



e-ISSN: 2458-7583

JOURNAL OF TOURISM THEORY AND RESEARCH

Volume: 9 – Issue:1 (March 2023)

- Analysis of the tourist offer of the Durres Region under the perspective of tourism stakeholders
- Differences in career planning attitudes of hotel employees by gender and age
- The impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic: Digital transformation changes in tourism
- Analysis of complaints regarding recreation and animation services in hotel businesses
- A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman



Editor-in-Chief

Prof. Mahmut DEMİR, Ph.D.

Isparta University of Applied Sciences, Isparta, TURKEY

Associate Editor

Prof. Şirvan Şen DEMİR, Ph.D.

Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, TURKEY

Assist. Prof. Yusuf GÜNAYDIN, Ph.D.

The Final University, TRNC

Assistant Editor

Emre YAŞAR (Case Studies)

Isparta University of Applied Sciences, Isparta, TURKEY

Cristina S. CLARKE (Linguistics)

The University of Manchester, UK

Editorial Advisory Board

Prof. Ali Şükrü ÇETINKAYA, Ph.D., *Selçuk University, TURKEY*

Prof. Alla Okhrimenko Ph.D., *Kyiv National Un. of Trade and Economics, UKRAINE*

Prof. Balayar Aliyev, Ph.D., *Baltic Academy University of Latvia, LATVIA*

Prof. Ermira Qosja, Ph.D., *Universiteti Europian i Tiranës, ALBANIA*

Prof. Jeong-Gil Choi, Ph.D., *Kyung Hee University, S. KOREA*

Prof. Parikshat Singh Manhas, Ph.D., *University of Jammu, INDIA*

Prof. Asım SALDAMLI, Ph.D., *Bolu Abant İ.B. University, TURKEY*

Prof. Cihan COBANOGLU, Ph.D., *University of S.Florida Sarasota-Manatee, USA*

Prof. Dogan GURSOY, Ph.D., *Washington State University, USA*

Prof. Celina MANITA, Ph.D., *University of Porto, PORTUGAL*

Prof. Ewa OZIEWICZ, Ph.D., *University of Gdańsk, POLAND*

Prof. Kemal BİRDİR, Ph.D., *Mersin University, TURKEY*

Prof. Kevin NIELD, Ph.D., *Sheffield Hallam University, UK*

Prof. Marianna SIGALA, Ph.D., *University of South Australia, AUSTRALIA*

Prof. Muzaffer UYSAL, Ph.D., *Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA*

Prof. Oktay EMİR, Ph.D., *Anadolu University, TURKEY*

Prof. Ljudmil GEORGIEV, Ph.D., *New Bulgarian University, BULGARIA*

Prof. Ozan BAHAR, Ph.D., *Muğla S. Koçman University, TURKEY*

Prof. Juan José Padiá BENTICUAGA, Ph.D., *University of Málaga, SPAIN*

Prof. Yina Donald ORGA, Ph.D., *The Federal Polytechnic, NIGERIA*

Prof. Yusuf AYMANKUY, Ph.D., *Balıkesir University, TURKEY*

Prof. Zerrin Toprak KARAMAN, Ph.D., *Dokuz Eylül University, TURKEY*

Contact

Address: Isparta University of Applied Sciences, Tourism Faculty, Eğirdir- ISPARTA - TURKEY

Phone: +90 (246) 3133447

Fax: +90 (246) 3133452

E-mail: editor.jttr@gmail.com

web: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/jttr>

Unless otherwise indicated, all materials on these pages are copyrighted by the JTTR. All rights reserved. No part of these pages, either text or image, may be used for any purpose. Therefore, reproduction, modification, storage in a retrieval system, or retransmission, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise, for reasons other than academic and scientific use, is strictly prohibited without prior written permission. JTTR is context of TÜBİTAK DergiPark Project.

Legal Responsibility: The authors and translators are responsible for the contents of their paper.

Focus and Scope: *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research* is a peer-reviewed online journal that publishes original research papers. *JTTR* welcomes submissions related to academic and scientific practices, approaches, applied research studies, critical reviews on major issues, development of new technologies and tools in tourism in English.

Peer Review Process: All author(s) submitted manuscripts are subject to initial appraisal by the section editors to peer review as a double-blind by at least two independent and expert referees. For the article to be published, at least two referees agree on the publication of the work.

Indexes & Databases:

- ISI - International Scientific Indexing
- ESJI - Eurasian Scientific Journal Index
- OAJI- Open Academic Journals Index
- CiteFactor
- Google Scholar
- IPIndexing
- ResearchBib-Academic Research Index
- ISI - International Scientific Indexing
- ESJI - Eurasian Scientific Journal Index
- OAJI- Open Academic Journals Index
- CiteFactor
- Google Scholar
- IPIndexing
- ResearchBib-Academic Research Index
- DRJI - Directory of Research Journals Indexing
- SIS - Scientific Indexing Services
- JournalSeek
- SOBIAD
- Türkiye Turizm Dizini
- ASOS Index

Research article

Analysis of the tourist offer of the Durres Region under the perspective of tourism stakeholders

Ani MBRICA, Aurela BRAHOLLI, Ermira QOSJA, Licaj BRUNILDA

1-7

Research article

Differences in career planning attitudes of hotel employees by gender and age

Ömer SARAÇ

8-14

Research article

The impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic: Digital transformation changes in tourism

Buket BULUK EŞİTTİ

15-23

Research article

Analysis of complaints regarding recreation and animation services in hotel businesses

Ersin ARIKAN

24-29

Research article

A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman

Raja TUMATI, Mustafa DASKIN, Yusra AL ZAKWANI

30-40

Journal of Tourism Theory and Research

Volume:9, Issue:1, 2023

Research article

Analysis of the tourist offer of the Durres Region under the perspective of tourism stakeholders

Ani MBRËÇA, Aurela BRAHOLLI, Ermira QOSJA, Licaj BRUNILDA

Analysis of the tourism quality of the Durres Region under the perspective of tourism stakeholders

Ani Mbrica^{1*}, Aurela Braholli², Ermira Qosja³ and Brunilda Licaj⁴

¹Department of Management and Marketing, European University of Tirana, Albania, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6050-5367>

²Department of Management and Marketing, European University of Tirana, Albania, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6499-0686>

³Department of Management and Marketing, European University of Tirana, Albania, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3572-2009>

⁴Department of Tourism, Aleksander Moisiu University of Durres, Albania, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5695-3204>

Abstract

This paper analyzes the tourist offer of the Durres Region from the perspective of tourism stakeholders, in accordance with the objectives set in the Albanian National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development 2019-2023 (Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2018). The research method employed is qualitative, based on a questionnaire in the form of a semi-structured interview addressed to private operators, public operators, donors, and NGOs related to the sector, as well as training and educational institutions. The findings of the paper highlight the crucial importance of cooperation among the various operators in the tourism sector. They also point out the obligation of the local government to better discharge their duties concerning the management of public works, preparation of the tourist offers, organizing the inventory of tourism resources of the region, as well as the establishment and branding of the Durres Region as a tourist destination. For the private operators, the findings emphasize the need to improve the quality of service and focus a lot more on training and development of human resources.

Keywords: Tourism, Tourist offer, Stakeholder, Durres Region

1. Introduction

Today, the tourism industry is one of the most critical sectors of the Albanian economy. The favorable geographical position, the Mediterranean climate, the long coastline from Velipoja in the north to Saranda in the south, the Alps, and the lakes are known all over the Balkans for their unique features, as well as the rich cultural and historical heritage constitute an essential foundation for the development of tourism in Albania. In fact, through innovative entrepreneurship and strategic investments, tourism is vitalizing the country's economy.

Tourism's contribution to sustainable development is connected to three dimensions: the generation of trade, the creation of jobs, and the creation of essential capacities to promote the advantages of environmental conservation and cultural diversity.

Durres Region, with an area of 766 square kilometers and a population of 468 467 inhabitants (Prefecture of Durres, 2022), is located at the center of the Albanian

coastline, has a favorable geographical position since it serves as the country's central connecting hub for all types of transport. The Mother Teresa Tirana International Airport, the only international airport in Albania, is located in Rinas, which is in the Municipality of Kruja, part of the Durres Region. On the other hand, the Port of Durres is the largest port in the country and a vital gateway for international trade (Prefecture of Durres, 2022). The Durres Region harmonizes and interlaces sun and sea tourism, agro-tourism, and mountain tourism with the rich heritage of thousands of years of civilization and development of the territory. A large number of objects located in the Durres Region are classified as tourism resources and cultural monuments. They include the Castle of Durres, the Castle of Ishmi, the Castle of Skanderbeg, the Castle of Kruja, the Amphitheatre of Durres, the Basilica of Arapaj, the Church of Saint Anthony of Padua, the Bazaar of Kruja, etc. The Durres Region also houses the Archaeological Museum of Durres, the Ethnographic Museum of Durres, the Scanderbeg National Museum of Kruja, the Ethnographic Museum of Kruja, the King Zog's Villa in Durres, etc.

*Corresponding author

E-mail: ani.mbrica@uet.edu.al

Article info: Research Article

Received: 11 August 2022

Received in revised form: 28 September 2022

Accepted: 16 October 2022

Ethics committee approval:

*All responsibility belongs to the researcher.

This research is part of the project "Design of tourist offer based on the perspective of sustainable development (Case study: Durres and Vlora Regions)", supported by the Albanian Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation.

To cite this article: Mbrica, A., Braholli, A., Qosja, E., & Licaj, B. (2023). Analysis of the tourism quality of the Durres Region under the perspective of tourism stakeholders. *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 9 (1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.24288/jttr.1160950>

The Durres Region is also distinguished by a vast number of natural monuments, such as the Cape of Rodon, the Cliffs of Rodon, the Beach of Kallmi, the Beach of Shenpjetri, the Queen Mother Fountain in Kruja, the Sari Salltik Cave in the Mountain of Kruja, the Forest of Kolndrekajve, the Black Pine in Qafe-Shtame, etc. (Prefecture of Durres, 2022).

One of the biggest problems of the tourism sector in Albania, especially for the operators conducting such activity along the coast, is its seasonality and the few days the tourists stay. This paper is based on the project “Design of tourist offer based on the perspective of sustainable development (Case study: Durres and Vlora Region)” supported by the Albanian Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation and is in line with the objectives of the Albanian National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development 2019-2023 (Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2018). The paper is based on primary and secondary research, where special consideration is also given to the laws related to the sector, such as law no. 7764, dated 2.11.1993, “On foreign investments” (Assembly of Albania, 2018), law no. 93/2015 “On tourism” (Assembly of Albania, 2015), law no. 27/2018 “On cultural heritage and museums” (Ministry of Culture, 2018), etc.

This research aims to analyze the tourist offer of the Durres Region from the tourism stakeholders’ point of view. The research question is: What do the tourism sector stakeholders think of the tourist offer of the Durres Region? The additional question is: What are the reasons for tourists/vacationers staying for a small number of days only?

In this research, the qualitative methodology is used. It is based on a questionnaire in the form of a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was designed with the definition of the tourist offer in mind, and it retains the same bulk of questions for all subjects directed to but has one or two different ones depending on the operator interviewed: private, public, donor, or non-profit organization (NGO), and education-training institution in the sector. A total of 31 interviews were conducted: 16 private operators, seven public operators, six donors and NGOs, and two educational institutions.

The findings of the paper, in addition to highlighting the problems of the sector, emphasize the crucial importance of cooperation among operators, as well as the need for the local government to discharge better their duties concerning the preparation of the tourist offer and to organize the inventory of tourism resources of the region. The findings also emphasize the necessity to improve service quality, focus on human resources, and establish and brand the Durres Region as a tourist destination.

2. Literature review

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, tourism refers to the practice of travel for recreation, directing or managing tourists, tourist promotion or encouragement, and

tourist accommodation. Another definition of tourism is spending time away from home in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure while utilizing the commercial provision of services. Tourism is a product of the arrangements of modern society, beginning in Western Europe in the 17th century, although it has appeared since classical antiquity. At the beginning of the 21st century, international tourism has become one of the most important economic activities in the world, and its influence is becoming increasingly visible from the Arctic to the Antarctic.

Tourism is the largest industry in the world, and, considering the size of its growth, we can safely state that it is one of the great engines for economic development. In 2013, tourism represented 20% of the employment created worldwide. Based on the Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Report 2018 of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism employs 319 million people, which is expected to increase to 421 million by 2029 (WTTC, 2018). In 2019, 1.5 billion tourists were registered, and the growth needs to be managed responsibly to make the most out of tourism opportunities for communities worldwide (UNWTO, 2020). Tourism provides a lot of value to the communities, and almost everyone benefits directly or indirectly.

Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, it contributes towards achieving SDG 8, SDG 12, and SDG 14 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production, and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources. Sustainable tourism is also strongly positioned in the United Nations 2030 Agenda. However, achieving this agenda requires a clear implementation framework, funding, and adequate investment in technology, infrastructure, and human resources.

There is often some confusion in tourism, travel, and hospitality. While tourism is the overarching umbrella term for the activities and the industry creating the tourist experience, travel is defined as the activity of moving between different locations, often for any purpose, but more for leisure and recreation. On the other hand, hospitality is “the business of helping people to feel welcome and relaxed and to enjoy themselves” (Westcott and Anderson, 2021: 3).

As in any other market, the tourism market economy is determined by supply and demand. The tourist offer is a combination of services and products presented for consideration to a customer who wants to make a tourist trip (Centro Europeo de Postgrado, n.d.). Therefore, the tourist offer includes everything that can be used to satisfy the tourist demand: climate, landscape, hotels, restaurants, entertainment facilities, etc. The tourist offer means “quality accommodation” and covers various elements, fun activities, and good service (Avramoski and Ismaili, 2012).

