A REVIEW ON THE QUALIFICATION, PROBLEMS OF TOURIST THERMAL ENTERPRISES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS OF REGIONAL ECONOMY.

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Abstract

Thermal tourism facilities are thermal springs and climatic cure centers that soil-, underground-, marine-, and climate-derived natural therapy elements are used as therapeutic factors, and the facilities that incorporate units established with the aim of therapy and recreation.

The qualities of therapeutic elements in the facilities, medicinal evaluation of such elements, and the issues such as the principles on the protection of the natural characteristics of such elements and the environment that such elements are present, medicinal and technical conditions during therapy period, the qualifications and quantity of the medical personnel at the facilities must be well-defined and supervised. Therefore, it is necessary for tourism investors and operators of such facilities to receive permission from the relevant public institutions associated with healthcare and tourism. Otherwise, they go beyond the scope of supervision and lose their qualities that enable them to serve as therapeutic facilities.

Thermal tourism accommodation facilities must be operated and certified together with the principal accommodation facilities founded with the aim of tourism, and the type and class of the accommodation facilities to which such thermal tourism facilities belong must be specified and entitled accordingly.

Thermal tourism has become important in the world in recent years. It has become a tool to eliminate regional disparities in terms of accelerating and complementary effects of regional development. Therefore, the contribution of thermal tourism to the regional economies will be discussed in the last part of the study.

Keywords: *thermal facility, thermal spring business management, regional development, regional differences*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the human being, whose consciousness of wellness and living a healthy life is developing continuously, demand to reach health care services, even if outside their homeland, in order to ***keep and get healthy*** on the one hand and on the other hand ***to obtain brand new and most effective treatments***. In other respects, nowadays, the ever-aging world population aims ***to live healthy evening of life***.

Nowadays, health care in the modern sense focuses on ***"providing continuance of the sanitary living conditions"*** rather than recovering from the illness. Therefore, health policies have changed as the ***"continuation of wellness"***. Although the classic holiday concept with sea, sand and sun trilogy is still the main area of the tourism sector, it gives its way to a contemporary and healthy recreation concept, which is characterized by ***SPA and wellness****. For centuries, water has been a primary element of cultural change. Cultural life started with the use of water and aquatic resources by people. At the present time, due to the facts that natural ***thermal water*** is the oldest and the most well-known treatment method, the interest in natural treatment methods and ***the thermal market consists of patients between 25-75 years old and healthy people***, the interest in this sector has been increasing.

In this study, a brief evaluation on the overall ***historical development*** of the thermal establishments, ***the concept and functions of touristic thermal establishments,*** and ***the overall legal framework of health tourism in Turkey***, ***problems*** of thermal establishments in Turkey and ***the contribution of thermal establishments to the regional economy*** will be carried out.

1. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE THERMAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Although ***health tourism*** and ***thermal tourism*** are concepts that need to be perceived differently, when they are considered in terms of their origins, it is seen that they are paronymous and do not have any differences except for the ***customer profile***. From this point of view, while examining the history of thermal tourism, ***to start*** to the inception of the subject ***from health tourism*** will be appropriate in terms of clarifying the matter (Sandikci, 2008:26-28).

In terms of wellness and healing, human beings' willingness to benefit from the hot healing waters, the subject of thermal tourism, ***date back to very old times***. Researches show that, ***in the early ages***, thermal waters are used for ***religious purposes*** as well as ***health purposes***. ***The Egyptians, Romans, and Greeks*** benefited from thermal waters through the before Common Era. Romans, in particular, have attributed the ***therapeutic*** effects of thermal waters to ***gods***. They built ***sculptures and temples*** to the places where thermal water resources were discovered. The most important reason for the development of the thermal centers in the ***Romans and Greeks*** was ***religious beliefs***. The use of thermal waters in the Romans has ***social reasons*** such as being used for ***military*** purpose and Roman soldiers' accommodation, as well as religious beliefs. ***In the Common Era period***, ***with the emergence of kingdoms***, we see that the royal families have placed emphasis on thermal waters. ***After the eighth century***, the operation of thermal waters was ***monopolized by the church***, and a thermal movement ***specific to the aristocracy*** emerged.

