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A new alternative in the field of tour guiding emerging after COVID-19: Online guided virtual tour¹

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate online guided virtual tours, which started to be massified for the first time with the COVID-19 pandemic, as an alternative in the context of the tour guiding profession and to address them in a holistic approach. The pandemic is known to have accelerated the pace of digitalization globally and transformed many professions. It is seen that tour guides, who are considered key stakeholders in the tourism sector, are also faced with new alternative practices in the face of this digitalization. Among these new applications, online guided virtual tours, which have become massive with the impact of global sharing platforms such as Airbnb and TripAdvisor, are considered an alternative in the tour guide profession. Considering that digital and virtual applications have become widespread in recent years and have the potential to grow gradually, the investigation of online guided virtual tours, which are predicted to create an important alternative in the field of tour guiding, is essential in terms of providing a perspective to the tour guiding profession and stakeholders. Online guided virtual tours should be used effectively in the pre-promotion of the touristic destination in terms of encouraging travel and positively affecting the tendency to visit on-site. In this conceptual study, an evaluation and some suggestions are given regarding the possible usage areas of these virtual tours in the field of tour guiding and their impact on the profession's future.

KEYWORDS

Tour Guiding, Digitalization, COVID-19, Online guided virtual tour.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation, which emerged with the spread of digitalization as a result of the progress in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) (Buhalis & O'Connor, 2005, p. 6), is gradually increasing its pace with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. As it is known, consumers can change their existing habits while trying to adapt to this rapid development. Technological developments and tools that affect people at the center of the tourism sector also drive change in tourism (Sigala, 2018, p. 152). On the other hand, the emergence of large-scale travel restrictions in recent years due to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change negatively affects service sector stakeholders such as tourism (Abbas et al., 2021) and forces them to change.

Tour guides are recognized as essential tourism stakeholders (Pu et al., 2023, p. 826). Tour guides are professional tourism workers who provide professional support to tourists, give informative explanations about the place visited, guide them, and stay in contact with tourists the most in tour programs. At this point, tour guiding is among the professions affected in the tourism sector in the face of travel restrictions, changing consumer behaviors, and digital transformation (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2022, p. 7). Tour guiding will inevitably be integrated into digital transformation by using ICTs to adapt to new situations, especially crisis processes such as climate change and epidemics and their aftermath (Nazlı, 2020, p. 76). In the developing digitalized world, digital interaction on virtual platforms is thought to be at the center of almost every aspect of life (Buhalis et al., 2023, p. 8).

In recent years, it has become imperative for the tour guiding profession to adapt to these technologies and undergo a transformation (Harpe & Sevenhuysen, 2020) in the face of innovations such as virtual and augmented reality technology-based platforms (such as Metaverse), online virtual tours on sharing economy platforms (such as Airbnb), humanoid robots, artificial intelligence, Big Data, Internet of Things and 5G technology. In the tourism sector, where new technologies are used and widespread, the emergence and widespread use of new applications (robot guide, hologram guide, on-site guidance with virtual and augmented reality technology supported devices, online guided virtual tours, digital voice guidance on mobile devices, organizing tours through platforms within the scope of sharing economy, etc.) have some opportunities and threats for the sustainability of this profession.

In the face of travel restrictions due to the pandemic, online guided virtual tours (Cenni & Vásquez, 2022; Dybsand, 2022), which have emerged and become widespread on global platforms such as Airbnb and other global and local platforms, have emerged as a new practice in tour guiding. In addition to online guided virtual tours that can be organized at a more local level by travel agencies or tour guides, online guided virtual tours offered by Airbnb and TripAdvisor stand out among those organized at the global level (Wong et al., 2022; Zhang & Qiu, 2022). In the post-pandemic period, it is predicted that platforms offering similar virtual tour experiences will increase in importance, peer-to-peer (P2P) online experiences will transform the tourism industry, gain more popularity even after the pandemic, and create a need to evaluate their impact on the tourism industry (Lu et al., 2022; Zhu & Cheng, 2022). At this point, it is necessary to evaluate online guided virtual tour applications, which have emerged as a new alternative in the context of the tour guiding profession.