The factors forming a complex tourist offer consist of three groups of essential factors: a) attractive or alluring factors are fundamental to attracting potential tourists, b)

communication or transport factors are factors that enable us to familiarize potential tourists with the advantages of a destination (promotion), the arrival of tourists (means of transport and development of transport connections) and market communication, c) receptive factors are factors that enable stay in a certain destination (hotels, motels, campsites, and other offer holders) and ensure that attractive factors are highlighted (Rudancic et al., 2020).

The object of the tourist offer is the consumer, which in this case is the tourist. The content of the tourist offer also depends on the entities that produce and receive it. Therefore, during the planning and development of a package of services, it is necessary to identify the client's real needs and target the offer for these needs. The tourist offer cannot be examined before it is consumed; to do this, it is necessary to move to different places.

It is necessary to emphasize that the development of specific tourist destinations must be adapted to the goals of the development plans of local authorities and tourism boards. It is essential to understand the needs of the local communities to stimulate the overall economic development of all the local communities in harmony with the development and growth of tourism itself. Bearing this in mind, tourism development must be planned to avoid or reduce the negative consequences, such as overcapacity, noise, water pollution, land pollution or air pollution, and waste disposal (Bruza et al., 2020).

The components of the tourist offer are as follows: attractions (Iaromenko, 2021), which are the places the tourists perceive as the satisfaction of their leisure-oriented needs; transportation, which are the modes of commuting; intermediaries, which are the mediators; destination, which is the place the tourists visit; activities, which are all events the tourists are interested in engaging in (Camilleri, 2018).

3. Methodology

Due to its geographical position-being very close to Tirana and the international airport, as well as offering easy access for the Albanians living in Kosovo and for visitors from North Macedonia and Serbia- the Durres Region is preferred during the second and the third quarter of the year (Institute of Statistics, 2021). Tourism in the Durres Region is characterized mainly by short trips, which in Albania make up about 68.8% of all trips and refer to a stay of up to three nights (Institute of Statistics, 2021). Based on the Travel and Vacation: Tourism Survey 2019, the throughout the year distribution of trips to Durres Region as compared to the whole of Albania is as follows: the first quarter stands at 5.2%, the second quarter at 23.5%, the third quarter at 25.2%, and the fourth quarter stands at 5.3%. The Durres Region seems to have a more extended tourist season than other regions, except the capital city of Tirana. During the second quarter of the year, the Durres Region has the highest concentration of vacationers at the national level, even though they mainly stay on weekends (Institute of Statistics, 2021).

Suppose we refer to seasonality's objectives of the Albanian National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development 2019-2023 (Ministry of Tourism and Environment, 2018). In that case, the small number of days of stay of tourists, the quality of service, and the management of destinations constitute the primary concern of the Albanian government. Its interventions are aimed precisely at improving these factors.

Based on the above, this paper aims to analyze the Durres Region's tourist offer from the tourism stakeholders' point of view. According to law no. 93/2015 "On tourism" (Assembly of Albania, 2015), the tourist offer for each region is to be compiled by the Regional Council, while the promotion is the task of the National Tourism Agency and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment.

This research aims to analyze the tourist offer of the Durres Region from the tourism stakeholders' point of view. The research question is: What do the tourism sector stakeholders think of the tourist offer of the Durres Region? The additional question is: What are the reasons for tourists/vacationers staying for a small number of days only?

The methodology used in this research is the qualitative methodology, and the instrument used is a questionnaire in the form of a semi-structured interview, which retains the same bulk of questions for all subjects but has one or two different ones depending on the operator interviewed: private, public, donor or NGOs, and education-training institution in the sector. The distribution was based on a contact database provided by the authors of this paper. The sample consists of 31 entities located in the Durres Region: (i) private operators, (ii) public operators, (iii) donors and associations, and (iv) educational and training institutions. The questionnaire was distributed and collected during the November - December 2021 period.

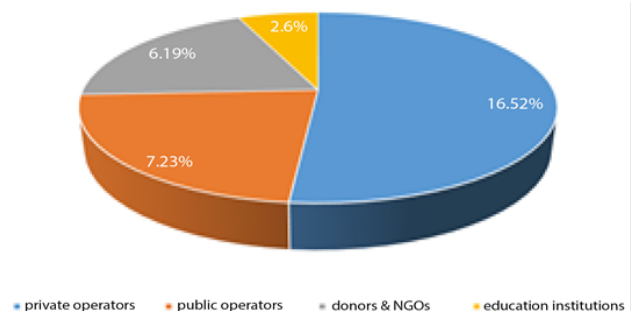


Fig. 1. Composition of the sample of respondents

The semi-structured interview, which was conducted with stakeholders of the tourism sector, contains the following questions: What is your opinion about the tourist offer of the Durres Region? What is your idea about why tourists stay on limited days? Is there a difference between Albanian and foreign tourists? Do you keep regular statistics of visitors (tourists)? If so, what percentage of them return? How many of them are foreigners, and how many are Albanians? Are there any tourism information centers in your region?

Do you think you have sufficient human capacities to cover the tourist offer? In your opinion, are there any local and central policies supporting the enrichment of the tourist offer and the creation of tourist destinations? What are the most acute problems of tour operators that affect the tourist offer? Do you engage in any form of cooperation with other stakeholders in the tourism industry? If so, how does this cooperation affect the tourist offer? How do you assess your collaboration with the education sector?

4. Findings

The data collected through interviews was processed based on the definition of the tourist offer, the components it is made up of, and based on law no. 93/2015 “On tourism” (Assembly of Albania, 2015).

4.1. Evaluation of the tourist offer of the Durres Region

The assessment of the tourist offer of the Durres Region is based on the SWOT analysis. Therefore, the weaknesses and strengths of the tourist offer of the Durres Region were identified, as well as the threats and opportunities related to the external environment (Table 1).

Table 1. Evaluation of the tourist offer of the Durres Region

Weaknesses	Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no tourist product that offers exploration of the mountains, the sea, culture, archeology, gastronomy, etc., that extends throughout the year and in accordance with the law no. 93/2015 “On tourism” • Poor offer at the regional level; • There is a gap between the demands of tourists and the offer of the tourism businesses and the municipalities of the Durres Region regarding the preparations for the tourism season; • Seasonal tourism, limited to sea and sun tourism • Most of the hotels/restaurants are closed for six months • During the June-August period, there are difficulties in managing the flow of tourists • The construction standards are still vague, even after the release of the categorization of these structures based on their construction and services they offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Tirana, the airport and to the Durres port • Rich offer regarding the number of beds • The coastal areas at Shkemb i Kavajes, the Bay of Lalzi and Hamallaj count dozens of two-star, three-star and four-star large resorts and other accommodation structures • Opening of five-star hotels that are part of well-known international brands; • Cooperation with tourist agencies through advance contracts and operation of hotels through booking and OTA platforms are diversifying the countries from which tourists come (Northern Europe countries, Belarus, Russia, Poland, Czechia, Moldova, etc.) • Improved standards related to sea and sun tourism services (beaches, HoReCa services, extra activities during the summer period)
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of law enforcement • Chaotic urban planning and development • Infrastructure problems, mostly related to urban planning, road traffic, potable water supply, parking spaces • Environmental management and especially urban waste management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing the tourist offer in cooperation with the Regional Council • Compilation of an inventory of the main tourism resources of the local government unit by the Regional Council • Coordination of local government work with the tourism sector related to waste management, environmental protection, allocation of private beaches, improvement and development of infrastructure • Coordinated efforts of central government, local government and tourism operators in relation to information and advertising campaigns • Various projects for the establishment of organizations for destination management

4.3. Statistics for the sector in the Durres Region

Regarding all the indicators and features that the Durres Region embodies, the local government units process several statistics, mainly sourced from the data collected at the

4.2. Reasons for the short stay of Albanian and foreign tourists

The subjects interviewed state that tourists stay only for a few days in the Durres Region because of its proximity to Tirana, the poor offer of product variety, and the fact that Durres is mainly considered a weekend destination. Among the reasons for the present situation also include the lack of coordination among stakeholders, the lack of a chain of experience for the tourists, which could lead to more extended periods of stay, the lack of additional tourist activities, and the lack of guides or information about tourist areas.

Most of the accommodation structures in the region are not designed to provide green and relaxing entertaining spaces, and the quality and culture of service, as well as prices, vary in a great range. The respondents also point out the high level of pollution of the environment, especially the polluted sea and beaches. On the other hand, many tourists are one-time customers, so they try to visit as many places as possible. About this attitude, the subjects interviewed also state that the behavior of both foreigners and Albanian visitors is the same.

border crossing points (Port of Durres and Mother Teresa Tirana International Airport). For these purposes, the data collected from the registers of guests that, by law, every hotel, guesthouse, or similar accommodation structure must maintain is also used. The Municipality of Durres possesses

such statistics, but they mainly come from the data collected at the Port of Durres, which represent general information related to the arrivals and departures of tourists, but not their destination/destinations.

Private operators, although by law are required to maintain the register of guests, are usually not very diligent, and their data is controversial due to informality. On top of that, the non-declaration of the accommodation activity conducted by private residences is a widespread phenomenon.

4.4. Tourist information offices in the region

Although the possibilities of accessing information today are endless, tourist information remains problematic due to difficulties with the address system and road signs. During the interviews with the private operators, it turned out that they do not have accurate information about the tourist information offices in the region. While the public operators state that there are two such information offices, one at the Port of Durres ferry terminal and one near the Palace of Culture in the city of Durres, they are actually not functional and therefore do not serve tourists.

With funding allocated by the National Tourism Agency, three static info points have been provided, which have a map of the city of Durres with its central locations and destinations. However, the information is old, and it is not in English.

4.5. Human capacities covering the tourist offer

Human resources are one of the biggest problems for businesses at the global, European, and Albanian levels. All four stakeholders interviewed admit to the crisis the sector is facing, and for 2022 it seems that the situation will become even more challenging (Syri, 2022).

The problem in human resources is related to a series of social and economic phenomena accumulated over the years. Since 2017, Albania has been going through a very high emigration rate. During the last two years, the trend has become even bolder because of the easier conditions applied by Germany and Austria for granting work permits to immigrants (Institute of Statistics, 2021; Lapsi, 2022). Another critical factor is the seasonality of the coastal tourism sector, which, on the one hand, makes it very difficult to find staff, and, on the other hand, the quality of human resources in this sector remains questionable.

The job offer in the tourism sector is much lower than the business demand for human resources. On top of that, the respondents interviewed state that the continued education and training of the employees in the tourism industry continues to remain problematic. Large accommodation structures and four-star or five-star hotels have employed international staff.

The tourism sector also suffers from a lack of management staff, but there is also a lack of managerial capacity to absorb tourism workers and motivate or grow them

professionally. The interviewed stakeholders conclude that the human resources in the sector are still far from what tourists/vacationers deserve.

4.6. Local and central policies in support of enriching the tourist offers and creation of tourist destinations

During the interviews, the operators stated that the laws that support the creation and enrichment of tourist offers and the creation of tourist destinations exist. Still, their implementation leaves much to be desired, perhaps due to mismanagement or lack of cooperation in the sector, lack of vision, bureaucracy, and clientelism.

Based on law no. 93/2015 "On tourism" (Assembly of Albania, 2015), the Regional Council must formulate the tourist offer for the whole region. However, the process shows problems and produces little outcome due to the lack of structures and expertise and the lack of responsibility in fulfilling an obligation arising from the law.

The respondents interviewed state that the municipalities of the Durres Region are still far from taking a proactive and cooperative role with the tourism sector from a developmental point of view. Municipalities mostly see businesses in the industry as subjects to collect taxes from or impose fines mainly during the summer season rather than as essential contributors to the local and national economy.

The respondents point out that the institutions or agencies responsible for tourism promote destinations without any information, regardless of the conditions on the ground. Moreover, due to political clientelism, participation in international tourism fairs encourages sellers (operators), not tourist products or destinations.

4.7. Problems of tour operators that affect the tourist offer

The subjects interviewed state that there are several problems faced by the business operators in the tourism sector that impact the tourist offer, such as culture and quality of service; difficulty in finding staff; lack of qualified human resources either at the management level or in operational roles; seasonality; lack of cooperation of operators with each other; prices varying in a great range depending on the type of tourist; quality-price ratio; entrepreneurial mind-set; discrepancies between what is advertised and what is provided; lack of connections with financing channels, such as the national support schemes (Agency for Agricultural and Rural Development or EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for Rural Development) or other channels (this mainly for businesses in rural areas); investment quality and limited accommodation capacities; lack of diversity of services; hospitality infrastructure.

The tourist offer of the Durres Region is also affected by a number of environmental factors in which this offer is created and operates, such as: lack of services provided by the local and central government: potable water supply; cleaning of the city/beaches/sea; road infrastructure;

mismanagement of waste; maintenance of public spaces; measures prior to the start of the tourist season by the municipalities; lack of public transport; lack of road signs; continuous checks and controls by the tax administration throughout the season; land ownership; informality; constructions without any criteria or plan; urban chaos; lack of sustainable tourism development strategies at the municipal or regional level; lack of destination branding; lack of standardization of accommodation structures; lack of a calendar of cultural activities in the central municipalities; lack of marketing and public relations campaigns for the city/region directed to the foreign and local tourists; lack of attractions along the coastline and in the city; lack of infrastructure in the most essential material and non-material cultural monuments; lack of tourist information centers; delays in granting permission for private beaches.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The goal set in this paper, which was to analyze the tourist offer of the Durres Region from the tourism stakeholders' point of view, was made possible through the use of a qualitative methodology based on a questionnaire in the form of a semi-structured interview, on a variety of literature sources and concepts related to the tourist offer, tourism product and destination in tourism. A total of 31 subjects were interviewed, of which 16 are private operators, seven are public operators, six are donors and associations, and two are educational institutions. The tourism sector in Albania is new in terms of experience, and its chaotic development reflects the evolving entrepreneurial mindset, the lack of vision of governments to design and implement strategies aimed at creating a sustainable sector, the problems of local administration, and the lack of cooperation among stakeholders.

