



The Problem of Overtourism in Slow Cities

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the overtourism in slow cities from the perspectives of tourism academics. A qualitative research method was utilized, employing structured interviews. The research was conducted with 15 tourism academics and the participants were selected by purposive sampling method. The study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the causes and consequences associated with overtourism. The research data were analyzed according to the thematic analysis method and the findings were determined. The findings indicate that the impact of social media, inadequate tourism planning, and curiosity about slow cities are among the main causes of overtourism. The consequences of overtourism include environmental degradation, local people's quality of life, and increased traffic congestion. The study proposes several solutions such as limiting tourism supply, reducing promotional activities, and raising awareness among local people to mitigate overtourism. Furthermore, the importance of implementing policies to preserve the unique characteristics of slow cities and ensure their sustainability has also been emphasized.

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INTRODUCTION

People's expectations are evolving and the importance of distance is fading as globalization brings advances in almost every field (Çoşar, 2019). Individuals can now more swiftly journey to their desired destinations. The ease of changing locations has led to a marked increase in tourism participation. During this era, the variety in people's expectations is also noticeable. Those yearning to break free from the chaos of urban life are increasingly drawn to more authentic, tranquil, and less explored destinations (Shang et al., 2020). Slow cities meet the wishes of people who want to get away from the behavior of moving fast and catching up (Yaşar et al., 2023). A slow city represents an initiative to promote sustainability inspired by the slow food movement (Knox, 2005).

Responding to the rapid pace of contemporary life, the slow city movement prioritizes local uniqueness (Pink, 2008), presenting an alternative paradigm for urban development (Mayer & Knox, 2006). It aims to make travel pleasurable, enhance the life quality of its inhabitants, avert the emergence of a monolithic cultural fabric, and maintain cultural diversity (Baghirov et al., 2023). This emphasis on local flavor not only seeks to augment the living standards and experiences of both local people and visitors but also to safeguard the destination's distinctive sense of place, thereby preserving local tradition and identity (Kim et al., 2022). In doing so, slow cities play a pivotal role in promoting sustainability (Park & Kim, 2016). Additionally, the evolution of authenticity perception, as a result of slow city affiliation, has a positive effect on entrepreneurship and economic development (Cicek et al., 2019).

The emergence of negative effects within the slow city movement has sparked new debates (Khan, 2015). At the heart of these discussions is whether these cities have managed to stay true to their foundational aims. Characterized by their leisurely pace, small populations, and dedication to sustainability, local identity, and heritage (Coşar & Kozak, 2014), slow cities are now facing a dilemma. After receiving the slow city label, many have experienced increased tourism, population growth, a rapidly expanding real estate market, and challenges with traffic congestion and overcrowding (Çoşar, 2013; Karadeniz, 2014; Özmen & Can, 2018). These adverse outcomes have led the academic community to reassess the slow city paradigm from various viewpoints. Research by Doğan et al. (2014) has revealed zoning and construction issues in Seferihisar, whereas Dünder and Sert (2018) have underscored traffic, crowding, over-urbanization, and noise issues. Çokal et al. (2020) investigated slow cities through the lens of tourism statistics, finding that tourist numbers in slow cities have indeed risen.

Kurnaz and İpar (2020) state that there is a litter problem in the slow city of Akyaka due to overtourism and that the behavior of tourists is not pleasant. Yüksel et al. (2020) state that overtourism is experienced in the slow city of Akyaka. Genç (2021) states that Seferihisar's tourism is unsuitable for the slow city structure. As seen in the research, it is noteworthy that tourism activities have increased in slow cities, and even the problem of overtourism has started in some slow cities. In this context, this study aims to examine overtourism activity in slow cities. This study, it is aimed to determine the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of overtourism in slow cities.

Literature Review

Overtourism

The concept, which is used as "Overtourism" or "Over-tourism" in the international literature, is referred to as over tourism in the Turkish literature. According to the Turkish Language Association, the word "over" is defined as "more than necessary, too much, more than necessary, severe", while there is no definition of overtourism (TDK,

2024). However, how the word over is defined has content that can emphasize the basic structure of overtourism. In various definitions of overtourism, the connotation of negative situations brought by the concept is emphasized, and the emphasis on the cover is again at the forefront (Koh, 2020). In addition, there is a general belief that overtourism has a global nature (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Overtourism is conceptualized as the excessive number of tourists in a destination (Perkumiene and Pranskuniene, 2019), and definitions are supported by terms such as carrying capacity, sustainability, and disturbance index (Kuscer & Mihalic, 2019). Overtourism is caused by an excessive number of tourists in a destination over a certain period (Agyeiwaah, 2020) and is a concern for many destinations (Ait-Yahia Ghidouche & Ghidouche, 2019). This contributes to the intensification of studies approaching the issue from various angles and offering solutions.

While the drawbacks of overtourism are frequently highlighted, individuals benefiting from the tourism industry at various levels tend to be more open to welcoming additional tourists (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these negative impacts generally result in a shift in residents' attitudes toward tourists, often toward the negative. Additionally, there's criticism regarding the notion that overtourism is exclusively a problem in large cities (Erschbamer et al., 2018). Overtourism can also occur in rural and cultural settings (Koens et al., 2018), indicating that attributing overtourism solely to any specific destination type is inaccurate.

Koens et al. (2018) significantly contributed to clarifying misunderstandings about overtourism by providing detailed insights. According to their findings:

- Although it may seem like a new phenomenon, overtourism results from issues that have existed for a while.
- Overtourism goes beyond mere numbers and encompasses the complexities of managing destinations.
- While its effects may not be uniformly distributed across an entire destination, they could significantly impact specific areas.
- One-size-fits-all solutions cannot tackle overtourism; they need to be customized to fit each location's unique needs and features.
- Overtourism is not limited to metropolitan areas; it can also occur in rural locales and other settings.
- Overtourism's emergence is influenced by multiple factors, not just tourism expansion.

