

PENTAHHELIX STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING TOURISM IN TURKEY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the pentahelix strategy to increase Turkish tourism. This research uses a qualitative method. The data used in this study comes from secondary sources, including official reports from the Turkish government, publications from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, scientific journals, and credible online sources discussing the development of the tourism sector. The data collection technique was carried out through library research, examining various literature related to the concept of Pentahelix and Turkey's tourism policy. Data analysis is carried out through content analysis, which involves identifying, interpreting, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study show that the Pentahelix model is the main key to the rapid success of Turkey's tourism development to be known as one of the best destinations in the world. Collaboration between academics, government, business, media, and society creates a mutually supportive and sustainability-oriented tourism ecosystem. Academics contribute through research and human resource development, the government sets policies such as the Turkey Tourism Strategy 2023 as well as the GoTürkiye program, the business sector encourages product innovation and service digitalization, the media strengthens the positive image of tourism through global campaigns, while the community safeguards the local culture and environment. The synergy of these five elements forms innovative, inclusive, and sustainable tourism governance, making Turkey a real example for other countries in realizing competitive tourism at the global level.

Keywords: Model, Pentahelix, Tourism, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors that plays an important role in helping a country's economic growth. Not only in increasing foreign exchange earnings, but also in its ability to create jobs, strengthen the regional economy, and boost supporting industries such as transportation, hospitality, food, and creative fields. Tourism is a sector that has a broad multiplier effect on national development because it can unite economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors into a single entity.

The tourism industry plays a major role in helping to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This industry can promote environmental protection, empower local communities, and promote equitable growth between regions by using responsible tourism practices. Therefore, the development of modern tourism is required to not only focus on short-term economic growth, but also on the balance between economic, social, and ecological aspects. Thus, modern tourism needs to focus on more than just short-term economic growth. It also needs to find a balance between economic, social, and environmental factors. Therefore, tourism has become a strategic sector that not only brings in money but also helps build civilization and community welfare in a sustainable manner.

The tourism industry is now one of the most important parts of the world economy, adding significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and creating jobs in various fields. Many countries use their natural beauty and cultural wealth to attract tourists from other countries. The charming Swiss Alps, beautiful Japanese hot springs, and tropical beaches of Thailand are examples of how nature and culture can be used to create a sustainable economy. Indonesia is also known for having many different places to visit, such as Bali, Raja Ampat, and Yogyakarta. This makes it stronger in Southeast Asia. Italy, France, and Spain are some European countries that are also able to combine history, art, and food with stunning natural scenery. The latest trends show that modern travelers want more than just entertainment. They want authentic experiences that combine local culture, sustainability, and digital technology in every travel service.

Turkey is a good example of a country that has used tourism to boost its economy. Turkey is one of the

world's top tourist destinations due to its fascinating history, culture, and natural beauty. Every year, millions of people from other countries visit Turkey. According to a report from the WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council), Turkey's travel and tourism industry generated TRY 3.11 trillion in 2023, which is about 12% of the country's total GDP (WTTC, 2024). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), tourism revenue is expected to rise to US\$ 61.1 billion in 2024, an increase of around 8.3% from the previous year (Turkisminute, 2025).

The pentahelix strategy, which involves cooperation between five main sectors, namely government, academia, business, community, and media, is what makes this success possible. This cross-sector collaboration is crucial for creating competitive, inclusive, and sustainable tourism. With the pentahelix approach, Turkey can build a comprehensive tourism ecosystem where each sector plays its part in helping to develop destinations, improve service quality, generate new tourism products, and effectively promote tourism worldwide.

The results of research conducted by Calzada (2020) explain that Penta-Helix provides a more comprehensive framework to reflect the complexity of stakeholders in smart cities, especially to strengthen the role of civil society and informal social actors. The second finding shows that the Penta-Helix actors are the most important in sustaining urban development, and their projects impact urban transformation from the city level to the international level. According to Köse & Velibeyoğlu (2025), the first finding shows that these individuals are expected to have eight characteristics: being an activist, social entrepreneur, mediator, having an extensive network, organizing goal-oriented work, involving all actors in the process, producing new subject-focused solutions, and finally being able to keep up with change.