By the law regulating all tourism activities enacted in 2015, the Regional Council is responsible for preparing the inventory of the leading tourism resources of the local government unit. Still, the study showed that this process does not happen due to a lack of expertise, vision, or public accountability. Meanwhile, the region's municipalities continue to show incompetence in managing public works in function to the tourist season and in managing problems related to environmental pollution, waste management, lack of maintenance of public spaces, 24-hour potable water supply, etc.

Overlapping activities between the central and local government bodies, little focus on the tourist offer, cooperation among the operators, and promoting the tourist product is easily identified problems. Lack of destination branding, lack of a calendar of artistic and cultural activities, and absence of and dysfunctionality of tourist information offices are also related shortcomings. The entrepreneurial mindset is, however, evolving. The sector is new in terms of experience, and problems in communication and cooperation among stakeholders exist. That is reflected in the lack of coordination between the local government bodies and

business operators and the lack of coordination regarding marketing efforts.

The difficulties of business operators in finding qualified human resources, but, above all, in keeping them, and the lack of employee motivation to work in this sector due to a complexity of factors that may or may not depend on the operators, which also includes its seasonality, as well as the lack of a law protecting seasonal workers only add to the many problems faced by the tourism sector in the Durres Region. Questionable approaches to the overall quality, the quality-price ratio, and the quality of accommodation remain evident.

5.1. Recommendations

Central and local government institutions must do their share in formulating, supporting, and promoting the tourist offer of each region, discharging their responsibilities by the laws regulating tourism activities. The Regional Council must record and create an inventory of the leading tourism resources of the region, as well as formulate the tourist offer of the Durres Region. The National Tourism Agency should take on the responsibility of promoting the tourist offer in cooperation with private operators. Municipalities should also conceive and budget all the support needed for the sector through investments. Meanwhile, the local and central policies should focus more on developing and improving infrastructure in tourist areas.

It is also required a change of mentality for the cooperation among the operators themselves and between them and the local government; the promotion of private strategic investments and the attraction of well-known international brands in hospitality and tourism; the development of new methodologies for the assessment, standardization, certification, and classification of services related to tourism and tourism operators; consolidation and development of tourism products, as well as re-orientation of promotion towards tourism potentials, branding of destinations; the creation of TID/BID (Tourist Improvement District and Business Improvement District); a public-private partnership for the development of tourism and business areas; keeping statistics and registering the declarations of tourists at the border crossing points regarding the reasons for the trip, maintaining the registers of guests by the law; formalization of family residences, etc. However, maybe the most important of all is the fight against informality.

Increasing the number of days the tourists stay can be achieved through designing consistent policies and strategies at the macro level for several years that would uniformly impact the sector to enable recognition and competition with the countries of the region; the study of consumer behavior models for the local tourists, for those from Albanian-speaking countries and those from other countries; emotional tourism, which in the case of Albania means tourists from Kosovo and emigrant tourists, who continue to contribute to this sector of the economy.

The issue of human resources in the sector requires an approach both from within the businesses and from the local government bodies. The service's quality must be improved to meet international standards and make tourism entrepreneurship competitive with the region. The protection of seasonal employees by law is critical; meanwhile, within businesses, one should think about continuous motivation and training schemes for human resources.

The Durres Region should expand the tourism season so that it is not based only on sun and sea tourism. The short distance of this region from Tirana and the Albanian-speaking countries should lead the operators to design the appropriate tourist packages and to have year-round tourism, where the tours are also related to culture, tradition, religion, etc.

Author contribution statements

Authors contributed equally to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researcher. This research is part of the project "Design of tourist offer based on the perspective of sustainable development (Case study: Durres and Vlora Regions)", supported by the Albanian Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation

References

- Assembly of Albania. (2015). Ligji nr. 93/2015 "Për turizmin" [Law no. 93/2015 "On tourism"]. *Assembly of Albania*. Retrieved from https://www.parlament.al/Files/Integrimit/ligji_nr_93_dt_27_7_2015_23759_1-1.pdf
- Assembly of Albania. (2018). Ligji nr. 7764, datë 2.11.1993 "Për investimet e huaja" [Law no. 7764, dated 2.11.1993 "On foreign investments"]. *Assembly of Albania*. Retrieved from https://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20181026093814_per%20investimet%20e%20huaja%20i%20perditesuar.pdf
- Avramoski, M., & Ismaili, R. (2012). Leisure tourist offer as a component of competitive advantage in the situation of changing environment: Case of Ohrid tourist region. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 4(44), 62-69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.005>
- Bruza, D., Rudancic, A., & Paporic, D. (2020, May 7-9). Elements of the tourist offer of the island of Rab [Paper presentation]. In D. Barkovic, K. H. Demoscheg, A. Erceg, J. Glavas, N. Pap, B. Runzheimer & D. Wentzel (Eds.). *Interdisciplinary Management Research XVI*. XVI International Management Conference, Opatija, Croatia (pp. 127-143), Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. <https://imr-conference.com>
- Centro Europeo de Postgrado Magazine. (n.d.). Qué es la oferta turística? [What is the tourist offer?]. *CEUPE Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.ceupe.com/blog/que-es-la-oferta-turistica.html>
- Dissemond, S. (2022, July 27). Mungesa e personelit paralizon turizmin [Lack of personnel paralyzes tourism]. *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved from <https://p.dw.com/p/4Dv8U>
- Institute of Statistics. (2021). *Të huajt në Shqipëri* [Foreigners in Albania]. Tirana: INSTAT. Retrieved from <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/migracioni-dhe-integrimi-i-migrant%C3%ABve/publikimet/2022/t%C3%AB-huajt-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-2021>
- Institute of Statistics. (2021). *Turizmi në shifra: Shqipëria 2019* [Tourism in figures: Albania 2019]. Tirana: INSTAT. Retrieved from <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/librat/2021/turizmi-n%C3%AB-shifra-2019>
- Lapsi. (2022, June 25). Emigracioni ul fuqinë punëtore në Shqipëri: 5 vitet e fundit ikën 221 mijë persona nga vendi [Emigration reduces the labor force in Albania: 221 thousand people fled the country in the last 5 years]. *Lapsi*. Retrieved from <https://lapsi.al/2022/06/25/emigracioni-ul-fuqine-punetore-ne-shqiperi-5-vitet-e-fundit-iken-221-mije-persona-nga-vendi>
- Ministry of Culture. (2018). Ligji nr. 27/2018 "Për trashëgiminë kulturore dhe muzetë" [Law no. 27/2018 "On cultural heritage and museums"]. *Ministry of Culture*. Retrieved from https://kultura.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Ligji.nr27-_dt.17-05-2018.pdf
- Ministry of Tourism and Environment. (2018). *Strategjia kombëtare për zhvillimin e qëndrueshëm të turizmit* [National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development 2019-2023]. *Ministry of Tourism and Environment*. Retrieved from <https://turizmi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Strategjia-Komb%C3%ABtare-e-Turizmit-2019-2023.pdf>
- Prefecture of Durres. (2022). *Institucioni i Prefektit të Qarkut Durrës* [Institution of the Prefect of Durres Region]. *Prefekti i Qarkut Durrës*. Retrieved from <https://prefektidurres.gov.al>. Retrieved from <https://prefektidurres.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PREFEKTURA-E-DURRESIT-.pdf>
- Rudancic, A., Guzovski, M., & Akmacic, M. (2020). Tourist offer management in globalisation processes. *Journal of Economic and Social Development*, 7(1), 82-90.
- Syri. (2022, June 6). Mungesa e stafit problemi kryesor i turizmit në Shqipëri dhe Kosovë [The lack of staff is the main problem of tourism in Albania and Kosovo]. *Syri*. Retrieved from https://www.syri.net/syri_kosova/lajme/381958/mungesa-e-stafit-mbetet-problemi-kryesor-i-turizmit-ne-shqiperi-dhe-kosove-tur-operatoret-kerkojne-mbes
- World Tourism Organization [UNWTO]. (2020, January 20). International tourism growth continues to outpace the economy. *World Tourism Organization*. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/international-tourism-growth-continues-to-outpace-the-economy>
- World Tourism Organization [UNWTO]. (2015). *Tourism in 2030: Agenda*. *Tourism Aid Global*. Retrieved from <https://tourismaidglobal.org/tourism-in-2030-agenda>
- World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC]. (2018). *Travel and tourism economic impact report 2018*. London: WTTC & Oxford Economics. Retrieved from <https://wtcc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>

Links

- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tourism>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/tourism>

Journal of Tourism Theory and Research

Volume:9, Issue:1, 2023

Research article

Differences in career planning attitudes of hotel employees by gender and age

Ömer SARAÇ

Differences in career planning attitudes of hotel employees by gender and age

Ömer Saraç¹

¹Sakarya University of Applied Sciences, Tourism Faculty, Sapanca, Sakarya-Türkiye, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4338-7394>

Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the career planning attitudes of hotel workers and to determine whether these attitudes vary in accordance with the gender and age of the workers. The data were attained from the hotel workers in the Taksim Talimhane region in Istanbul by benefitting from the survey technique, and 564 participants were reached. A statistical package program was used in the data analysis, and frequency, percentage, t-test, and factor analysis were applied. As a consequence of the analyzes conducted, the career planning attitude levels of the hotel workers have a high average. While the career planning attitudes of the hotel workers did not vary according to gender, a statistically significant difference was obtained in terms of age.

Keywords: Career, Career planning, Hotels, Tourism, İstanbul

1. Introduction

After the Industrial Revolution, vital changes were experienced with regard to the form and amount of production in business life (Saraç et al., 2019: 35). One of the most important justifications for these changes is the increase in the number of factories which were established to make production and the need for more skilled and well-equipped individuals for the business. As we approach the 21st century, the increase in the share of service management in Gross National Product (GNP) has brought people to an even more important position in business life. Individuals who want to make progress in their occupation (Bayraktaroğlu, 2006: 137), acquire knowledge and skills (Erdoğan, 1999), and gain more wages, responsibilities, and status (Can et al., 2011: 17) have put emphasis on career planning to be able to shape their future.

At the present time, the fact that personal development is at the forefront and the competitive environment has escalated to much more advanced levels has led businesses to observe different criteria in terms of the employee qualifications that they would prefer to have within the body of the businesses. In particular, the abstract, simultaneous, and privacy features of the product that were presented in hotel businesses led the product to be offered to the tourists without being involved in the quality control process (Türkyay and Saraç, 2019). For this reason, it is highly

important to produce the highest quality product (Saraç, 2020). There is a need for employees who have interiorized the professional business life, who want to achieve success and rise in their business life, who are determined and volunteer, and who do their jobs by internalizing them. The fact that employees have these qualifications is directly proportional to the developed career planning attitudes. Henceforth, the primary aim of this study is to detect the level of career planning attitudes of hotel employees.

On the other hand, the career planning of individuals differs according to their gender. According to the Social Role Theory (SRT) of Eagly (1987), the attitudes of women and men differ with the impact of the community. The gender-based behavioural differences have also occurred in workplaces (Eagly et al., 1995). Women are relatively warmer, social relationship-oriented, and mature, whereas men are confident, effective, competent, independent and success-oriented characters (Langford and MacKinnon, 2000; Eagly and Koenig, 2006; Koenig et al., 2011). In this respect, it can be stated that men are individuals who attach more importance to their career planning.

Career planning of individuals also differs in accordance with age. Selection Optimization and Compensation (SOC) theory and Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST) are highly important in revealing the relationship between job characteristics that differ according to age and job

*Corresponding author

E-mail: omersarac@subu.edu.tr

Article info: Research Article

Received: 5 September 2022

Received in revised form: 22 October 2022

Accepted: 28 October 2022

Ethics committee approval:

* All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of his own free will.

satisfaction and motivation (Carstensen, 1995; Baltes et al., 1999). These theories contribute to understanding probable changes in person-career harmony (De Vos et al., 2020). According to the theories, individuals try to satisfy themselves both socially and emotionally as they get older rather than improve themselves (Cavanagh et al., 2020), and they value the respect and sincerity of their colleagues more (Linz, 2004). Accordingly, it can be stated that individuals who are relatively younger attach more importance to career planning than those who are relatively older.

In light of the above information, the secondary aim of the research is to identify whether the career planning attitudes of employees in hotel businesses differ according to their gender and age. When the literature is examined, the research which was conducted to detect whether the career planning attitudes of the employees in hotel businesses are tried to be determined (Kahyaoğlu, 2012; Gönül and Demir, 2020) and whether these attitudes differ according to age and gender (Kiliç and Öztürk, 2009; Demirdelen, 2013) is very few. Within this context, this research contributes to the expansion of the literature.

On the other hand, it has been considered that this study will present significant contributions to the applied field. Likewise, in globalizing business life, determining the career planning levels of the labour force in hotel businesses and determining whether they differ according to gender and age is extremely important in the plans, policies, and strategies to be developed for human resources.

