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## Analysis of Specialization and Competition Level in Turkey's Tourism Sector

*Türkiye'nin Turizm Sektöründe Uzmanlaşma ve Rekabet Düzeyinin Analizi*

### Abstract

Tourism sector has become quite important in recent years due to its contributions to the balance of payments, employment and national income of both developed and developing countries. In order for countries to become a stronger global actor today, they need to increase their global competitiveness not only in the product markets and industry, but also in the tourism sector. In this perspective, in this study, which covers the period 2003-2017, the level of specialization and competitiveness in the tourism sector, which is a key role for the Turkish economy, were analyzed and "the Revealed Comparative Advantages" approach was used in the analyses. The Balassa index was used to determine the level of competition. In order to determine the level of specialization, the Net Trade index and the Export Import Ratio index were used. According to the results of the analysis, Turkey has provided expertise in the tourism sector and has a moderate competitive edge.

**Key Words:** Tourism, Specialization, Competition, Revealed Comparative Advantages, Turkey

**Jel Codes:** F00, F13, Z30, Z32

### Özet

Turizm sektörü son yıllarda hem gelişmiş hem de gelişmekte olan ülkelerin ödemeler bilançosuna, istihdamına ve milli gelirine yaptığı katkılar nedeniyle oldukça önemli bir hale gelmiştir. Günümüzde ülkelerin daha güçlü bir küresel aktör olmaları için sadece ürün piyasalarında ve sanayi sektöründe değil, turizm sektöründe de küresel rekabet güçlerini arttırması gerekmektedir. Bu perspektifte, 2003-2017 dönemini ele alan bu çalışmada, Türkiye ekonomisi için kilit bir rolü olan turizm sektöründe uzmanlaşma düzeyi ve rekabet gücü analiz edilmiş ve analizlerde "Açıklanmış Karşılaştırmalı Üstünlükler" yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Rekabet düzeyinin belirlenmesi için Balassa endeksi, uzmanlaşma seviyesinin belirlenmesi için ise Net Ticaret endeksi ve İhracat İthalat Oranı endeksi kullanılmıştır. Analiz sonuçlarına göre Türkiye turizm sektöründe uzmanlaşma sağlamıştır ve orta derecede rekabet üstünlüğüne sahiptir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Turizm, Uzmanlaşma, Rekabet, Açıklanmış Karşılaştırmalı Üstünlükler, Türkiye

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## Introduce

Tourism sector is a sector which has fixed capital investments, which is more labor intensive, which is very sensitive to political, social and economic changes especially in terms of supply and demand (Bilgiçli & Altınkaynak, 2016). With the emergence of the concept of globalization, the whole world has embarked on a transformation. The disappearance of borders with globalization has led countries to adopt export-based growth models. Especially since the 1980s, countries have switched to an export-driven growth model instead of an imported substitutional growth model. This has positively affected the increase in goods trade between countries as well as service trade. Tourism, which is one of the most important items of service trade, has become a more important sector for countries in parallel.

Along with globalization, the significant growth of global tourism has resulted in a systematic intensification of the international flow of goods and services. With globalization, tourism revenues have generally increased in countries that open their economies to the outside world and aim to establish global economic links. This can be treated as a trait that occurs thanks to the liberalization of the economy (Majewska & Mińska-Struzik, 2012).

Today, tourism is an important sector that provides foreign exchange input not only for developing countries, but also for developed countries. Therefore, tourism has become one of the most trafficked sectors in the world in recent years. Since tourism is a multidisciplinary sector with input-output relationships with various industries and based on various skills, its benefits also spread to a wider part of society and to local sectors of the economy (Öztürk & Acaravcı, 2009). The development of tourism also facilitates the development of related industries and further increases the economic growth of a country. Therefore, many countries take into account the tourism sector in creating important policies to increase the rate of economic growth and increase global competitiveness (Chiang et al., 2017).

