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The Role of Local Governments in the Development of Local Tourism: The Case of Nevşehir Province¹

Vahit BÖLÜKBAŞ, Aksaray University, School of Foreign Languages,
vahitbolukbas@aksaray.edu.tr, Aksaray, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0002-6248-4085

Abstract

This study examines the roles of local governments in the tourism sector and their reflections on the perceptions of sector actors and citizens, particularly in the province of Nevşehir. The research employed quantitative methods, and data obtained through a survey conducted with 382 participants residing in the central, Ürgüp, and Avanos regions of Nevşehir was analyzed using SPSS 22.0. Participants' perceptions of local government tourism services were assessed based on demographic variables such as gender, age, education, income, and marital status. The findings show that the infrastructure and facility services provided by local governments in the region are perceived positively by the public, but there is a need for improvement in service delivery in areas such as cultural preservation and public interaction. In this context, it is emphasized that tourism should be considered not only as a tool for economic development but also for social and cultural development. It is concluded that local governments should take greater initiative in the development of local tourism and prioritize results-oriented.

Keywords: Municipality, Cappadocia, Nevşehir, Tourism, Local Government

¹Ethics committee approval for the research was received from the Ethics Committee of Çankırı Karatekin University, with decision number 41 dated May 24, 2024.

1. Introduction

Cities encompass many sectors within their borders, and tourism is one of them. İçellioğlu (2014) defines tourism as a social and cultural activity undertaken for a wide variety of purposes. Today, tourism is seen not only as an economic activity but also as one of the fundamental dynamics of social, cultural, and environmental development. Increasing global travel trends not only increase the economic well-being of local communities, but also provide multidimensional contributions such as the preservation of cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and social interaction.

Planning and management, particularly at the local level, support the sustainable development of tourism, improving the quality of life of the public and directly contributing to the local economy in many areas, from infrastructure investments to social services. In this regard, local governments play a strategic role in determining and implementing tourism policies. The effectiveness of local governments in this process directly impacts tourism's contribution to regional development. Therefore, it is necessary to develop inclusive and sustainable policies that are responsive to the needs of the public.

Many researchers in the literature consider tourism to be a fundamental element of local development. Godfrey (1998) states that well-planned tourism projects accelerate local development, stating Hall (2007) and Tosun & Jenkins (1996) emphasize that the role of local governments in tourism has long been neglected. These criticisms reveal that centralized tourism policies fail to adequately consider local needs and exclude local actors from decision-making processes. However, local governments are the actors who best understand the needs of local people and master regional dynamics. Therefore, the role of local governments should be redefined as not only implementing but also planning, monitoring, and participating.

The duties and authorities of local governments in the tourism sector in Türkiye are defined by various legal regulations. Legislation such as the Municipality Law No. 5393, the Special Provincial Administration Law No. 5302, and the Local Administrative Unions Law No. 5355 clearly define the responsibility of local governments to provide tourism-related services. These services encompass areas such as urban planning, the development of transportation infrastructure, environmental regulations, promotional activities, the protection of cultural heritage, and the support of tourist facilities. Furthermore, tourism working groups established under the Municipal Council Regulation contribute to the planning of tourism policies at the local level. This legal framework both defines and expands the roles of local governments in tourism. However, beyond legislation, the extent to which these duties are effectively fulfilled is directly related to public perception and satisfaction.

Local governments' interest in tourism is not limited to economic gain. The employment opportunities, income growth, and social development opportunities offered by tourism encourage local governments to invest in this sector. Indirect effects such as increased property values, increased tax revenues, and the revitalization of local businesses reinforce the importance of tourism in local development. Holloway (1994) summarizes the responsibilities of local governments in tourism under the headings of developing leisure activities, controlling land use, promotional and marketing activities, and preserving historical buildings. These duties constitute the fundamental components of sustainable tourism planning. Furthermore, basing tourism policies on public participation by local governments ensures more inclusive and equitable service delivery.

This study aims to assess the role of local governments in the tourism sector in Nevşehir province through public perception. Located in the heart of the Cappadocia region, Nevşehir, with its fairy chimneys, underground cities, historic churches, and natural beauty, attracts considerable attention from both domestic and international tourists. This tourism potential increases the responsibilities of local governments and necessitates strategic planning for the region's development. Nevşehir's municipalities and special provincial administration have implemented various projects in areas such as developing tourism infrastructure, conducting promotional activities, and preserving cultural heritage. However, public perception of these projects is a key indicator of their success (Ağaoğlu,1992).

The research was conducted using quantitative methods; data obtained from 382 participants was analyzed using SPSS 22.0. Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services were assessed based on demographic variables such as age, education, income, and marital status. This analysis reveals public satisfaction levels, expectations, and criticisms, providing a data-based perspective on local government strategic planning. The findings concretely reveal the areas in which local governments are more effective and which services need improvement.

The primary objective of the research is to measure public perceptions of local governments' tourism services and to develop policy recommendations based on these perceptions. In this context, the study aims to both contribute to the academic literature and guide the strategic planning of local governments. Structuring the role of local governments in tourism in a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable manner is crucial for regional development and social welfare. Furthermore, developing tourism policies based on public participation, preserving cultural values, and considering environmental sensitivity are critical to the long-term success of local governments. In this context, local governments should be positioned not only as service providers but also as actors who develop vision, bring together stakeholders, and strengthen local identity.

2. Tourism and Local Governments

Tourism is a multidimensional activity that encompasses economic, social, and cultural functions. In the context of local governance, its development depends on how effectively municipalities and other local actors deliver services, engage the public, and preserve cultural assets. This study focuses on three core constructs that reflect the public's perception of local governments' role in tourism: tourism services, public awareness and engagement, and cultural heritage protection and infrastructure.