2. Development of conceptual background and hypotheses

2.1. Career concept

Career is derived from the words "carrière" in French and "career" in English (Gürüz and Yaylacı, 2004: 184). There are a lot of definitions related to the concept of a career. According to the most commonly used definition among them, a career is to progress in any part of the occupation that was selected to gain dignity and status and to take more responsibility (Taştepe, 2001). Career includes the places where the individual is in his/her working life, his/her attitudes and behaviours related to these places, and the work he/she does.

The concept of career encompasses the effects and movements of individuals related to the occupation, as well as their attitudes towards these effects and movements. In this respect, it can be stated that a career is all the work-related experiences that the person has acquired throughout his / her life (DeCenzo et al., 2016). Different people and the businesses for which individual works also have an influence on the career of the individual apart from the individual himself. Therefore, even though career choice is mostly made by the individual, it is largely affected by businesses and other external factors as well (Erdoğan, 2003).

2.2. Career planning

Career planning comprises an individual's accumulation of knowledge, his/her skills and abilities, or his/her planning for where they want to be in the future (Taşlıyan et al., 2011: 233). Career planning is defined as the process of choosing the tools that will enable the employees to set a course for themselves within the organization and to achieve the goals and objectives on the determined path (Balta Aydın, 2007). While planning their careers, individuals discover themselves and ascertain their purposes by determining environmental factors. In this context, whereas the individual plans his/her career, he/she plans his/her future, as well. On the other hand, organizations are in need of employees who are able to understand environmental factors, discover themselves and plan their future. In this regard, organizational career planning is the process of anticipating the requirement of the employees that the business will need in the future and providing that the development of personal careers of the employees develop and rise in the organization that is in parallel with the career planning of the organization (Werner and DeSimone 2006). In order for organizations to compete with other organizations in the sector, they need to make career planning in accordance with the future-oriented requirement of the employees. Henceforth, career planning studies gain importance for organizations to attain qualified employees and to keep these qualified employees in the organization (Soysal, 2004: 122).

2.3. Differences in career planning attitude by gender

Past studies in sociology demonstrate that men are able to express their emotions freely as they are self-focused and not interested in the social approval of others (Fisher & Dubé, 2005). On the other hand, these studies reveal that women are conditioned to control their emotional side with the concern of being seen as bad by others (Hochschild, 1983; Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Wharton, 1993; Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000). There are also studies examining the relationship between attitude differences by gender and career. According to the studies conducted on this axis, Maimunah and Roziah (2006) determined in their study that women have flexible, transferable skills, part-time and temporary working career models. Sullivan and Mainiero (2008) also identified that women adopt a relational attitude in their careers. According to the authors, women pay regard to the needs of their family members, friends, and colleagues in their career decisions. They try to redress the balance between their private and business lives and carry out both of them in cooperation. Conversely, men are target-oriented characters. They give priority to their business life, and their private and family lives are totally different (Cabrera, 2009). Based on these explanations, the following hypothesis has been developed.

H1: Career planning attitudes of employees in hotel businesses differ according to gender.

2.4 Differences in career planning attitude by age

The physical and psychological activities of individuals change according to age (Reuter, 2010). One of these activities is occupation. The subjective importance of occupation features also varies depending upon age (Kooij et al., 2009: 1011; Ng and Feldman, 2010; Grube and Hertel, 2012). On the other hand, young employees display behaviours to advance their learning and careers (Carstensen et al., 1999; Zaniboni et al., 2013). Also, older employees have higher internal motivation levels compared to their young colleagues (Ng and Feldman, 2010), and they provide more job satisfaction than internal factors and internal rewards (Kooij et al., 2007). In other words, it can be stated that age softens the relationship between job characteristics and work motivation, that older employees need intrinsically more challenging and satisfying jobs to maintain their motivation, and that the relationship between career opportunities and motivation decreases as employees get older (Boumans et al., 2011). Based on these explanations, the following hypothesis has been developed.

H2: Career planning attitudes of employees in hotel businesses differ by age.

3. Method

3.1. The qualification of the survey form

In this study, it was aimed to determine the career planning attitudes of hotel employees and to determine whether the planning behaviour varies according to gender and age. Quantitative data collection method was used in the research and survey technique was used to obtain the data. In the quantitative approach, the aim is to evaluate the application performed on the sample and make the differences between the variables and the cause-effect relationship of the evaluation objectively generalizable to the population (Gall et al., 1996). In this study, it was concluded that the most appropriate method for the research was the quantitative data collection method, since the number of subjects constituting the sample was large and a generalization purpose was pursued with the answers to these questions rather than seeking in-depth answers to the research questions.

The survey preferred for the research consists of two sections. In the first section, there is a scale consisting of 28 expressions. While determining the scale, researches related to career planning were examined, and it was convinced that the most appropriate scale to reach valid and reliable answers that are suitable for the aim of the research was the scale developed by Gümüş (2021) in his study. “General managerial competence”, “job safety”, “lifestyle and entrepreneurship”, “challenge”, “dedication to the service”, “independence”, “technical functional competence” and “geographical security” attitudes were tried to be calculated with the scale in the career planning of hotel employees. The expressions in the survey were directed to the participants as “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “neither agree nor

disagree”, “agree” and “completely agree” according to the five-point Likert scale. In the second section of the survey, there are questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants. The survey was prepared in Turkish as it was applied only to the domestic employees of the hotels in Istanbul.

3.2. Data collection and sampling

The population of the research consists of hotel employees. The most important reason is that creating career satisfaction in the employees is as significant as holding customer satisfaction. Because the satisfaction of the employees with their careers increases productivity with quality service and improves guest, business manager and employee relations (Demirdelen and Ulama, 2013: 67). Since it was not possible to reach all hotel employees in Turkey due to time and economic causes, the sampling method was utilized. Accordingly, the convenience sampling method was preferred. The most important reason why this method is preferred is the easy, fast and economical collection of data from the main mass (Aaker et al., 2007: 394; Malhotra, 2004: 321; Zikmund, 1997: 428).

Because in convenience sampling, everyone in a certain place is reached in a certain time period (Kozak, 2018: 106). In this respect, it has been considered that Istanbul is the most appropriate application area where data can be collected. Istanbul is the most outstanding destination for city hotel management in Turkey, and the career satisfaction of hotel employees should be provided (Saraç and Batman, 2021). This destination took place among the most visited provinces in the world by hosting its 13.4 million tourists (IHA, 2021). The data were attained by face-to-face technique from hotel employees in the Taksim Talimhane area and around Talimhane in Istanbul. 564 samples were reached from Taksim Talimhane and its surroundings. This situation formed the opinion that the number of samples was adequate to represent the universe. Likewise, reaching a sample of ten times the number of statements in the survey is found sufficient to gain reliability (Kerlinger, 1978; Kline, 2011). The number of 290, which is ten times more than the 29 statements in the survey, was exceeded. Moreover, the reliability of the research was increased by reaching more than 384 participants who have the power to represent the unlimited universe (Sekaran, 2003: 294).

3.3. Data analysis

The data were obtained by survey technique between February 23, 2022, and July 18, 2022. 600 participants were reached in total. Upon the conclusion that 36 of the surveys were invalid as a result of the observation, a total of 564 surveys were used in the analysis. The obtained data were analyzed with a statistical package program. In the distribution of the data, the values of kurtosis and skewness were taken as basis. Since the skewness value is between - ,425 and -1,138 and the kurtosis value is between - ,163 and 1,316, the normality assumption is provided (Kline, 2011).

Therefore, the t-test, which is one of the parametric tests, was used in the comparative analysis of the study.

3.4. Reliability and validity

Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the structural validity of the scale. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1. Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which is one of the factor analysis methods, and varimax, one of the orthogonal rotation types, were preferred for rotation. In order to be suitable for factor analysis, Kaiser Mayer Olkin (KMO) value was examined, and the Bartlett test was conducted. KMO value is at a good level for factor analysis with 0.764. Likewise, in order to be able to conduct

factor analysis on the data, the minimum KMO value should be 0.60 (Field, 2005: 640). According to the results of the Bartlett test, it is convenient for factor analysis to be performed with $X^2=8492,762$, $p<0.05$ value (Keser and Bilir, 2019: 233). When factor loads are examined, they are all above 0.50 and are at a very good level compared to Hair et al. (1998: 385). Reliability test (Cronbach Alpha) was performed to determine the validity and reliability of the scale. In order to express that the scale is reliable, the Cronbach Alpha value must be 0.70 and above (Koçak, 2020: 414). Since the Cronbach Alpha values of all dimensions of the scale are above 0.70, it can be said that the scale is reliable.

Table 1. Factor analysis

Factors	Statements	Factor Loads	Declared Variance	Cronbach's Alfa
General managerial competence	I aim for a career where I can make decisions that can affect other employees in an organization.	.852	12.751	.891
	I aim for a career where I can coordinate and manage the work of other employees in an organization.	.836		
	I would like to rise to a position in my career where I can direct other employees in an organization.	.835		
	I would like a career in an institution where I can be promoted to a managerial position.	.790		
	I aim for a career where I can coordinate and manage the work of other employees in an organization.	.754		
Job safety	I would like to work in an institution that can give me a sense of trust and stability.	.808	10.886	.778
	I aim to have career goals that allow me to feel a sense of trust and stability.	.767		
	I would like to work in an institution that can provide me with a long-term and stable job.	.721		
	I aim to have a career goal that allows me to lead my own life the way I want.	.554		
Lifestyle and entrepreneurship	I would like to explore ideas that will enable me to start my own business.	.844	9.669	.838
	I would like to start and develop my own business.	.838		
	I aim to have career goals that allow me to maintain my personal and business life harmoniously.	.596		
	I aim for a career where I can balance my personal and family requirements with my career needs.	.579		
	I aim for a career where I can always give equal weight to my family and career.	.551		
Challenge	I aim for a career where I can work on difficult problems.	.911	9.153	.894
	I aim for a career where I can face difficult problems and solve them.	.890		
	I aim for a career that provides environments where I will constantly encounter difficult problems.	.848		
Dedication to the service	I aim to have career goals that I can serve for the welfare of society.	.876	8.770	.812
	I aim to have a career goal where I can make real contributions to humanity.	.836		
	I aim for a career where I can use my skills for the benefit of others.	.779		
Independence	I aim for a career which is independent of rules, procedures, costumes and similar institutional restrictions.	.777	7.653	.735
	I aim for a career that gives me the freedom to do and plan my job the way I know it.	.764		
	I aim to have career goals that can give me the freedom to choose my own working hours.	.650		
Technical functional competence	I only aim for a career where I can continuously improve my skills in my area of expertise.	.852	7.546	.764
	I would like to stay in my area of expertise throughout my career.	.796		
	I aim to have career goals so that I can specialize in my field rather than being promoted to management at any level.	.730		
Geographical security	I aim for a career that doesn't require me to change cities.	.887	7.413	.827
	I would rather continue to work in my city rather than be promoted to a position in a different city.	.844		
			73,842	.837

4. Result

4.1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2. According to Table 2, 56.7% of the participants are women, 57.4% are between the ages of 18-30, 64.4% are single, 22% are waiters, and 74.1% are undergraduate graduates.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of the participants

		n	%
Gender	Female	320	56.7
	Male	244	43.3
Age	18-30	324	57.4
	31 and above	240	42.6
Marital status	Married	160	28.4
	Single	363	64.4
	Missing value	41	7.3
Position	Trainer	96	17
	Bell boy	36	6.4
	Bell captain	4	0.7
	Guest relation	30	5.3
	Receptionist	57	10.1
	Shift leader	10	1.8
	Front office supervisor	15	2.7
	Busboy	14	2.5
	Waiter	124	22
	Captain	12	2.1
	Head waiter	9	1.6
	Maid/valet	66	11.7
	Fielder	15	2.7
	Floor supervisor	6	1.1
	Others	58	10.3
Education	Primary school	20	3.5
	Secondary school	14	2.5
	High school	90	16
	Under graduate	418	74.1
	Graduate	14	2.5

4.2. Career planning attitude levels of participants

The averages of hotel employees were examined to identify their career planning attitudes. According to the results attained, it was concluded that the career planning attitudes of the participants have a high level with an average of 3.8402 (Özdamar, 2003: 32). This situation demonstrates that employees in the globalizing business world and in hotel businesses, where people are extremely important, inclined to plan careers.

4.3. Comparison of career planning attitude levels of participants by gender

The differences in the levels of career planning attitudes of the participants by gender are presented in Table 3. According to the table, the career planning attitudes of hotel employees do not demonstrate a statistically significant difference by gender. In this respect, the H1 hypothesis "Career planning attitudes of employees in hotel businesses

differ according to gender" was rejected. This situation forms an opinion that women and men employees in hotels have high levels of career planning attitudes in a globalized business environment.

Table 3. Comparison of career planning attitude levels of participants by gender

	Gender	n	Mean	p
Career planning attitude	Female	320	3.8225	0,277
	Male	244	3.8634	

4.4. Comparison of career planning attitude levels of participants by age

The differences in the levels of career planning attitudes of the participants by age are presented in Table 4. According to the table, the career planning attitudes of hotel employees demonstrate a statistically significant difference by age. In this respect, the H2 hypothesis "Career planning attitudes of employees in hotel businesses differ according to age" was accepted. According to the analysis conducted, According to the analysis, as the age of the employees in the hotel enterprises increases, the level of career planning attitudes decreases. This situation demonstrates that young people are more sensitive to career planning in globalized business life.

