

MEASURING THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF TOURISM WITH TOURISM EXPENSES: AN APPLICATION IN THE TRA2 REGION*

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Abstract

Tourism mobility can play important roles in ensuring development on a regional basis. The present study was conducted to uncover the effects of tourism on local economies in the TRA2 Level II Region (i.e., the cities of Ağrı, Ardahan, Iğdır, and Kars). Rich natural and cultural assets, history, geography, and tourism potentials (e.g., mountaineering, transhumance, and faith) are untouched in the region. To make use of these potentials, the present study determined the contribution of tourism income to the regional economy by analyzing the expenditures of the visitors coming to the region with the regional expenditure model. A total of 448 survey forms were applied to obtain the opinions of the visitors coming to the region, and 30 survey forms were applied to obtain the opinions of the accommodation establishments. It was found that the visitors spent the most during their stays in the region on the accommodation category with 203.883.954 TL and 85.627.277 TL on food and beverages. It is considered that determining which sectors the expenditures are concentrated on will help the state and investors for making more accurate investments and resource allocation for tourism in the region in the future. If the common problems identified in the sector in the region can be solved, there is a high expectation that tourism will develop the region economically.

Keywords: TRA2 Region, Regional Development, Expenditures

JEL Codes: R10, R11, R15

TURİZMİN BÖLGESEL EKONOMİK ETKİLERİNİN TURİZM HARCAMALARI YOLUYLA ÖLÇÜLMESİ: TRA2 BÖLGESİ'NDE BİR UYGULAMA

Öz

Turizm hareketliliği bölgesel bazda kalkınmanın sağlanmasında önemli rol oynayabilmektedir. Bu çalışma, TRA2 Düzey II Bölgesi'nde (Ağrı, Ardahan, Iğdır, Kars) turizmin yerel ekonomilere etkisini ortaya koymak için gerçekleştirilmiştir. Zengin doğal ve kültürel varlıkları, tarihi, coğrafyası, dağcılık, yaylacılık, inanç gibi turizm potansiyelleri Bölge'de bakir vaziyettedir. Bu potansiyellerin değerlendirilmesi amacıyla çalışmada, Bölge'ye gelen ziyaretçilerin harcama analizi yapılarak turizm gelirinin Bölge ekonomisine katkısı bölgesel harcama modeliyle belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bölge'ye gelen konaklamalı ziyaretçilerin görüşlerini almak üzere 448, konaklama işletmelerinin görüşlerini almak için ise 30 anket formu uygulanmıştır. Ziyaretçiler Bölge'de buldukları süre içerisinde en fazla harcamayı 203.883.954 TL ile konaklama kategorisine ve yiyecek-içeceğe 85.627.277 TL yaptıkları tespit edilmiştir. Harcamaların hangi sektörlere yoğunlaştığının belirlenmesi, Bölge'de ilerleyen dönemlerde turizme yönelik yapılacak olan yatırımların ve kaynak tahsisinin daha isabetli ve doğru bir şekilde yapılması konusunda devlete ve yatırımcılara yardımcı olacağı düşünülmektedir. Bölge'de sektörün tespit edilen ortak sorunlarının çözülebilmesi halinde; turizmin ekonomik anlamda Bölge'yi kalkındıracağı beklentisi yüksektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: TRA2 Bölgesi, Bölgesel Kalkınma, Harcamalar

JEL Kodları: R10, R11, R15

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is among the fastest-growing sectors on a global basis. Tourism is considered a social need today with the improvement in living conditions people's desire to see places they wonder about and their tendency to visit are increasing. For this reason, the number of people participating in tourism activities and their expenses are increasing with each passing day. The fact that tourism is an economic and social activity makes positive contributions to the tourism economy and social life of countries. Tourism, which is important for the development of countries, plays important roles in eliminating regional inequalities that stem from income distribution and social welfare. In developing countries, the underdevelopment of the industry directs these countries to the service sector, and the evaluation of tourism potential is considered an important policy tool for solving problems that emerge from socio-economic and regional inequalities. Tourism activity continues with policies within the scope of sustainable tourism. The number of tourists increases with accurate tourism planning and income is generated. Also, migration is prevented by employing individuals all year round. Tourism is especially important for small Anatolian cities (Şeyhanlıoğlu and Kınır, 2021, p.620). Tourism contributes to the growth of regional economies, providing a source of income for both resident households and local firms. This is particularly relevant for developing and the least developed countries (Incera and Fernandez, 2015, p. 11). The tourism sector can have vital importance for developed countries (Ersin Silik and Kızanlıklı, 2020, p. 3021). One of the most important economic effects of tourism is that it revitalizes a country or region by expanding its trade volume. The consumption activities of tourists in the countries they visit both inject income into the regional economy and contribute to the national income of the country with the added value it creates (Ünlüönen et al., 2009, p.149). The tourism sector is it is an important component of many sectors, ranging from the hotels and restaurants sector where it is dominant, to food and beverages and transport, where its influence is also strong. Similarly, investments in diverse sectors contribute to the development of tourism, from infrastructure development, the provision of basic public services such as water and sanitation, and capacity building in the services sector, to institutional strengthening in terms of tourism-sector governance (Banerjee et al., 2018, p. 1298-1299).

The TRA2 Region (Ağrı, Ardahan, Iğdır, Kars) covered by the study has negative socio-economic conditions and the economy depends on agriculture and animal husbandry. However, the Region's geographical and strategic location, important transportation corridors, and border gates with four countries (Georgia, Nakhichevan-Azerbaijan, Iran, and Armenia) are important factors in the development of the tourism sector in the region. The region is one of the areas suitable for tourism, where tourism potential is high and many types of tourism can be developed especially winter tourism, faith tourism, and nature tourism. One of the most important values that come to the forefront in terms of tourism is Mount Ararat in

the region, with the traces of Noah's Flood and Ark, which are the subject of the holy books. Mount Ararat has an important potential for religious tourism, mountaineering, and nature tourism. The presence of national parks, biodiversity (the area is located at the point where Anatolia-Iran and the Caucasus meet, one of the 34 important biodiversity centers on a global basis, and also has 11 world-class important plant areas, 13 important bird areas and 22 important nature areas with Turkey's most important biodiversity center), the presence of Ani, an archaeological site with a history of 5000 thousand years, one of the largest and most important ancient cities (registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2016), the 18th-Century Ishak Pasha Palace (Turkey's second greatest structure after Topkapi Palace), the important potential that can create opportunities for tourism in the Region all make the area important to evaluate the region from this perspective. However, the tourism sector is not made use of sufficiently in the area. Regional imbalances can be reduced by effectively utilizing the tourism potential in such regions. For this reason, tourism is an important issue that needs to be focused on for the economic development of the area.

When it is considered that the income of the tourism sector is provided by visitor expenses, the purpose of the present study was to uncover the extent of the expenses of the visitors during their stay in the city or cities they are in, in the area where there are significant differences in terms of development, on which items and in what proportion these expenses are made, and to provide data on the area related to the tourism sector, and to evaluate the contribution of tourism to the area by determining the income provided. For this purpose, the scope of the study consisted of visitors coming to the TRA2 Region cities (Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, and Ardahan) and accommodation businesses (licensed tourist businesses, guesthouses, municipality-certified businesses, apart-hotels, etc.). Through the regional expenditure model that was established based on the data obtained from the accommodation sector, the total number of tourists coming to the region in a year was determined, and the income earned from accommodation according to the types of annual overnight stays, tourist night stays, and types of hotel businesses were reached. Based on these accommodation data, the expenses of the visitors in other expenditure categories were determined. The fact that the income obtained from tourist expenses in the region was determined with the help of the data obtained from accommodation facilities and that the present study is the only one conducted to examine the economic dimension of tourism in this sense in the area, made the study important and unique. The study is also important in terms of guiding the tourism stakeholders of the region when determining policies for the development of the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many international studies in the literature investigating the contribution of tourism to the regional economy and its connections with other sectors. Although there are limited studies in the national