As a result of the scientific researches conducted in Europe in the ***18th and 19th centuries***, ***use of SPA treatment in accordance with its purpose in medicine*** became possible. Thus, ***the concept of SPA medicine*** emerged, and thermal centers ***came under the rule of medical academies in Eastern Europe countries***, mainly in ***France and Italy***.

Thermal resources were also used in ***the first age states of Anatolia***. The Turks used ***Bursa and Yalova hot springs*** as from their first arrival in Anatolia. ***The Seljukians*** established the initial complexes serving ***thermal tourists*** rather than patients in the world. ***During the Republic of Turkey period***, the first step pertaining to the thermal resources was taken by ***Mustafa Kemal Ataturk*** through investment in ***Yalova hot springs resorts***. However, ***until the 1980s***, the subject of thermal waters was neglected and operated with the mentality of ***"bath management"***. Thermal tourism establishment in Turkey in the later years became an attractive sector due to the ***recreational activities*** as well as a ***thermal treatment center***.

Studies on ***health and thermal tourism*** in terms of ***increasing the tourism revenue in Turkey and supporting the regional developments*** were turned into a ***course of action*** within the framework of ***2007-2023 Thermal Tourism Master Plan*** (CultureTourism Minist, (t.y.): 1).

2. THERMAL TOURISM CONCEPT AND ITS FUNCTIONS

2.1. Thermal Tourism Concept

In the globalizing world, an increase in international cooperation, freedom of travel and travel opportunities; a convenience in transportation; the emergence of health care developments in different parts of the world; and the emergence of both individual and budget-related difficulties in healthcare financing have led to the development of ***health tourism*** in the world.

The problems arisen by industrialization and urbanization these days have negative effects on human and public health. Labor and production capacity in unhealthy societies is decreasing. In order to preserve human health and to increase productivity in labor and production, the use of clean air, sun,

healing thermal waters, and climate facilities, which are natural resources of tourism, are among the ***health tourism policies of governments***. ***Health tourism*** in this context contain within itself; ***thermal health tourism, medical tourism, old age tourism, accessible tourism concepts***. Accordingly, health tourism and thermal health tourism concepts are developed (SATURK, t.y.:2, Sandikci, 2008:9).

Health tourism, in a few words, is a visit to a country other than the homeland in order to get ***protective, therapeutic, rehabilitating and health promotion services***. Health tourism is a sector that allows health organizations to develop by using the health-purpose potential of international mobility. The tourists have high ***expectations*** of health tourism as they have both a treatment and holiday purpose. Accordingly, ***the added value they create*** is also high.

Thermal tourism is aimed at protecting and improving the health of people and society in order to maintain a healthy life. With curing rheumatism, circulatory, and respiratory tract etc. diseases; relieving stress and physical fatigue; and physical care features it is one of the most important parts of health tourism. ***Thermal tourism*** within this framework; is a movement of tourism to conduct curing applications of mineralized thermal waters and muds, in the vicinity of the spring and with environmental and climatic factors, together with supportive treatments such as exercise, physical medicine, and rehabilitation under the supervision and program of expert physicians, in order to make a positive contribution to human health.

Other concepts related to thermal tourism include; (Sandikci, 2008: 10-15).

- ***Cure***

To benefit from SPA, sea and climate assets within the framework of certain rules, through the philosophy of healthy living and being treated, and for fun. The cure application is performed under a certain time interval and under the supervision of a doctor since it is a ***stimulation and compliance treatment***.

- ***Spring Treatment***

It is a treatment system where natural treatment elements such as soil, underground and sea-born mineral waters, gases, peloids (muds) and climatic elements are applied in a curing-style together with the regional climatic possibilities and other treatments considered necessary.

- ***Balneotherapy***

It is the use of natural treatment factors such as thermo-mineral waters, peloids, and gases for medical purpose together with bath, drinking and inhalation methods.

- ***Climatotherapy***

The systematic, dose-adjusted, cure-style application of climatic factors such as air temperature, humidity, intensity and speed of the wind, and solar radiation.