The tourism sector has many contributions to the country's economy. First, tourism revenues contribute to the development of many sectors by making a positive impact on national income. Secondly, the sector contributes to employment and enables both qualified and unqualified labour to work in this sector. In addition, tourism increases the competitiveness of local firms and increases the scale of the economy of these firms (Çetintaş & Bektaş, 2008). Especially in overcoming the economic bottlenecks faced by developing countries, the economic effects of tourism are very important. For this reason, the tourism sector is the most important element of economic development in terms of developing countries and it has an effect on reducing the fragility of fragile economies (Tezcan et al., 2008).

Investments in the tourism sector create a multiplier effect like any investment in the economy, resulting in significant increases in national income. Tourism consumption and investment expenditures result in a direct effect on national income in the first place. After that, an increase in revenue is generated by the indirect effect and over the amount of expenditure (Önen, 2008).

As much as countries' tourism revenues are high, the global competitiveness of the sector needs to be high. In other words, the added value created in the sector must be proportionally above the added value created in the external realm. In this context, the concepts of specialization and competitiveness are gaining importance in the tourism sector. In the study, the profile of the tourism sector of Turkey was tried to be revealed in 2003-2017 period. Later, with the literature review, Turkey's level of expertise and competition in the sector was analyzed by calculating various Revealed Comparative Advantage indices.

### 1. Tourism Revenues and Expenses of Turkey

Tourism is an industry that will contribute to long-term growth as well as being an important source of income for countries. Also, growth in the tourism sector has exceeded the growth rates observed in many other service sectors (Ennew, 2003). Today, the tourism sector accounts for 10.4% of the world's GDP and has become one of the largest economic sectors in the world. Considering that the global economy grew by 3.2%, the tourism sector recorded 3.9% growth in 2018, which stands out as a very important phenomenon (WTTC, 2019).

Ensuring the rising of the tourism revenues is the main purpose of countries that want to be a more important actor in the global world. Tourism is also part of the economic development of countries. Countries want to increase their competitiveness in this sector. In order to increase the competitiveness of the tourism sector, the countries form policies for increasing the consumption of tourists. It also aims to attract more tourists to the country. This will also increase the foreign currency that will enter the country (Angelkova et al., 2012).

Turkey is in the group of upper middle income countries and has been liberalized since the early 1980s, thus turning more towards the outside world in the service sector. Also, for countries with unemployment and lack of foreign exchange, tourism is a great opportunity to solve this problem. Investments in the tourism sector in Turkey began to increase especially in the early 1980s, and growth in the sector continued after that date (Sarılğan, 2016).

**Table 1:** Tourism Revenues of Turkey (2003-2018)

TOTAL				
YEARS	NUMBER OF INCOMING VISITORS	TOURISM REVENUES (thousand dollars)	AVERAGE SPENDING (dollar)	SHARE OF TOURISM REVENUE IN GDP (%)
2003	16 463 623	13 854 866	850	4.42
2004	20 753 734	17 076 607	843	4.24
2005	25 045 142	20 322 111	842	4.07
2006	23 924 023	18 593 951	803	3.39
2007	27 239 630	20 942 500	770	3.09
2008	31 137 774	25 415 067	820	3.27

2009	31 759 816	25 064 482	783	3.87
2010	32 997 308	24 930 997	755	3.23
2011	36 769 039	28 115 692	778	3.38
2012	37 715 225	29 007 003	795	3.33
2013	39 860 771	32 308 991	824	3.4
2014	41 627 246	34 305 903	828	3.67
2015	41 114 069	31 464 777	756	3.65
2016	30 906 680	22 107 440	705	2.56
2017	37 969 824	26 283 656	681	3.09
2018	46 112 592	29 512 926	647	3.8

Source: (TÜİK, 2019)

When Turkey's tourism revenues between 2003 and 2018 are examined (Table 1), it is observed that the number of visitors to the country has increased by about 3 times and tourism revenues have increased by about 2.5 times. The average expenditure and the share of tourism revenues in GDP has decreased over the years. The most important reason for this is that the tourist profile in Turkey has a low income level. In other words, the added value created by incoming tourists in the country is relatively low.