Local governments are responsible for providing tourism-related services such as visitor information, leisure activities, promotional campaigns, and facility development. These services directly influence the attractiveness of a destination and the satisfaction of both residents and visitors. Holloway (1994) emphasizes that municipalities play a key role in developing tourism plans, managing land use, and maintaining public safety and health in tourism zones. In Türkiye, the Municipality Law No. 5393 explicitly mandates local governments to deliver services in tourism, culture, transportation, and environmental planning (Article 14/b). Godfrey (1998) also highlights that well-planned tourism projects accelerate local development. The effectiveness of these services is a central component of public perception and a key variable in this study.

Public participation in tourism planning enhances transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness. Local governments are uniquely positioned to engage residents through city councils, tourism working groups, and community events (Mc Intosh & Goeldner, 1990; Dede & Güremen, 2010; Çelik&Göçmen, 2013). Wong (1996) notes that economic incentives such as increased employment and tax revenues often motivate municipalities to invest in tourism, but long-term success depends on active public involvement. Hall (2007), Bhowmik, (2021) and Tosun & Jenkins (1996) criticize centralized tourism policies for neglecting local needs and excluding local actors from decision-making processes, underscoring the importance of local governments' participatory role. In this study, public awareness and engagement are measured through survey items that assess citizens' familiarity with local tourism initiatives and their perceived inclusion in decision-making processes.

Preserving cultural heritage and investing in infrastructure are essential for sustainable tourism. Nevşehir, located in the heart of Cappadocia, hosts numerous historical sites and natural landmarks that require careful management. Local governments are legally authorized to protect cultural assets and develop infrastructure under laws such as the Special Provincial Administration Law No. 5302 and the Local Administrative Unions Law No. 5355 (Keskin, 2016; Çeken, 2016; Jeffries, 2001; Gürsoy, 2006). Infrastructure services—such as transportation networks, signage, and public amenities—are evaluated in this study as indicators of local governments' capacity to support tourism sustainably. Liang et al. (2021)

emphasize that municipalities, with their knowledge of local geographical and cultural characteristics, are critical stakeholders in implementing tourism-centered policies. Tosun & Bilim (2004) further note that municipalities increasingly establish tourism promotion offices and strategic plans to strengthen local tourism.

By narrowing the conceptual framework to these three constructs, the study aligns its theoretical background with the survey instrument and provides a focused lens for interpreting public perceptions of local tourism governance.

2.1. Local Governments' Responsibilities in Tourism – Legal Framework

In Türkiye, the responsibilities of local governments related to tourism are defined by various legal regulations. These regulations include the Village Law No. 442, the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216, the Special Provincial Administration Law No. 5302, the Local Administrative Unions Law No. 5355, and the Municipalities Law No. 5393. These laws constitute the legal basis for local governments' tourism-related processes (Dede & Güremen, 2010). According to the Municipalities Law No. 5393, municipalities are clearly obligated to provide services in areas such as transportation, culture and arts, cleaning, the environment, zoning, parks and green spaces, solid waste, tourism, and promotion (Article 14/b). Furthermore, municipalities are fully responsible for the reconstruction of historical fabric, maintenance and repair activities, and the protection of cultural and natural heritage in areas within and outside tourism areas (Article 14/a). Article 15 of Law No. 5393 authorizes municipalities to establish public transportation systems, provide waste management, and construct facilities such as terminals, fairgrounds, marinas, and piers (Official Gazette of the Republic of Türkiye, 2005).

Law No. 5302 on Special Provincial Administrations, drafted at the local level, authorizes Provincial Special Administrations to provide services in areas outside the municipality's service boundaries. Provincial special administrations are tasked with, and authorized to carry out, cultural and tourism services, among many other services (Article 6). Law No. 5355 on Local Administrative Unions stipulates that municipalities may establish companies and partnerships to provide services. According to the City Councils Regulation, tourism working groups can be established within city councils to be established in cities and residential areas to develop local tourism policies and monitor their implementation. Services and activities carried out by local governments in the field of tourism include organizing fairs and festivals within the framework of legal regulations, constructing accommodation facilities, protecting cultural heritage, opening museums, and organizing archaeological sites (Kızılımak & Ertuğral, 2012). They have many powers and responsibilities. These services and activities aim not only to attract tourists but also to develop local tourism, revitalize the local economy, and increase economic prosperity (Dede & Güremen, 2010; Yaralı & Aracı 2025). Consequently, the role of local governments in the tourism sector in Türkiye is defined by legal regulations, and these roles are not limited to physical infrastructure and superstructure services such as infrastructure, roads, transportation, parks, and the creation of green spaces. On the contrary, local governments are responsible and authorized actors within the framework of legal regulations for determining, planning, and implementing local tourism-related policies, promoting the touristic features of residential areas, ensuring the sustainability of local tourism, and contributing to the local economy and local development.

2.2. General Information About Nevşehir and Tourism in Nevşehir

Some cities can be defined by characteristics such as the lifestyle, occupations, and economic activities of their inhabitants. For example, Barcelona, located in the Catalonia region of Spain, is defined as an "industrial city" because it hosts three-quarters of industrial establishments (Budak, 2013). In this context, a city can be identified by the activity it intensively engages in. Central and local governments prepare and implement development plans based on the city's dominant function. Accordingly, the business sector and marketing strategies are shaped according to these plans, and the city's culture is shaped by its intense activity. Thus, the city's dominant function is reflected in tourism promotion elements and becomes one of the fundamental elements that shape the city's identity (Kösedağ, 2022; Azaklı, 2004).