Overtourism is not solely caused by tourism development. During ongoing developments and changes, events like the domino effect occur. In this context, it is necessary to look at the situations that include various reasons that affect and have the potential to affect overtourism to have broader information content on the subject and to reveal the development course of overtourism. Various reasons for the emergence of overtourism in destinations have been suggested by studies. These are (Goodwin, 2017):

- Decreased transportation costs and increased transportation diversity make it easier to move from one destination to another.
- Tourists should not be charged for using infrastructures and public spaces in a destination, and local people should be responsible for maintaining them.
- Increased incentives such as vacation credits can encourage tourists to take vacations, leading to widespread participation in tourism activities.
- Strategies diverting tourists from busy to less busy destinations are not working.

- The local people's opposition to the idea of spreading tourism over a year and their positive attitudes towards intensity.
- Destination management organizations have expressed some reasons for evaluating the tourism position of the destination based on the number of tourists.

Longer lengths of stay, along with shifts in tourist profiles and motivations, contribute significantly to overtourism. The diversification in accommodation options, highlighted by Oklevik et al. (2019), offers more choices to tourists, encouraging longer and more frequent visits. Efforts to simplify border crossings and the expansion of airline transportation, with an increase in the frequency of flights, further facilitate access to various destinations, boosting tourist numbers. The rise in day visitors also exacerbates the pressure on local infrastructure and resources. The widespread use of online evaluation platforms and travel applications, as noted by Lawton (2017) makes it easier for tourists to discover new destinations, increasing visitation. These factors collectively ease the travel process, contributing to the complex challenge of overtourism.

A development that increases the number of tourists is said to expand the middle class and their participation in tourism activities more than before. At this point, within the scope of the sharing economy, which is described as a form of online shopping, people turning to various applications to make their vacations cheaper stands out as a reason that affects overtourism (Duyar & Bayram, 2019; Richardson, 2015). It should be noted that the world population is gradually increasing. As a result of this increase naturally contributes to the rise in the number of individuals participating in tourism activities. In addition, thanks to the positive developments in communication technologies, travel can be planned more easily and quickly, providing individuals with more freedom and increasing the tendency to travel individually. These positive gains for individuals create the conditions for them to travel to more destinations more frequently. At this point, it becomes easier for individuals to access the necessary information about a destination before traveling, especially as social media platforms spread information about destinations more quickly (UNWTO, 2018). Technological developments facilitate individuals' access to destinations and enable destination managers and stakeholders to interact with tourists (Çilesiz & Arıkan, 2020).

Destination-specific overtourism has multifaceted consequences that can significantly affect tourists and local people. While these impacts are predominantly negative, leading to heightened concern and interest in overtourism, they can vary widely between destinations. This variability means stakeholders and tourists in different locations might experience the effects of overtourism to varying degrees. Despite these differences, the consequences of overtourism are generally considered collectively, with the understanding that most destinations will face these challenges at certain stages of their development or during peak tourist seasons. These consequences can include overcrowding, environmental degradation, diminished quality of life for residents, increased cost of living, and changes in the local culture and heritage. As such, managing and mitigating the impacts of overtourism requires tailored strategies that consider each destination's unique characteristics and needs.

The negative consequences of overtourism in a destination are expressed in different ways. These are (Cheer et al., 2019; Capocchi et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2018; Phi, 2019; Cheung & Li, 2019; Singh, 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2019; Sarantakou & Terkenli, 2019; Seraphin et al., 2018):

- Crowding: The influx of tourists to destinations leads to a severe lack of space, making even walking on the streets a challenge for locals. This is a pressing issue that demands immediate attention.

- **Physical and Environmental Destruction:** The increase in resource use and development of facilities in the destination is leading to irreversible physical and environmental destruction. We need to act now to prevent further damage.
- **Air and Noise Pollution:** It occurs with crowding.
- **Decrease in Quality of Life:** The local community bears the brunt of over-tourism, with their daily activities and quality of life significantly disrupted. We must address this situation for the sake of the locals.
- **Traffic:** With the increase in the number of vehicles and people, traffic problems begin to occur in destinations and there are also problems with vehicle parking.
- **Increasing Product Prices:** With the destination's dependence on tourism, consumer goods' prices increase, and the local people are affected by this situation.
- **Negative Comments in Destination Evaluation:** With the increase in negativities caused by over-tourism, the destination structure deteriorates, and negativities in the perception of the destination increase due to conflicts between tourists and local people.
- **Tourist/Visitor Dissatisfaction:** Due to the negativities experienced, visitors' experiences are not realized as they want, and a general dissatisfaction occurs.
- **Local Community Unrest:** Due to the negativities in the destination, unrest occurs in the local community.
- **Problems in Sustainability:** With the overuse of resources, there are various concerns about sustainability.
- **Clogging of Infrastructure:** As more and more people come together and the use of resources increases simultaneously, infrastructure problems arise.
- **Loss of Destination and Local Community Characteristics:** With increasing negative consequences, the destination's and local people's fundamental authentic values are damaged, and degeneration begins.
- **Development of Tourism Phobia:** The increase in the dissatisfaction of local people leads to hatred and rejection of tourists.

Overtourism is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that manifests differently across various destinations and necessitates a comprehensive approach to address the associated challenges. Effective solutions require coordinated efforts involving policies, organizations, institutions, and stakeholder engagement, all supported by careful and strategic planning (Benner, 2019). Overtourism is not an anti-growth phenomenon but is related to how people manage tourism. In other words, tourism offers opportunities for both destinations and local communities. Still, the meaningfulness of this opportunity depends on the ability to create a sustainable set of policies to manage tourism growth. Butler (2017) argues that destinations already suffering from overtourism must increase their resilience by creating new and alternative destinations. According to some experts, the problem with overtourism is not just tourism but also with the management and public authorities. Despite the negativity of overtourism, alternative forms of tourism are being created, and more efforts are being made in promotion and marketing (Ait-Yahia Ghidouche & Ghidouche, 2019). Different opinions are expressed on the policies that should be developed against overtourism.