Literature on tourism shows that holistic studies on online virtual tour guiding and its applications in the tour guiding profession are limited. Studies on online guided virtual tour applications (Mastroberardino et al., 2021; Dybsand, 2022; Uca & Karahan, 2022; Cenni & Vásquez, 2022; Zhu & Cheng, 2022; Wong et al., 2022; Yamada & Matsuda, 2023) mainly focus on the impact of these applications on the tourism sector in general and include content analysis of user comments and the tour experiences of users participating in these online guided virtual tours. On the other hand, the starting point of this study is that there is no holistic assessment of the use of this new alternative practice, especially in the context of tour guiding, its impact on the business ecosystem, and the profession's future. In this context, this conceptual study is thought to contribute to the literature.

COVID-19 AND DIGITALIZATION IN TOURISM

Digitalization has significantly changed the travel and tourism industry, transforming it into a smart industry, i.e., an innovative and technologically advanced industry fully embedded in the Industry 4.0 paradigm (Pencarelli, 2020, p. 459). Since its emergence, ICTs have been transforming the tourism industry on a global scale (Buhalis & O'Connor, 2005, p. 7). As a definition, ICT "is the collective term given to the most recent developments in the mode (electronic) and the mechanisms (computers and communications technologies as well as the software which drive them) used for the acquisition, processing, analysis, storage, retrieval, dissemination, and application of information" (Poon, 1988, p. 533). The first examples (technologies) of the development (evolution) of ICTs begin with the mass use of telephones, telex, and fax for communication. Since the early 2000s, with the widespread use of the Internet and social media and the advent of smartphones, the advanced technology stage has been reached, followed by the Metaverse technology stage, where reality technologies are used (Buhalis et al., 2023).

Tourism, one of the fields where digitalization is widely seen and shaped, is considered one of the world's largest industries (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2023, p. 53). Tourism has traditionally been a labor-intensive sector due to its service-oriented nature (Buhalis, 2000, p. 42). However, in parallel with the development of ICTs, tourism is gradually transforming into a mix of "digital" and "labor intensive" sectors. Due to the effects of technology on consumer behavior, tourists now use technology extensively in the pre-travel, during, and post-travel stages. This intensity has increased with the COVID-19 pandemic, which negatively affected the global tourism sector between 2020 and 2022 and led to travel restrictions worldwide (Gyimothy et al., 2022). The emergence of the pandemic minimized travel mobility at both international and national levels, and mobility restrictions significantly impacted the tourism sector (Viana-Lora et al., 2023, p. 21). As is well known, during this pandemic, the world faced and is still coping with the effects of an unprecedented global health, social, and economic crisis (Dybsand, 2022).

Important events in human history can push society to change. The COVID-19 pandemic (Wright, 2023, p. 116), considered in this context, has changed the behavior, demands, and even the qualifications of visitors to travel (Mirzaei et al., 2023, p. 56). At the same time, the pandemic has further accelerated the adoption of new technologies and technology-enabled services (Buhalis et al., 2023, p. 8). The pandemic has also brought digital innovations. For example, almost overnight, people have turned to platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams for various events as a quick solution to constraints, and online events have replaced face-to-face meetings. These developments in extended reality, an umbrella term for immersive technologies that combine physical and virtual worlds, have led to the proliferation of virtual and virtual reality (VR) activities (Yung et al., 2022). Also, during the pandemic, "from live exercise workouts to yoga and meditation sessions before breakfast, to gaming at a distance, to attending virtual church services and craft lessons, to online school classes and workplace meetings, as well as convivial drinking and socializing sessions with friends of an evening, Internet-based videoconferencing finally came into its own" (Marks, 2020, p. 21). The most striking example to be given in this context is the application that made it possible to watch live broadcasts via webcam in 2020, when the pandemic emerged, and presented the parade of penguins in Australia on social media channels (Facebook, YouTube, etc.) under the name Penguin TV. According to the findings of a study conducted on the participants of these live broadcasts, it was revealed that technological applications within the scope of live Penguin TV positively affected travel motivation and actual visitation, and viewers were more likely to visit the places they viewed through their webcams (Blaer, 2023, p. 65). In summary, even watching penguins live online during the pandemic positively impacted the willingness to travel.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN TOUR GUIDING PROFESSION

Tour guides are recognized as one of the key players in tourism, which has become a worldwide industry (Ap & Wong, 2001). According to tourists, a tour guide is "a person representing the country, a wise, an example, an ambassador" (Ahipaşaoğlu, 2006, p. 150). "A guide is an interpreter, educator, ambassador of the host society, and an interaction facilitator

between the local culture, locals and tourists, either foreign or domestic” (Cetin & Yarcın, 2017, p. 346). Tour guides are also a powerful intermediary in the branding and positioning of destinations (Jonasson, 2011, p. 90). In this context, tour guides are essential in the tourism sector.