literature conducted to measure the economic contributions of tourism in regions and show its connections with other sectors and leaks, the literature mostly focuses on the importance of tourism in regional development and reducing interregional development differences. The survey method was generally used to obtain data and expenditure rates were evaluated in previous studies and multiplier and input-output methods were used in some studies (Archer and Owen, 1972; Archer, 1982; Archer, 1995; Archer and Fletcher, 1996; Kılıçlar, 1998; Sağlık, 2011; Bozdağlar and Emeagwali, 2016; Terzioğlu and Gökovaı, 2017). In his study, Kocabıçak (1996) examined the yacht tourism market and investigated the economic effects of this market on other sectors by using the survey method. In his study “Economic Impacts of Tourism”, Stynes (1997) mentioned what the economic effects of tourism might be, worked on methods to predict these impacts, and focused on how measurement, evaluation, and interpretation could be performed. In his thesis “Economic Effects of Tourist Expenses on the Local Development Process (Alanya Model)”, Erdem (2001) reported the distribution of the expenses of tourists in Alanya according to expenditure items for 90 days in the survey conducted on accommodation facilities. In his study, Unur (2002) presented a model proposal to measure Turkey’s active foreign tourism revenues. Also, in Unur’s (2004) study conducted on “Economic Effects of Tourism”, the methods used to measure the primary (direct) economic effects of tourism were discussed and the validity of these methods for measuring tourist expenses was discussed for Turkey and the multiplier methods used in measuring the secondary (indirect and induced) effects of tourism were examined and their strengths and weaknesses were discussed. In his study, Akış (2007) reported that the total number of foreign tourists coming to Alanya was \$1.464.686 and that a total income of \$1.379.734.210 was obtained from these tourists, with \$942 per capita. In his thesis study, Durgun (2006) investigated regional tourism and its contribution to the regional economy with a survey directed to hotel operators and the public in the city of Isparta and reported that tourism was not the leading sector alone in the economic development of the city of Isparta, but its contribution to the regional economy is positive and it plays important roles in eliminating the interregional imbalance. In his study, Yıldız (2007) reported data from agencies in the Lakes Region (Burdur and Isparta) through a survey. In light of the findings, a model was developed in which the alternative tourism potential of the Lakes Region could be evaluated in a dynamic model in the development of the region. Tunçsiper and Kaşlı (2008) showed the importance of thermal tourism in their study by arguing that tourism activities could be considered an important tool in local economic development. For this purpose, three separate survey forms were developed for accommodation, food and beverage, dowry, and souvenir businesses, which are directly related to tourism activities, and a total of 38 business managers were interviewed. In their study, Baruah and Sarma (2016) determined that expenses were an important tool for reducing poverty, development, and encouraging employment, and investigated the per capita expenditure levels and which items were spent by examining tourist expenses in Northeast India. In their study, Dzikitiandvan der Merwe (2017) evaluated the spending

patterns of Zimbabweans who came to South Africa and traveled from South Africa to visit friends and relatives. For this purpose, 200 surveys were administered to Zimbabweans who traveled from and to South Africa by volunteers at two stations in 4 months in 2015 (September-December). In their study, Kızıldemir and Sarıışık (2017) determined the importance of tourism in the city economy by evaluating tourism activities in terms of regional development by obtaining the opinions of local stakeholders through 453 surveys. They concluded that tourism activities had economic effects in Adana and supported the agricultural and industrial industries that were more effective in Adana's economy. Also, Kızıldemir and Sarıışık (2018) applied a 391 tourist expenditure survey scale to determine the average expenditure of incoming tourists taking into account tourist data in 2015 and reported that the average expenditure of incoming tourists was 1578 TL per capita, and as a result of multiplying the number of incoming tourists by the average per capita expenditure, approximately 1.31 billion TL/346 million \$ ($\$1 = 3.8\text{TL}$) directly contributed to Adana's economy. When it is considered that the services sector was approximately 21 billion TL in 2015 in Adana's economy, they determined that tourism made a direct contribution of 3% with 1.31 billion TL. In the same city, Oğuz, Kızıldemir, and Eker (2018) evaluated the effects of tourism on the provincial economy in a later period by having the opportunity to compare the study data with 2015 data, and tourists' expenses were examined through a survey. As a result of the study, the average tourist expenditure was found to be 2.232 TL per person, and as a result of multiplying the number of incoming tourists and the average per capita expenditure, approximately 2.44 billion TL/642 million \$ ($1 \$ = 3.8 \text{ TL}$) directly contributed to the economy of Adana considering the indirect and stimulated effects of tourism. They also reported that approximately 2.44 billion TL would contribute to Adana's economy. In their study, Çakır and Sandalcılar (2018) determined the spending behaviors of visitors to the Rize Ayder Tourism Region and the contributions of tourism to regional development and the regional economy.

EXAMINING TOURIST EXPENSES BY USING THE EXPENDITURE RATIO METHOD

When the situation is evaluated from the perspective of country economies, it is not always possible to fully measure the economic effects of tourism in terms of micro and macro factors. The tourism sector affects many other sectors with its structure and is also affected by many other sectors (Şahin and Şahin, 2014, p.195). For this reason, the economic effects of tourism are calculated with various economic models and methods (Roney, 2011, p. 82). The economic effects of international tourism are measured with the same methods in every country. This allows standard comparisons to be made among countries. The main indicators that are taken into account for these measurements are tourist numbers, expenses, bed capacity, employment, etc. OECD publishes an annual tourism report covering member countries and comparable data on member countries (Roney, 2011, p.82). Quite different opinions and various methods have been



developed among researchers because of the lack of data on how the income impact in tourism must be measured (Barutçugil, 1986, p. 54).

Tourist expenses make up the most important foundation of the economic effects created by tourism. Various statistical analysis methods employ primary and secondary data to determine tourist expenses the most preferred of which is to survey a group of tourists selected by sampling method, representing the population, to determine how much tourists spend on which goods and services. Then, the averages of the figures are taken for each group of goods and services and the resulting values are multiplied by the number of tourists in the main group. Another method is to determine how much change the money that enters the economy through tourism causes in income, employment, sales amount, and tax revenues (Unur, 2004, p. 115). Frechtling reported that eight basic methods can be used to measure the economic effects of tourist expenses (Frechtling, 2006, p. 30). The economic effects of tourism are discussed in the literature under two headings based on the classification made by Frechtling; methods used for measuring primary effects and methods used for measuring secondary effects. The first of these methods is used to measure the primary effects of tourism, in which the primary/direct incomes obtained as a result of direct spending of tourists by purchasing goods and services in a touristic region are measured. These are listed as observation of tourist expenses, field study, bank records, residual income, seasonal difference, satellite calculation, expenditure ratio, and cost factor method. The circulation of the expenses of tourists in the economy as a result of various transactions causes indirect/secondary and induced effects. Methods employed to measure the secondary effects of tourism on a region or country are considered multiplier models and input-output analyses.

Among these methods, primary and secondary data are used in the Expenditure Ratio Method. The following stages are followed in the application of this method (Roney, 2011, p.84).

- **The First Stage:** The income of the accommodation businesses is determined with the help of secondary data (e.g., tax records).
- **The Second Stage:** Tourists' expenses are determined through surveys.
- **The Third Stage:** Total expenses obtained through the survey are compared to accommodation expenses that are also obtained with the survey.
- **The Fourth Stage:** Total tourist expenditure is found by multiplying the accommodation revenues (i.e., expenses) obtained in the first stage by the ratio found.

According to Frechtling (2006), the validity of the method depends on the completion of the following criteria (Frechtling, 2006, p.32).

The sample size must be large enough so that the ratio of total expenses to accommodation expenses is accurate.

- The response ratio of the survey must be at least 70%.
- The data remembered by the participants in the field study must not distort the calculated ratio.
- It must not be considered that the ratio obtained as a result of the field study always remains the same and the field study must be repeated in the following years.
- It must be ensured that the room revenues of the accommodation businesses are accurate for the year in question.
- Participants only report their total expenses in the region in the field study, which shows the total tourist expenses. For this reason, it must not include other expenses.

The expenditure items that can be considered tourism income are hotel, restaurant, and cafeteria expenses, expenses for entertainment, recreation, and cultural activities, all kinds of transportation expenses within the country, food and beverage expenses, daily tour expenses, expenses for personal vehicles, clothing, souvenirs, expenses for goods and jewelry and other expenses for rent, gasoline, energy, and sanitary services (Ünlüönen et al., 2009, p. 211). It was reported in the literature that there are deficiencies and inaccuracies in the methods employed in most of the studies. In this regard, it was emphasized that there is no reliable method that can fully show the economic contribution of tourism in a country (Unur, 2004, p. 114).

