sekiz akademisyenin görüşüne başvurulmuştur. Sonuçlar göstermektedir ki sakin şehir unvanının yanında kitle turizmine de hitap eden destinasyonların sükunetleri kaybolmuştur. Bir diğer önemli sonuç ise yerel idarecilerin sakin şehirler birliğine dahil olmayı destinasyon pazarlamasına yönelik bir strateji olarak gördükleridir. Sakinliğini kaybetmiş örnek destinasyonların varlığı ve yerel idarecilerin pazarlama odaklı bakış açısı karşısında görüşmeciler, kriterlerin denge mekanizması olarak kullanılmasının gerekliliğini belirtmiş ve kriterler bağlamında gerçekleştirilen turizm faaliyetleri sonucunda sürdürülebilir turizm hedeflerine de ulaşabileceğini ifade etmişlerdir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Sakin Şehirler, Cittaslow, Turizm, Sürdürülebilir Turizm

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization is one of the most common words used to explain today's world and many current events. In a globalized world, differences disappear and everyone is forced to become uniform, no matter how hard they resist. According to Genç (2021), the homogenizing effect of globalization has been debated and criticized with phrases such as McDonaldisation (Ritzer, 1996) or Americanization (Demirhan & Taylan, 2017), which references the United States of America as the country that introduced globalization to the world. Some of the areas where uniformization is intensely demonstrated involve eating habits and cities.

International chain food companies can move faster than people. People do not have to go to the company's founding city to consume the products of these chains, as they can easily access these companies wherever they are. For many people, this situation is pretty normal and pleasing. However, some people see the negative aspects yet remain involved in the process without knowing what they can do to defeat it. Meanwhile, a few other people take a more conservative stance and actually do something to preserve their local values. These actions may include not consuming from global companies or becoming a member of a non-governmental organization. Beyond these individual reactions are some movements like slow food, slow cities (Cittaslow), and slow tourism.

In 1986, a demonstration pushing back against the opening of a fast-food chain paved the way for more serious developments, such as signing the Slow Food manifesto at the meeting held in

1989 with the participation of representatives from 15 countries (Slow Food, 2021). This manifesto is a sign that a war had begun against globalization through fast-food criticism. The manifesto states, "In the name of productivity, the 'fast life' has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes" (Slow Food, 2021). In 1999, the Cittaslow association was established under the leadership of the head of the Slow Food movement, Carlo Petrini, and four mayors from Italy. Today, the Cittaslow movement involves a network of municipalities covering 287 cities in 33 different countries and ironically uses the weapon of globalization in order to establish an opponent philosophy against the concept of globalization.

As can be seen in Figure 1, Türkiye has 21 slow cities as of 2023. These cities and their provinces can be listed as follows in order of having joined the association: Seferihisar in İzmir in 2009, Gökçeada in Çanakkale in 2011), Akyaka in Muğla in 2011, Yenipazar in Aydın in 2011, Yalvaç in Isparta in 2012, Vize in Kırklareli in 2012, Perşembe in Ordu in 2012, Halfeti in Şanlıurfa in 2013, Şavşat in Artvin in 2015, Uzundere in Erzurum in 2016, Eğirdir in Isparta in 2017, Gerze in Sinop in 2017, Göynük in Bolu in 2017, Mudurnu in Bolu in 2018, Ahlat in Bitlis in 2019, Köyceğiz in Muğla in 2019, Güdül in Ankara in 2020, Arapgir in Malatya in 2021, İznik in Bursa in 2021, Foça in İzmir in 2021, and Kemaliye in Erzincan in 2022.

Within and beyond Türkiye are some slow cities that host a number of tourists way in excess of their capacity. Although experts do not find this proper, the administrators of the related destinations have seen and introduced this as a sign of success. Ekinçek's (2014) study understood Cittaslow city administrators