Overall, the main gap lies in the lack of empirical application and Pentahelix-based collaboration models in the context of Turkey's national tourism. This research is important because it has the potential to provide theoretical contributions (development of the Pentahelix model in the context of developing countries) and practical contributions (formulation of collaborative strategies for the Turkish government and tourism stakeholders). The purpose of this study is to analyze the application of the Pentahelix strategy in improving the tourism sector in Turkey by involving five main elements, namely the government, academics, business actors, communities, and the media. This study aims to identify the roles and contributions of each actor in supporting sustainable tourism development, evaluate the effectiveness of collaboration among stakeholders, and assess the impact of implementing these strategies on increasing tourist visits and tourism economic growth. In addition, this study is also expected to formulate a relevant Pentahelix-based collaborative strategy model to strengthen the competitiveness of Turkish tourism in the global arena.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how the Pentahelix strategy is used to improve the tourism sector in Turkey. This approach was chosen because it can comprehensively describe the roles and interactions between the five main elements of the Pentahelix, namely the government, academics, business actors, the community, and the media, in promoting synergy for sustainable tourism development. The data used in this study comes from secondary sources, including official reports from the Turkish government, publications from the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, scientific journals, and credible online sources discussing developments in the tourism sector. Data collection techniques were carried out through library research, examining various literature related to the Pentahelix concept and Turkish tourism policy. Data analysis was conducted through content analysis, which involved identifying, interpreting, and drawing conclusions from various sources to reveal the collaborative strategies used by each actor to improve tourism. The results of the analysis are expected to provide an overview of the effectiveness of the Pentahelix model as a strategic approach to strengthening the tourism sector in Turkey.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The involvement of Pentahelix stakeholders—academics, businesses, communities, government, and media—in Turkey's tourism development corresponds to their respective roles, influence, and interests.

Situated at the intersection of Asia, Europe, and Africa, Turkey spans about 780,000 square kilometers and is bordered by approximately 8,000 kilometers of coastline. Its climatic conditions vary significantly across regions, and its peninsular form offers diverse natural attractions such as mountain ranges, forests, rivers, and lakes. Owing to its distinctive geography and strategic position, the region has been a center of numerous civilizations for millennia, including those of prehistoric times, the Hittites, the early Iron Age, the Greeks, the Byzantines, the Seljuks, and the Ottomans (Tavmergen & Oral, 1999). This geographical diversity makes Turkey an appealing destination with potential for both summer and winter tourism.

Turkey's primary tourist appeal lies in its coastal attractions—namely the sea, sand, and sun. Over the last twenty years, tourism in the country has evolved into a large-scale industry predominantly concentrated along the western and southern shores. It was not until the 1980s that the Aegean and Mediterranean coastlines emerged as significant destinations for both domestic and international investors. Although the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey cannot substitute for traditional beach holidays, they provide a wider variety of tourism offerings. These areas are rich in historical sites, cultural heritage, and notable natural features. Despite this potential, planners and economists have historically given limited attention to these regions, although some initiatives have begun to promote them through cultural and sports-based tourism development.

Turkey's mountainous regions offer extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation, such as hiking, trekking, and climbing during the summer months, while in winter these same areas host resorts and facilities that support various seasonal sports, particularly skiing. Among the most prominent destinations for mountain and winter tourism are Uludağ, Erciyes, Kartalkaya, and Palandöken. Pilgrimage tourism and spa tourism also have deep historical roots in Turkey (Seckelmann, 2002), though modern spa tourism remains relatively new and continues to operate primarily within the domestic market. The country encompasses a diverse array of geographical settings and attractions, including a Mediterranean climate and scenic coastlines. Furthermore, Turkey possesses a rich historical and cultural heritage, with numerous Christian-era artifacts, many of which originate from the Byzantine period.