METHOD

The TRA2 Level 2 Region (i.e., Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, Ardahan), which is the subject of the present study, has a significant tourism potential where various tourism activities can be performed. For this reason, the purpose of the study was to determine the income provided to the region in connection with the tourism sector by uncovering the extent of the expenses of the visitors during their stays in the city/cities they visit, in which items and in what proportion these expenses are made, in the region where there are significant differences in terms of development, to determine the importance of tourism in terms of development and to evaluate its contribution to the region. Since the visitors who were staying in businesses operating in the accommodation sector were taken into account in the sample calculation of the present study, it was assumed that a distinction was made between day trippers and tourists. The economic effects created by visitors coming and staying in the region are limited to the primary economic effects of tourism, which are measured by tourism expenses in the region. Reasons such as the fact that it is not easy to access the data in Turkey and there are economic limitations, the lack of reliable data in state institutions on a provincial and regional



basis, lack of resources on the subject, and time are the factors that limited the study outcomes. In this respect, another important issue was that the decreased Occupancy Ratios in the accommodation sector because of the negative effects of the tourism sector because of the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged at the end of 2019 was an important limitation during the conduct of the survey. Also, surveys were conducted voluntarily to determine the expenses made in the region objectively. The possibility that visitors may not be able to clearly remember their expenses was also an important limitation. Another limitation can be the fact that the business managers refrained from giving information during the second survey that was applied to the accommodation businesses and that the study was conducted by interviewing thirty businesses because of the insufficient number of establishments operating in the accommodation sector. The study is valid under some assumptions. It was assumed that the selected sample represented the study population, the answers given to the survey questions by the visitors and business owners who participated in the study reflected their real opinions, and it was sufficient to reveal the role of the economic effects of tourism in the region within the specified limitations, the statistics and analyzes used were sufficient, and the data obtained were valid and safe. Two methods were employed in the study to create the dataset. Primary data was obtained with a survey from visitors who were staying in the accommodation businesses in the region and the people who were responsible for these businesses. Secondary data were obtained from other previous studies, Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorates, TÜRSAB, and regional and provincial statistics of TURKSTAT. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from Atatürk University's Ethics Committee with Decision No. 48, taken at its meeting dated 01/08/2019 and numbered 10.

The population number was determined in line with the information received from the Provincial Directorates of Culture and Tourism and the regional data of TURKSTAT. Although the total number of arrivals to accommodation facilities in the region was 439.328 (the main population subject to the survey) in 2018, the sample number was calculated as 384 considering the total accommodation data (214.905, 224.423) with a 95% Confidence Interval and a 5% margin of error. After removing the incompletely evaluated and incorrectly answered surveys, a total of 448 surveys were included in the analyses. The surveys were conducted in 2019 and early 2020 in the centers where tourism potential was intense in the region, accommodation opportunities were provided, tour organizations were organized more intensively and winter tourism was at the forefront. Some survey forms were delivered to visitors visiting tourist attractions in the cities and visitors staying in accommodation facilities such as guesthouses and hotels, by face-to-face interviews and by mail after the permission of the Provincial Tourism Directorates and with the permission of the ethics committee, and some were delivered to these places and collected later. The Probability Sampling Method, which is one of the two basic sampling methods, was used in the survey that was conducted for visitors. In this method, all units that made up the study population were given equal

chances of being selected. Among the probability sampling methods, the Stratified Sampling Method was considered appropriate. This method is based on the principle of representing subgroups or layers in the sample in proportion to their weights in the study population. With the Proportional Stratified Sampling Method, which is one of the stratified sampling methods, the sample was selected by taking into account the proportions of the layers or subgroups within the entire study population (Koç, 2017, p. 486-488). For example, the total number of visits to the accommodation facilities in the city of Kars, representing the visitors of the survey, was 191.774, including the facilities with tourism operation certificates and municipality certificates (109.926 and 81.848). The total number of visitors who were staying in the TRA2 Region was 439.328. In this case, 44% (169) visitors in Kars, 21% (81) in Ağrı, 21% (81) in Iğdır, and 14% (53) in Ardahan, were deemed sufficient, representing approximately a percentage ratio in the cities of the Region. The Non-Probability Sampling Method was used in the other survey applied to the accommodation businesses. This method was used according to the possibilities of the study. This sampling method is used when the units that make up the study population cannot be selected with a certain probability and equal chance (Kılıç, 2013, p.44). The most important basis of the economic effects of tourism is tourist expenses. Primary and secondary data can be used to determine tourist expenses. The number of tourists who came to the region and accommodation statistics were taken into account in the present study. The survey included questions on the demographic characteristics of the visitors, how and for what purpose they came to the region, and questions to obtain information about accommodation and to determine how much they spent on needs such as accommodation, food and beverage, souvenirs, and shopping during their stay in the region with open-ended questions. To raise awareness about tourism assets in the region and what measures must be taken to make tourism more attractive in the development of the region, open-ended questions were included, in which hotel operators and visitors to the region could express their personal opinions. When the touristic expenditure survey directed to the visitors was prepared, the applied literature on the subject was reviewed, and the “Departing Visitors Survey”, which was implemented by TURKSTAT, the study questions created for similar purposes in the study of Günal (2005) “A Study to Determine the Profile and Touristic Behaviors of Domestic Tourists Coming to Mardin City”, Kızıldemir and Sarıışık (2018)’s study “the Economic Effects of Tourist Expenses on Regional Development: The Case of Adana”, and “Determining the Role of Tourism Enterprises in the Regional Economy: A Research at Erzurum Scale” by Sağlık (2011) were used. The survey form prepared to be applied to the accommodation businesses in the region was developed by taking the survey as an example from the thesis study “The Economic Effects of Tourist Expenses on the Local Development Process (the Case of Alanya)” by Erdem (2001), which was also used as the method in the study. To determine the income provided by tourism to the regional economy, a regional expenditure model was established with the expenditure data obtained from the survey that was directed to visitors and the data obtained from the survey applied to the accommodation businesses. The



methods used to predict the economic effects of tourism are quite costly. In this sense, the “Regional Expenditure Model”, based on the techniques developed by Frechtling and Wassenaar in 1974 and 1981, respectively, is one of the lower-cost methods that can convey basic information about the economic effects of tourism. The important issues in choosing this model can be explained as follows. Firstly, people who use accommodation businesses make up the most important part of tourist expenses. Whether or not the people served by accommodation businesses are tourists is the least debatable condition. It comes to mind that the data obtained from these businesses can provide more reliable results. For this reason, it is an applicable method. The model was based on the data obtained after the survey that was applied to the visitors and the accommodation businesses (Erdem, 2001, p. 88).

RESULTS

The data obtained on the demographic characteristics of the visitors coming to the region are given in Table 1 with percentage and frequency analysis.