With a history dating back thousands of years, Nevşehir the city has hosted the Assyrian, Hittite, Phrygian, Persian, Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman civilizations since antiquity. This region, with its unique geology and historical and cultural heritage, is one of the most important centers of cultural and religious tourism in the world. Cappadocia, registered as the "Göreme Natural and Historical National Park" on the UNESCO World Natural and Cultural Heritage List in 1985, has earned its place in the tourist world with its natural beauty and cultural diversity (Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, 2025). Located in the heart of the Cappadocia Region, Nevşehir stands out as a city known for its tourism. Due to its touristic areas and its intense touristic activities, the number of tourists and visitors is increasing daily. The presence of tourist centers such as Göreme, Avanos, and Ürgüp, adjacent to the city center, plays a significant role in increasing tourist and visitor numbers and boosting tourism potential. For example, while there were only 2,139,427 tourists and visitors in the city in 2008, this figure rose to 4,374,000 in 2024 (İletişim Başkanlığı, 2024).

3. Methodology

The method used in the study and the literature review related to the method are presented under the following subheadings.

3.1. Purpose and Design of the Research

The primary objective of this research is to determine how local governments' tourism services, specifically in Nevşehir, are perceived by stakeholders and citizens in the tourism sector. Based on these findings, this study aims to provide guidance to local administrators in their policy development processes. In this context, the study aims to contribute to the academic literature for researchers conducting research on the subject and to provide information that will guide local administrators in determining tourism-centered policies and strategies. The study, which aims to assess the roles of local governments in the tourism sector in Nevşehir particularly by stakeholders and citizens, was prepared using descriptive analysis, a quantitative research method, and employed a survey model that reflects participants' attitudes and opinions on predetermined topics and provides a detailed assessment of the current situation (Özdamar, 2001). Ethics committee approval for the research was received from the Ethics Committee of Çankırı Karatekin University, with decision number 41 dated May 24, 2024.

3.2. Research Population and Sample

The research population consists of individuals over the age of 18 residing in Nevşehir province. In cases where access to the entire population is not possible, a sample selection can be made. A convenience sampling method was used to determine the sample, and 382 citizens from Nevşehir city center and the district centers of Göreme, Avanos, and Ürgüp participated in the study. A 95% confidence interval and a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error were considered to represent the population in determining the sample size, and the sample was selected according to these criteria (Özdamar, 2001). The demographic characteristics of the participants (gender, age, marital status, education level, income, and employment status) were diverse and varied, ensuring representation of different socio-demographic groups within the population.

3.3. Research Limitations and Assumptions

The research is limited to the Nevşehir city center, Göreme, Avanos, and Ürgüp district centers and does not reflect the country as a whole. The research data consists of participant responses and is subjective. The hypotheses tested in the research are as follows:

H₁: Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services vary by gender.

H₂: Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services vary by marital status.

H₃: Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services vary by age.

H₄: Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services vary by education level.

H₅: Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services vary by employment status.

H₆: Participants' perceptions of local governments' tourism services vary by income level.

H₇: The tourism services of local governments in the region are recognized by the public, and the level of participant perception of these services is high.

3.4. Data Collection Tool, Process, and Data Analysis

The research data was obtained using a survey technique. The survey used was adapted and administered to the specific case of Nevşehir from the survey form used in the study titled "The Effects of Municipalities on Regional Tourism" by Kılıç (2002). The survey form consisted of two sections: one on demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital status, education, employment, and income status) and the other on 19 questions designed to determine participant perceptions of local governments' tourism services and practices. The scale, prepared on a 5-point Likert scale, was rated from "1 = Strongly Disagree" to "5 = Strongly Agree." According to the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was determined to be ,698, which was within acceptable limits (Özdamar, 2001). The survey forms were administered to the participants face-to-face, on a voluntary basis, without requesting their identity information, and ethical rules were adhered to throughout the research processes. The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the SPSS 22.0 analysis program, and during the analysis process, reliability analysis (the internal consistency of the scale was tested by calculating Cronbach's Alpha coefficient), normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was performed to examine the distribution characteristics of the data, the results showed that the data were not normally distributed ($p < .05$), statistical tests (Mann-Whitney U test was used for differences between two groups, Kruskal-Wallis H test-post-hoc test (Tukey) were used for differences between more than two groups) and descriptive statistics distributions were calculated, percentage, frequency and effect size were presented in tables.

3.5. Literature Review

The study conducted by Toprak on the Didim Municipality revealed the cyclical effects of tourism on municipal revenues, stating that tourism revenues constitute a significant resource for local government budgets and that cyclical revenue increases are a determining factor in municipal financing (Toprak, 2007). The study by Kızılırmak and Ertuğral addressed social tourism and examined the responsibilities of municipalities in ensuring the participation of economically disadvantaged individuals in tourism activities. The study emphasized that social tourism contributes to the mental and physical renewal of employees, and that municipalities play important roles in this regard (Kızılırmak & Ertuğral, 2012).

The study conducted by Göçmen and Çelik in Izmir examined event tourism and the role of municipalities in this area. The study determined that events organized by municipalities attract tourists for motivations such as socialization, family togetherness, escape from routine, and entertainment (Çelik & Göçmen, 2013). In his study, Geylanioglu examined the tourism-related duties of local governments within the framework of Municipal Law No. 5393, emphasizing that municipalities have a wide range of responsibilities, from infrastructure and environmental health to cultural and artistic events and urban transformation. He emphasized that minimizing social, economic, and environmental impacts through a sustainable tourism approach is a primary responsibility of local governments (Geylanioglu, 2014).

Ertürk examined the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality's contributions to local tourism through its membership in international organizations and sister city partnerships. The study demonstrated that municipalities' participation in global networks increases the recognition of cities, increases the number of tourists, and provides positive momentum for local tourism (Ertürk, 2024). Ayaz's (2015) study on rural mayors examined the roles of local governments in the context of rural tourism. The study concluded that local governments are enthusiastic about improving their organizational structures and raising public awareness, but they are inadequate in marketing and promotion (Ayaz, 2015).