In terms of supply, many destinations find themselves powerless to stop the influx of tourists, even if they want to. For example, companies, governments, and the private sector often control air travel. A similar structure applies to cruise transportation. Where there is control over tourist numbers, there are conflicts of opinion in many

destinations as stakeholders have different interests. In general, the factors that want to increase the number of tourists to destinations are in a stronger position than those that want to decrease the number of tourists (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Developing an inclusive policy requires full stakeholder participation and consensus.

Several reports have been prepared and presented by different institutions within the scope of policies towards overtourism. In one, the European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism prepared a report analyzing the destinations that can be an example of overtourism and the policies implemented. These policies (Peeters et al., 2018):

- Developing legal regulations for tourists/visitors,
- Directing tourists to different destinations through promotion and marketing activities,
- Planning for issues such as traffic and waste management,
- Raising taxes or price levels,
- Conducting various promotions to reduce seasonality,
- To enact laws to prevent uncontrolled construction and facilities,
- Ensuring stakeholder participation in destination management,
- Stop marketing efforts for some destinations,
- Carrying out activities to improve the quality of life of local people,
- Implement regulations such as green fuel, environmental tax,
- Providing accurate destination-specific information for tourists,
- Conducting monitoring and research studies.

Although the implementation of these policies may differ according to the specific structures of the destinations, making legal regulations for tourists, and directing tourists to different destinations with promotions, traffic, and waste management policies stand out as three common practices. UNWTO (2018), on the other hand, proposed various policies for overtourism in their report. These are:

- Harmonizing destination tourism policies with the structure of the destination,
- Preparing a long-term plan for sustainability,
- Identify the potential consequences of tourism activities on the destination with the participation of all stakeholders,
- Ensuring cooperation between stakeholders,
- To increase the participation of local people in tourism activities,
- Monitoring tourism perceptions of local people,
- Taking concrete decisions on carrying capacity, use of resources,
- Adapting technology to destinations,
- Creating new touristic products and experience content,
- Including tourists in destination tourism policies,
- Making a planning study in advance by making predictions,
- Identify governance models.

According to the report prepared in collaboration with McKinsey&Company and the World Travel and Tourism

Council (2017), there is no general policy recommendation for all destinations. In other words, a highly successful policy in one destination may not yield results in other destinations. In this report, five central policies are proposed to address overtourism. These are:

- Spreading visitors temporally,
- Spreading visitors to different areas within the destination,
- Conducting pricing studies,
- Making arrangements in terms of accommodation,
- Restrictions on transportation and activities.

In numerous reports addressing overtourism, various policy recommendations are put forward to mitigate its impacts. However, a common theme across these recommendations is the recognition that the effectiveness and feasibility of policies can vary significantly between destinations. This underscores the importance of understanding and appreciating each destination's unique circumstances and needs, emphasizing the necessity for tailored policies.

Slow City (Cittáslow)

The term Cittaslow, derived from the Italian word "Citta" (city) and the English word "slow" (calm), translates to "Slow City" (Türkiye Kültür Portalı, 2024). To comprehend the philosophy embedded within the slow city movement, which is an association of municipalities that can join upon meeting specific criteria, one must first understand the slow food movement, often regarded as the origin of this philosophy (Genç, 2021). The slow food movement emerged in March 1986 in Rome, Italy, as a reaction to the opening of a fast-food restaurant near the Spanish Steps, following demonstrations led by Carlo Petrini and a group of participants (Slow Food, 2024). Consequently, it can be stated that the slow food movement garnered significant attention as a social movement opposing the growing globalization of eating habits and food production (Nilsson et al., 2011). Similarly, the slow city movement promotes local and traditional culture, a relaxed pace of life, and an enjoyable lifestyle, much like the slow food movement (Knox, 2005). Additionally, Cittaslow stands out as an eco-friendly movement aimed at improving the quality of life for both visitors and local people while promoting the development of the local area, in alignment with the principles of the slow food movement (Park & Kim, 2015).

By focusing on protecting quality living standards and promoting sustainable development, the slow city aims to minimize the negative effects brought about by the rapid consumption of society and improve people's quality of life (Bayraktar, 2023). Another aim of the slow city movement is to prevent the standardization of the texture of the city and its inhabitants as a result of globalization and to protect the local characteristics of the city (Demirkol & Taşkıran, 2019). The slow city movement, which promotes a lifestyle focused on enjoyment and a relaxed pace, aims to create cities where people can connect, socialize, and thrive in self-sufficient, sustainable environments. These cities prioritize the preservation of handicrafts, nature, traditions, and customs while also addressing infrastructure needs, utilizing renewable energy sources, and embracing the conveniences of modern technology. The movement envisions these cities as a realistic alternative to fast-paced urban life (Cittaslow Turkey, 2024a).

The slow city movement continues to grow with new members joining its international network every day (Özür, 2016). The criteria required for membership in the slow city network include environmental policies, infrastructure policies, urban quality of life policies, policies regarding agricultural, touristic, and artisanal trades, plans for

hospitality, awareness, and education, as well as social cohesion and partnerships (Cittaslow Türkiye, 2024b). These criteria play a significant role in the success of the slow city movement, which is implemented by numerous settlements around the world, offering people the opportunity to live in a more favorable environment (Karataş & Karabağ, 2013). As Özhancı et al. (2012) emphasize, a city that meets these criteria and is designated as a slow city implies that the fabric, color, music, and story of the city are experienced in harmony and at a pace that both residents and visitors can enjoy.