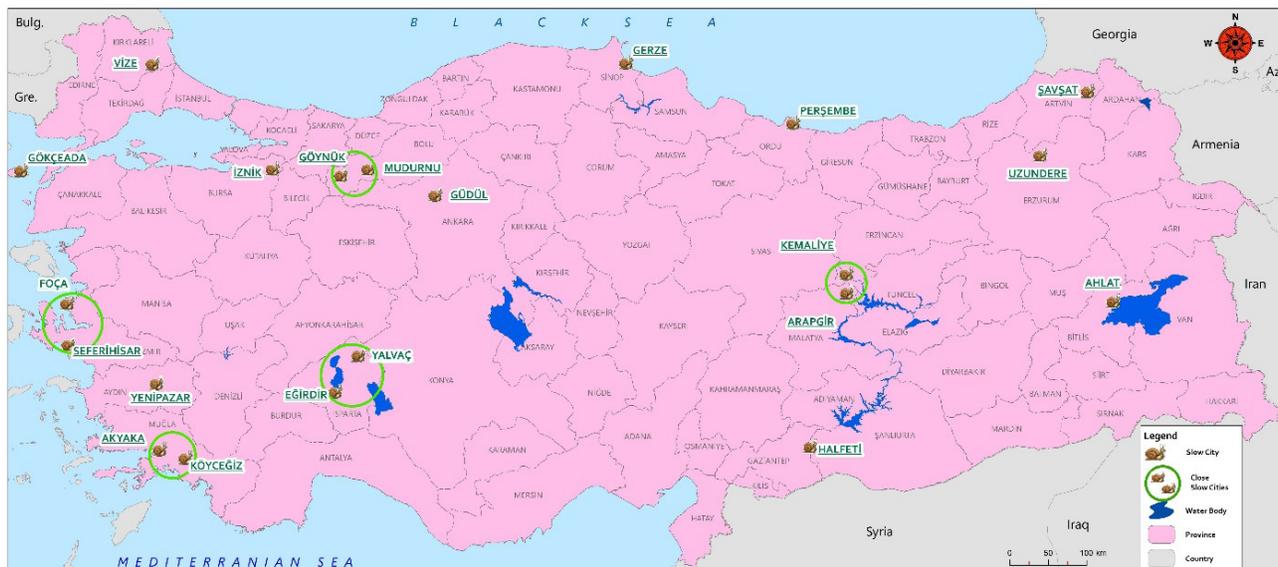


Figure 1. Slow Cities of Turkey

to view becoming a member of the Cittaslow association as an important step toward strengthening the image of the destination and toward branding. These so-called success stories make many micro-destination managers want to become a part of the Cittaslow movement. However, having Cittaslow become a successful concept in marketing destinations also brings the risk of eroding the resources Cittaslow aims to protect and improve (Nilsson et al., 2011; Karadeniz, 2014).

Slow city destinations have a high tourism demand, and despite having different touristic attractions that cause this, marketing a destination with the label of being a Cittaslow member may raise a dispute between the essential points of this philosophy and the business of tourism. Within this context, this study aims to evaluate the validity of the possible disputes and concerns on this matter from the perspective of academicians specialized on the subject.

### 1.1 The Paradox of Tourism in Slow Cities

The Cittaslow movement actually has a deep philosophy behind it. Therefore, one cannot really say that for all slow cities that their local administrators who have decided to join the Cittaslow association fully understand the Cittaslow philosophy, nor all local residents or tourists who visit there. With the increased demand in tourism, investors may possibly engage in actions counter to the Cittaslow philosophy. Thus, to believe that the possible adversities of tourism that are expected to occur in all destinations will not occur in slow cities is unrealistic. Moreover, these destinations being at a microscale makes the fact that these adversities will be experienced more intensely in these cities inevitable.

The best example of the coexistence of a slow city and tourism in Türkiye would be Seferihisar, which has been the subject of many studies. One of these studies (author, year) concluded that some of adversities the city may face could be increased traffic, noise, construction, prices, and population, as well as shoddy construction, protected areas turning into construction sites, the establishment of big hotels, parking issues, migration, cultural corruption, deterioration of the ecological texture, an unaware public that only cares about their short-term interests, and investors being attracted. Other studies have also had similar results, reasserting the above-mentioned study and pointing out the conflicting aspects of slow cities and tourism. As Genç (2021) stated, the tourism activities experienced in Seferihisar have brought along intensive tourism investments; as a result, the number of hotels has increased from 15 in 2009 to

163 in 2021. Nevertheless, various studies have revealed Seferihisar to mostly attract daily visitors rather than tourists who will spend the night (Coşar, 2013; Çıtak, 2016). These same-day visits may sometimes cause overcrowding at a level that can disturb the locals (Doğan et al., 2014; Dündar & Sert, 2018). Coşar (2013, p. 80) reported one local resident to have the following opinion: “Our life has become more difficult as the crowds have increased. Especially on weekends, the traffic jams are really disturbing. The current structure of Seferihisar cannot handle such a crowd.” These crowds are caused not only by pedestrians but also by vehicles, which also brings up the issue of parking.

As the area has become a tourist attraction, secondary residents (see Ak & Bıçkılı, 2016), investors, and those who move to the region for employment in these investments (see Farhadi, 2012) have caused a population increase. As Genç (2021) explained, the population of Seferihisar was 28,603 in 2009 and increased to 48,320 in 2020. An increase has also occurred in construction with the increase in the settled population and the demand for tourism. Ak Çetin and Akpınar (2021) stated the number of companies in the construction business in the district to have reached a very high level and 48% of houses for sale to be new. The number of houses had been 14,284 in 2009 and reached 44,053 in 2021. Parallel to the population growth, the demand for housing and rentals have also increased, with land prices also rising for new house construction.

Öztürk (2012) reached such a conclusion in her study asking local people’s opinions. Genç (2021) reported real estate prices to have increased by 160% between 2017-2021, with this being 135.61% for Izmir. Price increases are experienced not only in the real estate market but also with consumer goods. Farhadi’s (2012) study concluded 48% of the participants to believe that Cittaslow tourism had had the effect of increasing prices.