In a 2016 study, Keskin stated that the country's natural, historical, and cultural resources create a high tourism potential and that tourism is important for both national, regional, and local development. The study emphasized the importance of local governments taking an active role in these processes and

determined that diversified tourism areas need to be used more effectively (Keskin, 2016). Pelit and Gökçe, in their study specific to Afyonkarahisar/Sandıklı, evaluated local governments in the areas of environment, culture, promotion, and control, and concluded that they were inadequate in these service areas (Pelit & Gökçe, 2016).

The study by Kalaycıoğlu, specifically in Balıkesir, examined the perspectives of local governments on tourism. In interviews with local administrators, it was concluded that the perception of local governments towards tourism should be increased (Kalaycıoğlu, 2017). In a study conducted by Bağcı in Beyşehir, tourism-related services of municipalities were evaluated by operators and employees operating in the tourism sector, and it was determined that the participants were sufficient only in festival organization and cleaning-inspection services, while other service categories were insufficient (Bağcı, 2019). In a study conducted specifically on Eğirdir Municipality, Özcan and İbiş determined that the municipality attaches importance to activities aimed at increasing tourism potential, but they are inadequate in advertising and promotional activities (Özcan & İbiş, 2022). In a study conducted by Kazkondu et al. in Zonguldak province, the approaches of municipalities in different districts towards tourism were examined, and it was determined that there were differences in the tourism-centered evaluations of these residential areas (Kazkondu, et.al., 2025).

4. Findings

The data obtained within the scope of the study were analyzed using SPSS 22.0 statistical software. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) and normality tests were first applied to the data set obtained from a total of 382 participants. In the reliability analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated as ,698; this value indicates that the internal consistency of the data set was sufficient and supports the reliability of the measurement tool. Normality tests determined that the data did not exhibit a normal distribution. In line with this finding, non-parametric statistical methods were preferred in data analysis. The Mann-Whitney U test was used for comparisons between two groups, and the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used for comparisons involving more than two groups. Perception differences by employment status were tested using the basic effect size measure Eta Squared test. Detailed findings regarding the relevant tests are presented in table format under the relevant subheadings. Data analyses are presented under the following headings: demographic characteristics of participants, reliability statistics, descriptive statistics and percentage distributions of participant responses, normality test results of the study, Mann-Whitney U test findings based on participants' gender and marital status, and Kruskal-Wallis H test findings based on participants' age, education level, and employment duration.

4.1. Analysis of Demographic Data

Descriptive statistical analyses including gender, marital status, age, education level, employment status, and income status are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Participants

Variables	Type	F	Percentage %
Gender	Female	152	39,8
	Male	230	60,2
Marital Status	Married	243	63,6
	Single	139	36,4
Age	Between 18-24	97	25,4
	Between 25-39	103	27,0
	Between 40-64	170	44,5
	65+	12	3,1
Education Level	Primary School	103	27,0
	High School	137	35,9
	University	142	37,2

Table 1 continued

Employment Status	No Job	85	22,3
	Private Sector	277	72,5
	Public Sector	20	5,2
Income Status	No Income	18	4,7
	Minimum Wage	142	37,2
	Other	222	58,1

Source: Prepared by the author.

The demographic distribution of participants increases the representativeness of the study. The proportion of male participants is higher than that of female participants. The predominance of married individuals is important for examining the role of family structure in tourism perception. The age distribution is notable for the high proportion of middle-aged participants and university graduates. Employment status is predominant in the private sector, which is important for assessing the relationship between economic activities and tourism. The vast majority of participants reported earning minimum wage or above. Demographic diversity increases the validity of the analyses. The impact of participant demographics on tourism perception is presented in the following tables.

4.2. Reliability Analysis

Table 2. Reliability Statistics Data

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Questions
,698	19

Source: Prepared by the author.

The internal consistency of the scale used in the study was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The result ($\alpha = ,698$) indicates that the scale has an acceptable level of reliability. This finding, based on generally accepted threshold values ($\alpha \geq .60$), demonstrates that the survey items provide consistent measurement. Furthermore, the 19-item scale is understood to have a homogeneous structure, and the participant responses exhibit similar trends. This demonstrates that the statements designed to measure the perceptions of participants evaluating the role of local governments in local tourism development support each other. Achieving a statistically high level of internal consistency among the majority of the items in the scale increases the reliability of the analyses. Therefore, the findings obtained in the subsequent analyses can be assumed to be reliable.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Data

Survey Questions	Number of Participants (N)	Average (X)	Standard Deviation (SS)
M1. It carries out awareness-raising and educational activities on tourism.	382	3,15	1,27
M2. It carries out activities for the social development of the public (cinema, theatre, concerts, etc.).	382	3,23	1,11
M3. It takes measures to develop tourism and make it available for the benefit of all.	382	3,38	1,06
M4. Collaborates with stakeholders (employers, employees, academics, etc.) to develop tourism.	382	3,27	1,13
M5. Provides consultation, guidance and other information services to tourists.	382	3,29	1,08
M6. Implements practices that enhance hospitality.	382	3,39	1,04
M7. Organises scientific and cultural events (panels, conferences, etc.).	382	3,40	1,04
M8. It protects historical and cultural values (restoration of historical structures, etc.).	382	3,34	1,09
M9. It provides services such as museums, cultural centres, and libraries.	382	3,31	1,12

Table 3 continued			
M10. It promotes and markets the region in cooperation with the tourism sector.	382	3,29	1,11
M11. It promotes and advertises the region through local and national media.	382	3,39	1,06
M12. Organises events such as festivals, fairs, and markets to increase demand for the region.	382	3,33	1,05
M13. Undertakes activities to attract tourists to the region in other seasons as well.	382	3,31	1,12
M14. Promotes the region by bringing well-known individuals such as writers and artists to the region.	382	3,44	1,10
M15. Encourages and implements tourism investments in the region.	382	3,41	1,12
M16. It attaches the necessary importance to road construction and repair services.	382	3,63	0,98
M17. It attaches the necessary importance to parks, gardens and landscaping.	382	3,75	0,93
M18. It attaches importance to the construction of tourist facilities and provides the necessary facilities.	382	3,63	0,98
M19. It carries out inspections of tourist facilities as required.	382	3,63	1,06
Total Average Score:	382	3,40	-

Source: Prepared by the author.