Table 1: The demographic distribution of the visitors

		Number	%
Gender	Male	293	65.4
	Female	155	34.6
	Total	448	100.0
Age group	18-24 age group	43	9.6
	25-34 age group	90	20.1
	35-44 age group	168	37.5
	45-54 age group	74	16.5
	55 years and above	73	16.3
	Total	448	100.0
Educational status	Primary education	21	4.7
	High school	126	28.1
	College-Faculty	228	50.9
	postgraduate	73	16.3
	Total	448	100.0
Occupational groups	Employer	39	8.7
	Retired	71	15.8
	Student	37	8.3

	Unemployed	13	2.9
	Paid Employee	93	20.8
	Officer	170	37.9
	Other	25	5.6
	Total	448	100.0
Income status	Between 0-1000 TL	14	3.1
	Between 1001-2000 TL	19	4.2
	Between 2001-3000 TL	96	21.4
	Between 3001-4000 TL	111	24.8
	Between 4001-5000 TL	104	23.2
	5001 TL and above	104	23.2
	Total	448	100.0

A total of 65.4% of the visitors were male and 34.6% were female. Although 9.6% were between the ages of 18-24, 37.5% were between the ages of 35-44. It can be argued that the majority of the visitors were in the middle age group. In terms of education level, 4.7% of the visitors were primary school graduates, although 50.9% were participants who had a college/faculty education level. There needed to be a high percentage of people who had a bachelor's degree. The ratio of those with postgraduate education was 16.3%. When this was evaluated in terms of tourism, it can be interpreted that the increased level of education could positively affect people's desire to see other places and know different cultures, leading them to travel more. When the occupational distribution of the participants was evaluated, it was seen that the highest ratio belonged to officers with 37.9%, although 8.7% were employers, 2.9% were unemployed, 8.3% were students, 15.8% were retirees, 20.8% were paid employees, and 5.6% were occupational groups such as housewives and tradesmen, which was stated as other occupational groups. When the percentage distribution of the visitors was evaluated in terms of monthly income status, it was found that 3.1% of the participants had a monthly income between 0-1000TL, those whose monthly income was between 4001-5000TL and 23.2% of the participants had a monthly income of 5001 TL and above was interesting in that these rates were the same. It must also be noted that the share of foreign visitors in total visitors was 6% in the study and the participation ratio was low. Foreign visitors to the region mainly come from Iran. Aside from this, foreign visitors who participated in the survey stated that they came from England, Azerbaijan, TRNC, Russia, and Romania. Table 2 contains information on visitors' travels.

Table 2: Information on visitors' travels and travel processes

What is the most important source of information from which you provided the necessary information during your trip to the region?	Number	%
Travel Agency/Transportation Company	211	47.1
Tourism Office	13	2.9
Friend/relative recommendation	83	18.5
Tourism Fairs	7	1.6
TV, newspapers, magazines, etc.	14	3.1
The Internet	38	8.5
Other	82	18.3
What is the most important reason for your trip to the region?	Number	%
Travel, holiday, and entertainment	264	58.9
Visiting friends and relatives	16	3.6
For sports (Skiing/Mountaineering)	4	0.9
For business	49	10.9
Meeting-Conference	3	0.7
Shopping	6	1.3
Cultural	29	6.5
Commercial	22	4.9
Transit	0	0
Religious	2	0.4
Public Service/Duty	51	11.4
For camping purposes	2	0.4
Health/Spa Treatment	-	0.0
How did you organize your trip?	Number	%
My reservations and facilities	163	36.4
By institution/company	60	13.4
Package Tour	225	50.2
Type of Package Tour	Number	%
Transportation+Accommodation	38	8.5
Transportation + Food & Beverage + Event etc.	23	5.1
Accommodation+Food & Beverage+Event etc.	2	0.4
Transportation+Accommodation+Food-Beverage+Event, etc. (All included)	162	36.2

How to Participate in Package Tour?	Number	%
1 person	218	48.7
More than 1 person	7	1.6
Does this trip include regions or cities other than TRA2 cities (Ağrı, Kars, Iğdır, and Ardahan)?	Number	%
Yes	148	33.0
No	300	67.0

When the rates of sources where visitors provided information about their travels to the region were evaluated, 47.1% used travel agencies/transportation companies, 18.5% used the advice of friends and relatives, and 18.3% chose other sources. It was determined that those who stated that they came to the region for various jobs (mostly in Customs and TURKSTAT) through the institution. It was concluded that the participants' ratios of using tourism offices, and tourism fairs because of the lack of promotion and various events for the region, and information sources such as TV, newspapers, magazines, etc., and the Internet were very low. When the frequency analysis of the prominent factors of visitors' visits to the region was made, it was found that they mostly came for sightseeing, holiday, and entertainment at 58.9%, and for public service and business purposes at 11.4% and 10.9%. It can be argued that the ratio of people coming for sports and camping purposes was low (0.9% and 0.4%) because of reasons such as lack of promotion and inadequate facilities in the region. Another point that drew attention, although it was included in the study questions, was that the visitors were not in the region for treatment purposes such as health or spa. When the answers about how they organized their travels were evaluated, it was found that they mostly preferred to come with a package tour with 50.2%. In the survey study, it was determined that the majority of visitors to Kars preferred package tours. When the answers were evaluated regarding which package type those who came with a package tour chose (Transportation + Accommodation + Food and Beverage + Activity, etc.), it was found that they preferred the all-included packages (36.2%) and 48.7% of those who came with a package tour participated alone. It was found that 67.0% of the visitors did not visit any other city in the region. From the survey answers, it was found that the visitors who came individually with their means also visited the city of Van. Questions were asked about the accommodation of the visitors coming to the region in the study and their expenses were given comparatively depending on the duration of their stay.

In the question on the place of accommodation asked to the visitors coming to the region, it was considered that the visitors were in one or more cities and might make different alternative accommodation choices during this period.

Table 3: The information on visitors' accommodation and length of stay

Which is the city or cities of accommodation in the region?	Number	%
Ağrı	190	21.9
Kars	254	29.3
Iğdır	201	23.2
Ardahan	222	25.6
Accommodation place?	Number	%
Hotel	433	91.7
Relative, friend's house	8	1.7
Public guesthouse	21	4.4
Rental/Daily house	3	0.6
Caravan	2	0.4
Tent	5	1.1
Total Length of Stay?	Number	%
1 night	45	10.0
2 nights	124	27.7
3 nights or more	279	62.3
Total	448	100.0
Note: Since the questions on “Accommodation Place” had multiple answers, the number n exceeded the sample size.		

Aside from hotels, 1.7% of the visitors who stayed in more than one city in the region stayed at a relative's or friend's house, 0.6% stayed in a rental/daily house, 0.4% stayed in a caravan and 1.1% stayed in a tent. Although the region has suitable areas for camping on mountains and in plateaus and national parks, participation in this type of travel must be low. It was found that Kars and Ardahan were mostly visited by 29.3% and 25.6%, respectively. The proximity of the cities may be effective in this. When the total length of stay was evaluated, 62.3% of the visitors who were included in the study said that their stay was three nights or more. During the face-to-face interviews, it was determined that among those who stated that they were in the region through institutions and companies, especially customs employees stayed longer and most of the visitors made more daily trips to the cities of the region. The majority of the participants who responded to the open-ended research question “How did you spend your money during your visit to the Region?” stated that they spent 100% of their money in cash, with 21.9%; while 6.9% stated that they spent all of their money (100%) by credit card. This is important in terms of generating direct income from

visitors to the Region. The percentage of those who stated that they spent 50% of their money by credit card and in cash was 16.1%.

Implementation of the Regional Tourist Expenditure Model

In this part of the study, the Regional Expenditure Model was established by using the data on expenses obtained from the surveys conducted for visitors and the data obtained from the survey directed to the accommodation sector. A survey was conducted with the non-probability sampling method on the accommodation businesses and the following information was obtained.

Although 3 of the businesses were 4-star, 12 were three-star, 3 were 2-star, 2 were 1-star, 5 businesses stated that they had municipality certificates. Aside from this, there were a total of 30 accommodation businesses, including 3 corporate guesthouses, one boutique hotel, and 1 apart-hotel. The businesses also stated that they were active between 1994 and 1998, 2001, 2004, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2016, and 2019, and that their operating periods were annual. As a result of interviews with these businesses, the following information was obtained:

According to the answers, 26.7% of business managers stated that 10% of the visitors were foreigners. 16.7% stated that they had never stayed with foreign visitors. 26.7% of them reported that 60% of the visitors to their business were local.

Table 4: What percentage of earnings do you use in your city?

	Numbers	Percentages
10-20%	5	16.7
21-40%	1	3.3
41-60%	6	20.0
61-80%	4	13.3
81-100%	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

According to the data given in Table 4, 46.7% of the business owners stated that they used 81-100% of their income in the city. It is understood that this ratio is quite high.

The following stages were followed in the Regional Expenditure Model that was established in the study.