Increases in tourism revenues increase the rate of economic growth, creating new employment both in the local economy and at the national level, and contributing to the reduction of unemployment. The proceeds also increase and diversify the socio-cultural level in the tourism regions. In addition, the expenditure of tourists other than hotels and meals is considered as export income for the countries. Thanks to tourism, the goods in question are considered to be sold abroad. This leads to the effect of increasing demand volume and foreign exchange input. Developments in the tourism sector provide benefits such as increased domestic and foreign capital investments, technology and information transfer in the country, leading to the development of many sectors and increasing competitiveness (Erkan et al., 2013).

**Table 2:** Tourism Expenses of Turkey (2003-2018)

YEARS	TOURISM EXPENS (thousand dollars)	NUMBER OF CITIZENS	AVERAGE EXPENS (dollar)
2003	2 424 827	3 414 844	710
2004	2 954 459	3 844 494	768
2005	3 394 602	4 124 829	823
2006	3 270 947	4 063 180	805
2007	4 043 283	4 956 069	816
2008	4 266 197	4 892 717	872
2009	5 090 440	5 561 355	915
2010	5 874 520	6 557 233	896
2011	5 531 486	6 281 972	881
2012	4 593 390	5 802 950	792
2013	5 253 565	7 525 869	698

YEARS	TOURISM EXPENS (thousand dollars)	NUMBER OF CITIZENS	AVERAGE EXPENS (dollar)
2014	5 470 481	7 982 264	685
2015	5 698 423	8 750 851	651
2016	5 049 793	8 062 065	640
2017	5 137 244	8 886 916	578
2018	4 896 310	8 383 432	584

Source: (TURSAB, 2019)

When the tourism expenses of Turkey between 2003 and 2018 are examined (Table 2), it is observed that tourism expenses increase 2 times and average spending decreases. Considering that tourism revenues can be characterized as export income and tourism expenses as import expense, it is possible to say that net tourism income for Turkey is positive and contributes positively to the economy.

## 2. Literature Review

Research on the literature on the subject has shown that studies on the tourism sector are mainly aimed at revealing the relationship between tourism revenues and basic macro-economic indicators such as economic growth. While few, some studies have sought to demonstrate the competitiveness of the sector.

Yavuz (2006) and Kızılgöl and Erbaykal (2008) tried to reveal the causality relationship between tourism revenues and economic growth in Turkey (Yavuz, 2006), (Kızılgöl & Erbaykal, 2008). Yavuz (2006) analyzed the 1992:Q1-2004:Q4 period and Kızılgöl and Erbaykal (2008) analyzed the 1992:01-2006:02 period. Yavuz (2006) used the traditional unit root test (Augmented Dickey Fuller), as well as the Zivot and Andrews unit root test to detect the presence of structural fracture. According to the results of the standard Granger causality and Toda-Yamamoto test, causality had not been established between the variables. Kızılgöl and Erbaykal (2008) used the Toda-Yamamoto method and determined that there is a one-way causality connected from economic growth to tourism revenues. However, Huang and Zhang (2016) also discussed China's cities of Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai, examining the issue with regional tourism. In addition, cointegration test, Granger causality test, VAR models and variance dissociation methods were used. The results of the analysis showed that there were long-term mutual effects between economic growth and the regional tourism industry (Huang & Zhang, 2016). Chiang et al. (2017) also examined the same variables in Asia-Pacific countries during 1996-2009. The results showed that the sector had significantly affirmative impact on the growth (Chiang et. al, 2017).