The slow city movement was initiated by Paolo Saturnini in Italy in 1999 and has since spread worldwide (Presenza et al., 2015). As of June 2024, 33 countries and 301 cities around the world are part of the slow city movement (Cittaslow List, 2024). As in the rest of the world, the growing interest in preserved natural habitats, traditional healthy diets, organic agricultural products, renewable energy sources, and high-quality living environments in Turkey, along with the awareness-raising efforts of local governments and non-governmental organizations, has led to the introduction and rapid spread of the slow city movement in the country (Baykal & Ataberk, 2020). The Turkish Cittaslow network was established in 2009, and a total of 25 cities in Turkey have since joined the movement (Cittaslow Türkiye, 2024c).

In summary, the slow city movement emerges as an alternative development vision that strongly focuses on traditions and history while preserving local values (Grzelak-Kostulska, et al., 2011; Radstrom, 2014). Additionally, it is stated that the slow city movement leads to social changes, such as the increase in tourism activities, the promotion of local products, and the reduction of noise pollution caused by vehicles in a region (Özdemir, 2024). The movement envisions development while preserving a city's unique characteristics, structure, arts, cuisine, and social cohesion without causing harm to nature (Süer, 2023). Eşiyok and Öztürk (2023) describe the slow city phenomenon as a social movement and organization that encourages the acceptance of cultural values at the local level and promotes slowness in people's lifestyles. Therefore, it can be argued that the preservation of a region or city's local values, leading to development, is essential to the concept of a slow city.

Overtourism in Slow Cities

In the study conducted by Avcu (2021) on Akyaka and Seferihisar, it was concluded that after the title of slow city, crowding, noise, increase in the number of tourists, pollution, environmental issues, and infrastructure problems were experienced, and popular foods were served and preferred more instead of local foods. After Seferihisar was granted the title of a slow city, the number of migrants and visitors increased, crowding problems occurred, traffic and noise problems increased, construction increased, and real estate prices increased. Natural life has lost its authenticity (Coşar, 2013). In the study conducted by Genç (2021), it was stated that developments in Seferihisar are unsuitable for the slow city structure. These are an increase in the number of secondary housings, a significant increase in the number of pools, going beyond the architectural authenticity of the region, and crowding.

Çokal et al. (2020) observed that in Turkey, the implementation of the slow city concept often prioritizes tourism appeal over sustainability. They found that cities with longstanding recognition as slow cities tend to attract more tourists. In Çıtak's (2016) study of Halfeti, an increase in tourism activities was noted, accompanied by a rise in vehicular traffic and the construction of new buildings inconsistent with the city's original aesthetic, catering to mass tourism. Consequently, noise pollution has become a prevalent issue. Similarly, Akyaka experienced tourism-related challenges, as outlined in various studies. These include a surge in tourist numbers, traffic congestion, ecological

damage from reed cutting for motorized boat tours, and increased nighttime illumination, as indicated in Çıtak's study (2016) and in Doğan et al.'s (2014) investigation of Seferihisar revealed a notable increase in tourism, investments, crowds, and infrastructure strain following its designation as a slow city.

Dündar and Sert (2018) highlighted an increase in visitor numbers in Seferihisar, accompanied by traffic congestion, haphazard urbanization, noise pollution, and environmental degradation. Similarly, Kurnaz and İpar (2020) noted a surge in tourism in Akyaka, leading to heightened environmental pollution and disrespectful visitor behavior. Uslu and Avcı (2020) drew attention to overcrowding, a disconnect from cultural heritage, noise disturbances, and price hikes following Köyceğiz's designation as a slow city. İpek (2021) documented similar issues in Şavşat, including crowding, traffic congestion, pollution during peak tourist seasons, increased tourist numbers, and associated businesses. Oranlı (2022) reported concerns among some participants in Perşembe regarding the potential negative impacts of obtaining the slow city designation, particularly related to increased tourism activity and its possible detrimental effects on the region. Lastly, Yüksel et al. (2020) found adverse effects in Akyaka following its recognition as a slow city, including overcrowding, traffic congestion, pollution, exceeding carrying capacity, and diminished quality of life for residents.

In addition to the studies above, various news websites also report news that draws attention to the overtourism in slow cities. "The slow city Seferihisar is going fast in tourism: Seferihisar, Turkey's first slow city, is spending the tourism season with 100 percent occupancy" (Habertürk, 2015), "We peaked in tourism last year. There was great interest in Gökçeada." (AA, 2021), "Yalvaç district of Isparta, the first member of the Slow City Association in the Western Mediterranean, entered the route of travel lovers with its cultural richness." (Sabah, 2016), "Intense demand for the slow city Perşembe." (CNNTÜRK, 2020), "Vize district attracts those who want a holiday intertwined with nature and history." (TRTTÜRK, 2020), "The slow city of Şavşat became a favorite of tourists this summer." (Trend, 2019), "In Eğirdir, the municipality plans to attract tourists by promoting the title of slow city." (AA, 2017), "Gerze district, declared a slow city a year ago, is experiencing an intensity of visitors in the summer season." (AA, 2018), "Köyceğiz is experiencing active days with the acceptance of "slow city" at the International Cittáslow Executive Board Meeting held this year in Greve in Chianti, Italy, and the approach of the tourism season." (İHA, 2019), "Ahlat district became a popular destination for tourists with the acceptance of the "slow city" membership this year." (AA, 2019), "The membership of Arapgir, a favorite of local and foreign tourists, to Cittáslow (Slow City) mobilized the district's tourism." (HABERTÜRK, 2022).

Method

This study comprehensively examines the phenomenon of overtourism, its causes, and its consequences from the perspective of tourism academics. Since gathering in-depth information about overtourism from the perspective of tourism academics is essential, this study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research allows for a detailed understanding of individuals' thoughts on a specific subject or situation (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the structured interview technique, which is a qualitative research method, was utilized. The structured interview technique aims to learn the views of the participants within the scope of the questions determined by the researchers. In this interview, which proceeds in a certain order, the questions are predetermined (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). Accordingly, an interview guide was developed to facilitate the process.