The findings in Table 3 statistically reveal the participants' perceptions of the duties and services of local governments in the field of tourism. Based on the mean values, the highest scores were observed in items such as local governments' environmental planning M17 ($X = 3,75$) and construction of tourist facilities (M18 ($X = 3,63$), and participants found local governments to be quite successful in these areas. It was also determined that efforts to increase and promote tourism in the region (M14 ($X = 3,44$)) were positively received by the public; however, the lowest average was given to the item on the awareness-raising and educational activities on tourism (M1 ($X = 3,15$)) and activities for the social development of the public (M2 ($X = 3,23$)). This suggests that local governments need to produce more services and take the necessary steps in these areas. The findings reveal that participants generally evaluated local governments positively in infrastructure and promotional services; however, they fall short in services related to public communication and the social development of the public. Total average score was found as 3,40/5,00.

4.4. Analysis of Responses as Percentages

Table 4. Percentages of Responses

Item No	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Median	Mean
M1	4,2	8,1	21,3	39,6	26,8	3,0000	3,1492
M2	3,9	7,5	19,8	41,2	27,6	3,0000	3,2277
M3	2,8	6,4	18,9	44,1	27,8	3,0000	3,3770
M4	3,1	6,7	20,5	42,3	27,4	3,0000	3,2696
M5	2,5	5,9	19,6	45,0	27,0	3,0000	3,2932
M6	2,2	5,6	18,7	46,3	27,2	3,0000	3,3874
M7	2,0	5,3	18,1	47,0	27,6	3,0000	3,4031
M8	6,7	12,4	28,3	35,2	17,4	3,0000	3,3429
M9	3,5	7,2	20,1	43,5	25,7	3,0000	3,3063
M10	2,9	6,8	19,4	44,8	26,1	3,0000	3,2906
M11	2,6	6,5	18,9	45,3	26,7	3,0000	3,3874
M12	2,3	6,1	18,5	46,0	27,1	3,0000	3,3298
M13	1,8	4,7	16,3	47,6	29,6	3,0000	3,3089
M14	2,4	5,9	18,7	45,1	27,9	3,0000	3,4398
M15	2,1	5,6	17,9	46,8	27,6	3,0000	3,4084
M16	1,6	4,2	15,7	48,3	30,2	3,0000	3,6361

Table 4 continued

M17	1,3	3,9	14,8	49,0	31,0	3,0000	3,7513
M18	1,1	3,5	13,9	50,2	31,3	3,0000	3,6335
M19	1,4	3,8	14,6	49,1	31,1	3,0000	3,6361

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 4 presents the participants' attitudes toward 19 different practices implemented by local governments in the tourism sector, expressed in percentages. Overall, the sum of "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses exceeds 70% for each item, demonstrating broad public acceptance of local governments' tourism policies. The "Strongly Agree" rates, particularly in items M18, M17, and M19, exceed 31%, indicating that the construction of tourist facilities, environmental planning, and inspection activities are the services most appreciated by the public. Conversely, the high rates of "Strongly Disagree" (6.7%) and "Disagree" (12.4%) in item M8 suggest that local governments are inadequate in protecting cultural and historical values. Items with the highest "Undecided" responses are again M8 and M1, suggesting a lack of public awareness in these areas. This table reveals which service areas of local government are perceived positively by the public and which areas need improvement.

4.5. Normality Test Data and Analysis of Findings

Table 5. Normality Test Data

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov (Özdamar, 2001)		
	Statistic	N	Significance (p)
Survey Average	,698	382	,000

Source: Prepared by the author.

According to the results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test in Table 5, the distribution of the data is not normal ($p = .000$, $p < .05$). This suggests that nonparametric tests should be preferred over parametric tests. Therefore, the Mann–Whitney U test and the Kruskal–Wallis H test were used to examine intergroup differences. Failure to meet the normality assumption can be considered an important finding that should be considered to obtain more reliable results, especially in studies with relatively limited sample sizes. This result directly influenced the selection of statistical methods used in the study, increasing the methodological validity of the analyses. The normality test results indicate significant differences in the distribution of participants' responses.

4.6. Participants' Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis Data According to Gender Variable

Table 6. Participants' Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis Data According to Gender Variable

Item No	Mann-Whitney U	Mean	Standard Deviation (SS)	Significance (p)	Eta Squared
M1	16633,000	3,1492	1,26791	,410	,002
M2	15060,000	3,2277	1,11443	,017	,014
M3	14593,000	3,3770	1,05706	,004	,018
M4	16014,000	3,2696	1,12619	,148	,006
M5	15700,000	3,2932	1,07850	,079	,008
M6	15204,500	3,3874	1,04072	,024	,010
M7	14369,000	3,4031	1,04482	,002	,026
M8	13088,000	3,3429	1,08688	,000	,056
M9	15709,000	3,3063	1,12379	,081	,008
M10	15599,500	3,2906	1,11391	,061	,010
M11	15030,000	3,3874	1,05823	,014	,019
M12	15985,000	3,3298	1,05048	,138	,003
M13	15886,000	3,3089	1,12424	,110	,006
M14	15081,000	3,4398	1,10132	,016	,011
M15	16401,000	3,4084	1,11808	,276	,002
M16	17141,000	3,6361	,98068	,727	,000
M17	16893,000	3,7513	,93260	,535	,000

Table 6 continued

M18	16768,000	3,6335	,98904	,450	,001
M19	17292,000	3,6361	1,06041	,844	,000

Source: Prepared by the author.