- ***Hydrotherapy***

Cure applications with fresh water. Generally applied via cold water. Accordingly, almost 20^0C water is used. With the thermal effect occurred in this way it happens as first the vasodilation of the peripheral veins and then the vasoconstriction. The metabolism acceleration, referred to as blood circulation gymnastics, is only applied to patients with heart disease and hypertension. Application types of hydrotherapy are bath, shower and compress.

- ***Thalassotherapy***

Cure applications with sea water (thalasso) and other nautical assets.

- ***Peloidotherapy***

Use of peloids (muds), which are organic and/or inorganic substances, the result of natural geological and/or biological phenomenon, as a balneotherapy method.

- ***Aromatherapy***

It is a kind of therapy that relieves people and eliminates the tension via smell obtained by means of the especially collected various plants, herbs, roots and resins.

- ***SPA***

It means "***water through health***" and a name given to the water therapies applied by the Romans until now. Any kind of ***water and mud applications*** are included in the scope of SPA.

- ***Curist***

Thermal tourist and ***curist (those visiting the thermal facilities for the purpose of health)*** are two different terms usually perceived as the same***. Curists*** often visit the thermal facilities ***compulsorily*** due to ***health problems*** and stay longer. Whereas ***thermal tourists*** are those who consider taking advantage of thermal springs and climate values for the benefit of ***recreational purposes***, and ***spending pleasant time as well as investing in their health***.

2.2. Functions of Thermal Tourism

Health tourism in Turkey base on ***thermal tourism*** virtually. The fact that thermal tourism is a touristic movement aimed at rehabilitating, recreating, entertaining people and changing place reveals that ***thermal tourism has different functions***. These functions emerge as ***health, economic and socio-cultural functions*** (Sandikci, 2008: 23-26).

Health Function

Despite the technological developments in the field of medicine, the emergence of different forms of treatment and the introduction of different drugs, the cures applied in the thermal tourism centers are nowadays confronting us as the most popular treatment methods. According to some surroundings, it has been argued that the best treatment for the curing of certain diseases and disabilities, healing of various pains, resting, unwinding stress and mental fatigue, and rehabilitating is the ***cure applications*** in the thermal tourism establishments.

Economic Function

Although it is considered that thermal health tourism is not evaluated properly in our country, its contribution to the economy is crucial. Services within the scope of thermal tourism such as treatment, accommodation, physical rehabilitation, recreation, and entertainment are all considered as a source of income. Especially in thermal tourism facilities, incomes related to health services are higher than other tourism receipts. In addition to ***those lodging*** in these facilities, it is also known that ***overnight tourists*** fetch a significant amount of income. For example, considering that every year ***150,000 medical tourists go to India***, and ***in 2012, health tourism income is expected to be 1.2 billion pounds***, and ***in Hungary 2 billion dollars are brought-in only from dental treatment***, how important is the ***health tourism*** can be understood.

Socio-Cultural Functions

Thermal tourism aims people's physical and mental health. Thus, to increase the number of healthy people in society and to give them a positive point of view is desired. The fact that the health expenditures in thermal tourism are covered by the social security institutions has been a guarantee for the people who benefit and has increased the demand for health tourism.

3. THERMAL TOURISM IN TURKEY; LEGAL FRAMEWORK, CENTERS, ADVANTAGES, AND PROBLEMS

3.1. Legal Framework

Thermal tourism facilities in Turkey are under strict control. The legal regulations were made in ***Turkish Tourism Law***. Turkish Tourism Law is organized according to the national and international resources. The provisions related to ***National Settlement and Travel Freedom in Article 23 of the***