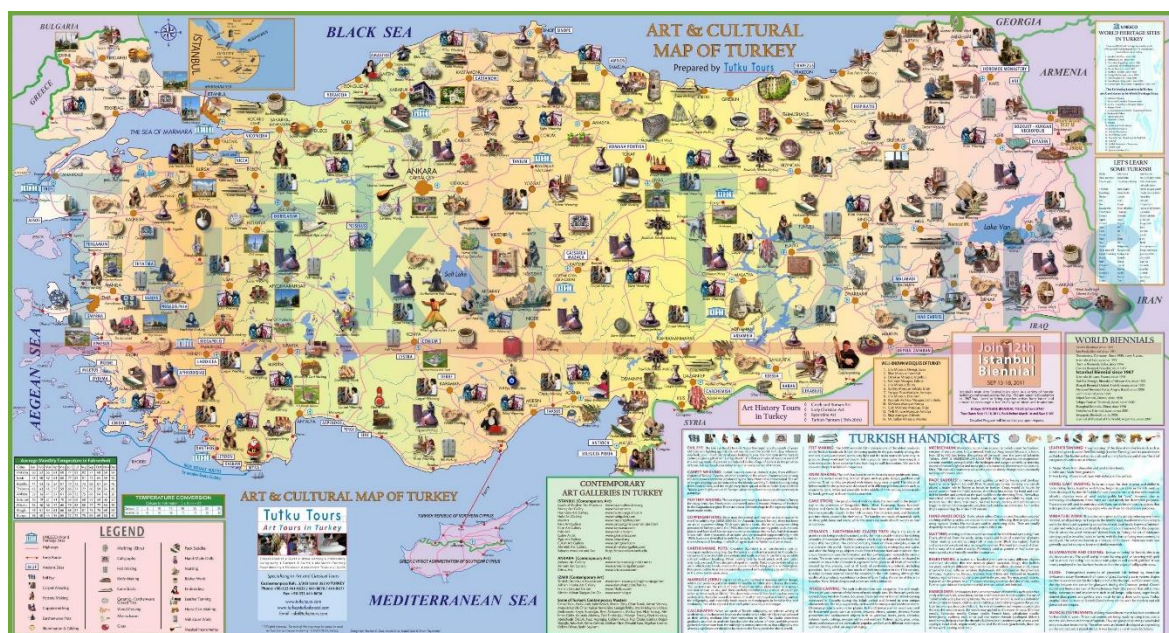


Figure 1. Tourist Destinations in Turkey

a. Academics

Human resource development policies for tourism by academics are aimed at developing and improving the quality and professionalism of the tourism workforce based on competencies and global industry needs (Yurchyshyna et al., 2021). Academics play an important role in providing scientific perspectives, research results, and policy recommendations based on empirical data in the field regarding the level of development of the tourism sector in Turkey (Madera et al., 2017). Through research activities, training, industry-based curricula, and partnerships with the public and private sectors, academics help create human resources with managerial skills, cross-cultural communication, and innovation in tourism services. In addition, academics also serve as knowledge providers and innovation centers that support the development of sustainable tourism destinations, including in the aspects of digitization, cultural conservation, and destination management. Thus, the contribution of academics in the Pentahelix model is not only limited to education and training, but also becomes the main driver of synergy between academic knowledge and industrial practice to increase the competitiveness of Turkish tourism at the international level.

Many universities in Turkey have tourism faculties or study programs that collaborate with local governments and businesses to create new tourist attractions and improve services. Scientific research often informs the development of national tourism policies, as exemplified by the promotion of cultural tourism in Istanbul, historical tourism in Cappadocia, and coastal tourism in Antalya and Izmir. Academics also help strengthen the concept of sustainable tourism by balancing its economic, social, and environmental aspects. They create models for managing destinations that focus on protecting local culture and empowering the people who live nearby. Furthermore, collaboration between academics and businesses helps make tourism more innovative and digital, such as using information technology in reservation systems, digital marketing, and studying tourist behavior (Pencarelli, 2020). The Turkish government can create better marketing plans and reach the right people in the international tourism market with the help of academic research. Thus, the academic field is not only a place where professionals and scientific knowledge are created, but also a link between theory and practice. This makes the Turkish tourism sector more competitive and sustainable on the world stage.

b. Government

The government sector plays a strategic role in the growth of tourism in Türkiye through policy formulation, infrastructure development, international promotion, and service quality improvement. Through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the government promotes tourism as a leading sector that can generate foreign exchange and create jobs. National targets, such as achieving 60 million tourists and US\$60 billion in revenue by 2024, demonstrate the government's commitment to positioning tourism as an engine of economic growth (TTW, 2025).

The progress of Türkiye's tourism is reflected in the increase in the number of tourist visits to 52.6 million tourists and revenues of US\$61.1 billion in 2024 (PMA Group, 2025). To support these achievements, the government continues to strengthen infrastructure through the development of airports, tourist areas, transportation networks, and increased accommodation capacity. In addition, the "Sustainable Tourism" certification program strengthens service standards and ensures the quality of destinations with more than one million certified beds (goturkiye, 2022).

Furthermore, the government is also working to diversify tourism products so as not to be dependent on coastal tourism. The development of cultural, health, ecotourism, and MICE tourism is carried out through thematic policies and strategic promotions managed by the Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development <https://iqtishaduna.com/proceedings/index.php/iicp>

Agency (TGA) (Purnawarman & Nurfadila, 2022). The Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA) is one of the government's promotional agencies that helps improve service quality, create thematic tourism corridors, and brand the country as a global destination (TTW, 2025). The government's role in the Pentahelix framework is reflected in its ability to create a collaborative ecosystem between the business sector, academia, the media, and the community, which ultimately drives the inclusive and sustainable growth of tourism in Türkiye.

c. Business Sector

The business sector plays a very important role in the growth of tourism in Turkey. This includes hotels, transportation companies, tour operators, restaurants, shops, and other services that enhance the tourist experience. Tourism businesses are the ones who really make the tourism ecosystem work. They transform the potential of destinations into goods and services that tourists can use. At the end of 2021, there were more than 14,800 registered accommodations in Turkey. Of these, 5,386 had official permits from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and 9,445 had certification from municipal governments (Mesci et al., 2024).