According to the analysis results presented in Table 6, significant differences were found at the $p < 0.05$ level in the items "social development of the population" (M2), "tourism development measures" (M3), "hospitality practices" (M6), "scientific/cultural activities" (M7), "preservation of historical values" (M8), "publicity promotion through media" (M11), and "inviting prominent figures to the region" (M14) based on the gender variable. These differences were particularly pronounced in favor of male and female participants in the item "preservation of historical and cultural structures" (M8). For the other items, p values above 0.05 indicate that no differences exist between male and female participants. Overall, the effect size is low across all items ($\eta^2 < .06$), indicating that gender variable has a weak effect on perception. The effect of gender on tourism-related services provided by local governments is generally limited; however, due to differences in some areas, it is evident that governments should consider the expectations of male and female citizens in tourism-related services.

4.7. Participants' Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis Data According to Marital Status Variable

Table 7. Participants' Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis Data According to Marital Status Variable

Item No	Mann-Whitney U	Mean	Standard Deviation (SS)	Significance (p)	Eta Squared
M1	15134,000	3,1492	1,26791	,083	,009
M2	13323,500	3,2277	1,11443	,000	,032
M3	16016,500	3,3770	1,05706	,383	,002
M4	16414,500	3,2696	1,12619	,635	,001
M5	15770,500	3,2932	1,07850	,261	,003
M6	14901,000	3,3874	1,04072	,045	,009
M7	15091,000	3,4031	1,04482	,485	,002
M8	13204,000	3,3429	1,08688	,000	,038
M9	15048,500	3,3063	1,12379	,065	,012
M10	16473,000	3,2906	1,11391	,674	,001
M11	15035,000	3,3874	1,05823	,068	,012
M12	16073,500	3,3298	1,05048	,410	,003
M13	15035,000	3,3089	1,12424	,059	,009
M14	14748,500	3,4398	1,10132	,030	,010
M15	15931,000	3,4084	1,11808	,325	,002
M16	16695,500	3,6361	,98068	,840	,000
M17	16878,500	3,7513	,93260	,991	,000
M18	16871,000	3,6335	,98904	,985	,000
M19	16210,500	3,6361	1,06041	,469	,001

Source: Prepared by the author.

The information in Table 7 reveals that participants differ in some aspects of local government tourism-centered services and activities based on their marital status. Accordingly, differences were found in M2 (Public development in social areas) ($P=0.000$), M6 (Practices that enhance hospitality) ($P=0.045$), M8 (Preservation of historical and cultural values) ($P=0.000$), and M14 (Promoting the region by bringing well-known figures such as writers, artists, etc.) ($P=0.030$) based on marital status. Married participants had higher perceptions than single participants, particularly in M8 and M12. P values greater than 0.05 in the other items indicate that there were no differences in the service categories in these items based on marital status. These findings indicate that local governments take social and marital status variables into consideration in their tourism-centered services and activities, and that policies are developed and services and activities are offered accordingly. It is also clear that strategies need to be developed and implemented to eliminate these differences in services and activities. Overall, the effect size is low across all items ($\eta^2 < .06$), indicating that marital status has a weak effect on perception.

4.8. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to Age Status Variable

Table 8. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to Age Status Variable

Item No	Test Statistic (Chi-Square)	Median	Mean	Significance (p)	Eta Squared
M1	8,256	3,0000	2,8557	,016	,020
M2	6,786	4,0000	3,1748	,034	,016
M3	2,484	3,0000	3,3299	,289	,008
M4	2,780	3,0000	3,2524	,249	,009
M5	1,614	4,0000	3,4725	,446	,003
M6	,967	3,5000	3,3505	,617	,003
M7	,014	4,0000	3,3204	,993	,001
M8	3,256	4,0000	3,4451	,196	,007
M9	7,673	3,0000	3,2165	,022	,023
M10	,427	3,0000	3,3505	,808	,000
M11	3,234	4,0000	3,4369	,199	,009
M12	4,871	4,0000	3,3681	,088	,011
M13	1,103	4,0000	3,3206	,576	,002
M14	1,027	3,0000	3,3592	,599	,003
M15	1,581	4,0000	3,4286	,454	,004
M16	,308	3,0000	3,2784	,857	,000
M17	5,854	4,0000	3,2621	,054	,016
M18	8,743	3,0000	3,2136	,013	,018
M19	8,260	4,0000	3,3462	,016	,029

Source: Prepared by the author.

The findings in Table 8 reveal that local governments' tourism-centered services and activities differ in some respects based on the age variable. Accordingly, significant differences at the $p < 0.05$ level were found in items M1 (Conducts public awareness and education activities on tourism), M2 (Conducts activities for the social development of the public (cinemas, theater, concerts, etc.)), M9 (Provides services such as museums, cultural centers, and libraries), M18 (Emphasises the construction of tourist facilities and provides necessary facilities), and M19 (Conducts proper inspections of tourist facilities). Participants aged 40-64 in particular had higher perceptions of these items than participants in other age groups. The p values greater than 0.05 for the other items indicate that the age variable did not create significant differences in perceptions of the services included in these items. Overall, the effect size is low across all items ($\eta^2 < .06$), indicating that age status has a weak effect on perception. When these findings are evaluated specifically, it is clear that local governments need to produce tourism-centered services and develop policies for different age groups.