This interview form, designed to gather information on the causes and consequences of overtourism in slow cities,

includes three demographic questions and five specific queries. These questions were formulated based on extensive research, including studies by Avcu (2021), Çoşar (2013), and Genç (2021). The questions included in the interview are as follows;

1. How do you evaluate the slow cities where overtourism and its consequences are experienced? Is this a typical situation for you? If this situation is normal, what are your reasons for seeing it as normal? If this situation is not normal, why do you not see it as normal?
2. What could be the reasons for overtourism and its consequences in destinations with the title of slow city?
3. What might be the consequences of overtourism and its consequences in destinations with the title of slow city?
4. What measures can be taken to prevent overtourism and its consequences in destinations with the designation of slow city?
5. How do you interpret those destinations with the title of slow city, where overtourism and its consequences are experienced, carry this title? If you find this situation correct, what are your reasons? If you find this situation wrong, what are your reasons?

Purposive sampling was employed in this study, wherein participants were selected based on specific criteria deemed crucial for the research objectives. The study targeted academics specializing in tourism, chosen for their theoretical understanding of slow cities and overtourism phenomena. 15 such academics were interviewed, a sample size considered adequate in qualitative research when data saturation is achieved through repeated interviews and responses become repetitive (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Marshall, 1996). Creswell (2013) suggests that a participant range of 5-25 is generally sufficient for interviews, thus affirming the adequacy of the 15 participants selected for this study.

Between 30.07.2023 and 30.09.2023, the participants were reached by e-mail. The main reason for reaching the participants by e-mail is to ensure that the participants can convey their thoughts comfortably. Participants can express their thoughts without being under pressure. The participants participated in the research on a voluntary basis. After the interviews were obtained, the data were checked. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Isparta University of Applied Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board, with the decision dated September 1, 2022, and numbered 04.

The responses were subjected to thematic analysis, a methodical approach to identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following Braun and Clarke's guidelines, the analysis proceeded through several stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, definition, naming, final analysis, and report preparation. Two expert academicians oversaw the process to ensure rigor and validity. This systematic approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the data and the extraction of meaningful insights aligned with the research objectives.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. Of the participants, eight were male, and seven were female. Their academic titles ranged from research assistant to professor.

Table 1. The Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant	Gender	Title
P1	Male	Instructor
P2	Female	Associate Professor
P3	Male	Professor
P4	Female	Associate Professor
P5	Female	Doctor Lecturer
P6	Female	Doctor Lecturer
P7	Female	Research Assistant
P8	Male	Associate Professor
P9	Male	Research Assistant
P10	Male	Associate Professor
P11	Male	Doctor Lecturer
P12	Female	Professor
P13	Male	Research Assistant
P14	Male	Associate Professor
P15	Female	Associate Professor

Findings

As a result of analyzing the responses obtained from the participants, five main themes were identified. These main themes are overtourism in slow cities, causes of overtourism in slow cities, consequences of overtourism in slow cities, measures to prevent overtourism in slow cities, and the title of a slow city. The main theme of overtourism in slow cities includes the participants' evaluations of the phenomenon of overtourism in slow cities. Table 2 shows information on the main theme of overtourism in slow cities.

Table 2. The Main Theme of Overtourism in Slow Cities

Main Theme	Sub Themes	Participants
Overtourism in Slow Cities	Over-tourism is unusual in slow cities	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15
	Overtourism is both usual and unusual in slow cities	P7, P13

Most participants, except P7 and P13, express that experiencing overtourism in a slow city is unusual. Slow cities are characterized by their emphasis on slowness and a relaxed pace of life, which contrasts sharply with the fast-paced nature of overtourism. Therefore, participants view overtourism as incompatible with the fundamental principles of a slow city. For instance, P1 remarks, "It is never usual. The characteristic of a slow city is being lost. It should have certain characteristics when it is called a slow city." Similarly, P4 expresses sadness at discussing overtourism in slow cities, stating, "It is quite sad that overtourism is being discussed in slow cities. It is completely against the philosophy of being a slow city. Of course, this situation should not be usual." Moreover, P12 emphasizes the contradiction between slow city and overtourism, stating, "Slow city and overtourism are separate, completely contradictory concepts. You cannot talk about overtourism in a slow city and a slow city where there is overtourism." These sentiments highlight the consensus among participants regarding the paradox of overtourism within the context of slow cities.

P7 and P13, conversely, perceive the occurrence of overtourism in slow cities as a contradictory situation. They acknowledge the unusualness of experiencing overtourism in slow cities, given their characteristic emphasis on tranquility and a slower pace of life. However, these participants also recognize that the branding process associated with the title of a slow city may inadvertently contribute to overtourism. They suggest that while the inherent nature of slow cities contradicts overtourism, the designation of a slow city may inadvertently attract increased tourism

activity. P7 elaborates on this perspective, stating, "Actually, it can be considered both ordinary and extraordinary. I see it as ordinary because it can become interesting. In other words, as soon as a region that receives the slow city feature makes promotions in this sense, it can turn into a center of attraction arising from curiosity. It is not ordinary. Because it is against the nature of a slow city. With the onset of overtourism activity, the characteristic of calmness is lost."

The main theme of the causes for overtourism in the slow cities is expressed as why there is overtourism in the slow cities. Table 3 shows the main causes of overtourism in slow cities.

Table 3. The Causes of Overtourism in Slow Cities

Main Theme	Sub Themes	Participants
The Causes of Overtourism in Slow Cities	Slow city curiosity	P1, P7, P9, P13
	Longing for rural life and nature	P2
	Covid-19 pandemic	P3, P7, P8, P12
	Lack of tourism planning	P4, P9, P11, P14, P15
	Social media impact	P5, P6, P10

The curiosity created by the title of slow city leads people to visit these places. People who want to discover new places other than the usual holiday destinations are curious about slow cities. They want to see closely what differences they have from other cities. For this reason, they contribute to the increase in tourism activity in slow cities. P1 says, "Since they do not know what the concept of a slow city is, they may want to go and see it." P7 states, "The adjective of slowness may arouse curiosity. Another reason that leads people to a slow city is the longing for rural life and nature. People want to get away from the negativities in their urban lives. They are looking for a slow place where they can relax instead of classic holiday destinations. Destinations known as slow cities can respond to these desires of people." P2 says, "The dream of meeting with the past that they will never have again in the place where they live and the longing for rural life cause people to turn to slow cities intensely."

