

Factors Influencing Tourists' Participation in Rural Tourism Activities

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism has emerged as a significant alternative tourism type contributing to rural development and national economic growth. In both developed and developing countries, the growing desire to escape urban life, spend time in natural and tranquil environments, adopt healthier lifestyles, engage with local culture, and participate in outdoor recreational activities has substantially increased demand for rural tourism. This study aims to identify the demographic and socio-economic factors influencing tourists' participation in nature-based rural tourism activities in Mersin, Türkiye—a province with considerable natural potential for wildlife observation, rafting, mountaineering, running, and hiking. Data were collected through face-to-face surveys conducted with 271 tourists visiting Mersin. The Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to analyze the data. The findings indicate that participation in nature-based rural tourism activities is higher among tourists under the age of 35 (63.9%), males (55.4%), individuals holding at least a university degree (60.8%), single individuals (60.0%), households with fewer than five members (53.8%), and those allocating 10% or more of their income to tourism expenditures (64.1%). The results suggest that younger, better-educated individuals and those with a higher share of tourism expenditure are more likely to engage in rural tourism activities. These findings provide valuable implications for market segmentation and the development of targeted marketing strategies in rural tourism destinations.

Keywords: Rafting; mountaineering; hiking; Chi-square; Mersin