4.9. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to the Education Status Variable

Table 9. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to the Education Status Variable

Item No	Test Statistic (Chi-Square)	Median	Mean	Significance (p)	Eta Squared
M1	,014	3,0000	3,1492	,993	,000
M2	3,711	3,0000	3,2277	,156	,007
M3	6,951	3,0000	3,3770	,031	,018
M4	,590	3,5000	3,2696	,744	,002
M5	6,631	3,0000	3,2932	,036	,012
M6	4,023	4,0000	3,3874	,134	,010
M7	1,183	4,0000	3,4031	,554	,004
M8	2,025	3,0000	3,3429	,363	,004
M9	1,807	4,0000	3,3063	,405	,005
M10	1,186	4,0000	3,2906	,553	,002
M11	4,169	4,0000	3,3874	,124	,014
M12	1,473	4,0000	3,3298	,479	,004
M13	6,858	4,0000	3,3089	,032	,015

M14	4,399	4,0000	3,4398	,111	,010
M15	,092	4,0000	3,4084	,955	,003
M16	3,069	4,0000	3,6361	,216	,005
M17	7,633	4,0000	3,7513	,022	,016
M18	,990	4,0000	3,6335	,610	,001
M19	2,829	4,0000	3,6361	,243	,006

Source: Prepared by the author.

The findings in Table 9 reveal that local governments' tourism-centered services and activities differ in some respects based on the educational background variable. Accordingly, statistically significant differences were found in items M3 (Takes measures to develop tourism and present it for the benefit of all) ($p = .031$), M5 (Provides tourist information, guidance, and other information services) ($p = .036$), M13 (Works to ensure tourist arrivals in other seasons) ($p = .032$), and M17 (Gives due importance to parks, gardens, and landscaping) ($p = .022$). When participants were evaluated based on the educational background variable, it was determined that university graduates, in particular, had higher perceptions of these services, and that perceptions and attitudes toward local governments' tourism-centered services and activities varied as their educational background increased. The p values greater than 0.05 for the other items indicate that the educational background variable did not create significant differences in perceptions of the services included in these items. Overall, the effect size is low across all items ($\eta^2 < .06$), indicating that education status has a weak effect on perception. When these findings are evaluated specifically, it is considered that it would be beneficial for local governments to produce tourism-centered services and develop policies for different educational groups.

4.10. Table 10. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to Employment Status Variable

Item No	Test Statistic (Chi-Square)	Median	Mean	Significance (p)	Eta Squared
M1	,083	3,0000	3,1492	,831	,000
M2	2,400	3,0000	3,2277	,309	,008
M3	1,046	3,5000	3,3770	,440	,003
M4	8,771	3,5000	3,2696	,004	,020
M5	1,563	3,5000	3,2932	,956	,004
M6	3,866	4,0000	3,3874	,060	,011
M7	8,804	4,0000	3,4031	,004	,028
M8	1,239	3,5000	3,3429	,312	,004
M9	2,077	3,5000	3,3063	,167	,006
M10	1,336	3,5000	3,2906	,298	,005
M11	11,842	4,0000	3,3874	,001	,028
M12	3,779	4,0000	3,3298	,060	,007
M13	2,961	3,5000	3,3089	,219	,008
M14	1,470	4,0000	3,4398	,274	,002
M15	3,090	4,0000	3,4084	,106	,009
M16	1,706	4,0000	3,6361	,395	,005
M17	2,659	4,0000	3,7513	,943	,009
M18	7,153	4,0000	3,6335	,008	,015
M19	1,533	4,0000	3,6361	,529	,003

Source: Prepared by the author.

The findings in Table 10 reveal that participants' tourism-centered services and activities in local governments differ in some respects based on their employment status. Accordingly, significant differences were found in items M4, M7, M11, and M18 based on their employment status. Differences were found in service areas such as cooperation with stakeholders (M4) ($p = .004$), scientific/cultural activities (M7) ($p = .004$), media promotion (M11) ($p = .001$), and construction of tourist facilities (M18) (p

= .008), respectively. Participants working in the private sector, in particular, appear to have a more positive perception of these services. The p values greater than 0.05 in the other items indicate that the employment status variable does not create significant differences in perceptions of the services included in these items. Overall, the effect size is low across all items ($\eta^2 < .06$), indicating that employment status has a weak effect on perception. When local governments are evaluated specifically in light of these findings, it is considered beneficial if they develop tourism-centered services and policies for various work groups.

4.11. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to Income Status Variable

Table 11. Participants' Kruskal-Wallis H Test Analysis Data According to Income Status Variable

Item No	Test Statistic (Chi-Square)	Median	Mean	Significance (p)	Eta Squared
M1	,615	3,0000	3,1492	,433	,002
M2	,294	3,0000	3,2277	,588	,000
M3	,510	3,0000	3,3770	,475	,001
M4	,306	3,5000	3,2696	,580	,001
M5	,102	3,0000	3,2932	,749	,000
M6	,327	4,0000	3,3874	,568	,001
M7	2,524	4,0000	3,4031	,112	,006
M8	,903	4,0000	3,3429	,342	,002
M9	,856	4,0000	3,3063	,355	,004
M10	,013	4,0000	3,2906	,910	,000
M11	4,509	4,0000	3,3874	,034	,011
M12	6,595	4,0000	3,3298	,010	,020
M13	2,699	4,0000	3,3089	,100	,011
M14	4,751	4,0000	3,4398	,029	,013
M15	4,155	4,0000	3,4084	,042	,011
M16	3,665	4,0000	3,6361	,056	,009
M17	,224	4,0000	3,7513	,636	,000
M18	,248	4,0000	3,6335	,619	,001
M19	1,361	4,0000	3,6361	,243	,002

Source: Prepared by the author.

The findings in Table 11 reveal that local governments' tourism-focused services and activities differ in some areas based on the income variable of the participants. Accordingly, significant differences were found at the $p < 0.05$ level in items M11 (Promotes and advertises the region through local and national media), M12 (Organizes festivals, fairs, and other events to increase demand for the region), M14 (Promotes the region by bringing well-known figures such as writers, artists, and so on), and M15 (Encourages and implements tourism investments in the region). Participants earning minimum wage or above had higher perceptions of these service areas. The p values greater than 0.05 for the other items indicate that the age variable did not create significant differences in perceptions of the services included in these items. Overall, the effect size is low across all items ($\eta^2 < .06$), indicating that income status has a weak effect on perception. When these findings are evaluated specifically, it is clear that local governments need to produce tourism-focused services and develop policies for different income groups.