In recent years, it has been seen that the use of technology has become widespread in tour guiding, which is accepted as an increasingly important profession (Kırıcı Tekeli, 2022, p. 2856). In this context, it has become inevitable for the tour guide to have the equipment and competence to use technology while providing guidance services in line with the needs and wishes of the tourists, which are differentiating day by day (Çapar & Karamustafa, 2018, p. 205). Technological developments can sometimes negatively affect some professions. For example, it is predicted that tourists may no longer need guidance services such as finding the address of places to visit in an unfamiliar place, providing translation services, and providing transfer services. For this reason, it is emphasized that tour guiding should be innovative and transform into a service that adds value in a way that technology cannot (Weiler & Black, 2014, p. 168).

One of the most striking indicators of being caught unprepared for technological developments in the field of tour guiding is when the COVID-19 pandemic took effect. Among the adverse developments at the global level (pandemic, cost of living, climate crisis, etc.), rapid digital transformation has been experienced in many sectors, especially with the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the use of technology has become an indispensable element of daily work and life more than ever. It has been observed that tour guides, who are the promotional faces of their countries, have experienced economic, social, and psychological problems due to the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to their many chronic, legal, professional, and personal problems (Ap & Wong, 2001; Batman, 2003) (Nazlı, 2021). New COVID-19 safety measures such as wearing face masks, using hand sanitizing gels, and maintaining social distancing have reshaped tour guiding (Galí, 2022, p. 789). During the pandemic, many tour guides took advantage of their communication and interpersonal skills and decided to change the sector or even leave the profession by working in many different sectors, from real estate companies to call centers (Düzgün & Kurt, 2020; Türker & Karaca, 2020; Brito & Carvalho, 2021; Nazlı, 2021).

The tour guiding profession is affected by technological developments that have become increasingly widespread with the COVID-19 pandemic in a period called Industry 4.0, in which digitalization is intensely seen. Some technological devices and applications that have been used by tourists and tour guides in the field of tour guiding in recent years and may be used in the future can be listed as follows: Headsets, audio guide applications, QR codes, smart headset systems, tablet, mobile application, hologram, 3D animation-animation, personal digital assistant (Siri etc.), robot guide, virtual and augmented reality technology, gaming technologies in museums, virtual museums, interactive kiosk, simulation, location-based digital audio mobile guide applications, social media platforms, social media platforms, websites, blogs, podcasts, transportation, exchange, flight, translation and accommodation applications, online meeting platforms (Zoom etc.), artificial intelligence (AI) platforms (ChatGPT etc.), online guided virtual tours and Metaverse. It is thought that such an intense variety of technological applications and innovations will push the tour guiding profession to change. Therefore, it is time for tour guides to embrace technology and acquire the necessary skills to deliver superior experiences (Chowdhary & Prakash, 2022, p. 20).

ONLINE GUIDED VIRTUAL TOUR CONCEPT

Until the emergence of the pandemic in the tour guiding profession, the virtual tour service and the platforms on which these services are offered have remained relatively limited. However, with the impact of the pandemic, new and comprehensive developments are being experienced in virtual tour applications. Since 2020, during the period of travel restrictions due to the pandemic, museums around the world have developed virtual tour applications that allow virtual browsing (Aksoy & Baş, 2020; El-Said & Aziz, 2022; Lu et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022). After virtual museums that can be experienced through virtual tours, touristic attractions (such as ruins, city centers, natural and cultural heritage sites, etc.) were opened to the public, especially in a 360° virtual tour environment, and attracted the attention of users during periods of quarantine or limited travel opportunities (Wu & Lai, 2021).