Sandbroock (2010) measured the contribution of nature tourism to the economy in Uganda. To measure total and local spending, data from tourist interviews and local corporate surveys were used. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the total expenditures generated higher costs in tourism and that these expenditures increased with the duration of stay. Therefore, it has been stated that nature tourism is costly and does not benefit the economy (Sandbrook, 2010). Angelkova et al. (2012) also discussed Macedonia's sustainable tourism development and competitiveness. It has been suggested that natural and cultural heritage should be protected and made attractive in

order to preserve Macedonia's competitiveness. It is stated that protecting and promoting the environment, natural resources, cultural values and the integrity of the local community will contribute to the competitiveness of tourism by realizing sustainable tourism (Angelkova et. al, 2012).

The study by Majewska and Struzik (2012) analyzed whether there was a relationship between the number of tourists coming to Poland and Poland's exports. Empirical analysis is based on two types of VAR model used in the annual (VAR1) and quarterly (VAR2) panel data set for the period 1993-2010 (VAR1) and 2005-2010 (VAR2). In order to examine the relationship between international tourism and international trade, co-integration and Granger causality tests were conducted. In the analysis conducted using quarterly data, the hypothesis that tourism contributes to exports has been accepted (Majewska & Mińska-Struzik, 2012). Erkan et al. (2013) also aimed to identify factors affecting tourism revenues in Turkey and used VAR analysis and Granger causality test. According to the results, there was a double causation between revenues of the sector and the number of tourists in Turkey, while the real exchange rate does not have any effect on tourism revenues (Erkan et. al, 2013).

Zortuk and Bayrak (2013) were analyzed by HEGY seasonal unit root test, developed for the quarterly series, with tri-monthly time series data including period 1999:1-2013:2. According to the results of the analysis, seasonal unit root presence was reached in the number of incoming tourists and revenue series. In the tourism price, transportation cost and exchange rate series, seasonal unit roots were found not to be found (Zortuk & Bayrak, 2013). The study by Oguz and Tokmak (2018) also examined the relationship between Sustainable Development and tourism. In the study, the period 1990-2015 was discussed, first of all, the stasis of the time series was tested and Johansen co-integration test was applied. Granger causality analysis was applied using the VAR model to determine the short-term causality relationship between the series. As a result, no causality relationship was found (Oğuz & Tokmak, 2018).

Algieri et al. (2018) and Kuşat (2019) examined the competitiveness of the tourism sector and used the Balassa index. Algieri et al. (2018) examined the comparative advantages of EU-28 countries in the tourism sector in the period 2000-2013. The study used panel data analysis along with the Balassa index. It concluded that Mediterranean countries have a high competitive advantage in the tourism sector. However, Croatia and Greece have strong levels of competitiveness (Algieri et al., 2018). Kuşat (2019) also aimed to determine the comparative advantages and disadvantages of Turkey and 5 countries with the highest tourism income in the tourism sector. The study used the Balassa index and the comparative export performance index. According to the results, although Turkey has comparative advantage, its performance against Thailand alone is low (Kuşat, 2019).

Literature research has shown that there are a limited number of studies aimed at determining the competitiveness of the tourism sector. In this context, the study is expected to contribute to the studies with reference to the specialization and the level of competition in the tourism sector.

### **3. Specialization and Competitiveness Analysis**

The purpose of the paper was to exhibit the level of specialization and global competition in the tourism sector of Turkey between 2005 and 2017. For this purpose, the Net trade Index and the Export-Import Ratio Index were used to determine the level of specialization. In order to determine the level of global competition in the sector, Balassa's Revealed Comparative Advantage index was used.