1982 Constitution of the National Resources constitutes the general characteristics of our tourism law. Again, Turkish tourism and ***the thermal tourism enterprises*** were taken under legal control with ***various laws, constitutions, and regulations*** that constitute the national legal basis of Turkish Tourism Law. Here, ***"Regulations Regarding Certification and Qualifications of Tourism Facilities"*** are included within the scope of the issues relating to thermal plants and thermal tourism in Turkey. According to this, it is pointed out ***that "the definition of the facility" in Article 16 of the relevant Regulation*** will be made ***in accordance with the document received from the Ministry of Tourism*** in relation to her facility introduction. However, within the scope of the enterprises operating in the tourism sector, thermal tourism facilities shall submit ***all kinds of information and documents requested by the Ministry of Tourism on time.*** It is indicated that they are obliged to inform the Ministry ***about changes in document capacities***. In this article, ***the facility introduction*** will be made in accordance with the document to be obtained from the Ministry of Tourism and ***the right information*** will be given ***in terms of consumer rights.*** Again***, in Article 17 of the Regulation***, thermal tourism establishments cover the whole ***hygiene (medical knowledge) and the regulations*** about obeying ***health rules. Article 29 of the Regulation provides information on the definition and containment of thermal facilities.*** (Regulation different 05.03.2011 /27865 R.G, Andaç, 2006: 19-29, 61-106).

3.2. Thermal Tourism Centers in Turkey, Advantages, and Problems

According to the facilities, which are within the scope of tourism investment in our country or in which tourism managing is performed, and details of these, ***tourism facility types*** are diversified as follow; ***essential accommodation facilities, refreshment and entertainment facilities, health and sports facilities, congress and exhibition centers, recreation facilities, rural tourism facilities, featured facilities, complex facilities. Thermal tourism facilities***, the subject of this study, are under the heading ***of health and sports facilities*** in this classification. Thermal touristic facilities described here are; ***hot springs, drinking water and climate curing centers in which soil, underground, sea, and climate-borne natural treatment factors are used as therapeutic elements, and the facilities including units established here for therapeutic and recreational purposes.*** The characteristics of the therapeutic elements in these facilities and their evaluation in medical terms, characteristics, preservation, medical and technical conditions during treatment, the quality and quantity of medical personnel are evaluated by the Ministry of Health. ***In case of tourism investment and establishment certificate requests,*** should be applied to ***the Ministry of Culture and Tourism*** with ***the permission slip taken from the Ministry of Health.*** (Andaç, 2006: 134-161, 151-154, Andaç, 2011:57-61).

Turkey, which is ***the first seven countries in the world*** according to rich geothermal resources and potential, ***ranks first in Europe.*** Thermal waters in our country with their flows, temperatures, various physical and chemical properties have further superior qualities compared to the ones in Europe. In our country, ***their temperatures are over 20^0C*** and there are ***more than 1500 sources whose flow rates vary between 2-500 lt / sec.*** Most of these resources are located ***at the seaside***, and some of them are located in ***the middle-high mountainous and forested areas. Of more than 1,500 thermal springs*** in Turkey, only ***around 5% are being used*** and this shows that this potential is not used well and the loss of great value is experienced. It is known that thermal resources in our country are mainly operated by ***municipalities***. Even though private entrepreneurs have increased their investments in recent years, ***the share of the private sector in thermal facility investments is quite low.*** (Sandıkçı, 2008: 41).