Following COVID-19, the tourism industry invested heavily in technological innovations such as virtual tours (Nautiyal & Polus, 2022). This is because the impossibility of traveling during this period stimulated the creativity of tourism professionals who experimented with new ways of maintaining relationships with tourists (Mastroberardino et al., 2021, p. 1732). One of these innovations is online guided virtual tours, which emerged widely during the pandemic (Dybsand, 2022, p. 3; Repo & Pesonen, 2022, p. 329). As a definition, an online guided virtual tour is “a digital excursion in which a tour guide accompanies the tour participants online and live through a promotional and/or educational content developed in a virtual environment.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns, travel bans, and social distancing rules forced most tourism stakeholders to stop offering physical tourism experiences temporarily. As a temporary solution, online guided virtual tours were offered as part of live streaming experiences using Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube and other streaming platforms, allowing participants to participate in experiences remotely (Dybsand, 2022, p. 3). These tours have been conducted by travel agencies, by tour guides and local experts on platforms such as Airbnb (Prabowo, 2022; Repo & Pesonen, 2022; Yamada & Matsuda, 2023).

For the first time since 2020, guided virtual tours in the online environment have become significantly widespread. Examples of these tours include Airbnb (Airbnb Online Experience), TripAdvisor (Virtual Tours Around the World to Experience at Home), Amazon (Amazon Explore), and Viator (Mastroberardino et al., 2021; Zhu & Cheng, 2022; Dybsand, 2022; Uca & Karahan, 2022; Wong et al., 2022; Zhang & Qiu, 2022).

Online guided virtual tours have been widely used during the pandemic, mainly as an alternative during quarantine. However, it is also a less demanding alternative, especially for people with disabilities and the elderly (Dybsand, 2022, p. 12). On the other hand, the sociality and interactivity provided by online guided virtual tours have been shown to satisfy consumers' desire to travel during the pandemic to some extent and to encourage their desire to travel after the pandemic (Zhang & Qiu, 2022, p. 313).

Airbnb, the leading online guided virtual tour application and the largest peer-to-peer accommodation platform offers online virtual tours accompanied by a local expert or guide (Zhu & Cheng, 2022). Airbnb, which was founded in 2008 as a website and mobile app-based accommodation platform that offers the opportunity to rent places hosted by local people to others, is the largest global company in its field, with more than 150 million members (Guttentag, 2015; Gössling et al., 2021). Launched in 2020, the "Airbnb Online Experience" is seen as a new peer-to-peer online experience business model in a paid and online virtual tour environment narrated by the host (Zhu & Cheng, 2022).

An example of an online guided virtual tour of the Taj Mahal in India, which takes place on the Airbnb platform with a tour guide, can be seen in Image 1. As in this image, the tour guide who organizes the virtual tour introduces the tour as follows: “Explore the timeless beauty and historical significance of the Taj Mahal through our immersive virtual presentation.” It is thought that online guided virtual tours like this one, organized flexibly online and for a fee, independent of time and space, will continue.