According to the participants, the COVID-19 pandemic may be one of the reasons for overtourism in slow cities. With COVID-19, people have moved in the tendency to go to safer and slower places with the desire to get away from crowded environments. Therefore, interest in slow cities has increased. P3 says, "Especially after the pandemic, demand for less crowded areas increased. This increased the tendency towards slow cities." P8 states, "The pandemic has a great impact. People turned to less crowded places with the pandemic." P12 says, "The pandemic pushed people to live more isolated. For this reason, there is an increase in the demand for slow cities."

The fact that tourism planning is not entirely successful also affects the overtourism in slow cities. The lack of planning for managing tourism in the tourism sector makes it impossible to prevent the increase in tourism activities in these cities. It also harms the management of tourism flows. P4 says, "Inadequate tourism planning is one of the reasons." Finally, social media influence also influences over-tourism in slow cities. Creating and sharing posts about slow cities on social media directs people to these cities. P6 states, "I think that slow cities are extremely popular with the posts made by social media users. Social media posts become viral and make slow cities more frequently visited."

The main theme of the consequences of overtourism in slow cities focuses on the negative impacts of overtourism in slow cities. Table 4 provides information on the main theme of the consequences of overtourism in slow cities.

Table 4. The Consequences of Overtourism in Slow Cities

Main Theme	Sub Themes	Participants
The Consequences of Overtourism in Slow Cities	Crowding	P1, P7
	Deterioration of the quality of life of local people	P2, P4, P6, P9, P11, P12, P15
	Environmental degradation	P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P8
	Degradation of culture	P3, P5, P6
	Traffic problem	P11
	Air pollution	P11, P14, P15
	Loss of the slow city title	P2, P5, P7, P10, P13, P15

With the overtourism in slow cities, cities lose their slowness and become crowded. The increasing number of people naturally causes slow cities to become congested. P7 says, "The features that are necessary for the slow city disappear, and the crowd of people living in the city becomes crowded." With overtourism, the quality of life of local people living in slow cities is negatively affected. Because with overtourism, resources are insufficient. In addition, both environmental and cultural deterioration can be experienced with possible negativities caused by tourist behavior. P2 says, "The quality of life in the local area is deteriorating." Overtourism increases environmental degradation in cities. This is realized both through the destruction of resources and environmental pollution. P8 states, "Environmental pollution is inevitable. Destination's tourism resources are likely to be damaged."

Overtourism has a negative impact not only on the environment but also on the culture of the slow city. P3 says, "Of course, the culture may also deteriorate." Traffic problems and air pollution are experienced due to overcrowding and overtourism. P11 says, "There is traffic density." P14 states, "Air pollution is inevitable." The loss of the title of slow city is also seen as one of the consequences of overtourism. P5 says, "It may lose the title of a slow city."

The main theme of measures to prevent overtourism in slow cities includes how overtourism should be prevented in slow cities. Table 5 presents information on the main theme of measures to prevent overtourism in slow cities.

Table 5. Measures to Prevent Overtourism in Slow Cities

Main Theme	Sub Themes	Participants
Measures to Prevent Overtourism in Slow Cities	Enforcement of restrictions	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P14, P15
	Distribution of density to certain points of the city	P2, P3
	Restriction in tourism supply	P2, P15
	No advertising	P5, P13
	Become conscious	P6, P11
	Enforcement of rules and policies	P10, P11, P12

The main measure often emphasized to prevent overtourism in slow cities is implementing restrictions. By restricting the number of tourists, overtourism can be prevented in the slow cities. In this way, supply and demand can be equalized. Even excessive demand can be reduced. P14 says, "By ensuring a balance between supply and demand, the tourists coming to the city can be taken under control. In this way, the carrying capacity will not be exceeded." In addition to implementing restrictions, another measure is to distribute the density in the slow cities to different parts of the city. With this practice, the negativities of overtourism can be reduced in slow cities. P3 states, "The crowd can be distributed to certain points of the city." In addition to restricting tourism demand, the tourism supply in slow cities must also be controlled. P2 states, "Restrictions on tourism supply (limitations on the number of facilities and bed capacity) should be applied."

Among the precautions, it is also suggested that tourism should not be advertised on social media and

communication channels. P5 says, "There should not be too much advertising on mainstream platforms." Raising awareness among the local people in the local community is also one of the measures. P6 states, "Local people should be made aware." Rules and policies should be implemented without any compromise in the slow cities. P10 states, "All necessary rules of a slow city should be implemented without compromise."

The main theme of the title focuses on whether or not it is right to maintain the title of slow cities experiencing overtourism. Table 6 shows information on the main theme of the title of slow city.

Table 6. The Title of Slow City

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Participants
The Title of Slow City	It is wrong for slow cities experiencing overtourism to carry the title of slow city	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15

All of the participants think that the cities experiencing overtourism should not have the title of a slow city. Stating that the characteristics of the slow city and overtourism do not overlap, the participants emphasize that with overtourism, slow cities lose their authenticity. P4 mentions, "If there is overtourism, it should definitely not be a slow city." P7 said, "If there is a title of slow city in regions where overtourism is experienced, this title should be reviewed. It is impossible to talk about a slow city if there is overtourism." P9 states, "It is wrong for destinations that have lost their slowness to carry this title."