Net Trade index (NTI) is calculated by dividing net exports into foreign trade volumes in a given sector. This index is an evaluation of the country's total trade and trade movements with the rest of the world. In this context, the index is used to measure intra-industrial trade and determine the country's commercial performance (Kösekahyaoglu & Sarıçoban, 2017). For this reason, the NTI can be regarded as a true averaging indicator of comparative advantage (Amighini, 2005). The NTI is formulated as follows (Balassa & Noland, 1989):

$$NTI_{kt} = \frac{X_{kt}^j - M_{kt}^j}{X_{kt}^j + M_{kt}^j} \quad (1)$$

The index is between -1 and +1 (Saboniene, 2009). The positive value of the NTI indicates that the country specializes in the sector. Negative value of the index that the country does not specialize in this product (sector) and has no competitiveness (Bozduman & Erkan, 2019).

The Export-Import Ratio index (EIRI), presented by Balassa, shows the economic performance of the country in relation to foreign trade of a particular product group, its competitive power and especially its level of specialization. According to Balassa, since the opportunity costs are different among countries, countries have to specialize in production and foreign trade. The index shows the ratio of exports to imports in any product group of an country (Balassa, 1977). The logarithmic form of the index is as follows:

$$EIRI_{kt} = \ln \frac{X_{kt}^j / X_t^j}{M_{kt}^j / M_t^j} \quad (2)$$

While the logarithmic form of the index is concerned; If the  $EIRI > 0.50$ , the country's competitiveness is high. If the  $EIRI < -0.50$ , it means that the competitiveness of the country is low. If  $-0.50 < EIRI < 0.50$ , the competitiveness of the country is the marginal limit (Erkan & Bozduman, 2018).

Balassa's Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA) index measures changes in relative price differences of production factors by measuring the relative trading performance of the country in certain commodities. It has been possible to identify which sectors have potential competitive advantage and disadvantage through the use of comparative advantage coefficients, such as the Balassa index. The Balassa index (RCA) is formulated as follows (Balassa, 1965):

$$RCA_{jkt} = \frac{X_{kt}^j / X_t^j}{X_{kt}^w / X_t^w} \quad (3)$$

In this formula, 'j' represents the country, 'k' represents the product group, 't' represents related year and 'w' represents the world. While the fractional share represents the domestic specialization in the mentioned form, the denominator also shows the world's specialization. The fact that the index value is greater than 1 shows the comparative advantage of the country's exports of that product, vice versa. If the RCA coefficient is between 1 and 2, it has a weak comparative advantage, between 2 and 4 it has a comparative advantage at medium level, and at 4 and above it has a strong comparative advantage (Hinloopen & Marrewijk, 2001).

In this study, the 3 indices that measure specialization and competitiveness in the foreign trade of product markets were adapted to the tourism sector. In this context, the following changes have been made:

- Instead of the export indicators in the indices, Turkey's tourism revenue data was used.
- The total revenue of the service sector in Turkey was used instead of the total export indicator of Turkey.
- Turkey's tourism expense was used instead of the import indicator in the indices
- Instead of Turkey's total import indicator, the total expense of the service sector in Turkey has been used.
- Instead of world total exports, the total revenue of the service sector in the world has been used.

In this perspective, in this study, the level of specialization and global competition in Turkey's tourism sector was calculated and the scores obtained were interpreted.

