

Winter Tourism Route in Aladağlar

Deniz Öztürk^{1,*}

¹Selçuk üniversitesi, Tarım Ekonomi Anabilim Dalı, Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi İş Güvenliği Uzmanı

* 238244001002@ogr.selcuk.edu.tr denizbagceozturk@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Aladağlar
Winter tourism
Agricultural policy
Rural
Transformation
Regional
Development
Sustainability
Received: 02
February 2026
Received in revised
form: 19 February
2026
Accepted:
21 February 2026
Available online: 26
February 2026

ABSTRACT

Mountain regions have increasingly gained strategic importance not only for tourism development but also for the restructuring of agricultural policies and rural economies. Located at the intersection of Central and Southern Anatolia, the Aladağlar Mountain Range has traditionally been associated with summer mountaineering and nature-based activities, while its winter tourism potential has remained largely underexplored. This article examines the development of winter tourism routes in Aladağlar within the framework of agricultural policy transformation, rural development, and sustainability. It argues that winter tourism should be conceptualized not merely as an alternative tourism product but as a complementary policy instrument that supports agricultural income diversification, mitigates seasonal vulnerability, and strengthens rural resilience. By adopting a policy-oriented analytical approach, the study highlights how integrated winter tourism routes can contribute to regional development objectives while aligning with sustainable land-use and climate adaptation strategies.

1. Introduction

Rural areas play a critical role in agricultural production, food security, and natural resource management. However, agriculture-dependent rural economies are increasingly exposed to structural vulnerabilities arising from climate change, market volatility, demographic aging, and declining farm incomes. As a result, contemporary agricultural policy frameworks have progressively shifted from production-oriented paradigms toward integrated rural development approaches that emphasize income diversification, multifunctionality, and territorial resilience. Within this context, tourism, particularly nature-based and seasonal tourism has emerged as a complementary policy instrument capable of reinforcing rural livelihoods without displacing agricultural activity.

In Turkey, winter tourism policy has historically been dominated by large-scale ski resorts, primarily concentrated in a limited number of destinations. While these investments have contributed to national tourism revenues, they have often generated spatial concentration, environmental pressure, and limited spillover effects for surrounding rural economies. Conversely, mountain regions

such as the Aladağlar, characterized by high-altitude landscapes, prolonged snow cover, and low-intensity land use, offer opportunities for alternative winter tourism models that are more compatible with agricultural policy objectives and sustainability principles.

This study positions winter tourism routes in Aladağlar as a strategic interface between agricultural policy transformation, rural resilience, and territorial governance. Beyond descriptive analysis, the article develops a policy-design framework that translates national tourism diversification objectives into a regionally embedded rural development model.

2. Materials and Methods

This research adopts a qualitative policy-analysis framework grounded in structured document analysis and territorial development theory. The study does not rely on primary field interviews or survey-based empirical data. Instead, it aims to construct a policy-design model derived from official strategic documents, rural development frameworks, and agricultural transformation policies relevant to mountainous regions in Turkey.

The methodological approach consists of systematic analysis of national tourism strategy documents, agricultural diversification policies, rural development action plans, and environmental governance frameworks. In particular, the Tourism Strategy of Turkey (2023 Vision) explicitly emphasizes the development, diversification, and enrichment of tourism activities, encouraging alternative and regionally distributed tourism models beyond mass tourism destinations. This strategic objective forms the institutional foundation of the present study.

The analytical process was conducted in three stages:

First, strategic objectives related to tourism diversification, seasonal balance, and rural income stabilization were extracted from national policy documents.

Second, these objectives were evaluated in relation to the geographic, ecological, and socioeconomic characteristics of the Aladağlar region, including prolonged snow cover duration, agricultural seasonality, and dispersed rural settlement patterns.

Third, a territorially integrated conceptual model was developed to demonstrate how winter tourism routes could operationalize national tourism diversification strategies while aligning with agricultural policy transformation and sustainability principles.