With the motive for higher rental income, property owners may think about evicting tenants who are local residents and selling their current residences to investors, which may result in local residents being displaced. Moreover, the local people in such a scenario are compelled by their relatively high income to live their lives removed from their traditional lifestyles and outside of the neighborhoods they have left. In short, gentrification may begin through the tourism demand and the impact of new residents (Özmen & Can, 2018). For the Sığacık Kaleiçi area in particular, the area as an attraction point for visitors can be said to be on its way to becoming a symbol of capitalism with its new generation of restaurants, cafes, and

boutique hotels (Köstem & Yüksel, 2020). The growing income disparity between the residents of Sığacık and other neighborhoods in favor of the new residents is also a clear sign of gentrification (Özer Tekin, 2018).

One can see gentrification emerging through tourism and new residents in the district not only through places of consumption but also through new residences. As a matter of fact, the number of pools, which was only 6 in 2009, had increased to 287 in 2021. This increase cannot be explained simply by the increase in the number of hotels. The fact that new residents build their new houses with a pool can be interpreted as a departure from the traditional architectural pattern of the region (Genç, 2021).

The situations conveyed through Seferihisar may also be valid for other slow cities and have been revealed by various studies. In the article “Slow Cities, Fast Tourists”, Çıtak (2016) stated some slow cities in Türkiye to be exposed to mass tourism. Besides Seferihisar, another good example would be Akyaka. Akyaka is frequently featured in the national press with the number of tourists it hosts, which far exceeds its own population. Although not as much as Akyaka or Seferihisar, Halfeti now has 6,000 vehicles entering it daily, with very loud music being played on boat tours. This completely contradicts the Cittaslow philosophy, which includes prioritizing pedestrians and having environmentally sensitive approaches (Özmen & Can, 2018).

While Goolwa had been a river port city in Australia, after joining the Cittaslow association, it started to face an intense demand for tourism and started opening art galleries, cafes, and hostels in the historical buildings of the city in response to this demand. This indicates gentrification to have started through places of consumption and the effect of tourism (Serin, 2009). Mayer and Knox (2006) also stated the slow cities of Hersbruck and Waldkirch in Germany to be important alternatives for the residents of large nearby cities for entertainment purposes. As explained above, however, gentrification happens not only through place of consumption but also through residences. For example, high-income groups working in cities such as Milan and Turin prefer the nearby slow cities for their residences (Nilsson et al., 2011). This fact not only doesn't add value to slow cities but also causes housing prices to rise.

Similar developments took place in the destination city of Taraklı, which was removed from the Cittaslow association in 2022. Large spa facilities with a timeshare system were established at a point very close to the district center of Taraklı,

targeting people in big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, especially Arab tourists. These facilities have had an undeniable impact on the increase of brand chains in this destination and the replacement of neighborhood grocers by large markets after being designated as a Cittaslow city (Toprak, 2018). According to Semsari and Giritlioğlu (2021), such cases can see the voices of the new residents of the city drown out the voices of the local residents regarding urban management issues, and this is quite in contrast to the slow city philosophy.

This study has found within its scope no research to have established a direct relationship between being included in the Cittaslow association and an increased demand in tourism for the destination. Arikan et al.'s (2015) study on three slow cities located in Austria concluded the partial increase in tourists after joining the Cittaslow association to not be able to be directly associated with its membership, nor could the study make a comparison between the cities due to each slow city having a unique profile. Hence, explaining the increased demand in tourism and other aforementioned developments only with having become a slow city does not seem very appropriate. To give an example from Türkiye, the slow cities of Seferihisar and Köyceğiz have seen an increase in the square meter housing costs after joining the Cittaslow association, despite no rise in real estate prices occurring in other slow cities such as Gökçeada, Eğirdir, or Perşembe.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Purpose and Importance of the Study

This study aims to start a debate on the idea that situations contradicting the slow city philosophy may arise as a result of the increase in tourism activity in slow city destinations. In line with this aim and based on the collected opinions collected, the importance of the study can be stated in the suggestions that will be presented to the local governments of existing and potential slow cities regarding the requirements of the philosophy and the execution of balanced tourism activities.

### 2.2 Data Collection Method

The research data were obtained using the interview method, one of the most frequently used qualitative research methods. To collect opinions, the researchers created a semi-structured interview form based on the literature review and the suggestions of researchers who have studied slow cities as a subject. Different districts are the subject of the study, and because the experts

whose opinions are to be consulted live in different places, the interview form has been sent by e-mail.

The interview form consists of nine questions. The questions are used to obtain opinions on the coexistence of slow cities and tourism, and these opinions are expected to be presented based on the current situation in the destination city. The questions were designed in line with this, and this situation was also conveyed to the interviewees. The interview form has the following questions:

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your institution?
2. Can you evaluate the effect being in the Cittaslow network has on destination marketing?
3. Can you comment on the current tourism demand (accommodations, daily tourists) in your destination? Has being included in the Cittaslow network had an impact on demand?
4. Do you have any observations or thoughts that the negative developments (e.g., crowding, noise and visual pollution, secondary housing, expensiveness) that occur in destinations that are overly dependent on the tourism sector are being experienced in your destination or may be experienced according to the current trend?
5. Can you comment on the positive and negative effects of slow cities' use of unique values (e.g., cultural values such as local dishes, handicrafts, events) as a way to draw tourism? Can you talk about the commodification of values?
6. Can you comment on the purpose of including administrators in the Cittaslow network? Do you think their main purpose is to consider and adopt the Cittaslow philosophy as beneficial

to the settlement or is it an initiative for tourism?