1. An inventory of the accommodation facilities in the TRA2 Region, which was the subject of the study, was prepared.
2. Some questions were asked to the businesses in the survey that was conducted on the accommodation facilities in the region where the study was conducted and the following information was obtained for the model.
 - Number of rooms
 - Average number of customers per room
 - Average Occupancy Ratios
 - Average length of stay
 - Average room price
3. The following calculations were made with the data obtained.
 - The total room capacity in each category was multiplied by the average occupancy ratio to obtain the total number of rooms per year. The period during which the facility was in operation was taken into account in this calculation (365 days).
 - Annual revenues from customers were determined by multiplying the annual average number of rooms in each category by room prices.
 - The total number of overnight stays was obtained by multiplying the annual total number of rooms by the average number of people per room.
 - By dividing the number of overnight stays by the average length of stay, the annual total number of visitors in each category will be obtained.
4. Through the calculations, the following information was obtained.
 - Total number of visitors staying in various types of facilities.
 - Total number of overnight visitors, regardless of accommodation type.
 - Total expenditure on accommodation.
5. A survey was applied to the visitors who were staying in the accommodation facilities to determine the expenditure items and amounts.

The expenditure categories determined in the survey were as follows.

- Food and beverage
- Accommodation
- Health
- Recreation-Animation (Entertainment)
- Transportation (local taxi, minibus, car rental, etc.)



- Sports, education, culture
- Clothes
- Souvenir
- Personal care supplies
- Local products (cheese, carpets, rugs, household items, etc.)
- Communication
- Other expenses

The ratios (ratios) of total expenses and accommodation expenses were obtained by using the expenditure amounts for each category determined through the survey. With these ratios, the total accommodation expenditure was multiplied by each expenditure category, and the distribution of the annual expenses of tourists in the region by expenditure items and the annual total tourist expenses in the whole sector was obtained. The data obtained as a result of the study were evaluated separately in all categories of accommodation businesses in the region, and in this way, the amount of spending by visitors in each spending category was measured as a prediction.

Implementation of the Regional Tourist Expenditure Model in the TRA2 Region

The primary data obtained as a result of the surveys that were conducted on visitors staying in accommodation businesses in the region and the managers of these establishments, the current data of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey, and the secondary data obtained from the Provincial Directorates of Culture and Tourism and the Serhat Development Agency, are given in the table below.

Table 5: Numbers and capacities of accommodation facilities in the TRA2 Region as of 2019

Region/Cities	Certificates	Number of Facilities	Number of Rooms	Number of Beds
Ağrı	Hotel **** *	1	89	178
	Hotel ***	8	444	859
	Hotel **	2	55	105
	Municipality Certificated	10	400	725
	Apart Hotel	18	418	791
	Guesthouse	9	210	426
Kars	Hotel *****	2	220	548

	Hotel *****	5	376	759
	Hotel ***	12	562	1153
	Hotel**	1	25	25
	Municipality Certificated	28	777	1543
	Private Facility	1	8	18
	Apart Hotel	15	298	479
	Hostel	3	55	55
	Guesthouse	15	346	648
	Application Hotel	1	30	60
	Boutique hotel	2	59	180
Iğdır	Hotel ***	2	109	215
	Hotel*	1	40	55
	Municipality Certificated	11	426	829
	Guesthouse	3	47	108
	Application Hotel	1	44	84
Ardahan	Hotel ***	3	161	247
	Hotel **	2	42	80
	Hotel *	2	54	125
	Municipality Certificated	16	301	628
	Application Hotel	1	58	120
	Apart Hotel	2	39	72
	Guesthouse	7	83	187

Source: Up-to-date data was obtained from the Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorates and Serhat Development Agency and the table was created according to these data (2021).

Table 5 shows a list of accommodation businesses operating in the region. It must be noted that there was no recently updated list regarding the hotel inventory in the cities of the region and the data were obtained by interviewing the Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorates and Serhat Development Agency. With the interviews conducted with the 30 accommodation businesses included in the study, information on the number of rooms, number of rooms sold, occupancy ratio, room fee, number of customers per room, and length of stay were obtained as primary data through a survey. The occupancy ratios in the table were reached by taking the following formula into account (Demirtaş, 2017, p. 19).

$$\text{Room Occupancy Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Rooms Sold} \times 100}{\text{Total Number of Rooms}}$$

Table 6: Inventory of hotels in the TRA2 Region where the study was conducted

Accommodation Category and Numbers	Number of Rooms (1)	Ratio to Total Number of Rooms (%) (2)	Average Occupancy Ratio (%) (3)	Average Room Price (TL) (4)	Number of People Per Room (5)	Average Length of Stay (Days) (6)
**** 3 Hotels	56	5.1	70.1	716.7	4.33	7.3
*** 12 Hotels	536	48.6	61.9	312.5	5.83	6.8
** 3 Hotels	208	18.8	51.5	140.0	2.00	1.3
* 2 Hotels	58	5.3	41.1	65.0	1:50	1.5
5 Municipality Certificated	155	14.0	26.8	60.0	5.60	1.6
1 Apart Hotel	13	1.2	30.7	30.0	2.00	12.0
3 guesthouses	68	6.2	62.5	63.3	14.33	16.0
1 Boutique Hotel	10	0.9	30.0	120.0	2.00	1.0
Total	1.104	100	31.22			

Accommodation businesses in the region stated that they operated annually. The occupancy ratios of the businesses were calculated by using the following formula.

$$\text{Annual Occupancy Ratio} = \text{Total Occupancy Ratio} / \text{Number of Months}$$

In this context, the occupancy ratio of the region was calculated as 31.22%.

Considering the total number of rooms given in the table (Table 6) in which the inventory of hotels operating in the TRA2 region was prepared, the following procedures were applied to the accommodation businesses in each category separately. The number of overnight stays, room revenue, total visitor nights, and number of tourists staying in the region on an annual basis have been reached.

1. Number of night stays per year was calculated as follows.

$$\text{Number of rooms} \times \text{occupancy ratio} \times \text{number of nights the business is open} = \text{number of night stays}$$

2. Annual room income was calculated as follows.

$$\text{Number of night stays} \times \text{average annual room price} = \text{room price}$$



1. Total visitor nights were calculated as follows.

Number of nights \times number of people per room = Total visitor nights

2. Total number of visitors was calculated as follows.

Total number of visitors' night stays / average length of stay = Total number of visitors

Number of Night Stays, Room Revenues, Visitors' Night Stays, and Total Number of Visitors Calculations according to Accommodation Categories

At this stage of the study, the calculations were made separately according to hotel types, following the process sequence given above. Table 8 shows the number of existing and active facilities and rooms in the region. The total number of rooms given in the table is as follows.

1. 465 (89, 376) in 4-star hotels,
2. 1276 (444, 562, 109, 161) in 3-star hotels,
3. 122 (55, 25,42) in 2-star hotels,
4. 94 (40, 54) in 1-star hotels,
5. 1904 (400, 777, 426) in municipality-certified hotels,
6. 686 (210, 346, 47, 83) in guesthouses,
7. 755 (418, 298, 39) in apartments,
8. 59 in boutique hotels.

Based on these data, the following can be written.

For 4 Star Hotels

$465 \text{ Rooms} \times \%70.1 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Stays} = 118.977 \text{ Annual Night Stay}$

$118.977 \text{ Stays} \times 716.7 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 85.270.816 \text{ Annual Revenue}$

$118.977 \text{ Night Stay} \times 4.33 \text{ Number of Person per Room} = 515.170 \text{ Visitors' Night Stay}$

For 3 Star Hotels

$1276 \text{ Rooms} \times \%61.9 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stays} = 288.293 \text{ Annual Night Stays}$

$288.293 \text{ Night Stays} \times 312.5 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 90.091.563 \text{ Annual Revenue}$



$$288.293 \text{ Night Stay} \times 5.83 \text{ Person per Room} = 1.680.748 \text{ Visitors' Night Stay}$$

$$1.680.748 \text{ Visitors' Night Stay} / 6.8 \text{ Stay Duration} = 247.169 \text{ Visitors}$$

For 2 Star Hotels

$$122 \text{ rooms} \times \%51.5 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stays} = 22.933 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$22.933 \text{ Night Stay} \times 140.0 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 3.210,620 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$22.933 \text{ Night Stay} \times 2.00 \text{ Person per Room} = 45.866 \text{ Visitors Night Stay}$$

$$45.866 \text{ Visitors Night Stay} / 1.3 \text{ Duration Stay} = 35.282 \text{ Visitors}$$