3. Results and Discussion

Accordingly, this study produces a policy-design output rather than an empirical impact assessment. Its contribution lies in translating macro-level policy objectives into a region-specific rural development instrument.

Geographic, Ecological, and Socioeconomic Context of Aladağlar

The Aladağlar Mountain Range forms a major component of the Taurus Mountains, extending across the provinces of Niğde, Kayseri, and Adana. The region's high elevations, steep topography, and extended snow cover during winter months create favorable conditions for winter-based outdoor activities such as snowshoeing, ski touring, winter trekking, and mountaineering. At the same time, a significant portion of the area lies within the boundaries of Aladağlar National Park, which hosts high biodiversity value and ecologically sensitive habitats.

From a socioeconomic perspective, settlements surrounding Aladağlar are predominantly rural, with livelihoods largely dependent on small-scale agriculture and livestock production. Agricultural incomes are subject to pronounced seasonal fluctuations, particularly during winter months when production activity declines. This seasonal vulnerability contributes to rural poverty risks, labor underutilization, and outward migration. In this context, winter tourism represents a viable complementary activity

that can be integrated into existing agricultural systems without necessitating structural displacement.

Winter Tourism Routes as an Instrument of Agricultural Policy Integration

Within the framework of Turkey's national tourism diversification strategy, winter tourism routes in Aladağlar are conceptualized not as isolated tourism investments but as territorially embedded policy instruments. The route-based approach enables spatial integration of agricultural production zones, rural settlements, and protected landscapes, thereby operationalizing national strategic objectives at the regional scale.

From an agricultural policy perspective, winter tourism routes offer mechanisms for strengthening local value chains. Local food products, traditional livestock systems, and region-specific gastronomy can be incorporated into tourism services through farm-based accommodation, seasonal food markets, and cooperative supply networks. This integration enhances agricultural value added while reinforcing territorial identity. Importantly, such models align with contemporary policy objectives emphasizing multifunctional agriculture, rural entrepreneurship, and short supply chains.

Rural Transformation, Employment, and Social Resilience

Winter tourism has the potential to generate diversified employment opportunities in rural areas, particularly during periods of agricultural inactivity. Services such as guiding, accommodation management, transportation, and local product marketing create non-farm income streams that complement agricultural livelihoods. In Aladağlar, the development of winter tourism routes could contribute to retaining young populations in rural areas by expanding local employment prospects and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Beyond economic effects, tourism-driven rural transformation can strengthen social capital by fostering collective action, cooperative governance, and community participation. Policy frameworks that actively involve local farmers, cooperatives, and municipalities in tourism planning are more likely to achieve inclusive and durable development outcomes.

The Second-Level Output: Conceptual Territorial Integration Model

Hakemlerin "second output yok" eleştirisini doğrudan cevaplayan yeni bölüm:

Unlike stakeholder-based empirical studies, this research produces a second-level policy output in the form of a spatially integrated winter tourism route model. This model functions as a territorial implementation scenario derived from national tourism diversification goals.

The second output consists of three interrelated components:

1. A seasonal income stabilization framework (Figure 1), illustrating the inverse relationship between agricultural income cycles and winter tourism potential.
2. A conceptual spatial integration map (Figure 3), linking rural settlements, agricultural production areas, and protected natural zones into a cohesive winter tourism corridor.
3. A climate-adaptive zoning model (Figure 4), identifying snow continuity areas suitable for low-impact and sustainability-oriented winter tourism investments.

Through these outputs, the study moves beyond normative argumentation and provides a structured policy-implementation framework grounded in official strategic objectives.