Turkey's travel and tourism industry contributes significantly to the national economy, accounting for approximately 12% of GDP in 2023 and providing employment for more than 3.2 million people. Revenue from this sector is projected to reach US\$61.1 billion in 2024, an 8.3% increase from the previous year (Routers, 2025). To strengthen competitiveness, businesses are investing in the development of coastal resorts, boutique hotels, and long-term service facilities for health tourists, as well as collaborating with the government in meeting standards through the "Safe Tourism" program, which has been implemented in thousands of tourist facilities (OECD, 2022). Additionally, the business sector plays a crucial role in diversifying tourism products through the development of cultural, health, MICE, and ecotourism, thereby reducing dependence on seasonal tourism (Aktaş Çimen et al., 2024). They also use technology and new ideas to make themselves more competitive. For example, they use digital marketing, online reservation systems, personalized services for tourists, and visitor behavior data analysis to make their products and services more attractive to people around the world.

d. Media

Media helps shape and spread Turkey's image as a tourist destination to people around the world. For example, research shows that Turkish television series have a significant impact on Indonesian tourists' motivation to visit Turkey (ZEREN & ÇAVUŞ, 2025). The study "Social Media and Consumer Purchase Decisions in Tourism: The Case of Turkey" found that active use of social media influences people's decisions about what to buy in Turkey. This is because information, reviews, and user experiences spread quickly through digital platforms (Icoz et al., 2018). In other words, media does more than just share information; it also builds trust, expectations, and the desire to visit.

Digital media, in particular, takes promotion further at low cost and with wide reach. For example, a recent study found that about 80.7% of Turkey's population (about 69.9 million people) uses the internet for an average of 8 hours a day. This shows that digital marketing in tourism has a lot of potential (Armutcu et al., 2023).

Media also helps Turkish tourism products become more diverse and reach more people. For example, a semiotic study of Instagram posts promoting Turkish and Greek destinations revealed that visual marketing through social media effectively attracts the attention of potential users and stimulates interest in visiting (Duran et al., 2022). A related study titled "The Role of Destination Image and Social Media Interaction on Medical Tourists' Intentions to Visit Turkey" shows that social media interaction shapes the image of medical destinations in Turkey and influences medical tourists' intentions to visit the country.

e. Community

Local communities play a strategic role in the development of Turkish tourism because they are directly involved in the management of tourist areas and experience the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism activities. Community involvement in planning and decision-making has been shown to increase public support and strengthen the sustainability of destinations. Studies in rural areas show that greater control over tourism resources increases the social, economic, institutional, and ecological resilience of communities (Altınok, 2024).

Community support for tourism is also influenced by their perceptions of the benefits gained. Research in Manavgat reveals that positive perceptions of economic, social, and environmental impacts encourage greater commitment to supporting sustainable tourism (Yayla et al., 2023). However, despite a high level of theoretical support, actual participation remains limited. For example, only a small portion of the community is actually involved in tourism-related economic activities such as providing accommodation or selling local handicrafts, indicating a need for capacity building and empowerment (Bouncken et al., 2016).

In addition, the community has an important role in diversifying tourism products through the development of community-based tourism, local cultural tourism, homestays, agrotourism, and ecotourism. Factors such as education, income, and social background also influence the community's knowledge and attitudes towards tourism (Khan & Tuncer, 2022).

Within the Pentahelix framework, the community is a key actor that not only receives economic benefits but is also responsible for preserving culture and the environment. Through dialogue, training, and empowerment mechanisms, community involvement is expected to ensure that tourism provides equitable benefits and minimizes negative impacts.

CONCLUSION

The Pentahelix model is the main reason why Turkey's tourism industry has grown rapidly to become one of the best places to visit in the world. A mutually supportive and sustainability-focused tourism ecosystem is created when academics, government, business, media, and society work together. Universities and other higher education institutions play a very important role in tourism by conducting research, generating new ideas, and training skilled workers. The government is a key player in tourism by making rules and helping things happen. Examples include the Turkey Tourism Strategy 2023, building infrastructure, and the GoTürkiye program, which promotes Turkey around the world. The business sector, on the other hand, is the main driver of the tourism economy. It does this by creating new tourism products, investing in digital technology, and improving services so they can compete globally. The media also plays an important role in making Turkish tourism look good around the world through digital campaigns, promotional materials, and partnerships with international influencers. At the same time, local communities act as guardians of cultural values, environmentalists, and key players in community-based tourism that values local knowledge. The combination of these five elements creates a comprehensive tourism governance model that is open to everyone and capable of changing over time. Turkey has demonstrated that tourism success depends not only on natural beauty and cultural heritage, but also on how well different sectors work together. Turkey is able to balance economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors with the Pentahelix approach. This makes it a real example for other countries to follow in terms of developing sustainable and competitive tourism on a global scale.

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