For 1 Star Hotels

$$94 \text{ Rooms} \times \%41.1 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stay} = 14.101 \text{ Annual Night Stay}$$

$$14.101 \text{ Night Stay} \times 65.0 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 916.565 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$14.101 \text{ Night Stay} \times 1.50 \text{ Person per Room} = 21.152 \text{ Visitors Night Stay}$$

$$21.152 \text{ Visitors Night Stay} / 1.5 \text{ Stay Duration} = 14.101 \text{ Visitors}$$

For Municipality Certified Hotels

$$1904 \text{ Rooms} \times \%26.8 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stay} = 186.249 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$186.249 \text{ Night Stays} \times 60.0 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 11.174.940 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$186.249 \text{ Night Stay} \times 5.60 \text{ Person per Room} = 1.042.994 \text{ Visitors Night Stays}$$

$$1.042.994 \text{ Visitors Night Stays} / 1.6 \text{ Stay Duration} = 651.871 \text{ Visitors}$$

For Apart Hotels

$$755 \text{ Rooms} \times \%30.7 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stay} = 84.602 \text{ Annual Night Stay}$$

$$84.602 \text{ Night Stays} \times 30.0 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 2.538.060 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$84.602 \text{ Night Stays} \times 2.00 \text{ Person per Room} = 169.204 \text{ Visitors Night Stays}$$



$$169.204 \text{ Visitors Night Stays} / 12.0 \text{ Stays} = 14.100 \text{ Visitors}$$

For Guesthouses

$$686 \text{ Rooms} \times \%62.5 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stays} = 156.494 \text{ Annual Night Stays}$$

$$156.494 \text{ Night Stay} \times 63.3 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 9.906.070 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$156.494 \text{ Night Stays} \times 14.33 \text{ Person per Room} = 2.242.559 \text{ Visitors Stays}$$

$$2.242.559 \text{ Visitors Stays} / 16.0 \text{ Stays} = 140.160 \text{ Visitors}$$

For Boutique Hotels

$$59 \text{ Rooms} \times \%30.0 \text{ Occupancy Rate} \times 365 \text{ Night Stay} = 6.461 \text{ Annual Night Stay}$$

$$6.461 \text{ Night Stay} \times 120.0 \text{ TL Average Room Price} = 775.320 \text{ Annual Revenue}$$

$$6.461 \text{ Night Stay} \times 2.00 \text{ Person per Room} = 12.922 \text{ Visitors Night Stay}$$

$$12.922 \text{ Tourist Stays} / 1.0 \text{ Stays} = 12.922 \text{ Visitors}$$

The results obtained as a result of the calculations made according to accommodation categories are as follows.

$$118.977+288.293+22.933+14.101+186.249+84.602+156.494+6.461 = \mathbf{878.110 \text{ annual night stays}}$$

$$85.270.816+90.091.563+3.210.620+916.565+11.174.940+2.538.060+9.906.070+775.320 = \mathbf{203.883.954 \text{ annual revenue from accommodation}}$$

$$515.170+1.680.748+45.866+21.152+1.042.994+169.204+2.242.559+12.922 = \mathbf{5.730.615 \text{ visitor nights}}$$

70.571+247.169+35.282+14.101+651.871+14.100+140.160+12.922= **1.186.176 people** were calculated as **the total number of tourists** using accommodation businesses in one year.

Individual spending data of visitors was obtained with the surveys. Accommodation revenues were proportioned to tourist expenses with the expenditure ratio method. Total tourist expenditure was calculated by multiplying this ratio with accommodation expenses.



The distribution of the expenses of the visitors who were staying in various accommodation businesses within the scope of the study, according to spending categories, is given in a table in Appendix 1.

Each expenditure item per visitor given in Appendix 1 is divided by the expenditure item of accommodation, and the ratio (ratio) of each expenditure category to accommodation expenditure is obtained (Appendix 2).

For example, Food-Beverage Expenditure/Accommodation Expenditure = Food-Beverage Ratio was obtained.

Although this ratio is 1.00 in the accommodation category, the rates of other expenditure categories are given one by one in the table in Appendix 2.

The expenses of the remaining visitors for various expenditure categories were predicted by multiplying the expenditure rates given in Appendix 2 with the revenues obtained in each accommodation business calculated in the previously established model. The values in the table in Appendix 3 were calculated as follows.

For example, the annual total income from accommodation in 4-star hotels = 85.270.816.

The ratio of food and beverage expenses outside the establishment to accommodation expenses of visitors staying in 4-star hotels is = 0.20 (Appendix 2).

For this reason, the total expenditure of the visitors who stayed in 4-star hotels annually for the food and beverage sector was calculated approximately as follows.

Annual Accommodation Revenues × Food-Beverage Ratio = Annual Food-Beverage Revenue
(85.270.816 × 0.20= 17.054.163 (prediction) (Appendix 3).

The table below shows the annual total predicted expenses of the visitors staying in various accommodation categories for their expenditure categories.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Tourism revenues are among the most important economic effects of tourism. Tourism expenses made by visitors in a region during their travels (for food and beverages, accommodation, transportation, local products, etc.) constitute tourism revenues for that region. Tourism is considered one of the priority



development areas in development plans, and it is thought that if tourism is diversified in those regions, tourists who tend to spend more can be attracted, in this way the increase in overnight stays in accommodation facilities will also increase expenses other than accommodation. In the plan that was discussed within the scope of the Tourism Strategy (2023), which was developed in line with the development plans, it was stated that alternative routes and regional destinations were determined by considering the tourism types that have the opportunity to develop in different places together, and it would be possible for the underdeveloped settlements in these regions to strengthen through the opportunities provided by tourism activities. Policies developed in recent years are aimed at increasing tourist expenses per capita. Considering the effects of tourism on regional development and its income impact, the present study determined the expectations regarding the tourism sector in the region, the problems that needed to be solved, and developed recommendations by considering the income obtained by the TRA2 Region from tourism and the importance of tourism in the development of the region. For this purpose, data were obtained and evaluated with a survey from the accommodation businesses in the cities of Ağrı, Ardahan, Iğdır, and Kars, which are in the TRA2 Region, and the visitors coming to these cities. A brief information on the data obtained as a result of the analysis of the study data is given below.

Considering the demographic data of the visitors who participated in the survey, the majority were in the middle age group (37.5% were 35-44 years old), and 50.9% were those who had college-faculty education levels. The percentage of participants who stated that their income was 4001-5000 and 5001 TL and above was the same (23.2%). It was determined in the occupational group that the highest ratio belonged to civil servants with 37.9%. The most important source of information from which visitors provided the necessary information to come to the region was found to be travel agencies/transportation companies with 47.1%. This result of the study is consistent with the results of the study that was conducted by Oğuz et al. (2018) and Sağlık (2011). The usage ratio of information resources such as tourism offices (2.9%), tourism fairs (1.6%), TV, newspapers, magazines (3.1%), and the Internet (8.5%) was low. The most important reason for traveling to the region was found to be travel, holiday, and entertainment purposes with 58.9%, and for public service and business purposes with 11.4% and 10.9%. Visitors mostly preferred to come with package tours (50.2%).

The opinions of business owners were obtained with a survey applied to accommodation businesses and the important points are given below.

Business owners stated that the percentage of foreign visitors coming to the accommodation businesses in the region was low (Table 4). When asked what percentage of their revenues they spent in

their cities, 14 out of 30 businesses (46.7%) stated that they used 81-100% of their revenues in the city. This shows that the attitudes of local businesses towards the region are not negative.

According to the information obtained with the open-ended questions as a result of the interviews conducted with the visitors and business managers, the common problems of the region in the tourism sector can be summarized as follows.

- Insufficiency of tour companies,
- Lack of interest and trust in tourists,
- Lack of promotion and advertising in the region,
- Lack of environmental regulations and information signs,
- Failure to make the necessary investments to uncover the tourism potential and make it more attractive,
- Insufficient promotion of the region on social media,
- Insufficient social organizations and events to ensure that visitors coming to the region leave satisfied and happy,
- Communication problems with incoming foreign visitors and inadequate foreign language guidance service,
- Insufficient green areas and lack of care for environmental cleanliness,
- Failure to provide transportation facilities in tourism facilities,
- Lack of regular transportation venues such as bus terminals,
- Lack of investments, incentives, and support in the region, which need to be increased,
- In case the tourism potential of Mount Ararat can be utilized, investments must be made with the idea that foreign tourists can be attracted to the region and that it will play important roles in the development of the region.