Figure 1 illustrates the inverse seasonal relationship between agricultural income and winter tourism potential. While agricultural revenues peak during the growing

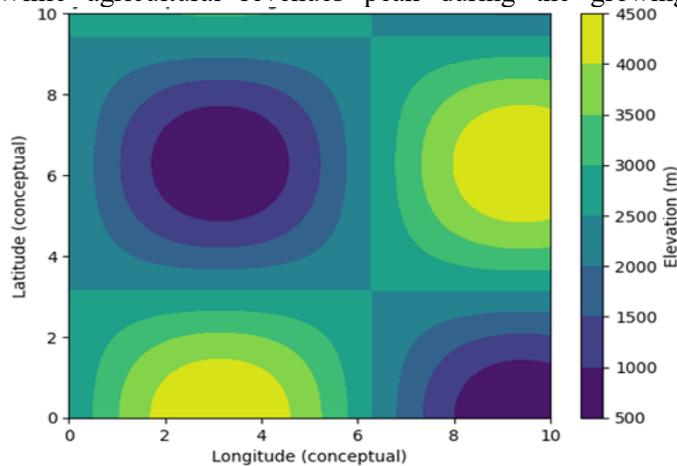


Figure 2. Conceptual physical map of the Aladağlar region illustrating elevation patterns and snow retention potential.

The map highlights high-altitude zones with prolonged snow cover, which constitute the core physical basis for winter tourism development. These areas coincide with seasonal agricultural inactivity, underlining the complementary nature of tourism-based income diversification.

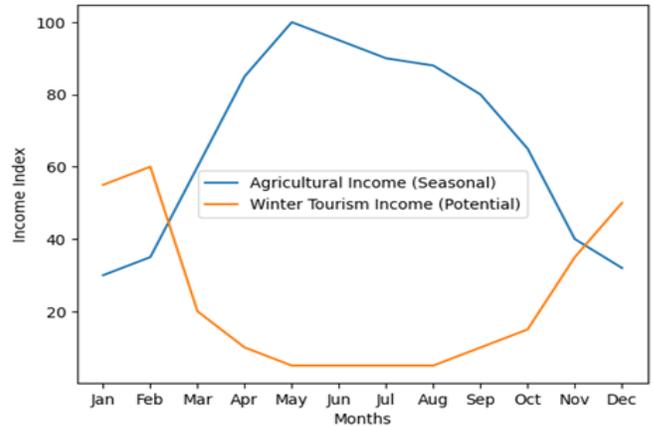


Figure 1. Seasonal fluctuation of agricultural income and the potential stabilizing effect of winter tourism in mountain rural areas.

season, winter tourism provides complementary income during periods of agricultural inactivity, supporting income stabilization and rural resilience.

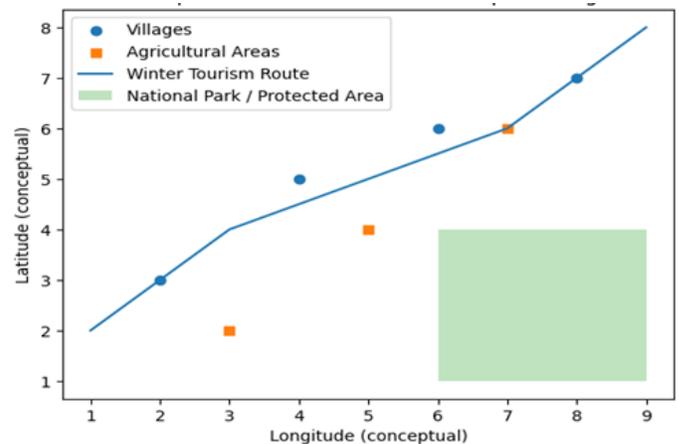


Figure 3. Conceptual winter tourism route integrating rural settlements, agricultural production zones, and protected natural areas in the Aladağlar region.

The proposed route demonstrates a spatially integrated model where tourism activities are aligned with agricultural livelihoods and conservation priorities, minimizing land-use conflict while maximizing rural development synergies.