Table 4. Comparison of career planning attitude levels of participants by age

	Age	n	Mean	p
Career planning attitude	18-30	324	3.9031	0,000*
	31 and above	240	3.7553	

5. Conclusion and discussion

Meeting the products produced in hotel businesses with the customer without entering the quality control process makes it necessary to try to produce the product with an error close to zero (Saraç, 2020). This is only possible with employees with high job satisfaction and motivation who have gained full belonging to their job. Career planning attitudes are extremely important for employees to have these features (Bedük et al., 2019). In this respect, it was tried to identify the career planning attitude levels of the employees in the hotels, and this rate was found to be high, with an average of 3.84 in the study. In studies similar to this research, Gönül and Demir (2020) concluded that the levels of career planning attitudes of hotel employees were 4.11; Kahyaoğlu (2012) reached results that support this research by determining that they had an average of 3.84.

The hierarchical structures of hotel businesses are extremely important in increasing the attitudes of employees towards career planning. Likewise, even in any department in the hotel business, there are many career steps that employees can reach. On the other hand, the wide range of international chain hotels in Turkey's tourism market and the

fact that these hotels offer employees high salaries, opportunities for progress, responsibilities, and the opportunity to work in different hotels in different provinces and countries are thought to be another important factor that enables employees working in hotels to make career plannings.

In the study, the career planning attitudes of hotel employees were gathered under six dimensions: "general managerial competence", "job safety", "lifestyle and entrepreneurship", "challenge", "dedication to the service", "independence", "technical functional competence" and "geographical security". In the comparative analysis conducted to identify whether the career plannings of hotel employees differ by their gender and age, no difference was found by gender, while a difference was found by age. According to the research, as the age increases, the career planning levels of the employees decrease. The results obtained by the studies of Kiliç and Öztürk (2009) support this research. According to the research of the authors, there is no difference in the career planning of the employees by gender; however, a statistically significant difference was found by age. Demirdelen (2013), in his study on managers, determined that career planning attitude was lower in women.

According to the results attained from the studies, it may be suggested that hotels should not pay attention to the concept of men-women except for the physical power of the work in the employment and management of the labour force. Likewise, it has been observed that hotels have a population of employees who want to achieve success in their jobs regardless of gender. Researchers who want to conduct studies on this subject in the future may be advised to make career planning on employees working in summer resort hotels. Comparative analyzes can also be conducted according to country and city hotels. Additionally, it can be tested whether career planning differs from the different demographic characteristics of the employees.

Author contribution statements

The author contributed all to the research's design and implementation, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of his own free will.

References

- Aaker, D.A., Kumar, V. & Day, G.S. (2007). *Marketing Research*, 9. Edition, John Wiley & Sons, Danvers.
- Balta Aydın, E. (2007). *Örgütlerde Kariyer Yönetimi, Kariyer Planlaması, Kariyer Geliştirilmesi ve Bir Kariyer Geliştirme Programı Olarak Koçluk Uygulamaları*, (Yüksek Lisans Tezi), Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Denizli.
- Baltes, P., Staudinger, U. & Lindenberger, U. (1999). Lifespan psychology: Theory and application to intellectual functioning. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 471–507.
- Bayraktaroğlu, S. (2006). *İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi*. Sakarya: Gazi Kitabevi.
- Bedük, A., Eryeşil, Ö. Ü. K. & Öztürk, A. G. D. M. (2019). Kariyer yönetimi. *Kariyer temel kavramlar yönetimi güncel konular*, (Eds: E. Kaygın & Y. Zengin). Konya: Eğitim Yayınevi.
- Boumans, N. P. G., De Jong, A. H. J. & Janssen, S. M. (2011). Age-differences in work motivation and job satisfaction: The influence of age on the relationships between work characteristics and workers' outcomes. *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, 73, 331–350.
- Cabrera, E.F. (2009). Protean organization reshaping work and careers to retain female talent, *Career Development International*, 14(2), 186-201.
- Can, H, Akgün, A. & Kavuncubaşı, Ş. (2001). *Kamu ve Özel Kesimde İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi*. Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.
- Carstensen, L. (1995). Evidence of a life-span theory of socioemotional selectivity, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4, 151–156.
- Carstensen, L., Isaacowitz, D. & Charles, S. (1999). Taking time seriously - A theory of socioemotional selectivity. *American Psychologist*, 54, 165–181.
- Cavanagh, T. M., Kraiger, K. & L. Henry, K. (2020). Age-related changes on the effects of job characteristics on job satisfaction: A longitudinal analysis. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 91(1), 60-84.
- DeCenzo, D. A., Robbins, S. P. & Verhulst, S. L. (2016). *Fundamentals of human resource management*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Demirdelen, D. (2013). Yöneticilerin Kariyer Tatminine İlişkin Görüş Ve Algılamaları: Antalya'da 5 Yıldızlı Otel İşletmelerinde Bir Araştırma (Yüksek Lisans Tezi), *Sakarya Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Sakarya*.
- Demirdelen, D. & Ulama, Ş. (2013). Demografik değişkenlerin kariyer tatminine etkileri: Antalya'da 5 yıldızlı otel işletmelerinde bir araştırma. *İşletme Bilimi Dergisi*, 1(2), 65-89.
- De Vos, A., Van der Heijden, B. I., & Akkermans, J. (2020). Sustainable careers: Towards a conceptual model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117, 103-196.
- Eagly, A.H. (1987). *Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social Role Interpretation*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Eagly, A.H., Karau, S.J. & Makhijani, M.G. (1995). Gender and the effectiveness of leaders: a meta-analysis, *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(1), 125-145.
- Eagly, A.H. & Koenig, A.M. (2006). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: implication for prosocial behavior, Dindia, K. and Canary, D.J. (Eds), *Sex Differences and Similarities in Communication*, Lawrence Erlbaum, NJ, pp. 156-72.
- Erdoğan, N. (1999). Kariyer kuramları ve Türkiye için geçerlilikleri üzerine eleştirel bir değerlendirme, 7. *Ulusal Yönetim ve Organizasyon Kongresi*, İstanbul.
- Erdoğan, N. (2003). *Kariyer geliştirme: Kuram ve uygulama*. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım.
- Field, A. (2005). *Discovery Statistic Using SPSS*, London: Sage Publication.

- Fisher, R.J. & Dubé, L. (2005). Gender differences in responses to emotional advertising: a social desirability perspective, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 850-858.
- Gall, D. M., Borg, R. W. ve Gall, P. J. (1996). *Educational Research: An Introduction* (6. Baskı). New York: Longman.
- Grube, A., & Hertel, G. (2012). Age differences in work motives. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Gönül, B. K. & Demir, M. (2020). Otel işletmelerinde öğrenilmiş çaresizlik ve kariyer planlaması arasındaki ilişkinin analizi. *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 9(3), 1648-1662.
- Gümüş, Y. B. (2021). Kariyer planlama sürecinde kişilik tercihlerin rolü: demografik, kişilik ve kariyer gelişimi değişkenlerinin etkisi (YL Tezi), *KTO Karatay Üni., LEE., Konya*.
- Gürüz, D. & Yaylacı, G. Ö. (2004). *İletişimci Gözüyle İnsan Kaynakları Yönetimi*. İstanbul: MediaCat Kitapları.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L. & Black, W. C. (1998). *Multivariate Data Analysis*, Fifth. Edition. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc.
- Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkeley, CA: University of CA Press.
- IHA (2021). İstanbul ve Antalya dünyanın en çok ziyaret edilen şehirleri arasında. <https://www.ihacom.tr/haber-istanbul-veantalya-dunyanin-en-cok-ziyaret> (accessed at: 06.03.2021).
- Kahyaoglu, M. (2012). Örgütsel sosyalizasyon taktiklerinin işgörenlerin kariyer planlamaları üzerine etkisi: Beş yıldızlı otel işletmelerinde bir alan araştırması (YL Tezi). *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Afyon*.
- Kerlinger, F. N. (1978). *Foundations of Behavioral Research*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Keser, A. & Bilir, K. B. Ö. (2019). İş tatmini ölçeğinin Türkçe güvenilirlik ve geçerlilik çalışması. *Kırklareli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3(3), 229-239.
- Kiliç, G., & Öztürk, Y. (2009). Kariyer yönetimi: beş yıldızlı otellerde bir uygulama. *Anatolia: Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 20(1), 45-60.
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Koçak, D. (2020). Monte Carlo simülasyon yönteminde tekrar sayısı klasik test kuramı parametreleri için kaç olmalıdır? *Cumhuriyet Uluslararası Eğitim Dergisi*, 9(2), 410-429.
- Koenig, A.M., Eagly, A.H., Mitchell, A.A. & Ristikari, T. (2011). Are leader stereotypes masculine? A meta-analysis of three research paradigms, *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(4), 616-642.
- Kooij, D., de Lange, A., Jansen, P. & Dijkers, J. (2007). Older workers' motivation to continue to work: Five meanings of age. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23, 364-394.
- Kooij, D., Jansen, P., Dijkers, J. & de Lange, A. (2009). The influence of age on the associations between HR practices and both affective commitment and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31, 1111-1136.
- Kozak, M. (2018). *Bilimsel Araştırma: Tasarım, Yazım ve Yayım İlkeleri*. İstanbul: Detay Yayıncılık.
- Langford, T. & MacKinnon, N.J. (2000). The affective bases for the gendering of traits: comparing the United States and Canada, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(1), 34-48.
- Leary, M.R. & Kowalski, R.M. (1990). Impression management: a literature review and two-component model, *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(1), 34.
- Linz, S. J. (2004). Motivating Russian workers: Analysis of gender and age differences. *Journal of Socioeconomics*, 33, 261-289.
- Maimunah, I. & Roziah, M.R. (2006). High flying academics: a question of career mobility, Kuala Lumpur: Pelanduk Pub.
- Malhotra, N. K. (2004). *Marketing Research an Applied Orientation*, 4. Edition, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Ng, T., & Feldman, D. (2010). The relationships of age with job attitudes: A meta-analysis, *Personnel Psychology*, 63, 677-718.
- Özdamar, Ö. (2003). *Modern Bilimsel Araştırma Yöntemleri*, Eskişehir: Kaan Kitabevi.
- Reuter, T., Ziegelmann, J. P., Wiedemann, A. U., Lippke, S., Schüz, B. & Aiken, L. S. (2010). Planning bridges the intention-behaviour gap: Age makes a difference and strategy use explains why. *Psychology and Health*, 25(7), 873-887.
- Saraç, Ö., Pamukçu, H., Ulama, Ş. & Batman, O. (2019). Students' perception of city branding: the case of Kastamonu and Kastamonu university, *Turizam*, 23(1), 34-52.
- Saraç, Ö. (2020). Otellerdeki kronizm algısının işgören motivasyonuna etkisi. (Doktora Tezi), Sakarya Uygulamalı Bilimler Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, Sakarya.
- Saraç, Ö. & Batman, O. (2021). Kronizm ve motivasyon algularının yöneticiler tarafından değerlendirilmesi: otel işletmelerinde nitel bir araştırma, *Turizm Akademik Dergisi*, 8 (1), 77-95.
- Schaubroeck, J. & Jones, J.R. (2000). Antecedents of workplace emotional labor dimensions and moderators of their effects on physical symptoms, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(2), 163-183.
- Sekaran, U. (2003). *Business Research Methods: A Skill-Building Approach*, (4th. Edition), New York: John Wiley&Sons.
- Soysal, A. (2004). *Kariyer Yönetimi: Çağdaş yönetim yaklaşımları, ilkeler, kavramlar ve yaklaşımlar*. İstanbul: Beta Yayınları.
- Sullivan, S.E. & Mainiero, L. (2008). Using the kaleidoscope career model to understand the changing patterns of women's careers: designing HRD programs that attract and retain women, *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 10(1), 32-49.
- Taşhyan, M., Arı, N. Ü. & Duzman, B. (2011). İnsan kaynakları yönetiminde kariyer planlama ve kariyer yönetimi: İİBF öğrencileri üzerinde bir alan araştırması. *Organizasyon ve Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 3(2), 231-241.
- Taştepe, H. (2001). Kariyer Yönetiminin Değerlendirilmesi (Yüksek Lisans Tezi), *Sakarya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Sakarya*.
- Türkay, O. & Saraç, Ö. (2019). Altyapı, üstyapı ve çevre sorunlarının turist şikâyetleri kapsamında değerlendirilmesi ve yerel yönetimlerin çözüm potansiyeli: Antalya örneği. *Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 10, 98-110.
- Werner, Jon M. & DeSimone Randy, L. (2006). Human resource development. *Ohio: Thomson South-Western*, 45(2006), 85-108.
- Wharton, A.S. (1993), "The affective consequences of service work: managing emotions on the job", *Work and Occupations*, 20(2), 205-232.
- Zaniboni, S., Truxillo, D. M. & Fraccaroli, F. (2013). Differential effects of task variety and skill variety on burnout and turnover intentions for older and younger workers. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 22, 306-317.
- Zikmund, W. G. (1997). *Business Research Methods*, 5. Edition, Orlando: The Dryden Press.

Journal of Tourism Theory and Research

Volume:9, Issue:1, 2023

Research article

The impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic: Digital transformation changes in tourism

Buket BULUK EŐİTTİ

The impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic: Digital transformation changes in tourism

Buket Buluk Eşitti¹

¹Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Tourism Faculty, Çanakkale-Türkiye, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5646-6166>

Abstract

The paper aims to examine the digital transformation changes in tourism within the process Covid-19 pandemic. The research data were collected qualitatively from 12 managers working in accommodation businesses in Istanbul, Turkey. According to the findings, it is seen that the managers emphasized that digital applications will gain importance in both accommodation businesses and tour operators due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The results also showed that digitality will be the main factor in new accommodation investments and that they will focus on rapidly realizing their projects in this area to maintain the competitive advantage of destinations. Based on the study results, some suggestions were made to tourism practitioners. It is thought that the results of the study will guide tourism practitioners.