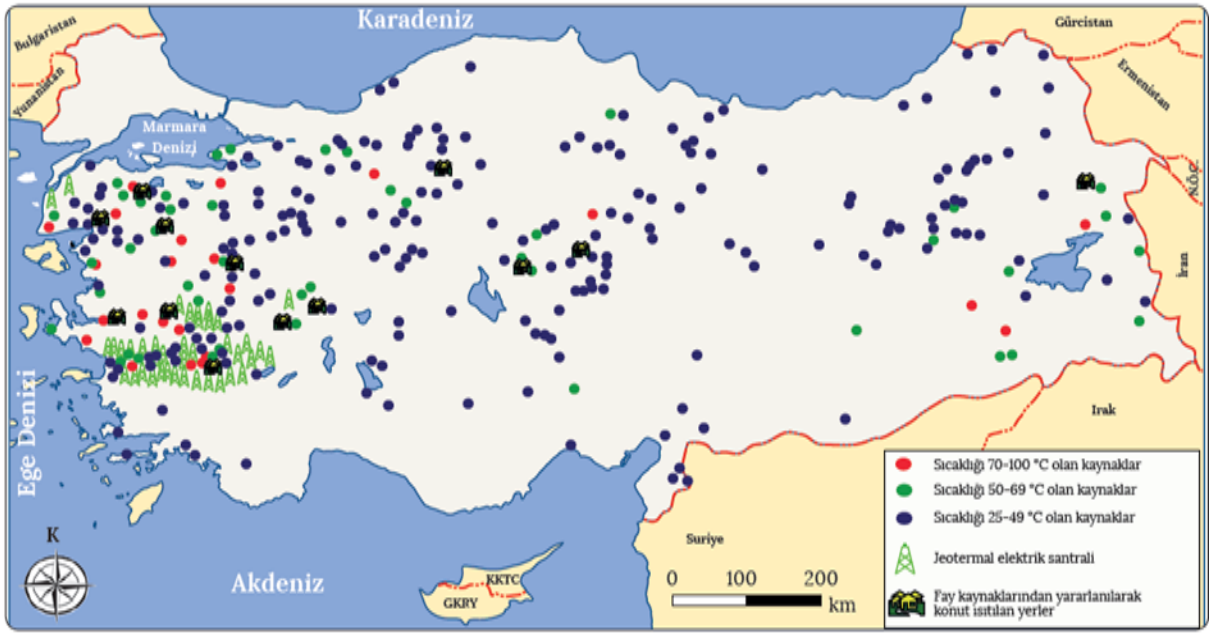


Fig. 1. Thermal Waters Map in Turkey

The thermal waters map in Turkey is shown on the map above. On the map, it is seen that the thermal sources are located especially in South Marmara and Aegean Region. Thermal waters whose temperature is between ***70 and 100 ^{0}C*** are almost negligible in other regions and are still in Aegean and South Marmara Region. It is seen that the thermal waters between ***25 and 49 ^{0}C*** have spread throughout the country and they are ***located in the Aegean and South Marmara regions. Furthermore***, it is seen that all of the geothermal ***electric power plants*** are gathered in ***the Aegean Region***.

When we look at the map of thermal regions and centers in our country, we mainly see that thermal centers are gathered in four regions. Currently, there are 65 thermal tourism centers and around 200 SPA facilities in our country. ***25% of SPAs*** in Turkey are privately owned. Depending on the richness of this resource, we can say that we have an advantage ***in health tourism, which is for therapeutic purpose.*** Turkey ***with 1300 estimated total number of thermal springs and over 2000 (two thousand) of healing waters*** rank among the top 5 of the world's geothermal resources. ***Economically beneficial thermals*** are mostly gathered ***in the Aegean region. The advantages and problems*** of thermal tourism establishments in our country are as follows (Akbulut, 2010: 38-41, 48).



Fig. 2. Thermal Zones and Centers in Turkey

The advantages of thermal tourism establishments in our country are as follows in general; **1.** Flow rates of thermal waters are high, **2.** They are suitable for curing applications in terms of melt mineral values and temperature values, **3.** They are located at the seaside and medium-high mountainous area as geographical location, **4.** Turkey's ***12-month tourism capacity***, the desired occupancy rate of the facilities, easy integration with other alternative types of tourism, the rapid repayment of the cost of the facility that integrates with the recreation and cure centers can be counted among them, **5.** The Aegean region is important in terms of thermal diversity, and especially Denizli serves modern tourism, **6.** Marmara Region is one of the most favorable and developed regions in terms of health tourism.

This time, when we want to talk about ***the disadvantages or problems*** of thermal tourism establishments in our country, the situation occur as follows: **1.** ***To preserve*** the existing resources and ***the area*** of thermal establishments and ***their environmental status*** vary in time ***in terms of sustainable tourism and local development***. In other words, like ***environmental changes with new settlements and facilities, or the drying of the river bed.*** **2.** Because the agriculture, services and industry and other kinds of tourism come to the fore in the Aegean and Marmara regions, where the thermal springs of Turkey are established, thermal capacity cannot be adequately assessed. **3**. Touristic thermal establishments are operated mainly by the municipalities in our country. ***More than 90% of thermal facilities are under standards*** due to experience, ***budget and regulatory bottlenecks*** of local administrations. It is difficult to develop this problem without solving these problems. **4.** Publications, statistics, and data on thermal tourism are limited. **5.** Universities, non-governmental organizations, and local authorities have limited efforts in thermal tourism. **6.** The local residents are not conscious.