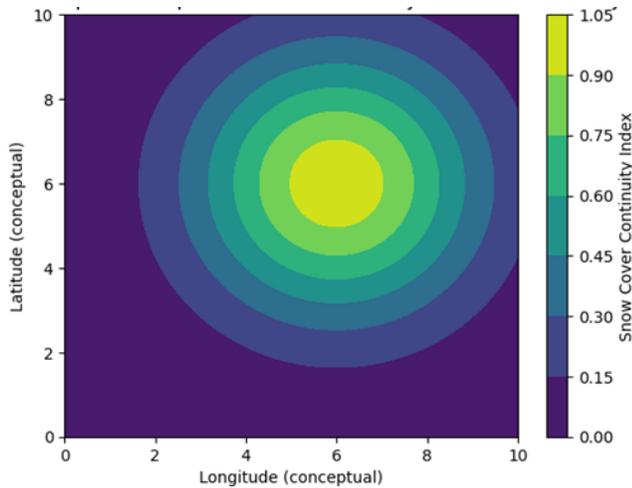


Figure 4. Climate adaptation map illustrates snow cover continuity and climate sensitivity in mountainous rural areas.

Areas with sustained snow cover continuity represent strategic zones for climate-resilient winter tourism investments, supporting adaptive rural development under changing climatic conditions.

Sustainability, Climate Change, and Environmental Governance

Given the ecological sensitivity of the Aladağlar region, winter tourism development must be embedded within robust sustainability and environmental governance frameworks. Climate change introduces uncertainties regarding snow reliability and ecosystem stability, necessitating adaptive and low-impact tourism models. Unlike mass ski tourism, route-based winter tourism emphasizes flexibility, low infrastructure intensity, and compatibility with conservation objectives.

Policy instruments such as carrying-capacity assessments, environmental impact evaluations, and climate adaptation planning are essential to ensure that tourism development does not compromise ecological integrity. In this respect, winter tourism routes represent a climate-resilient alternative aligned with sustainable land-use policies. This sustainability perspective is consistent with the national strategy's emphasis on balanced regional development and environmentally responsible tourism diversification.

4. Conclusion

Winter tourism routes in Aladağlar represent a territorially embedded policy instrument aligned with national tourism diversification and rural transformation strategies. By grounding the proposal within officially articulated strategic objectives, this study demonstrates how winter tourism can serve as a complementary mechanism for agricultural income diversification, seasonal risk mitigation, and climate-adaptive rural resilience.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its policy-translation function: transforming macro-level tourism strategy goals into a region-specific territorial development model. In this regard, Aladağlar should be regarded not merely as a tourism destination but as a strategic laboratory for integrated rural policy innovation in mountainous regions.

Policy Implications and Strategic Recommendations

The findings suggest that winter tourism in Aladağlar should be institutionalized within agricultural policy frameworks as a diversification mechanism rather than treated as a standalone tourism investment. Such institutional alignment would ensure policy coherence between tourism strategy, rural development planning, and environmental governance. Furthermore, national tourism strategies should move beyond destination-centric investment models and adopt territorial approaches that integrate agriculture, environment, and tourism. Supporting small-scale, community-based winter tourism initiatives through targeted incentives and capacity-building programs would enhance policy coherence and local ownership.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its reliance on document-based policy analysis and does not include primary stakeholder interviews or quantitative feasibility assessments. Future research may incorporate participatory rural appraisal methods, cost-benefit analysis, and climate simulation modeling to empirically test the viability of the proposed winter tourism route model. Additionally, stakeholder perception analysis would strengthen the social legitimacy dimension of the framework.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study clarifies its scope as a strategic policy-design contribution rather than an empirical impact evaluation.

5. References

- Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2011). Critical research on the governance of tourism and sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(4–5), 411–421.
- Hall, C. M., & Page, S. J. (2014). *The geography of tourism and recreation: Environment, place and space*. Routledge.
- OECD. (2019). *Rural policy reviews: Innovation and modernisation*. OECD Publishing.
- Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2007). *Tourism Strategy of Turkey – 2023*. Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism.
- UNWTO. (2020). *Tourism and rural development*. World Tourism Organization.
- Yıldız, Z., & Kaya, A. (2019). Alternative tourism in mountainous regions and regional development. *Anadolu University Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(3), 45–62.