Keywords: Coronavirus (Covid-19), Digitalization, Digital transformation, Tourism.

1. Introduction

The tourism sector is a dynamic sector that can be easily affected by external factors and crises (Ritchie, 2009). The covid-19 pandemic, which started in 2019 and affected the whole world quickly, affected logistics, travel, transportation, accommodation, restaurant, retail, etc. As in many other sectors. Unprecedented travel restrictions and curfews, both within the country and between countries, caused the biggest fluctuation in the global economy until this today. In this direction, tourism activities have also slowed down seriously as of March 2020. Almost all customers who have made hotel and travel reservations around the world canceled or postponed their reservations during this period (Kardeniz et al., 2020).

The covid-19 crisis experienced has changed the business models for the tourism sector worldwide (Bahar & İlal, 2020). In this context, it is foreseen that digitalization is considered as an opportunity and will gain momentum to rethink the sector. In this process, it was inevitable for the sector to become technology-intensive. It has been concluded that 75% of the consumers who benefited from the sector by using digital channels due to the pandemic will continue to use these channels after the pandemic (TURSAB, 2020). According to TURSAB's (Association of Turkish Travel

Agencies) tourism industry digitization roadmap report, using new tools such as "Artificial Intelligence (AI)", "Internet of Things (IoT)", "Augmented Reality (AR)", "Virtual Reality (VR)", "Chatboard" and "Blockchain" are among the new trends of the industry.

Customers can have personalized applications, so they feel more special with AR. In addition, it has become easier for tourism businesses to control and access data with the internet of things. Customer experiences were evaluated simultaneously, providing the opportunity to expand the customer base. Destinations, hotels, etc. to travel with VR provide benefits in promotion and marketing by allowing them to be experienced without going to that point. Travel planning and reservation issues become easier with chat boards. On the other hand, Blockchain allows global access to supply and demand information in the industry. Using all the listed applications in operations reduces unnecessary employee effort, resulting in a reduction in costs (Ernst & Young Global Limited (E&Y), 2020). Investing in digital in the sector is considered an opportunity for the sector to grow again.

In many studies on the subject, it is stated that after the Covid-19 pandemic, "contactless transactions" and "digitalization" in accommodation businesses will increase, and

*Corresponding author

E-mail: bulukbuket@comu.edu.tr

Article info: Research Article

Received: 16 October 2022

Received in revised form: 11 December 2022

Accepted: 16 December 2022

Ethics committee approval:

* All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

"This study is an expanded version of the paper presented orally at the 12th International Conference Competitiveness and Stability in the Knowledge-Based Economy Congress held in Craiova, Romania on 30–31 October 2020".

To cite this article: Buluk Eşitti, B. (2023). The impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic: Digital transformation changes in tourism. *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 9(1), 15-23. <https://doi.org/10.24288/jttr.1205828>

accommodation businesses will turn to the domestic market instead of foreign tourists who cannot come from abroad due to bans. It is also stated that new forms of tourism will increase in the smaller businesses offering personalized service (Hao et al., 2020; Kivılcım, 2020; Şanlı et al., 2020; Yazıcı Ayyıldız, 2020; Buluk Eşitti, 2021; Ulema & Akkaşoğlu, 2021). Based on the results of the studies, it is understood that the accommodation businesses will use more digital applications in the coming years, they have started to create infrastructure for this, and the expectations are in this direction. It is also understood that digitalization applications that require large budgets will be among the priorities of the accommodation businesses, and in particular, the tendency is increasing for applications where materials such as “paper” and “pencil”, which require less contact, will be used less. In this context, the paper aims to examine the digital transformation changes in tourism within the process of Covid-19. Firstly, the subject of digitalization and tourism was examined. In the study, then digital age trends during and after the coronavirus (Covid-19) were covered in the tourism sector. The data from 12 managers working in five accommodation businesses in Istanbul, Turkey, were used in the research. Based on the results of this study, some suggestions were made for the tourism practitioners. Thus, it is thought that the results of the study will guide tourism practitioners.

2. Digitalization and tourism

Digitalization is the integration of digital technologies into business life and daily life, and the change and recreation of business models and lifestyles. Digitalization is also defined as one of the main trends that change society and businesses in the short and long term (Tihinen & Kääriäinen, 2016: 1). The digital journey of the world started with the internet that entered our lives in the early 90's. When it is looked at the brands that use advertising channels in the digital world, it is seen that 95% of them are in the global scale. While the whole world is trying to adapt to the digital world, the tourism sector, which has gained an important market share in electronic commerce, is at the beginning of the road in digitalization. The development of information technologies and the digitalization process have affected almost every sector (Buhalis & Law, 2008: 609). However, the results of some researches show that the tourism sector has been one of the sectors that have shown the highest change with the development of information technologies and digitalization (Kaygısız & Bulgan, 2016: 553).

One of the biggest effects of digitalization in the tourism sector is expanding the competitive environment between businesses. This expanding competitive environment directly affects the decision-making processes of potential tourists. Digitalized tourism businesses can be examined separately by their potential customers and subjected to personal evaluations thanks to the feedback of the experiences of tourists who previously received service. In addition, posts shared through social media platforms can also be

effective in the decision-making mechanisms of tourists (Sarı & Kozak, 2005a: 363).

When digitalization was not widespread, tourism and travel businesses trying to provide information through materials such as “photographs” or “brochures” have reduced the need for printed inventory and increased the amount of information provided. The number of people informed, with the spread of the internet. In addition to providing information, the fact that products and services can be sold on the internet and that customers can share their experiences or opinions are among the important factors that the internet brings to the tourism industry (Yeung & Law, 2004: 307-308). Every business in the tourism sector has to adapt to new technologies and trends due to its structure, which needs speed, flexibility, and effective solutions (Beech et al., 2006: 248). In the first years of establishing websites that can make online reservations, the main features of these websites, such as “prices” and “security methods,” were considered. However, with the widespread use of digitalization and internet sites, the features and qualities expected from online booking websites have increased. These features are as follows in summary (Kim & Kim, 2004: 392):

- Ease of access to information
- Communication methods
- Virtual Reality (VR)
- Access to redirects
- Process feasibility
- Clarity of payment information and methods
- Presenting all information about products and services
- Ability to execute the reservation process quickly and stably
- Security applications
- Operations such as “returns” and “cancellations”

As the quality of websites increases, when the feedback of users' is analyzed correctly, it is possible to shape the products and services. Tourism businesses can use the feedback they receive through their websites to update, organize and improve their products and services (Miguéns et al., 2008: 1-2). Reservation and information transactions were the activities that used to be conducted by tourism transactions before the digitalization process. Nowadays, new information technologies have enabled tourism enterprises to perform these operations faster. In this way, the manageability of these enterprises has become easier (Buhalis, 1998: 409).

The digitalization process in the tourism sector has started to manifest itself in three main periods. Central Reservation Systems (CRS), which started to find a place in the tourism sector in the 1970s, is the first step of these three periods. Global Distribution Systems (GDS), which started to be used in the 1980s, became the second step. The last of

the three main streams mentioned is the widespread use of the internet infrastructure in the tourism sector. In this way, most functional and important processes have changed (Sarı & Kozak, 2005a: 250).

The Central Reservation Systems (CRS) were taken in the 1970s. This system is a set of digital networks where services such as “accommodation” and “transportation”, which are still exemplary, are gathered on a common platform and generally used by intermediary organizations. The Global Distribution Systems (GDS) has also been produced as a more comprehensive and diverse type of Central Reservation Systems (CRS) mentioned above (Buhalis, 1998: 412). As internet technology is an international system that establishes virtual networks between millions of computers and now smart devices, it can keep many institutions, organizations, businesses, or individuals in the middle of continuous information and communication (Sarı & Kozak, 2005a: 362). With the development of search engines and internet infrastructure, many tourists have had the opportunity to share their experiences with a wider audience while planning their travel processes on the internet (Buhalis & Law, 2008: 609). It produces useful solutions for users in areas where digital technologies are used. In tourism, it can be said that the information and communication processes established between businesses and their customers have become more comfortable and stable with digitalization.

Changing and developing marketing methods with digitalization have enabled the establishment of effective links between tourism and travel businesses and tourists (Buhalis, 1997: 73). The focus of the tourism sector is human. Therefore, all processes should be carried out by taking tourist psychology into consideration. Tourism products or services are somewhat intangible concepts. The fact that enough information to fill these concepts can be given to tourists is an important element. People generally want to have as much information as possible while planning their travels. It is possible to meet these needs thanks to developing information technologies and their advantages (Zhou, 2004: 7).

The opportunity to obtain sufficient information has also increased the opportunity for tourists to compare and choose between different options. Due to digitalized tourism systems, it is much more possible to compare parameters such as “travel businesses” or “country”, “city”, and “region” with options compared to the old methods. In this way, the need for intermediary institutions or organizations decreases (Sarı & Kozak, 2005b: 254). In addition, the wide range of information provided by the internet allows its users to receive information about destinations free of charge. In this way, tourists and travelers can make their travel plans without the need for anyone (Wynne et al., 2001: 427).

The advantages of information technologies have also increased the competitive environment. It is inevitable that the competition between institutions and organizations will increase because the processes that can be acquired and realized more easily than before, can be used by more

institutions (Buhalis, 1998: 409). In addition, businesses do not only compete to attract potential customers. It is also part of the competitive environment to get information about competing businesses. Moreover, the tourism sector is one of the leading sectors in terms of investing in information technologies. In this way, the adaptation of the tourism sector is high in the digitalization process.

3. Digital age trends in tourism sector

The widespread use of digitalization in tourism has changed many sectoral dynamics and led to new trends. Each period has its trends, and the new trends of the digital age can be called the digital age. One of the trends of the digital age is VR, which is produced in many parts of the world visually or aurally and enables users to experience the places and times that do not exist in the digital environment; it has found a place in the tourism sector, as are many other fields. VR applications, which will enable tourists to obtain sufficient information visually and aurally, as well as written documents about the destinations they have not visited or want to receive information about, can provide tourists with detailed information about the services, architecture, events, traditions and gastronomic riches they will encounter in any destination. Therefore, VR applications are one of the ideal applications that can be used in touristic promotion and marketing processes (Sarı & Kozak, 2005b: 363).

One of the examples of the use of VR in the tourism industry is the virtual guide called “Tuscany+”. “Tuscany+” is a VR application where the Toscana region of Italy is presented in VR and introduced with a digital guide, it is designed to provide a digital touristic experience to users who want to go to the region or get information about the region (Kounavis et al., 2012: 4-6). As the correct and efficient use of VR applications, as in this example, increases, the need of users and tourists for intermediary institutions that provide information in traditional ways will decrease. Because VR applications provide more objective and realistic data to tourists or potential tourists about the destinations they want to get information or visit, compared to the old methods, and cause a digital tourism activity. In addition, it is thought that the touristic experiences presented digitally in VR can replace the experience gained from traditional tourism activities (Sarı & Kozak, 2005b: 363).

Researches have shown that applications such as “VR” are effective in the preferences of users and tourists. Therefore, different experiences of individuals are offered services in which they can live in a digital environment (Dubey et al., 2017: 65-66). For example, virtual museum visits, three-dimensional virtual displays of products, VR visuals of accommodation businesses, and virtual trips have started to be organized. In addition, the development and spread of mobile technologies have made it necessary to move VR to the mobile area (Ilhan & Celtek, 2016: 589). It is thought that content containing visual, auditory, or touch information about the destination or regions that can be visited

without moving, which is offered to consumers through VR, will become more common day by day (Pirnar, 2005: 47).

One another digital age trends is hologram. Hologram technology is the projection of images recorded with a kind of laser light technique onto an environment in three dimensions (Ghuloum, 2010). Hologram technology, which gained popularity, especially in the 2010s, is used for various purposes and attracts attention in large organizations and in front of large crowds. One of example of this can be seen in the hologram show at the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics Closing Ceremony. In addition, a large part of the show in the concerts of Hatsume Miku, a popular singer in Japan, is the visual show presented with holograms (Koikawa, 2016). As seen in the examples, even hologram technology, which is just one of the possibilities offered by developing technology, succeeds in impressing large masses. This shows that when used correctly, hologram technology can also play “a major role in the creation or promotion of touristic activities”.

One of the trends of this age is robot technology. Although this technology is widely used for fabrication processes, it has also started to find a place in the tourism sector. For example, as stated in Cheung et al. (2017: 229), it has been observed that a robot that can serve in accommodation businesses can provide convenience for disabled guests and, at the same time, reduce the workload in the business. When the differences between robot technology and traditional business employees are examined, it is predicted that robots using cloud technology and intelligent learning may be more advantageous in some areas. For example, the knowledge and experience of any robot serving in a hospitality business can easily be acquired by all robots in the business due to cloud technology (Tung & Law, 2017: 2507-2508). Also, robots can be used for different purposes in different sectors.

The general purpose of robot use is mostly focused on providing information to tourists and services in the tourism sector. Job descriptions of robots in the tourism sector are generally service types such as “receptionists”, “waiters”, and “guidance” (Tung & Law, 2017: 2500). Robot technology can continue its activities by establishing interactive processes as well as providing uniform service in the service sector. For example, the robot Pepper, which is planned to be used in the 2020 Summer Olympics, is planned to act and serve according to the feelings and thoughts of the person opposite (Koikawa, 2016: 105-109). This shows that robot technology, which is progressing day by day, is developed with innovations focused on interactivity to increase the quality of the service.