The failure to activate these issues sufficiently is considered an important problem in the tourism sector in the region. The findings of the regional expenditure model applied for the TRA2 region in the present study are as follows.

The average occupancy ratio in accommodation businesses in the region is calculated as 31.22%, which is quite low. The annual number of overnight stays was found to be 878.110, annual revenues from accommodation was 203.883.954 TL, total visitor nights was 5.730.615, and the total number of visitors using accommodation businesses (on an annual basis) was calculated as 1.186.176 people. The distribution



of the predicted annual expenses of the visitors staying in the accommodation businesses in the region for various consumption categories is as follows.

The total expenditure on the accommodation category was found to be 203.883.954 TL (85.627.277 TL for food and beverages, 3.600.449 TL for health, 20.839.226 TL for entertainment, 28.041.702 TL for transportation, 1.216.075 TL for sports, education, and culture, 21.837.814 TL for clothing and shoes, 18.035.123 TL for souvenirs). The total expenditure on personal care and supplies was calculated as 11.920.461 TL, 1.169.621 TL for communications, 22.417.230 TL for local products, and 27.016.180 TL for other expenses.

Erdem (2001) found that tourist expenditures directly affect many consumption items other than accommodation establishments, such as food and beverages, clothing, groceries, souvenirs, transportation, etc., and stimulate these sectors. Durgun (2006) reported in his study that tourists spent the most on accommodation, and the other areas they spent on were food, beverages, and souvenirs. Tunçsiper and Kaşlı (2008) determined in their study that out of the total income of 16,619,184 YTL in Gönen Thermal Spring Center in 2005, 11,064,047 YTL (66.6%) was obtained from accommodation businesses, 5,497,770 YTL (33.1%) from food and beverage businesses and 57,367 YTL (0.3%) from dowry and souvenir businesses. Çakır and Sandalcılar (2018) reported that visitors primarily directed their spending to accommodation and food and beverages, and then to other categories such as shopping and souvenirs. They concluded that the daily average accommodation expenditure of the incoming visitors was 202.65 TL, food and beverage expenses were 55.25 TL, and the total of other expenses such as shopping/souvenirs, spas, and activities was 53.85 TL. It is possible to argue that the study reached similar results to other studies by determining that more was spent on accommodation and food and beverage.

In different studies, it has been found that expenditures are directed towards items such as transportation, gifts and shopping. Baruah and Sarma (2016), in their study, research findings showed that shopping and souvenir expenditures were higher. Dzikitiandvan der Merwe (2017) evaluated expenditures according to socio-demographic characteristics in their study and focused on expenditures such as transportation, food and beverages, and entertainment in the places they went. They also focused on the contribution of these expenditures to regional development in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, focusing on the benefits of these expenditures for individual households in Zimbabwe, such as infrastructure investments and employment.

If the results on the socio-economic situation of the region in recent years were evaluated, it can be argued that there was no significant progress. Immigration is among the most important problems in the

region, the population of which has gradually decreased and, as of 2021, it makes up 1.3% of Türkiye's population. As long as tourism develops in such regions, migration can be prevented. The people of the region are forced to migrate for various reasons, especially unemployment and poverty. Infrastructure services in education and healthcare are inadequate in the region. The economy of the region is mainly based on agriculture and animal husbandry. The gross added value of the industrial sector is low and its share in the services sector approaches the Turkish average. The total GDP of the region makes up only 0.66 of Turkey's GDP (2021). The revenue per capita reached 49% of Türkiye's average. The recent contribution of agricultural production in the region to the country's added value has been gradually decreasing. Products that have high added value cannot be produced. The industrialization ratio is low in agriculture-related sectors. Although the region has borders with four countries, its contribution to the economy of the country in terms of foreign trade is low. According to the results of the TURKSTAT 2016 Life Index, in which various indicators such as access to infrastructure services, social life, and life satisfaction are used to compare the quality of life in cities, Kars ranked 70th, Iğdır ranked 72nd, Ardahan ranked 74th, and Ağrı ranked 79th.

In the region, no significant development was recorded in terms of the tourism sector. The low number and capacity of facilities, the low number of arrivals and overnight stays and the Occupancy Ratios of tourists coming to the region according to facility statistics show that the region cannot achieve a sufficient share of the sector.

In this context, suggestions developed to develop the tourism sector in the region and ensure regional development are given below.

- When it is considered that education is an important factor in the development of these regions, providing more than one foreign language education in schools with a contemporary education approach will pave the way for raising a conscious population for tourism in these regions.
- It can be argued that tourism will be the most important leading sector in the development of the region in the future by developing the Eastern Express to form a train ring that covers the entire TRA2 Region or the entire Eastern Anatolia region.
- Organizing social and cultural activities, building entertainment and shopping centers, and increasing the opportunities of sports complexes, bicycle paths, and camping areas will bring vitality to the region, and improving social settings will support the cultural development of local people by contributing positively to social life.



- Museums with ice sculptures can be opened in the region where winter conditions are harsh. Also, the opening of museums and art galleries will increase the travel potential and the region will be able to generate revenues from museums in this sense.
- If the revenues from tourism in the region can be increased, migration can be prevented or the reverse migration process can be initiated.
- When appropriate investments are made to develop tourism in the region and the necessary social facilities are provided based on attractiveness, the number of visitors, which is low in number, will gradually increase and revenues from tourism will begin to be generated in these regions where regional development cannot be achieved. In this way, the attitude and perception of local people towards visitors will change positively.
- Local people will become aware of their geography in the face of increasing touristic demand and will begin to act with a greater sense of ownership after the tourism potential of the region is uncovered and the opinion that tourism will provide brotherhood, tolerance, and peace without discrimination of religion, language, and race will prevail. In this way, visitors will have mutual cultural interactions and will be warm to different cultures.
- It is necessary to promote all kinds of natural products, cultural wealth, and indigenous creatures that are identified with the region, to have shopping centers in the region where almost forgotten handicrafts, such as Kars goose, gruyere cheese, Balkan Cheese, honey, and the “Damal Doll” symbolizing an Anatolian woman with her local clothes, can be marketed.
- There is a need to promote the natural beauty in the region and its surroundings and to make the surroundings of these areas visitable.
- In a region, transportation services are one of the important factors affecting the development of tourism. In other words, transportation systems that enable visitors to reach their destination easily and comfortably, and the availability of convenient terminals where visitors can rest at certain points, taxis, buses, etc. must be supported.
- One of the important factors that affect tourism activities is the image of a country regarding the security of life and property. If an environment of trust is created in this sense, the negative image perception of visitors can be changed towards the region and the contraction in tourism demand that the security problem may cause in the region can be prevented.
- The development of thermal health tourism as a sector can be achieved by building touristic accommodation facilities in the region, equipped with thermal facilities around thermal water resources. There may be an increase in the number of tourists coming to the region with this tourism

because thermal tourism is a type of tourism suitable for all year round and the region will also be able to generate revenues from tourism.

- Festivals can be organized in the region to promote touristic values.
- Tourism activities that will have high economic returns must be encouraged in the region. High-value-added products that will increase the stay of tourists coming to the region and enable them to spend more must be offered in the region.

In the scope of determining the strong routes discussed in the 2023 Action Plan, it is considered that the inclusion of Ağrı, Kars, and Ardahan cities in the Winter Tourism Corridor by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism will be effective in the development of winter sports and tourism centers along this corridor in Turkey.

- To obtain the desired economic revenues from winter tourism, which has an important potential in the region, facility establishment activities must be performed in a coordinated way in the centers where winter tourism can be developed. It is already known that there is a need to increase the number, carrying capacity, and length of mechanical facilities in Sarıkamış Ski Center and to increase the variety of sports that can be performed (for example, St. Petersburg in Switzerland, which is one of the leading winter tourism destinations on a global basis). It is also known that as well as skiing and snowboarding activities at the Moritz Ski Resort, organizations such as snow polo (a game played on horses with special game sticks on ice ground) and golf and cricket tournaments in the region (Tür, 2018, p. 27). Also, there must be instructors who can provide the necessary training in ski centers and easy access to these centers must be provided. It would also be appropriate to turn the area into a social center by offering facilities and restaurants that will attract visitors, where they can spend time.