Conclusion and Discussion

This research examines the relationship between slow cities and overtourism comprehensively, unlike other studies that examine the problem of overtourism in slow cities in a destination-specific manner. Without specifying the destination, important findings have been obtained on why and how overtourism occurs in slow cities, what needs to be done to solve overtourism, and the consistency of the concept of a slow city.

It was determined that as a result of overtourism, environmental degradation occurs, resources are depleted, and pollution arises. A similar conclusion was highlighted in the study conducted by Kurnaz and İpar (2020). In their evaluation of overtourism in Akyaka from the perspective of local merchants, the authors noted that the most commonly raised issue by the merchants was the problem of waste and litter, which resulted in environmental problems as a consequence of overtourism. Additionally, this study identified that overtourism leads to overcrowding in destinations. A similar finding was reached in the study by Doğan et al. (2014), where they observed that in the slow city of Seferihisar, urban development boundaries expanded, construction increased, large hotels were built, and due to excessive demand, overcrowding occurred, resulting in inadequate capacity. Therefore, it can be concluded that overtourism has negative effects on the environment. These effects can be categorized under environmental pollution and overcrowding. Both in this study and in other studies on overtourism in the literature, similar findings regarding this issue have been reported.

There are distinct differences that set slow cities apart from other destinations. Tourists who wish to closely observe these differences often travel to such destinations, leading to an increase in tourism activity in those areas. This study highlights that the curiosity of tourists toward slow cities emerges as one of the causes of overtourism. Driven by this sense of curiosity, tourists seeking to observe the differences between slow cities and other cities firsthand contribute to the rise in tourism activity in these destinations. Genç (2021) notes that following Seferihisar's

inclusion in the slow city network, tourism activity in the region increased, resulting in undesirable outcomes for a slow city, such as increased construction, regional inflation, and population growth. Therefore, while curiosity about slow cities may stimulate tourism activity in the area, it can also pose a threat to the environmental integrity of the destination.

In this study, participants suggested that to prevent overtourism in slow cities, the concentration of tourists should be dispersed across different parts of the city. This is because overcrowding in a single street or area within a slow city can limit mobility within the city. In a related study, Yüksel et al. (2020) conducted interviews with tourism stakeholders in Akyaka and found that the carrying capacity of slow cities increases during the tourism season, leading to extreme overcrowding in the region. This situation has been found to negatively impact the quality of life for residents and cause environmental damage. Similarly, participants in this study indicated that overtourism leads to excessive crowding in slow cities and that this density should be spread across different areas of the city. Therefore, it can be stated that distributing the concentration of tourists to various parts of a slow city can reduce overcrowding, enhance the quality of life for residents, and minimize environmental damage caused by excessive crowding, thereby preserving the integrity of the slow city.

On the other hand, participants expressed that if a slow city is experiencing overtourism, it should no longer be considered a slow city. They suggested that if a slow city faces overtourism activity, its status as a slow city should be reconsidered, and it is inappropriate for destinations that no longer exhibit the characteristics of tranquility to hold the slow city title. Soylu et al. (2023) conducted interviews with representatives from slow cities such as Gökçeada, Köyceğiz, Seferihisar, and Akyaka, and participants noted that during peak tourism seasons, these destinations resemble other high-demand destinations. In this study, participants emphasized that this resemblance contradicts the philosophy of slow cities, which advocates for destinations that maintain their uniqueness rather than becoming replicas of one another. Therefore, it can be argued that if overtourism occurs in a destination with a slow city title, the uniqueness of that destination is compromised, and its status as a slow city is negatively affected.

Theoretical Implications

As can be understood from the information in the literature section of this study, it is seen that the concepts of slow cities and overtourism are used significantly in the field of tourism. It can be stated that the concept of slow cities, which has an important place in protecting the unique structure of tourism destinations, is welcomed with interest by tourists and as a result of this interest, there is a tourist flow to slow cities. With the intense flow of tourists to tourism destinations with the title of slow city, overtourism may occur by exceeding the carrying capacity in the region. Since the emergence of overtourism in tourism destinations with the title of slow city can be considered as a negativity, it is very important to resolve this negativity.

In line with this importance, it emerges as a necessity to take into account the views of tourism academics who have a theoretical understanding of the phenomena of slow cities and overtourism. This study provides a comprehensive perspective on this issue by taking into account the evaluations of tourism academics about the slow cities exposed to overtourism. The research clearly reveals the impact of overtourism on the slow cities and the views of tourism academics on this issue.

Within the scope of this study, it is possible to evaluate the findings under five main headings. Firstly, the

participants evaluated the phenomenon of overtourism in slow cities. In this evaluation, the participants mostly characterized overtourism in slow cities as unusual. Secondly, the participants made evaluations about the reasons for overtourism in slow cities. Participants stated that overtourism problems are experienced in slow cities due to tourists' curiosity about slow cities, longing for rural life and nature, COVID-19 pandemic, lack of tourism planning and the impact of social media. In particular, participants stated that lack of tourism planning is one of the main reasons for overtourism in slow cities.

Thirdly, it is seen that the participants made evaluations about the consequences of overtourism in slow cities. Participants stated that factors such as crowding, deterioration of the quality of life of local people, environmental and cultural deterioration, traffic problems, air pollution and loss of the title of slow city are the consequences of overtourism in slow cities. The participants stated that as a result of overtourism in the slow cities, the culture of the local people has deteriorated and the destinations in question have lost the title of slow city.

Fourthly, it is seen that the participants made evaluations on how to prevent overtourism in slow cities. Participants stated that overtourism in slow cities can be prevented by implementing restrictions, distributing the density to certain points of the city, restricting tourism supply, not advertising, raising awareness about slow cities and overtourism, and implementing rules and policies related to slow cities. Most participants stated that restrictions should be implemented in order to prevent overtourism in slow cities. Finally, the participants were asked about their views on whether or not they think that the cities subject to overtourism should bear this title. All of the participants stated that it is wrong for the cities experiencing overtourism to carry this title.