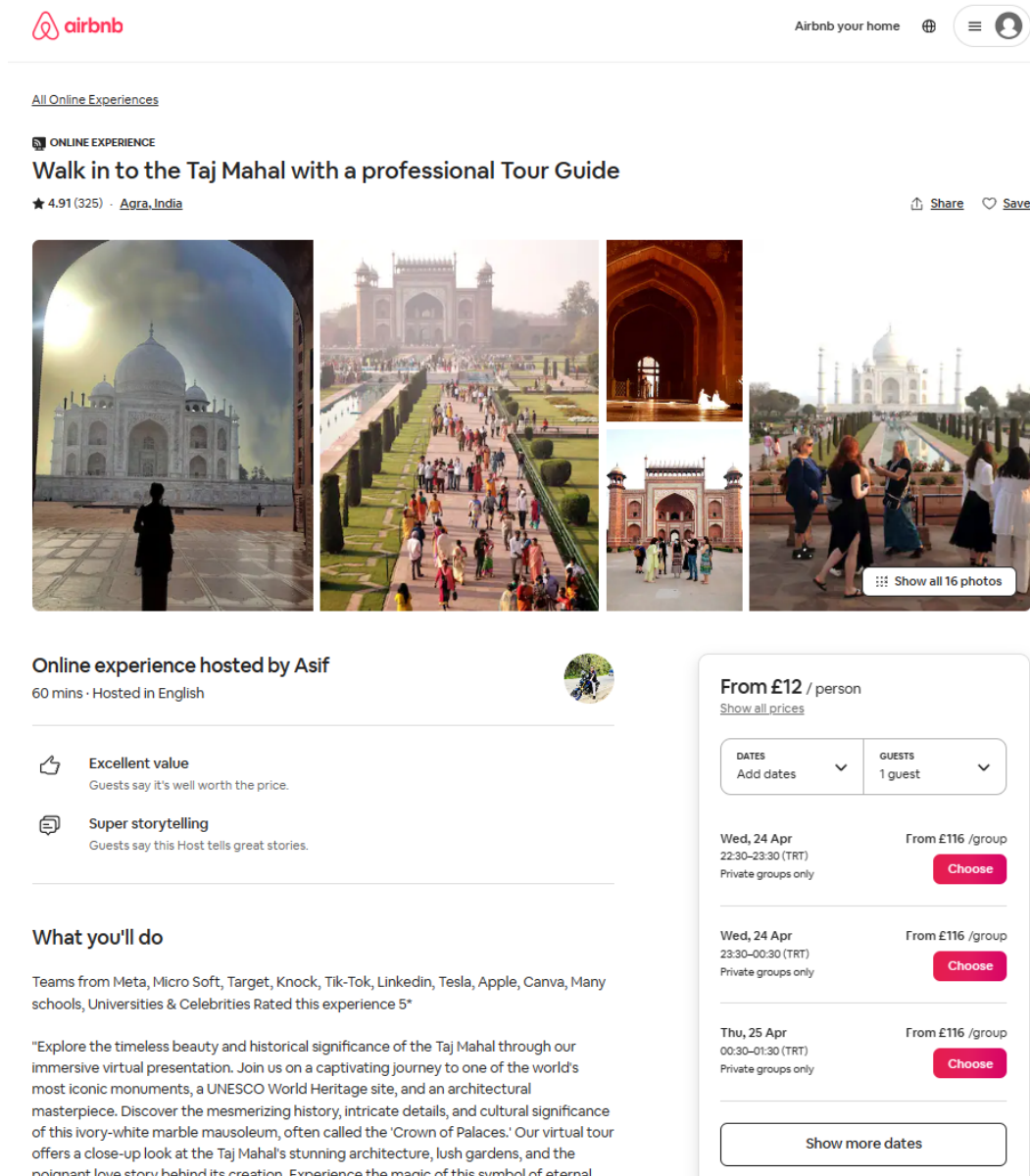


Figure 1. Online guided virtual tour of the Taj Mahal in India with a tour guide on the Airbnb platform (Airbnb, 2024).

Before the pandemic, no online guided virtual tour application was found on existing websites or mobile app-based tour platforms that deliver tours accompanied by local guides to national and international visitors. However, in response to the need for virtual tours that emerged with the pandemic, these tour platforms started to develop paid virtual tours accompanied by a guide online. Among the leading online tour platforms, ToursByLocals, Showaround, Withlocals, and PrivateGuide platforms bring together thousands of tour guides and users worldwide. Among these platforms, ToursByLocals (2024), the most extensive tour platform with 4445 guide members from 191 countries, offers 137 online guided virtual tours by 61 tour guides in 35 countries, with an average duration of 1-2 hours and an average cost of 50-100 dollars. Image 2 shows an online guided virtual tour of the Sagrada Familia in Spain on the ToursByLocals platform. This virtual tour is conducted by a licensed tour guide living in Spain. The virtual tour is organized online for a fee, with the following note in the description: "Attention!!!! In order to fully enjoy the virtual tour a good internet connection will be needed!!!!" In this context, it can be argued that internet connection speed is vital for online guided virtual tours.