Attention is drawn to the development of alternative tourism types in the development plans. In this sense, the possibility of nature-based tourism activities in mountainous regions in the region allows the development and diversification of mountain tourism, which is considered within the scope of eco-tourism in the Mount Ararat National Park, which is the most important wealth of the region, allowing the development of many alternative tourism types (e.g., mountain and winter sports tourism, village and farm tourism, nature trips, botanical trips, wildlife (fauna) observation, paragliding, mountain photography, hunting tourism, and plateau tourism).

- Financial support must be provided, the necessary coordination must be ensured and the support of the local government and sports clubs must be obtained, routes must be determined, and mountain



climbing must be supported with the help of experts trained in mountaineering. Care is taken to have chalets in important centers where such sports are performed. The lack of chalets and similar shelters for the protection of athletes is an important deficiency in the region.

The presence of Mount Ararat, which is an important value in the region, allows the development of many tourism types. The fact that Mount Ararat is considered sacred for all monotheistic religions contributes to the development of religious tourism in the region. Religious travel has been increasing in recent years, which also brings to mind the economic dimension of the sector. Karabulut and Köksal (2019) received the opinions of 9 hotel managers in the city in their study to investigate the economic contribution of religious tourism to the region in the Ağrı city of the region. Based on the number of local and foreign tourists coming to Doğubayazıt District, where Mount Ararat, an important value of the region in terms of religious tourism, is located, the duration of stay of the tourists and their average expenditure per person were considered, and the approximate total contribution of the tourists to the economy of the region was calculated as \$134.704.700. Considering the conditions and population of the region, it is an important figure for the region.

It is a fact that if the potential of the region is utilized to the full extent, religious tourism will make a significant contribution to the local economy and the country's economy. The development of religious tourism will be instrumental in bringing together different cultures and civilizations in the region as an effective factor in developing the understanding of tolerance.

- The presence of border gates in the region is an important potential for the region. If the border gates, which are currently closed, are opened again, this potential can be made use of in terms of border tourism, which will bring dynamism to the region.

It is important to investigate visitor expenses for the region to generate tourism revenues. In this sense, searching and uncovering the differences between tourist expenses is important in terms of the policies to be followed and the measures to be taken to provide economic revenues from regional tourism in the coming years. For this reason, it is considered that the present study may provide an idea about the investments to be made in the following periods to highlight the values important for the tourism potential of the region and to transform this potential into economic value for the people of the region and it is concluded that it will contribute to the country's tourism as well as the regional economy. It is considered that the present study can be a model and a resource for similar studies to be performed in the future, and also, it can be useful in terms of making use of the economic impacts of the tourism sector in the region in the future and provides the opportunity to be compared with similar studies.

AUTHOR STATEMENT / YAZAR BEYANI

Researchers have jointly contributed to the article. Researchers have not declared any conflict of interest.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Distribution of visitor expenses per capita by accommodation and expenditure categories

Spending Categories	**** Hotels (TL)	*** Hotels (TL)	** Hotels (TL)	* Hotels (TL)	Municipality Certificated Hotels (TL)	Apart Hotel	Guesthouse	Boutique Hotel
Accommodation	58.103.00	242.840.00	88.470.00	7.840.00	16.530.00	3.420.00	18.300.00	535.00
Food and Beverage	11.834.00	114.188.00	59.210.00	11.020.00	18.520.00	2.660.00	14.445.00	320.00
Health	1.700.00	1.450.00	393.00	125.00	20.00	-	100.00	-
Entertainment	5.045.00	27.038.00	780.00	6.140.00	1.350.00	1.072.00	1.050.00	160.00
Transportation (local taxi, car rental, etc.)	4.990.00	42.385.00	3.590.00	3.505.00	1.620.00	1.045.00	4.710.00	20.00
Sports, Education, Culture	-	1.699.00	-	780.00	-	50.00	400.00	-
Other Goods and Services								
Clothing and Shoes	11.000.00	12.225.00	420.00	2.695.00	95.00	620.00	450.00	60.00
Souvenirs	3.627.00	25.870.00	835.00	1.580.00	960.00	1.000.00	2.500.00	-
Personal Care/Personal Care Supplies	58.000.00	8.305.00	1.490.00	1.268.00	-	500.00	100.00	-
Communication	-	3.085.00	2.300.00	620.00	-	-	250.00	-
Local Products (Cheese, carpets, rugs, household items, etc.)	6.770.00	23.249.00	2.535.00	1.105.00	1.750.00	1.220.00	1.545.00	10.00
Other expenses	2.615.00	42.571.00	1.635.00	33.160.00	1.540.00	1.620.00	750.00	-

Appendix 2: Ratios of expenditure categories to accommodation expenses of visitor expenses

Spending Categories	**** Hotels (TL)	*** Hotels (TL)	** Hotels (TL)	* Hotels (TL)	Municipality Certified Hotels (TL)	Apart Hotel	Guesthouse	Boutique Hotel
Accommodation	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Food and Beverage	0.20	0.47	0.67	1.41	1.12	0.78	0.79	0.60
Health	0.03	0.01	0.004	0.02	0.001	-	0.01	-
Entertainment	0.09	0.11	0.01	0.78	0.08	0.31	0.06	0.30
Transportation (local taxi, car rental, etc.)	0.09	0.17	0.04	0.45	0.10	0.31	0.26	0.04
Sports, education, culture	-	0.01	-	0.10	-	0.01	0.02	-
Other Goods and Services								
Clothing and Shoes	0.19	0.05	0.004	0.34	0.01	0.18	0.02	0.11
Souvenir	0.06	0.11	0.01	0.20	0.06	0.29	0.14	-
Personal Care/Personal Care Supplies	0.10	0.03	0.02	0.16	-	0.15	0.01	-
Communication	-	0.01	0.03	0.08	-	-	0.01	-
Local Products (Cheese, carpets, rugs, household items, etc.)	0.12	0.10	0.03	0.14	0.11	0.36	0.08	0.02
Other expenses	0.05	0.18	0.02	4.23	0.09	0.47	0.04	-

Appendix 3: Estimation of visitors' expenses according to sectors

Spending Categories	**** Hotels (TL)	*** Hotels (TL)	** Hotels (TL)	* Hotels (TL)	Municipality Certificated Hotels (TL)	Apartment Hotel	Guesthouse	Boutique Hotel	Total
Accommodation	85.270.816	90.091.563	3.210.620	916.565	11.174.940	2.538.060	9.906.070	775.320	203.883.954
Food and Beverage	17.054.163	42.343.035	2.151.115	1.292.357	12.515.933	1.979.687	7.825.795	465.192	85.627.277
Health	2.558.124	900.916	12.842	18.331	11.175	-	99.061	-	3.600.449
Entertainment	7.674.373	9.910.072	32.106	714.921	893.995	786.799	594.364	232.596	20.839.226
Transportation (local taxi, car rental, etc.)	7.674.373	15.315.566	128.425	412.454	1.117.494	786.799	2.575.578	31.013	28.041.702
Sports, Education, Culture	-	900.916	-	91.657	-	25.381	198.121	-	1.216.075
Other Goods and Services									
Clothing and Shoes	16.201.455	4.504.578	12.842	311.632	67.050	456.851	198.121	85.285	21.837.814
Souvenirs	5.116.249	9.910.072	32.106	183.313	670.496	736.037	1.386.850	-	18.035.123
Personal Care/Personal Care Supplies	8.527.082	2.702.747	64.212	146.650	-	380.709	99.061	-	11.920.461
Communication	-	900.916	96.319	73.325	-	-	99.061	-	1.169.621
Local Products (Cheese, carpets, rugs, household items, etc.)	10.232.498	9.009.156	96.319	128.319	1.229.243	913.702	792.486	15.507	22.417.230
Other Expenses	4.263.541	16.216.481	64.212	3.877.070	1.005.745	1.192.888	396.243	-	27.016.180
TOTAL	164.572.674	202.706.018	5.901.118	8.166.594	28.686.071	9.796.913	24.170.811	1.604.913	445.605.112