Practical Implications

This study offers several practical contributions to the related literature. Firstly, the contradiction between slow cities and overtourism seems to be an important problem for tourism destinations. This study can guide the necessary initiatives to prevent overtourism problems that are likely to be experienced in slow cities in the future. Secondly, it may be possible to talk about practical contributions specific to the evaluations made by the participants regarding the problems of overtourism in slow cities. When the participants were asked to evaluate the phenomenon of overtourism in slow cities, they stated that they saw this problem as unusual. This shows that the overtourism experienced by the slow cities is not something that is expected by tourism academics. In addition to this, most of the participants pointed to the deficiencies in tourism planning as one of the reasons for the overtourism in slow cities.

In this direction, it can be ensured that investment plans are created in a way not to exceed the carrying capacity in slow cities experiencing overtourism, and efforts should be made to develop strategies and policies related to these plans. In addition, tourism academics have stated that overtourism in slow cities can disrupt the culture of the local people and these destinations can lose the title of slow city. In this regard, it may be possible to consider preserving the local culture by ensuring the preservation of the unique structure of slow cities exposed to overtourism. Preserving the local culture in such slow cities can also ensure the preservation of the culture of the local people who continue their lives within the existing culture. In particular, it is important to preserve the qualities that give these destinations the title of slow city and to make efforts to make this title sustainable. With this effort, it can be ensured that the slow cities protect their own titles. In addition, it is seen that the participants mainly stated that restrictions should be applied in order to prevent overtourism in slow cities. In this direction, not accepting tourists above the carrying

capacity and restricting vehicle entrances to the cities can be seen as a solution in the short term, especially during peak periods of demand in slow cities that are exposed to overtourism.

For long-term solutions, possible future tourism investments and advertising-promotion activities for the destination may be restricted. Finally, considering the opinions of most of the participants that slow cities exposed to overtourism should not carry this title, it can be concluded that tourism academics have a certain level of awareness on this issue and have expressed their concerns about the issue. For this reason, since the current study reveals the damage caused by the slow city-overtourism contradiction to tourism destinations that receive the title of slow city, it may be possible that tourism stakeholders, especially tourism academics, may be more sensitive to this problem.

Some recommendations developed according to the results obtained from the practical implications of the research are as follows:

- In order to prevent overtourism in the slow cities, the participants mostly stated that restrictions should be implemented. For this purpose, restrictions on factors such as investment in touristic facilities, traffic density, advertising and promotional campaigns can be realized in slow cities where overtourism is likely to occur.
- The quality of life of local people may deteriorate as a result of overtourism in the slow cities. In order to prevent this situation, it is necessary to implement rules and policies to protect the local culture and traditional lifestyle and to ensure that local people have a comfortable pace of life. These policies can be realized by avoiding practices that are likely to harm the slow city philosophy.
- Traffic problems can also arise as a result of overtourism in slow cities. The use of public transportation can be encouraged in these destinations. In this direction, investments can be made for the rail system rather than public transportation vehicles such as minibuses and buses that will increase traffic density in road transportation.
- The unique structure of slow cities, which opposes the crowded population and protects the local culture, draws attention. This structure can be damaged when such destinations are exposed to overtourism. For this reason, it is important for city managers to implement rules and policies to prevent overtourism in slow cities.
- It is important for local people to be informed about the slow city in order to prevent overtourism in the destination. Because, people who are informed about this issue can make efforts to prevent practices that may pose a threat to the philosophy of the slow city. Therefore, in order to raise public awareness in slow cities, training can be provided on what the slow city philosophy is and what should be done to protect this philosophy.
- Social media is an important factor in the overtourism activity in slow cities. Some of the newly discovered and not so popular cities are becoming well-known due to the influence of social media. This is one of the reasons for overtourism in slow cities. For this reason, it may be possible to reduce the amount of social media promotions of slow cities and thus prevent them from being over-visited.
- Participants indicated that overtourism in the slow cities can lead to environmental degradation. These degradations can occur in the form of unplanned settlement construction, unplanned urbanization, overcrowding, and industrialization. Therefore, in order to prevent environmental degradation, permanent migration and residence permits could be restricted.
- According to the study findings, environmental pollution also emerges as an important problem in the slow

cities. In order to prevent this situation, it may be possible to carry out studies to reduce the intense flow of visitors to slow cities. An example of such efforts could be more limited advertising and promotional activities.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The main limitation of this study is that only the views of tourism academics are included. In future research, the problem of overtourism in the cities of slow can be addressed comprehensively with a study that includes the participation of various stakeholders of tourism. The results can be expanded with studies using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Declaration

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission

**T.C.
ISPARTA UYGULAMALI BİLİMLER ÜNİVERSİTESİ
BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU
TOPLANTI KARARLARI**

TOPLANTI TARİHİ	TOPLANTI SAYISI	KARAR NO
01.09.2022	116	04

4. Üniversitemiz Turizm Fakültesi, Turizm Rehberliği Bölümü Öğretim Üyesi Arş. Gör. Emre YAŞAR'ın "Sakin Şehirlerde Aşırı Turizm Sorunsalı" isimli bilimsel araştırma ile ilgili etik kurul izni talebi.

Arş. Gör. Emre YAŞAR'ın 08.08.2022 tarih ve E.40590 sayılı dilekçesi ve eklerinin incelenmesi sonucunda; bilimsel araştırmanın ekteki şekliyle yapılabilmesi için gerekli iznin verilmesinin uygunluğuna,

Oy birliği ile karar verildi.

İmza
Prof. Dr. Mustafa AVCI
(Kurul Başkanı)

İmza
Prof. Dr. Murat ÖZTÜRK
(Üye)

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KARAKURT
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İmza
Doç. Dr. Ö. Kürşad
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İmza
Ufuk MÜLAYİM
Hukuk Müşaviri V.
(Kurul Sekreteryası)