The screenshot displays a webpage for 'Tours By LOCALS'. The main heading is 'The Wonder of Barcelona: Sagrada Familia - Indoor Live Virtual Tour'. It features a 5-star rating (1 review) and a description: 'A unique, breathtaking experience, virtually from my home in Barcelona using live video-conferencing software!!!'. The text describes the tour as a discovery of the Sagrada Familia, started in 1182 and still under construction, highlighting its unique Catholic architecture. The guide, Maica C., expresses her passion and knowledge of the site. The itinerary includes an introduction, a 1-hour virtual presentation, and a 3D photo experience of the Temple and Passion facades. The tour price is \$220 USD per tour for up to 10 users, with a 1-hour 30-minute duration. A 'MEET YOUR GUIDE' section introduces Maica C., a licensed tour guide (#2435) since 2005, with a 'MESSAGE MAICA C.' button. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'MESSAGE GUIDE', 'BOOK NOW', and 'ADD TO CART'.

Figure 2. Example of an online guided virtual tour conducted by a licensed tour guide in Spain (ToursByLocals, 2024).

Apart from mass online tour platforms, some organizations organize virtual tours individually. Finally, WeGoTrip, TourScanner, the Clio, Geotourist and GPSMYCITY applications, which can also be counted among tour platforms but do not have virtual tour programs and are considered among self-guided tour apps, are shown as examples of smart tour platforms in the field of tour guiding (Podsukhina & Pinke-Sziva, 2022, p. 4). An example of these smart audio guiding applications in Turkey that have reached a mass level is Piri Guide (2024), a mobile app-based digital tour with audio tours accompanied by local experts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the face of the rapid development of ICTs and the digital transformation it brings with it, it has been seen that it is inevitable that the service-oriented tourism sector and the tour guiding profession, which is considered an essential stakeholder of this sector, should be integrated into digitalization, as the COVID-19 pandemic strikingly reminds. Since technological developments, which have come to the extent of changing the habits of daily life, also affect consumer behavior (Xiang et al., 2015), tour guides, who are in direct communication with consumers, in other words, tourists, need to keep up with this change. In this context, traditional guiding services will

inevitably be affected when technologies such as Metaverse, artificial intelligence, robotics, and virtual reality are becoming increasingly widespread.

In a period when the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected human life socially, psychologically, and economically at a global level and travel restrictions were observed, online virtual platforms were considered as an alternative in the field of tourism as in every field (Gyimóthy et al., 2022). An alternative application developed during this period was online virtual tours accompanied by live tour guides. These virtual tour applications have been and continue to be organized during the pandemic, ranging from local to global, on platforms reaching millions of users such as Airbnb and TripAdvisor, as well as initiatives of travel businesses and tour guides. Considering the online guided virtual tours organized on Airbnb and ToursByLocals platforms, it is noteworthy that these tours are predominantly conducted online and live, accompanied by a licensed tour guide, and for a certain fee.

These online guided virtual tours, organized online and live accompanied by an expert tour guide, have attracted mass interest during the pandemic and have been suggested to have potential after the pandemic. In this context, online guided virtual tours are thought to be essential for the tour guiding profession as an alternative application to adapt to digital transformation and better manage such crises. On the other hand, the advantages of these online guided virtual tours accompanied by a tour guide for users can be listed as follows:

1. Instant communication with the tour guide and other participants through online guided virtual tours
2. Having reliable information from an expert
3. Providing access by offering an alternative for disadvantaged groups with travel restrictions
4. Creating an economic alternative for those with time and financial constraints
5. Creating a virtual travel opportunity with digital access
6. Contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (carbon footprint) that affect climate change through virtual travel
7. Ensuring social accessibility in times of crisis, such as infectious diseases, extreme weather events caused by climate change, terrorism, etc., and thus being socially and psychologically supportive
8. Getting a preliminary experience through a virtual tour before purchasing a touristic product (package tour, hotel room, etc.)
9. Supporting visitors with time and budget constraints to realize an efficient site visit by contributing to the level of knowledge with the preliminary introduction provided before visiting the destination on-site
10. Contributing to the level of knowledge of individuals about destinations that may be challenging in terms of travel and transportation and increasing the desire to visit them accordingly

Considering that crises are caught unprepared with the COVID-19 pandemic and many tour guides are affected socially and psychologically, especially economically, it can be argued that there is a need to develop alternative digital solutions by adapting to digital transformation. In this context, virtual tours can become an additional income-generating activity in the profession by professionally learning the preparation process of online guided virtual tours, their presentation, and the feedback evaluation afterward. The need for virtual tours emerges even more clearly in times of travel restrictions, especially in the face of environmental crises caused by climate change and the threat of epidemics. In this context, virtual tours can be considered an alternative solution to prevent job loss in the guidance profession, meet the travel needs of tourists, and promote the destination effectively.