7. What are your thoughts on how the local people have responded to the tourism activities (e.g., the increased demand for tourism-oriented businesses) that comes with the title of being a slow city?
8. Can you comment on the idea that the destinations being marketed with the Cittaslow label to attract attention contradicts the Cittaslow philosophy?
9. What is your belief on the ability of the Cittaslow philosophy and criteria being carried out alongside the tourism sector?

When forming the sample, the study used the purposive sampling method, which involves selecting knowledgeable and experienced individuals on the subject (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). In line with this method, the decision was made to consult the opinions of tourism academicians who work in slow cities, as well as tourism academicians who've chosen to reside in slow cities despite working elsewhere. This preference was made with the aim of benefitting both from their fields of expertise as well as from their daily life experiences and observations due to living in the relevant cities. As of January 19, 2023, eight of the 21 slow cities in Türkiye were determined to have tourism departments and programs at the higher education level or departments and programs closely related to tourism (e.g., gastronomy, tour guiding) and to have 70 instructors within the scope of these departments and programs. All participants in the study were informed about the subject and content of the research. Consent was obtained from all participants, and their participation in the study occurred voluntarily.

**Table 1:** Information Defining the Sampling

Interviewee Code	Destination	Destination membership date	Interviewee working/residence time
I-1	Akyaka	2011	11 years
I-2	Yalvaç	2012	13 years
I-3	Yalvaç	2012	6 months
I-4	Eğirdir	2017	26 years
I-5	Eğirdir	2017	2 years
I-6	Gökçeada	2011	5 years
I-7	Gökçeada	2011	2 years
I-8	Gökçeada	2011	12 years
I-9	Gerze	2017	12 years
I-10	Gerze	2017	2 years
I-11	Mudurnu	2018	5 years
I-12	Mudurnu	2018	3 years
I-13	Mudurnu	2018	8 years
I-14	Mudurnu	2018	5 years
I-15	Mudurnu	2018	2 years
I-16	Perşembe	2012	15 years
I-17	Köyceğiz	2019	33 years
I-18	Halfeti	2013	1 year

**Table 2:** Population and Number of Tourists with Accommodation in Slow Cities (2018/2021)

Destination	District Center Population 2022	Tourist number 2018	Tourist number 2021	Destination	District Center Population 2022	Tourist number 2018	Tourist number 2021
Seferihisar	54993	68291	80,453	Gerze	19144	16,456	11,869
Gökçeada	7479	15571	19,596	Göynük	4332	5,881	5,537
Akyaka*	3147	26,240	24,712	Mudurnu	5428	106,793	97,270
Yenipazar	11863	No data	No data	Ahlat	28904	7,836	7914
Yalvaç	22538	27,929	21,839	Köyceğiz	39242	44,762	58,245
Vize	15116	5,193	6,894	Güdüllü	8079	No data	No data
Perşembe	30101	8,967	8,180	Arapgir	9964	1700	7,860
Halfeti	41662	14,967	3,060	İzmit	44236	42,885	47,772
Şavşat	5885	10,263	19,532	Foça	34946	21,080	52,780
Uzundere	7625	5,863	2,734	Kemaliye	2536	4687	4,221
Eğirdir	16759	32,245	26,076				

\*Because it is connected to the Ula district, statistics actually belong to Ula.

As can be seen in Table 1, 18 academicians from nine different slow cities had submitted answers for the interview form that had been sent. Although no higher education department or program on tourism exists in Akyaka, Perşembe, and Köyceğiz, answers were received from the tourism academicians residing in these cities. The highest number of answers was received from Mudurnu.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