One of the most important elements in robot technology is Augmented Reality (AR) software. The more useful and functional AR software is, the more quality it will provide. For example, due to Saffron’s algorithm developed by Intel, it has shown how effectively AR robots can work in enterprises by predicting the behavior of the customers of the enterprise used in advance (Ivanov & Webster, 2017: 169).

However, although it is thought that robot and automation technologies will be used by tourism enterprises with high financial power in the first period, it is expected that these technologies will become widespread among tourism enterprises (Mil & Dirican, 2018: 2). The trends of the digital age include more than VR, hologram and robot technology. For example, many technologies such as “3D printers”, “digital travel companions”, “smart wearable devices”, “mixed reality applications”, “augmented reality applications” and “all virtual applications” are among the trends brought by the digital age (Soava, 2015: 112). It can be predicted that keeping up with these trends in the tourism sector will become increasingly important for businesses.

4. Tourism during and after the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2020) has announced that the tourism sector is the most affected sector by the Covid-19 pandemic, which the whole world is struggling with on a global scale because of especially with travel restrictions. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data, the number of tourists in the international arena was 1 billion 460 million in 2019. At the end of 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the number of tourists is expected to decrease by approximately 30% to 1 billion.

According to the scenarios developed by science and research centers around the world regarding the future of the tourism industry, it predicts that the measures taken within the scope of the pandemic and the psychological effects caused by the pandemic will continue the international travel crisis for at least another year. Reminding that the number of global tourists decreased by 0.4% in the 2003 SARS pandemic and 4% in the 2009 economic crisis, Tavakkoli (2020) has mentioned that Covid-19 will be the biggest crisis of the global tourism sector in the last 20 years. Stating that the Covid-19 pandemic had longer-lasting economic and social effects, Tavakkoli (2020) pointed out that the recovery in international tourism will take time and that new steps should be taken rapidly to avoid further losses in this process.

Success in tourism is based on making tourists feel safe, and the concept of security mostly comes together with health during the pandemic, Tavakkoli (2020) stated that the steps to be followed to manage the current tourism crisis correctly and mentioned whether tourism crises reduce the factors such as “economy” or “employment” which basically threat the safety of tourists. It is defined as the whole. Staying safe depends on being able to act in a planned way in events that may occur suddenly, such as “pandemics”. In this context, determining tourism processes, arranging a failure structure breakdown for each transaction, defining failure points for each defined activity, calculating the number of risk priorities for each failure point, matching the number of risk priorities with pre-determined strategies, prioritizing projected risks, organizing corrective programs and it is important to follow the steps to review the transaction process.

3. Methodology

In its most basic explanation, digitalization is the replacement or renewal of existing resources with digital products to achieve maximum efficiency with minimal physical effort. The point is needed to underline over and over again in the definition is this: “Physical effort at the lowest level and efficiency, substitution, and innovation at the highest level”.

The conversion of business processes and information to the digital platform by saving money and time is called “digital transformation with the extensive use of information Technologies”. The effects of digital and technological transformation in the Covid-19 process are very clearly seen in almost every sector. It can be easily argued that “this transformation will be affected much differently than other sectors, given the unique structural characteristics of tourism due to the cooperation of various products and services”. In this context, the paper aims to examine the digital transformation changes in tourism within the process of Covid-19. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were held with 12 managers of accommodation businesses with mobile applications and smart hotels in Istanbul, Turkey, between March-August 2020. Creswell (1998) expresses qualitative research as a process of interpretation by questioning social life and human-related problems with unique methods. This method uses documents and fragments of participant views to support the findings, and the sample selection is usually determined for a specific purpose rather than randomly.

3.1. Workgroup

The criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in determining the participants of the study. In this method, information-rich situations considered to be most suitable for the researcher's purpose are selected as a sample. Information-rich situations are situations in which the researcher will gain a large amount of information about topics that are important for the research purpose. This sampling is also an important measure in increasing the transferability in of qualitative research. In criterion sampling, situations that meet a predetermined set of criteria are studied (Creswell, 1998). For this reason, interviews were held with 12 managers working in five accommodation businesses in Istanbul, Turkey. Managers are coded according to their initials. Five of the 12 accommodation managers participating in the study are women, and six are men. Eight managers participating in the study are in the 28-40 age range, 10 hold an undergraduate degree, and nine have a salary of 6500 TL and above. In general, it is seen that most of the participants in the study are male, highly educated, and middle-aged.

4. Findings

According to the accommodation managers, the digital elements that tourists consider when choosing accommodation businesses are in Table 1. The manager's statements

about the factors that tourists pay attention to in their hotel preferences are highlighted in Table 1. According to the managers, the digital elements that tourists consider in their hotel preferences are the factors that facilitate their getting service. Especially the speed of the internet, the reliability of the systems used when making payments, the speed and convenience during check-in and check-out, and multimedia conference systems are very important factors in tourists' satisfaction. Some of the prominent opinions of the managers regarding the factors that tourists pay attention to in their accommodation business preferences are given below:

“Before purchasing and during, the holiday tourists use digital technologies more intensely than ever before for flights, accommodation, and vacation packages. Again, in this period when consumers are turning to digital technologies with the expectation of contactless experiences, it has become much more important and priority for the tourism sector to strengthen the online experiences offered to the consumer.”

Table 1. Digital elements that tourists consider when choosing a hotel

Highlights	Frequency
Broadband internet connection (LL, ADSL, gSHDSL, Metro Ethernet)	11
Payment systems and security	10
Quick Check-In and Check-Out Systems	8
Multimedia conference systems (audio and / or video)	8
Pay TV, Interactive TV, IPTV Systems, Content Providing	7
Digital imaging and content systems (Digital Signage)	6
Operator services (ISDN, UMTS, VoIP)	6
PC and various purpose server hardware	5
Hotel web page / portal, online reservation systems, hosting	5
Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVR)	4

“The world of computers and the digital arena have revolutionized the heart of tourism. Tourists have become very digital, and new job opportunities have emerged in the tourism industry.”

“As far as I concern, hospitality and leisure activities that we did ten years ago, for example, are out of date. Nowadays, we update our hospitality facilities according to the digital requests of tourists. Due to the digital world, tourists can use mobile phones and tablets to browse the web, find travel information, plan vacations, make reservations, and pay for trip products and services. Digital transformation will be the main pillar that supports the tourism industry.”

Considering the answers to the question “How will they be affected by digital transformation and what should they do in the period of Covid-19 and after this pandemic?”, the managers stated that:

“Internet and social media are indispensable today. During the Covid-19 period and after, tourism businesses should actively use their social media accounts as on their websites and convince tourists that they are safe and hygienic. They consider social distance in the Covid-19 pandemic from

online check-in to contactless door entries in hotels. We also offer tourists a virtual tour of our business and activities. We are developing our VR, especially in the Covid-19 period.”

“Reliable up-to-date data on Covid-19 should be presented to tourists, communication should be made with platforms that offer accommodation recommendations and sales, the status of businesses about Covid-19 and the destinations where the businesses are located should be up-to-date, and instant feedback from tourists should be provided. This will show that both the stakeholders are interested and businesses are active on digital platforms.”

“Accommodation portals are active all over the world, especially during the Covid-19 period most of the people participating in tourism activities prefer to make their hotel reservations online. For this reason, every business should have a website, be able to make reservations through this website, and provide instant feedback to tourists’ questions via the call center. The website must be constantly updated, and the site must be available on mobile phones, tablets, and computers.”

“During the Covid-19 period, we invest nearly 70% of our advertising-marketing budget on digital, and more than half of it is advertisements on social media channels. In this way, we think we will continue in the post-Covid-19 period. The reason we give priority to digital is that tourists want to take a vacation online without having physical contact with anyone. Now, we can plan our tourism activities online, follow the feedback instantly and direct our activities as we wish, due to the reports we receive. The return rate of tourists, the number of clicks, how many people will return to the reservation, digital channels are vital for us as we can plan all of them.”

5. Conclusion and discussion

Digital transformation is the transformation of “commercial activities”, “processes”, “products” and “models” to take full advantage of the possibilities of digital technologies. Digital transformation simply refers to the process of incorporating technology into all areas of the business. People use digital transformation in every part of daily life, from home, market, stationery, and special gift shopping to healthcare.

Digitalization is changing the way how people live, work and travel, and has opened up new opportunities for tourism businesses to compete in global markets. Digitalization is bringing unprecedented opportunities for tourism SMEs (notably micro and small enterprises) to “access new markets”, “develop new tourism products and services”, “adopt new business models and processes”, “upgrade their position in global tourism value chains” and “integrate into digital ecosystems”. The Covid-19 pandemic requires that the tourism sector accelerate its digitalization and make technological innovations. New processes in “transportation”, “mobile applications in hotels”, and “automatic travel insurance” are some of the keys to the tourism of the future.

Based on the study results, it is possible to say that “the accommodation businesses of the future will be a hybrid experience between the physical and the digital, and this will reduce contact as much as possible”. It is also possible to say that “tourists will check-in with an app on their phone, they will inform that room may be sanitized with a button, additional services on apps and instantaneous personalization will be premium experiences that technology will make possible while simultaneously reducing the physical presence of accommodation businesses personnel”.

In the process of digitalization, “content dissemination”, “data collection”, “analysis” and “evaluation software” are as important as “customer databases” and “their management tools” in terms of establishing a multi-channel structure. Based on the results of the study, it can be stated that “nothing that cannot be measured gives an idea, and under the success of omni-channel structures, it is possible to identify all contact points of a customer and to create and interpret data from it”. “Data-based digital marketing” and “measurement tools” also enable the determination of industry variables. While each brand differs with in its services and facilities, what is valid for one brand may not be for the other. Digital tools reveal the difference, namely the “brand variable”, by enabling them to transform data into information. This will facilitate the shaping of the marketing strategy and the calculation of advertising investments.

The results of the study indicate that “the new trend in this field is “Call tracking”, which allows following the calls”. International brands assign different numbers for each country and collect data from here. Then, insights can be obtained from this data on whether each call is the right channel for returning to sales and which channel will be successful. Just like web analytics, call analytics also provides brands with clues to increase sales conversion. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the tourism economy has been heavily affected by the Covid-19 outbreak. It shows that, depending on the duration of the crisis, there may be a 60-80% decrease in the international tourism economy in 2020. It is seen that the managers of tourism businesses have stated that “when their travel plans suddenly come to a halt, tourism businesses are turning to VR, which is still very young, even in its infancy, to attract potential visitors, and that this technology, which started as a gap measure, is a tool that can be developed in the long term”. Lastly, after the Covid-19 pandemic, it is predicted that “contactless transactions will come to the fore in the tourism sector, digitalization will become widespread, social distance tours and more isolated holiday preferences will increase”. Based on the study results, it can be stated that “the actors in the industry to adapt their business models to the new normal”.

5.1. Theoretical implications

It is seen that the studies on the subject are quite limited in the literature. According to Okafor et al. (2022)’s study, “developing economies that are more digitized,

accompanied by having a larger tourism sector, allocated more public funds to economic stimulus packages relative to developed economies in the period of Covid-19". This shows that "the pressure to introduce massive stimulus packages is lower when tourism providers are better prepared to use more digital tools during a pandemic, especially in developed economies". In their study which was aimed to determine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the tourism industry, Demir et al. (2021) reached the conclusion of "one of the important changes that Covid-19 has brought to accommodation businesses was the investments made in technology and the tendency towards digitalization". Similarly, Özaltın Türker (2020) emphasized that "the demand for tourism would decrease due to Covid-19 and that economic losses and employment problems would consequently arise, while participation in individual-based tourism activities and the importance of digitalization would increase in tourism". Consistent with the literature, the results of this study showed that "digital applications will gain importance in both accommodation and tour operators due to the Covid-19 pandemic". The results also showed that "the digitality will be the main factor in new accommodation businesses investments and that they will focus on rapidly realizing their projects in digitalization area to maintain the competitive advantage of destinations". Thus, it can be stated that the digitalization in tourism in the Covid-19 period gained importance and will accelerate.

5.2. Practical implications

The tourism sector must be ready for the return of demand, so it is important to review the marketing targets in the new period and take action accordingly. It is recommended to optimize digital marketing strategies and test brand messages and creative works during this period. Searching trends on platforms such as "Google" and "YouTube", third-party research, and monitoring and analyzing data provide valuable insight and advantages to brands striving to understand consumers' needs and behaviors that have changed significantly during this period. The tourism industry should also use the power of online video in brand communication during this period. According to the information on Think with Google (2020), 85% of users in Turkey to get information about tourist-oriented trips by watching videos online. In this case, users on YouTube, the main source preferred by 71% of the monitoring period, showed an increase of 51% in the first half of the year compared to last year in the travel category in Turkey. More than half of the tourists prefer to make their hotel reservations online, with accommodation portals being active worldwide. Every business must have a website and be able to receive reservations through this website and provide instant feedback to reservations via the call center. The website must be constantly updated, and the website must be available on mobile phones, tablets, and computers. The contact information and pictures should be up to date with the platforms offering accommodation suggestions and sales, and instant feedback should be provided to the comments from users.

This will show both that the user is being taken care of and that the accounts are active. Lastly, social media is indispensable today. Just like the websites, social media accounts should be actively used and linked to the website. Tourism businesses need to gradually prepare for a recovery and step up Virtual Reality (VR) marketing efforts to be among the pioneers in this regard.