Online guided virtual tours should be used effectively in the pre-promotion of the touristic destination in terms of encouraging travel and positively affecting the tendency to visit on-site. On the other hand, the satisfaction levels of the participants of these tours are quite high (Repo & Pesonen, 2022; Uca & Karahan, 2022). For this reason, its pre-promotion evaluation will positively contribute to the image of the country and the region. Users who are satisfied with the destination

on a guided online virtual tour are more likely to share their positive experiences and information, which will help create a destination brand (Yamada & Matsuda, 2023).

It is thought that the realization of online guided virtual tours by tour guides will create alternative business opportunities. For this reason, tour guides should be more active on online platforms. In this context, tour guides can organize virtual tours on the website developed at the personal level, on online platforms at the local level, and on Airbnb platforms at the global peer-to-peer level. In this way, income can be generated. If tour guides focus on these platforms, virtual tours with different content can be organized, the personal network of guides can increase with these tours, and finally, after the online tour, visitors can participate in the guides' tours in the actual field. Visitors who want to visit a destination with a tour guide can access guides through platforms such as Airbnb or Withlocals, considered part of the sharing economy. On the Airbnb platform, the service of touring in the field with a real tour guide was launched in 2016 and has reached a broad audience. Similarly, online guided virtual tours on the Airbnb platform were launched in 2020 and offered users a significant alternative tour opportunity, especially during the pandemic (Cenni & Vásquez, 2022). In this context, since the coming together of tour guides and tourists can be realized through tour operators or travel agencies and sharing platforms such as Airbnb, tour guides should focus on these platforms in line with this digital transformation.

It is thought that the impact of online guided virtual tours on the tour guiding profession and the number of visits to touristic destinations will be minimal. These virtual tours are the tours that users participate in to get information before seeing a place. For this reason, visitors influenced by the narration and content of these tours will want to visit the destination on-site and be accompanied by a tour guide.

Online guided virtual tours are considered among the most straightforward and least costly applications of virtual tourism. For this reason, it is necessary to establish platforms where a tour guide will accompany online and live and where advanced technology is used. In this context, it is thought that the development of platforms where the sense of reality will be increased for the participants with animations and visuals to be developed with drone technologies, 360 degrees, 3D, and artificial intelligence, and the creation of alternative areas by guides in this direction will offer advantages. In this context, it will be adequate to carry out educational activities for the evaluation of platforms such as Metaverse, which are among the first ones that come to mind in terms of tour guides, to encourage guides, to open courses in which these technologies will be taught in the curriculum of tour guiding undergraduate and graduate programs, and to provide various seminars on this subject by the association of guide chambers and guide chambers. Since online guided virtual tours, which are considered non-immersive virtual tours, do not require high technology skills and are not very costly to implement, training to develop these skills will be a practical and efficient way to advance virtual tourism in the field of tour guiding (Yamada & Matsuda, 2023).

Online guided virtual tours offer an alternative for people with travel restrictions, such as people with disabilities, older age groups, chronic patients, or those who cannot travel due to a lack of budget. Therefore, regarding market size, these virtual tours should be evaluated in the field of tour guiding. In this respect, it is seen that online guided virtual tours have a social aspect. On the other hand, these tours can create an alternative and contribute to experienced and expert tour guides with travel restrictions. Tour guides in the advanced age group or with travel disabilities in the tour guiding profession will have cultural contributions to promoting the country and region in different languages through these virtual tours and economic contributions as an income-generating business opportunity for themselves.

This study's limitation is that it deals with the issue at a conceptual level and evaluates it only in the context of the tour guiding profession. Similar future studies can address the impact of online guided virtual tours on other stakeholders in the tourism sector (accommodation businesses, travel agencies, etc.) and tourism education.

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