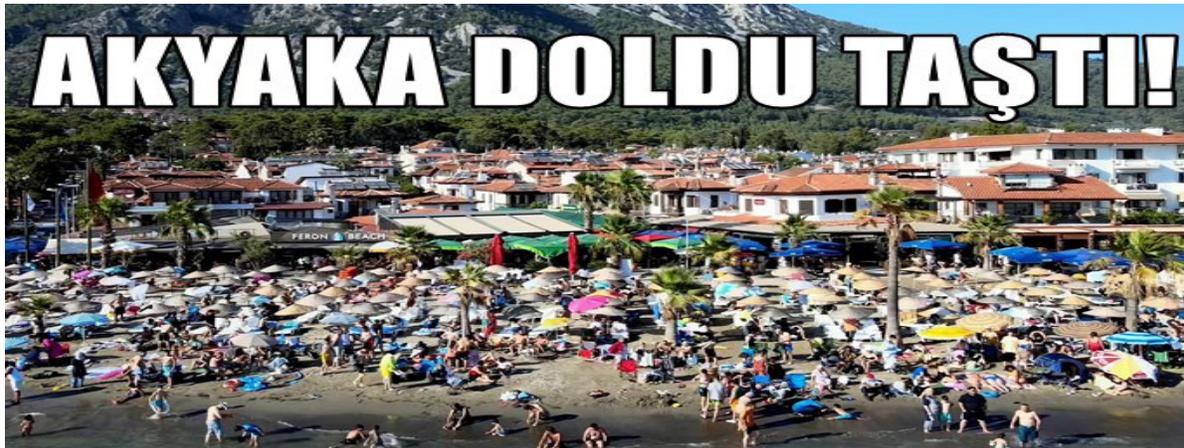
As a result of the combining the interviews with the evaluations from the three researchers, two themes were determined: evaluating the current situation and evaluating the coexistence of a slow city and tourism. Based on the purpose of the study, descriptive analysis was carried out by presenting direct quotations of the interviewees' statements regarding certain themes. Secondary data such as the number of tourists, population sizes, and newspaper content were also included in the analysis alongside the interviewees' statements.

Triangulation is a commonly used technique for establishing the credibility of qualitative research. The purpose of triangulation is to compare the obtained results from different perspectives (Işık & Semerci, 2019) and to realize a consistent analysis. According to Patton (2014), qualitative analysis can benefit from triangulating the methods, sources, analysts, and theories. This study uses source and analyst triangulation. The use of secondary data sources in addition to the interview data shows how the source triangulation was used, and the inclusion of three researchers in the data collection and interpretation stages shows how analyst triangulation had been used.

## 3. FINDINGS

### 3.1 Evaluating the Current Status

Table 2 shows the number of tourists with accommodations in the slow cities of Türkiye for 2018 and 2021. The 2018 figures have been included to reflect the situation before the COVID pandemic, and the 2021 figures have been included to reflect the situation after the gradual lifting of the pandemic restrictions. Although this table is far from being able to explain the impact



**Figure 2.** A Picture from the Slow City, Akyaka  
Source: Haberekspre, 2022

being a Cittaslow city has on the demand for tourism in the destination, it does provide partial information on the current situation of these destination cities. As can be seen from the table, the number of tourists with accommodations in slow cities is not very high. However, as can be understood from the views, a higher demand is found for day trips compared to overnight stays in slow cities. Representing Köyceğiz, Interviewee 17 (I-17) stated the following about daily visits still being predominant despite the increased demand accompanying the Cittaslow title:

*This place can be described as a place where daily visits are more common than visits with overnight accommodations. Visitors to this area don't really interact much with the locals as they pass by here on their way to more popular destinations around the district such as Fethiye, Marmaris, or Bodrum.*

In terms of the number of tourists with accommodations, the destinations that are at the top of the list for having reached more than 50,000 tourists are in order Mudurnu, Seferihisar, Köyceğiz, and Foça. For both years, Mudurnu had the highest number of tourists. The factors that make Mudurnu stand out among the slow cities are its high-end hotels and Abant Nature Park, which is located in the middle of the country's largest domestic tourism market and includes cities such as Ankara and Istanbul, is located within the boundaries of the district. Otherwise, the overnight capacity of Mudurnu city center is 253 persons in 12 facilities (Genç, 2016); this place lacks the potential to compete with summer tourism destinations such as Seferihisar, Akyaka, and Foça, which have attractions such as sea, sand, and sun, as well as being slow cities. The demand for Mudurnu city center can be understood from the statements of all participants from Mudurnu to not be overnight tourism but to mainly involve same-day visits, as in many other slow cities. I-15 expressed their views, stating, "People generally stay in Abant or the facilities on the way to Abant. I believe they have day trips to Mudurnu."

As explained above, tourism demand for slow cities in Türkiye is not high. Hence, no generalization can really be made about a positive or negative effect of tourism originating from slow cities. To come to a conclusion on this effect is much more difficult, especially in destinations that have recently been included in the Cittaslow movement. However, in slow cities such as Seferihisar, Akyaka, and Gökçeada, which also host tourists within the scope of mass tourism, the positive and especially negative effects of tourism can be felt and interpreted much more clearly. In fact, due to being micro-destinations, they may face challenges in meeting the demand due to their infrastructure and superstructure. These destinations are also

featured in the press from time to time with news about the intense demand for tourism.