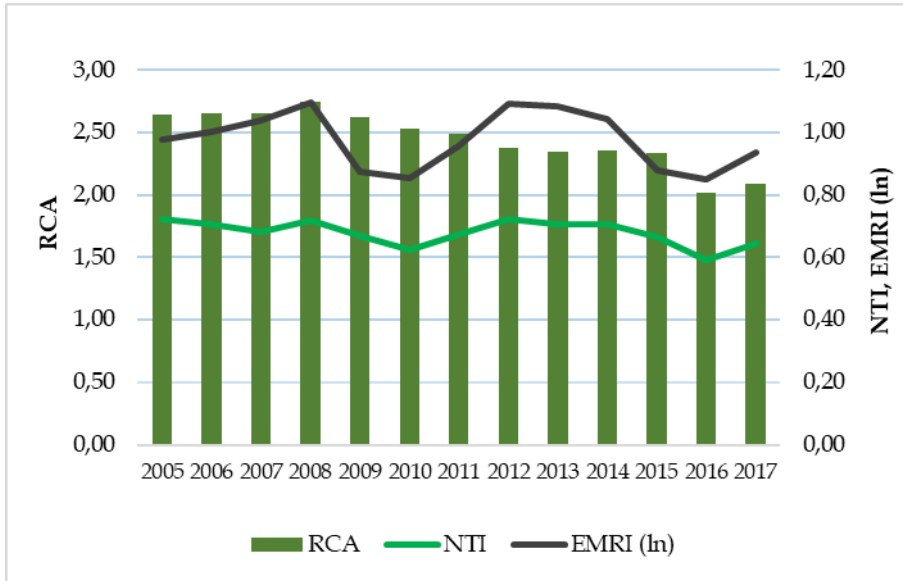
Chart 1 shows the analysis results of Turkey's NTI, EMRI and RCA indices. Accordingly, NTI scores show that Turkey provides expertise in the tourism sector. However, Turkey's level of expertise in the sector has decreased relatively in recent years. However, the NTI scores showing the level of specialization in the sector show a precarious course.

According to the EMRI scores, another index showing the level of specialization in the tourism sector, the level of specialization (competition) in Turkey's tourism sector is high. However, as with the NTI scores, volatility in the EMRI scores is high. In fact, the EMRI scores are more volatile than NTI scores.

According to the Balassa index (RCA) scores showing competitiveness in the tourism sector, Turkey has moderate competitiveness in the tourism sector. Because the RCA scores are between 2 and 4. However, as with the NTI scores, there has been a relative decrease in the RCA scores in recent years.



**Chart 1:** Competitiveness and Specialization Level in Tourism Sector of Turkey



Source: It was prepared by the authors by using the data obtained from <https://www.wto.org>

When the NTI, EMRI and RCA Index results are interpreted together, it seems clear that Turkey specializes in the tourism sector and has global competitive advantages. Moreover, although there have been relative decreases in the index scores in recent years, it can be stated that Turkey has maintained its stability at both specialization and competition level in general.

**Conclusion**

High foreign trade deficits are one of the chronic problems of the Turkish economy. However, Turkey's high net tourism revenues contribute to the balance of payments and lead to lower current account deficit than foreign trade deficit. Therefore, the tourism sector, which is characterized as a chimney-free industry, plays a key role in the Turkish economy.

As well as the high net tourism revenues, it is important whether countries have a global competitive advantage in this sector. Because although the countries' net tourism revenues have increased, this increase is lower than the increase in world tourism revenues, thus there may be a competitive disadvantage. In this perspective, sectoral specialization and global competition are key concepts. In this study, which aims to measure the level of specialization and competition in tourism sector in Turkey, the Net Trade index, Export-Import Ratio index and Balassa index used to measure the level of specialization and competition in the foreign trade of product groups were used. In this context, the foreign trade indices in question are adapted to the tourism sector.

The results of both the Net Trade index and the Export-Import Ratio index, which show the level of expertise in the tourism sector, and the Balassa index, which shows the

level of competition show that Turkey specializes globally and has a competitive advantage. The said specialization and competitiveness indices show that Turkey has a stable competition structure in the tourism sector. However, there are reductions in Turkey's expertise and competitiveness in the sector, although not at a significant level. The most important reason for this is that the global income and therefore the level of demand decreased in real terms, especially after the 2008 global crisis. However, the fact that the average spending of tourists in Turkey has been steadily decreasing in the years being studied is a significant problem for the sector. The most important reason for this problem is that tourists in Turkey have a low income profile. In other words, although the number of tourists is increasing, the value of tourism is not increasing at the same rate and provides added value below the sector potential. In this context, the tourism sector needs to focus primarily on policies aimed at attracting tourists with higher income profiles to the country in order to contribute more to the Turkish economy and employment.

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