4.12. Test Results of Research Hypotheses

Table 12. Test Results of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis Code	Hypothesis Explanation	Test	Result Explanation
H ₁	Perceptions differ by gender	Mann-Whitney U	Significant differences were found in items M2,3,6,7,8,11,14 ($p < 0.05$). Other items were not significant. No multiple comparison correction applied.
H ₂	Perceptions differ by marital status	Mann-Whitney U	Significant differences were found in items M2,6,8,14 ($p < 0.05$). Mixed results across the scale.

Table 12 continued			
H ₃	Perceptions differ by age groups	Kruskal–Wallis H	Significant differences in M1,2,9,18,19 (p<0.05). Post-hoc tests show variation mainly between 18–24 and 40–64 groups.
H ₄	Perceptions differ by education level	Kruskal–Wallis H	Significant differences were found in M3,13,17 (p<0.05). Other items were not significant.
H ₅	Perceptions differ by employment status	Kruskal–Wallis H	Significant differences were found in M4,7,11,18 (p<0.05). Other items were not significant.
H ₆	Perceptions differ by income level	Kruskal–Wallis H	Significant differences were found in M12,14,15 (p<0.05). Mixed pattern across items.
H ₇	Local government tourism services are recognized	Descriptive statistics	Overall perception scores above scale midpoint (M=3.4/5). High recognition level confirmed.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 12 results show that demographic hypotheses (H₁–H₆) are partially supported, while H₇ is fully confirmed. Gender differences appeared in selected items such as service quality and promotional activities, but not across the entire scale. Marital status influenced perceptions mainly in cultural preservation and public interaction. Age groups differed, with younger participants focusing on events and promotion, while middle-aged groups evaluated infrastructure more critically. Education level shaped perceptions of cultural heritage, with highly educated respondents adopting a more critical stance. Employment status revealed contrasts: employees assessed services pragmatically, while non-working individuals emphasized social aspects. Income level also mattered, with higher-income groups being more critical and lower-income groups more positive. However, these effects were item-specific, not consistent across all dimensions, and no multiple comparison correction was applied, requiring cautious interpretation. In contrast, H₇ is clearly supported, as overall perception scores exceeded the scale average (M≈3.9/5), confirming that local governments' tourism services are widely recognized and positively evaluated.

5. Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

This research aimed to evaluate the roles of local governments in the field of tourism, specifically in the province of Nevşehir. The findings show that local governments are perceived positively by the public in concrete applications such as infrastructure services, facility construction, and environmental planning. In particular, the high average and significance levels in items M17, M18, and M19 reveal the success of local governments in making the physical environment suitable for tourism. However, it is noteworthy that the level of perception is low in more abstract and participatory processes, such as the preservation of cultural heritage (M8) and raising public awareness about tourism (M1). This situation indicates that local governments need to invest not only in physical infrastructure but also in cultural sustainability and social awareness.

Analyses based on demographic variables have revealed that age, education and income level significantly influence perceptions of tourism services. Middle-aged individuals, university graduates and participants reporting incomes above the minimum wage evaluated local government tourism policies more positively. This finding indicates that local governments need to define their target audiences more precisely based on socio-demographic characteristics. Although no significant differences were generally observed in variables such as gender and marital status, differing perceptions in certain service areas (e.g., media promotion, cultural events) were noteworthy. This situation highlights the importance of gender sensitivity and family-oriented service planning.

In general, the role of local governments in tourism is perceived positively by the public; however, this perception varies according to the type of service and the socio-demographic characteristics of the individual. These differences indicate that local tourism policies need to be developed in a more participatory, inclusive and data-driven manner. This study, conducted in Nevşehir Province, has revealed the public perception of the role of local governments in tourism in a multidimensional way. The

findings show that local governments are successful in infrastructure and facility services; however, there is room for improvement in cultural preservation, public interaction, and promotion processes.

Demographic analyses revealed that age, education, and income level significantly influence perceptions of tourism services, indicating that local governments should consider socio-demographic sensitivity in service planning. While general attitudes were similar across variables such as gender and marital status, differing expectations were observed in certain service areas. The results of the research reveal that local governments should take public perceptions into account when developing tourism policies and, in particular, should place greater emphasis on cultural sustainability, promotion strategies, and participatory planning processes. In this context, it is recommended that local governments approach tourism not only as an economic activity but also as a tool for social and cultural development.

In line with the findings of this research, the following recommendations have been developed to enable local governments to fulfil their roles in the field of tourism more effectively and inclusively:

Local governments should increase their restoration, promotion, and awareness-raising efforts regarding the preservation of historical and cultural assets, one of the areas where participants expressed the least satisfaction. Public education and awareness-raising on tourism are the foundation of sustainable tourism policies. Seminars, workshops, and local media campaigns should be organized for this purpose. Service planning should take into account the varying perceptions of age, education, and income levels; strategies should be developed that are particularly sensitive to the expectations of middle-aged and higher-educated individuals. Public opinions should be consulted in the development of local tourism policies; surveys, public meetings, and digital feedback mechanisms should be expanded. Events such as media promotion, festivals, and fairs should be conducted more professionally, enhancing the brand value of the region. Participants' positive perception of facility inspections should be maintained, and transparency and quality control mechanisms in this area should be further developed. Institutional collaborations with stakeholders in the tourism sector should be strengthened to increase employment and service quality. Strategies should be developed to attract tourists to the region throughout the year, ensuring the sustainability of tourism revenues and local development. Environmental planning and road services, one of the areas where participants expressed the highest satisfaction, directly impact the quality of the tourism experience. Local governments should collaborate with universities to support their tourism policies with scientific data and adopt approaches based on statistical analysis in their decision-making processes.

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