Gökçeada representative I-10 explained as follows about how the social life of the local people is adversely affected during the summer in particular:

*For Gökçeada, especially in spring and summer, the demand is at a disturbing level. It has become worse, especially after that movie (Hedefim Sensin) was shot on the island. For the last two years, it has exceeded its carrying capacity. I don't think being included in the Cittaslow association has had a noticeable effect on this demand. I'm sure there are also tourists who are attracted to this title, but I believe their numbers are far lower than what they should be. Those who go to the island to work in June like us later experience serious difficulties. Although the ferry times are more frequent now, most of the time, we cannot get on the ferry with our personal cars. We have to leave our vehicle in the car park at Kabatepe Port and continue on foot. When we continue on foot, there are times when we cannot board the minibuses on the island or find a taxi. Besides, prices increase tremendously in the summer time. This is another huge problem for the locals. In addition, houses for students and civil servants are rented until the end of May. Once the season starts, even if the schools are not closed yet, the students and workers must evacuate their homes because these houses have been rented to domestic and foreign tourists as daily rentals or hostels. These are the biggest difficulties the locals face.*

Linking the adversities experienced in destinations with a high number of tourists from mass tourism directly to destinations being designated as slow cities does not seem like the right approach. These destinations have the potential to attract many tourists, even if they were not designated as slow cities. For this reason, the most appropriate explanation to this would be that the adversities do not directly originate from these cities being slow cities and that these adversities are unacceptable for a slow city. I-1 expressed their opinion on Akyaka, summarizing the events and explaining their thoughts on how Akyaka should be removed from the Cittaslow union as follows:

*Akyaka is no longer a slow city, and it should not be called one anymore. In the summer months with the influx of domestic and foreign tourists, vehicles form a queue. The beach is bursting at the seams, accommodations remain insufficient, and we witness a scene with a terrible crowd of people on the beach as a result. Thus, the demand in Akyaka is way above its carrying capacity. This hurts its slow city identity and the natural texture of the district.*

The answers to the question of how the local people view the developments in the destination due to tourism are in line with the theory of social change. A substantial number of participants stated that those who make money from tourism and the young people who benefit from businesses such as cafes opened for tourism purposes have a more positive perspective. Akyaka representative I-1's views on the subject are as follows:

*We can divide the local people into two groups: those who make money and those who do not. The local people who make money are happy. Of course, with profit comes satisfaction. However, those who cannot earn money from tourism or do not have any work are unhappy about this hecticness. They think the root cause of problems such as noise, crowds, and costs is the tourists, and they are quite disturbed by this situation.*

The opinions of the representative of Köyceğiz (I-17), which attracts the attention of investors as a touristic destination compared to many other slow cities in Türkiye, are as follows:

*In this process, I can say that those who migrated to the district from outside have been more advantageous than the locals, because the owners of the newly opened businesses are not locals but settlers from outside. Young people are more positive because they see new cafes and restaurants as alternatives. However, I do not think that the local people respond positively to the increased demand in tourism. Only one or two local people earn money as a result of the increased demand, such as boat tour owners in certain months of the summer season. Other than that, how the situation benefits the local people is open to question.*

### **3.2. Evaluations on the Relationship Between Slow Cities and Tourism**

While 11 interviewees stated being included in the slow cities association to be a marketing strategy for tourism, seven interviewees abstained from judging between a marketing strategy and the belief and desire to internalize philosophy. The main argument of the interviewees who believe the primary goal of joining the Cittaslow association to have been tourism involves the developments they associate with tourism in the destination. Explaining their views on Akyaka, interviewee I-1 explained the following about how no actions are taken to protect the slow city's identity and how tourism is prioritized:

*I think joining the slow city union is an initiative for tourism purposes. The administrators who adopt the slow city philosophy also aim to preserve the slow city identity and establish a plan in*

*this direction. But we cannot see such planning in Akyaka. The scenery during the peak season is not pleasant at all.*

The representative of Mudurnu district (I-14) explained how local administrators had considered joining the Cittaslow network as a marketing strategy, had been unsuccessful in their strategy, and only carried out activities to impress the local people, stating the following:

*The sensations of the district administrators on this issue are only a pretense of what they see in the surrounding districts. They are quite ineffective in internalizing the philosophy of the subject. They just say that they think this is important for tourism. But in practice, they only exhibit show activities to the local people.*

Stating how they see no negativity in destination marketing with the Cittaslow title, I-16 explained their views on how slow cities with a limited supply of tourism cannot become a destination where the negative effects of tourism will be seen due to marketing, stating the following:

*Except for Seferihisar and Akyaka, the districts are outside the general tourism supply regions. Therefore, they should become more noticeable so that tourism can develop there as well. The solution to the contradiction and its philosophy can be found later on. I think that tourism cannot develop enough to cause deteriorations and similar problems in slow cities.*

I-6 shared an abstaining view and explained how the perspectives of the administrators are what determine their attitude toward the slow city approach, stating the following:

*In certain destinations, we can really feel that the main purpose is to live and maintain the slow city philosophy. But in other places, it is the total opposite. They use it as a marketing tool. This may vary depending on the management skills and life philosophy of the administrator.*

When one accepts that local administrators see inclusion in the Cittaslow network as a marketing strategy, which the majority has suggested, one can say that most administrators have been unsuccessful in implementing the strategy in their minds when by considering the number of tourists. In addition, the opinions of the interviewees allows understanding of how awareness of the slow city philosophy is not enough and how destinations included in the association do not convey to their potential visitors any information about slow cities and their inclusion in the association. Many interviewees stated that tourists do not

visit the destination with the awareness of the slow city philosophy. I-9 explained how visitors are more interested in the features that prepare the ground for the slow city title rather than the title itself, stating the following:

*I believe that visitors to Gerze find the district to have a Cittaslow certificate only after coming to the city. To my knowledge, the facilities here do not use this feature in their marketing activities. People do not come here because Gerze has been included in the Cittaslow network, I think they come here because Gerze partially meets some of the slow city features.*

When questioning the contradiction between the Cittaslow title and the idea of destination marketing, the majority of the interviewees pointed out that sustainability should be ensured by acting in accordance with the criteria and stated that conflicting situations would arise if this could not be achieved. I-18 from the Halfeti destination had the following opinions on the subject:

*I think the key point here is to create an environment where sustainability is ensured and the carrying capacity not exceeded by improving all the conditions regarding being a slow city, rather than just being marketed as a Cittaslow. I don't think there is any harm in branding and marketing by adopting a balanced tourism understanding. In cases where this situation is used only as a marketing tool, the destination loses its feature of being a slow city; when commercial purposes are pursued carelessly, negative consequences may arise.*

The above-mentioned and other similar views give rise to the debate on whether Cittaslow criteria and tourism can truly go hand in hand in any balanced way. In other words, the question arises regarding the extent to which the desired results in tourism can be achieved without violating the Cittaslow criteria. The opinions of the interviewees were formed within the framework of the slow city criteria being in line with the principles of sustainable tourism, while in practice, administrative policies and the perceptions of locals and tourists are the decisive factors. Representing the destination spot of Gerze, I-9 expressed their views on the importance of stakeholder cooperation in destination management as follows:

*In my opinion, sustainable tourism approaches fit the Cittaslow philosophy well. This theoretical good fit should be also demonstrated in practice. The important thing here is having the central public authority, universities, local governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations work in coordination to establish a sustainable tourism approach*

*in the destination. The criteria for sustainability should be determined scientifically, and compliance with these criteria should be strictly controlled. To the extent that these can be achieved, I think the Cittaslow approach can be followed in harmony with the principles of sustainable tourism.*

Another important aspect of benefiting from the tourism sector by complying with the criterion of being a Cittaslow is stakeholder perception. Representatives from destinations that have problems in terms of the coexistence of a slow city and tourism, as well as the interviewees who foresee that such problems may occur, underlined the need to have the right perception first. Yalvaç representative I-2's had the following views on the subject:

*What needs to be done is to keep the controls in place regarding the implementation of the Cittaslow concept through conscious residents and administrators and to prevent situations such as excessive tourism and excessive construction.*

Pointing out the utilitarian approach, Gökçeada representative I-7 explained how the quality of tourism activities is more important than tourism activity itself in the destination and how perceptions should change in this direction, stating:

*Although the tourism sector sometimes serves excessive consumption and monotony in the globalizing world, it is also important for people to receive service in a planned way. In my opinion, creating the right perception of tourism will not harm the Cittaslow philosophy. The idea of a slow city includes increasing public investments and stimulating the local economy, as well as preserving cultural values. However, adopting a tourism approach focused entirely on the perception of benefit contradicts the Cittaslow philosophy.*

Carrying capacity is frequently mentioned in the execution of sustainable tourism in a destination with regard to not violating the Cittaslow philosophy. The interviewees emphasized this because they are aware of the situation in destinations such as Seferihisar and Akyaka, both from the press and from their visits, and they know that these slow cities have limited infrastructure and superstructure. I-17 stated knowing Akyaka very well despite residing in Köyceğiz, and had the following opinions:

*The Cittaslow movement includes very important criteria in its essence. It focuses on the sustainable development of the region and the preservation of both the local values and the essence of the region. However, after being included in the*

*Cittaslow network, a rapid development occurs that draws the attention of more people, contrary to the philosophy of this movement. I'm talking about a process that results in more noise, more waste, more people, and more construction. It is not just about joining the Cittaslow network. What are the plans regarding carrying capacity? Do we have an action plan for development? We should think about these questions.*

In the event that carrying capacity is exceeded, the dominant opinion is that all stakeholders have a responsibility to prevent the occurrence of adverse events contradicting the philosophy of slow cities. Mudurnu representative I-11 explained how the responsibility should be shared among local administrators, the public, travel agencies, and such, stating:

*By increasing the movement of people through tourism, you can cause a region that you have declared to be slow to become fast and the peace and tranquility to be lost in the region. First of all, if regions really adopt the fact that they are slow cities, if the public becomes more aware of the subject and believes in and embraces this concept, then I believe tourism activities can also be carried out. I mean, first you need to truly be a slow city, then be a destination. But the most overlooked criterion is carrying capacity. Once people begin to earn money from tourism, they tend to not care about the criteria, unfortunately. When regarding carrying capacity, agencies that bring tours to the region as well as local governments need to be conscious and act sensitively.*

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Beyond official statistics, the conclusion can be reached based on the interviews conducted within the scope of the study that a heavy demand exists for slow cities in Türkiye that have daily tourism. This outcome of the study is also supported by other studies (Coşar, 2013; Çıtak, 2016; Pajo, 2017). This can be explained by the lack of activities attracting tourists to spend the night in slow cities. Studies conducted in Göynük (Zengin & Genç, 2018) and Mudurnu (Genç, 2016) found the lack of attractive activities to inhibit overnight stays. The fact that destinations such as Seferihisar, Foça, and Akyaka, which have a relatively high number of tourists who spend the night, are coastal destinations confirms the importance the presence of activities has for overnight stays.