Here, in terms of thermal tourism, sustainable tourism, and local development is extremely important due to the fact that ***the existing resources and environmental locations are opened to new settlements and the source is not protected by the reasons such as drying the stream bed.*** Namely; ***nowadays, studies have made it necessary to understand the scope of corporate social responsibility with all dimensions of the scope of enterprises. The concept of corporate social responsibility emerges as a***

mechanism in the process of regulating the relations between commercial organizations and socio-cultural structure, which cannot be put into a legal framework. (Tamer, 2019: 115-116). This serious problem encountered in terms of thermal tourism management reveals that ***the necessary legal arrangements are not yet completed.*** For this reason, the legal regulations related to the sustainability of the environment and the use of resources should be completed quickly and in this process, enterprises have to activate ***the corporate social responsibility mechanism*** as mentioned above.

4. THERMAL TOURISM'S EFFECT ON ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN TURKEY

Tourism is a social activity that is mostly handled from the economic aspect. The economic effects of tourism are considered to be important due to their significant income-generating and foreign currency earning characteristics. At the end of the 20th century, with its dynamic and economic characteristics, tourism has become a starting point in solving the national and international economic problems and overcoming bottlenecks. The positive economic effects of tourism are: **1.** The effect on the balance of payments, **2.** The income-generating effect, **3.** The effect on infrastructure and superstructure development, **4.** The effect on other economic sectors, **5.** The effect on employment generation, **6.** The effect on eliminating interregional economic imbalance. The effects on ***interregional balanced growth*** are summarized as below (Andaç, 2001: 77, 88).

Economic development and social development aim to ***minimize interregional development disparities.*** Although tourism activities do not have adequate resources and development opportunities in agriculture and industry in terms of eliminating interregional imbalance, it will be possible to develop a balanced and effective development of the tourism sector as a result of the implementation of a planned and effective tourism policy.

According to the results of ***the Adana sample***, ***which is one of the studies conducted to investigate the economic effects of tourism expenditures on the regional development***, in general, considering that it covers ***the thermal tourism enterprises***, the results are as follows (Kızıldemir and Sarıışık, 2018: 138-140); Considering the expenses made by tourists, it is revealed that domestic tourists spend less than foreign tourists. The highest spending is made by American tourists; while the lowest spending is the native tourists. When the expenditures are examined, goods and services such as clothing, tobacco-cigarettes, souvenirs, car rental in the first row, food and beverages in the second row, accommodation in the third row and transportation expenditures in the fourth order are taken. Tourists ***made an average of 6 nights and an average of 1578 TL per person per day.*** They spent ***9% of this for accommodation, 21% for eating and drinking, % 7 for culture and entertainment, 54% for other goods and services, 7% for transport, and they reserved 2% of them as goods to take to their countries*** and for health. As a result of the research conducted for ***2015, the number of tourists arriving was 833,368*** and ***a total of 1.31 billion TL***. (1 $ = 3.8 TL) contributed to Adana economy. Considering that the services sector contributed ***approximately 21 billion TL*** in the Adana economy in 2015, it is concluded that ***tourism contributed 3% to the services sector with 1.31 billion TL. Considering the direct contribution of 3%*** and the indirect and stimulating effects of tourism, it can be thought that the effects are ***much higher.*** As a result, it is possible to say that the tourism industry has a positive effect ***on regional development.***

CONCLUSION

In our country, where around 1,500 thermal water resources are available, this potential is only used in ***around 5%*** and taking into account the contributions of health tourism to the regional development and services sector, it reveals that the necessary benefit is not provided from this sector to the national economy. For this reason, ***measures should be taken to revitalize*** thermal health facilities, and it should be ensured that they can ***answer the expectations of international standards.***

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