Although the current tourism demands are not at a level that will cause negative results apart from in certain slow cities, the interviewees seem to be resistant to the idea of coexistence

between slow cities and tourism. The most pessimistic opinions regarding this were received from the representatives of the Seferihisar, Akyaka, Köyceğiz, and Gökçeada destinations. However, these destinations should be noted for having a high tourism potential independent of their Cittaslow title. These destinations are frequently in the news with their high tourist numbers during the summer season and on special days such as bank holidays. Therefore, the problems faced in these destinations cannot be attributed to them being slow cities. Nevertheless, these destinations in their current state can clearly be stated to have lost their tranquility, so much so that the Akyaka representative expressed an opinion that they should be removed from the Cittaslow association. Other representatives, being experts on the subject, underlined a forward-looking approach regarding why the slow city criteria, which they believe to be compatible with the criteria of sustainable tourism, should not be abandoned and how administrative policies are not established with the participation of all parties. In their opinions, this is the only way for slow cities and tourism to be able to coexist.

Arıkan et al.'s (2015) study on three slow cities of Austria defined slow city tourists as being highly educated and quality-oriented, having low price sensitivity, and being highly interested in culture and history. This cannot be said to apply absolutely to the tourists visiting slow cities in Türkiye. In fact, a considerable number of interviewees expressed how visitors do not have enough knowledge of slow cities, do not act with awareness of this concept, and even more so don't find out the destination is a slow city until after they've arrived at the destination. This data indicates the lack of quantity regarding slow cities to also be valid in terms of quality.

Of the 18 representatives interviewed within the scope of the study, 11 stated the primary consideration for joining the Cittaslow network to have been destination and tourism marketing rather than the Cittaslow philosophy. Similarly, Ekincek (2014) reached the conclusion directly through the opinions of local administrators that inclusion in the Cittaslow network is considered a marketing tool. However, adopting marketing as the main objective while overriding the Cittaslow philosophy poses a threat to slow cities' becoming a part of the global world (Semsari & Giritlioğlu, 2021) and in the long run these cities may risk becoming everywhere cities (Akman et al., 2013) or clone cities (Semmens & Freeman, 2012). Representatives of destinations with a high demand for seasonal tourism, such as Gökçeada, Köyceğiz, Seferihisar, and Akyaka, stated that these places resemble other destinations. This is completely against the Cittaslow philosophy, which is based on

the idea that cities are not duplicates of one another but are places that have preserved their originality.

Finally, in line with the findings obtained from the literature review and interviews, the following suggestions can be presented for the maintenance of sustainable tourism in slow cities by acting in line with the relevant criteria.

- Prioritizing the welfare of the local people should be kept in mind as one of the basic requirements of being a slow city. Administrators should keep this in mind while forming their policies.
- The framework of the destination administration's policies should be based on Cittaslow criteria.
- Information should be exchanged with other slow cities. Destination comparisons are needed in terms of positive and negative effects.
- Data should be collected in order to understand the views of all stakeholders, especially local people, and this data should be used in management.
- Cittaslow marketing should be prioritized over traditional destination marketing. The title of Cittaslow should stand out so that tourists who will consciously choose to visit the region can be targeted. Modern and local artistic and cultural activities should be carried out and highlighted in marketing. A region's cultural activities should be included within the framework of the principle of conservation. A good example in this regard is the "Tradesmen's Prayer," which was held in Mudurnu as an application of the Ahi culture (Genç et al., 2016). Discussions come to the fore occasionally about moving the Tradesmen's Prayer event, which has been held every Friday for centuries, to the weekend for tourism purposes. Despite these discussions, the proper decision was made to not change the day of the event. However, the event retains important value for marketing Mudurnu as a tourist destination.
- Infrastructure (e.g., traffic arrangements, parking lots) should be completed and developed through scientific studies. This is important for preventing overcrowding that may occur due to tourism from negatively affecting the welfare of the local people. Especially in high-volume seasons, centers may be closed to vehicles. In addition, selling property to investors and individuals from outside the area should be made difficult or prevented.
- Close relations should be established and meetings organized with the relevant departments of universities whose fields of study cover urbanism and tourism.
- In particular, the number of accommodation facilities should not be increased to meet the demand, and local governments

should make strict decisions in this regard. Otherwise, commitment to tourism through other businesses may increase, and the negative effects of tourism may trigger one another. In slow cities by the sea, cultural and artistic activities should be emphasized rather than mass tourism activities, with the aim needing to be a positive change in the tourist profile.

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