5.3. Limitations and directions for future research

This study aimed to examine the digital transformation changes in tourism during the Covid-19 process. For this purpose, the research data were obtained through qualitative data collected from 12 managers working in accommodation businesses in Istanbul, Turkey. Due to the dynamic course of the pandemic, the constant change of global developments constitutes the limitation of the research. For this reason, the data and situation assessment included in the research cover a certain date range (March-August 2020). The findings presented in the research reveal the dynamic conditions of the process in the mentioned date range. Another limitation of the research is that all scientists in the world cannot predict the course of the pandemic, and as a result, the proposals for digital change in tourism focus on the radical changes that may occur in the post-pandemic sector. In this context, it is aimed that the study, which is handled in an environment where the debates on when the pandemic will end or whether it will end, will contribute to scientific studies to be carried out in the future.

Author contribution statements

The author contributed all to the research's design and implementation, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

References

- Bahar, O., & İlal, N. Ç. (2020). Coronavirüsün (Covid-19) turizm sektörü üzerindeki ekonomik etkileri [The economic effects of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the tourism industry]. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 6(1), 125-139.
- Beech, J. G., Beech, J., & Chadwick, S. (2006). *The business of tourism management*. Pearson Education.
- Buhalis, D. (1997). Information technology as a strategic tool for economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits enhancement of tourism at destination regions. *Progress in Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 3(1), 71-93.
- Buhalis, D. (1998). Strategic use of information in the tourism industry. *Tourism Management*, 19(5), 409-421.

- Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the internet-the state of eTourism research. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 609-623.
- Buluk Eşitti, B. (2021). Koronavirüs (Covid-19) sürecinde iç turizmin talepleri ve turizm işletmeleri yöneticilerinin iç turizme yönelik bakış açılarının incelenmesi [Investigation of domestic tourism demands and tourism businesses managers' perspectives on domestic tourism in the Coronavirus (Covid-19) process]. *Journal of Turkish Tourism Research*, 5(1), 260-280.
- Cheung, C. W., Tsang, I. T., & Wong, K. H. (2017). Robot avatar: A virtual tourism robot for people with disabilities. *International Journal of Computer Theory and Engineering*, 9(3), 229-234.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Demir, M., Demir, Ş. Ş., Dalgıç, A., & Ergen, F. D. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry: An evaluation from the hotel managers' perspective. *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 7(1), 44-57.
- Dubey, R., Gunasekaran, A., Helo, P., Papadopoulos, T., Childe, S. J., & Sahay, B. S. (2017). Explaining the impact of reconfigurable manufacturing systems on environmental performance: The role of top management and organizational culture. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 141, 56-66.
- Ernst & Young Global Limited (E&Y) (2020). Tourism Market Overview Turkey & Istanbul. İstanbul: Ernst & Young Consulting. https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_tr/pdf/ey-turkey-tourism-market-overview-2020.pdf, 15.09.2020.
- Ghuloum, H. (2010). 3D hologram technology in learning environment. *Informing Science & IT Education Conference*, 693-704.
- Hao, F., Xiao, Q., & Chon, K. (2020). COVID-19 and China's hotel industry: Impacts, a disaster management framework, and post-pandemic agenda. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 90, 102636.
- Ilhan, I., & Celtek, E. (2016). Mobile marketing: Usage of augmented reality in tourism. *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 15(2), 581-599.
- Ivanov, S., & Webster, C. (2017). Adoption of robots, artificial intelligence and service automation by travel, tourism and hospitality companies - A cost-benefit analysis. *International Scientific Conference "Contemporary tourism-traditions and innovations"*, 19-21 October 2017, Sofia University.
- Karadeniz, E., Beyaz, F. S., Ünlübulduk, S. N., ve Kayhan, E. (2020). Covid-19 salgınının turizm sektörüne etkilerinin ve uygulanan stratejilerin değerlendirilmesi: Otel yöneticileri üzerinde bir araştırma [Evaluation of the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on tourism sector and the applied strategies: A research on hotel managers]. *Journal of Turkish Tourism Research*, 4(4), 3116-3136.
- Kaygısız, Ü., & Bulgan, G. (2017). Sosyal medya temelinde bilgi iletişim teknolojilerinin turizmdeki yeri [The Place of Information Communication Technologies in Tourism on the Basis of Social Media]. *Journal of Suleyman Demirel University Institute of Social Sciences*, 28(3), 552-572.
- Kıvılcım, B. (2020). Covid-19 (Yeni Koronavirüs) salgınının turizm sektörüne muhtemel etkileri. [Probable effects of Covid-19 (New Coronavirus) pandemic on tourism sector]. *International Journal of Western Black Sea Social and Humanities Sciences*, 4(1), 17-27.
- Kim, W. G., & Kim, D. J. (2004). Factors affecting online hotel reservation intention between online and non-online customers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 23(4), 381-395.
- Koikawa, K. (2016). Ideas to boost tourism: From William Gibson's spook country to "Pokémon Go" and mixed reality. *Journal of Global Tourism Research*, 1(2), 105-109.
- Kounavis, C. D., Kasimati, A. E., & Zamani, E. D. (2012). Enhancing the tourism experience through mobile augmented reality: Challenges and prospects. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 4, 10.
- Miguéns, J., Baggio, R., & Costa, C. (2008). Social media and tourism destinations: TripAdvisor case study. *Advances in Tourism Research*, 26(28), 1-6.
- Mil, B., & Dirican, C. (2018). Endüstri 4.0 teknolojileri ve turizm etkileri [Industry 4.0 technologies and its effects on tourism economics]. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Academic Tourism*, 1(3), 1-9.
- Okafor, L., Khalid, U., & Gama, L. E. M. (2022). Do the size of the tourism sector and level of digitalization affect COVID-19 economic policy response? Evidence from developed and developing countries. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 1-24.
- Özaltın Türker, G. (2020). Covid-19 salgını turizm sektörünü nasıl etkiler? Turizm akademisyenleri perspektifinden bir değerlendirme. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 6(2), 207-224.
- Pınar, I. (2005). İzmir ili turizmin yeri ve geliştirme önerileri [The importance of tourism for Izmir and suggestions for development]. *Journal of Management and Economics*, 12(1), 47-60.
- Ritchie, B. W. (2009). *Crisis and disaster management for tourism*. Channel View Publications.
- Sarı, Y., & Kozak, M. (2005a). Turizm pazarlamasına internetin etkisi: Destinasyon web siteleri için bir model önerisi [The effect of internet on tourism marketing: A model proposal for destination-based web sites]. *Akdeniz İİBF Journal*, 9, 248-271.
- Sarı, Y., & Kozak, M. (2005b). Turizm işletmelerinde doğrudan pazarlama çabaları kapsamında bilgi teknolojilerinin kullanımı [The use of information technologies within the scope of direct marketing efforts in tourism enterprises]. *Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 19(1), 359-383.
- Soava, G. (2015). Development prospects of the tourism industry in the digital age. *The Young Economists Journal*, 12(25), 101-116.
- Şanlı, C., Erdem, A., & Unur, K. (2020). Koronavirüs salgınının tatile çıkma niyeti üzerine etkisi [The effect of the coronavirus pandemic on the intention of buying a holiday]. *Journal of Turkish Tourism Research*, 4(3), 1671-1688.
- Tavakkoli, F. (2020). COVID-19 dünya turizminde son 20 yılın en büyük krizi! [COVID-19 is the biggest crisis of the last 20 years in world tourism!]. <https://www.turizmgunlugu.com/2020/07/04/covid-19-dunya-turizmi-kriz/>, 18.09.2020.
- The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2020). UNWTO Statement on the Novel Coronavirus Outbreak. <https://www.unwto.org/taxonomy/term/356>, 20.09.2020.
- Think with Google (2020). Tüketici, izole tatil ve seyahat seçeneklerine yöneliyor [The consumer is turning to isolated

- vacation and travel options]. <https://www.turizmnews.com/tuketici-izole-tatil-ve-seyahat-seceneklerine-yoneliyor/20245/>, 02.09.2020.
- Tihinen, M., & Kääriäinen, J. (2016). *The industrial internet in Finland: on route to success?*. Espoo, Finland: VTT, VTT Technology.
- Tung, V.W.S., & Law, R. (2017). The potential for tourism and hospitality experience research in human-robot interactions. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 29(10), 2498-2513.
- TURSAB (2020). Türkiye ve dünya turizmi değerlendirmesi. İstanbul: Türkiye Seyahat Acentaları Birliği. <https://tursab.org.tr/apps/Files/Content/6ad52b35-1dd2-41c2-9f1c-c24cc19e7a63.pdf>, 14.09.2020
- Ulema, Ş., & Akkaşoğlu, S. (2021). The effects of COVID-19 on marketing policies and practices. Gursoy, D., Sarıışık, M., Nunkoo, R., & Boğan, E. (Eds.), In *COVID-19 and the Hospitality and Tourism Industry* (pp. 72-80). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Wynne, C., Berthon, P., Pitt, L., Ewing, M., & Napoli, J. (2001). The impact of the internet on the distribution value chain. *International Marketing Review*, 18(4), 420-431.
- Yazıcı Ayyıldız, A. (2020). Covid-19 salgın döneminde otellerin pazarlama stratejileri: Kuşadası örneği [Marketing strategies of the hotels in Covid-19 pandemic process: Kuşadası sample]. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, 8(3), 3328-3358.
- Yeung, T. A., & Law, R. (2004). Extending the modified heuristic usability evaluation technique to chain and independent hotel websites. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 23(3), 307-313.
- Zhou, Z. (2004). *E-commerce & information technology in hospitality & tourism*. Cengage Learning.

Journal of Tourism Theory and Research

Volume:9, Issue:1, 2023

Research article

Analysis of complaints regarding recreation and animation services in hotel businesses

Ersin ARIKAN

Analysis of complaints regarding recreation and animation services in hotel businesses

Ersin Arıkan¹

¹*Sinop University, School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Sinop -Türkiye; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6171-1813>*

Abstract

With the rapid development of digital media, consumer awareness has also soared. People who do not refrain from asking questions and doing research share their complaints not only with institutions but also through online tools. Today, with the increase in complaint channels, the complaint rate is also increasing. In this study, the document analysis was conducted to examine 317 complaints written by hotel business customers on the sikayetvar.com portal, one of the channels through which complaints can be reported online. In the study, consumer complaints were evaluated by expressing a complaint, waiting for a solution, and warning. It also analyzed complaint issues in staff, location, physical facilities, fees, and activity management. The study found that the most common purpose of the complaints was to express grievances. In the analysis of the subject of complaints, the variety of activities, the inadequacies of the animation areas, and the behavior of the staff was identified as the most problematic issues.

Keywords: Recreation, Animation, Hotel businesses, Complaint management.

1. Introduction

Improving and developing the services and products that lodging establishments offer their customers can significantly contribute to customer satisfaction and loyalty. In this context, managing customer complaints plays an important role in developing and improving products and services. In order to increase the likelihood of being preferred by customers, it has become a necessity for hotel companies that want to continue their activities in an increasingly competitive environment to work toward customer-oriented projects. Studies on the correct analysis and monitoring of complaints are topics companies have focused on in recent years. In competitive conditions, customer service is the most rational measure to prevent customers from swinging to competitors by differentiating themselves. The most important part of the after-sales services companies offer is managing customer complaints. The way companies handle and resolve customer suggestions or complaints will make it easier to hold onto customers and even retain them (Bengül, 2019: 255).

Complaints are a very important starting point to make dissatisfied customers happy again. Customers who complain give companies the opportunity to solve a problem. Furthermore, since customer feedback can improve quality, it can contribute to possible improvements in products and

services (Maurer & Schaich, 2011: 500). Some guests may prefer to transfer their loyalty to other companies instead of expressing their dissatisfaction with the companies. In addition, they may pass on their dissatisfaction through negative word of mouth by expressing it to friends and family (Dinnen & Hassanien, 2011). When evaluated in this context, it becomes clear how important existing guest complaints are for improving the service quality.

The complaints received are an important source of data for improving the process. In obtaining the data source, developments in web technology have enabled online customers to express their concerns and negative experiences with hotel services via the Internet (Lee & Hu, 2004). Animation and recreation services in hotels are important to properly evaluate and standardize the quality for customer satisfaction (Costa et al., 2004: 117). Analyses using this data source and systems for capturing complaints created within the company can differentiate companies from their competitors.

The lack of studies evaluating recreation and animation services in hotel businesses has been decisive in the conduct of this study. In this context, it is aimed to evaluate the recreation and animation services offered by the hotel businesses on the basis of complaints. In the study, first of all, the importance of complaint management and customer

*Corresponding author

E-mail: earikan@sinop.edu.tr

Article info: Research Article

Received: 2 November 2022

Received in revised form: 12 November 2022

Accepted: 16 December 2022

Ethics committee approval:

* All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

complaints for hotel businesses are explained. Then, customer complaints are evaluated under the title of the method, findings, and conclusion.

2. Literature

The perception of word complaint is generally perceived as a negative term. However, for companies, complaints are an important factor that enables them to identify the company's faults and shortcomings and ensure customer satisfaction (Albayrak, 2013: 39). According to another definition, a complaint is a reaction expressed by customers to resolve their dissatisfaction with a product or service, to show their anger in the face of injustice, and to harm the business of the company that causes their dissatisfaction (Yakut Aymankuy, 2011: 220).

Customers who feel they are not getting any benefit from the goods and services they purchase can express their dissatisfaction differently. These are (Akan & Kaynak, 2008):

- Verbal expression of discomfort,
- Never choosing the establishment again,
- Filling a complaint with the establishment,
- Contacting authorities that protect the customers,
- Sticking with the same establishment as if nothing happened.

Customers share their positive and negative experiences with products and services with other customers. Positive communication helps to increase the market share and revenue of companies. However, it is known that complainers who say negative things are twice as likely to make negative statements as guests who say positive things (Goodman & Newman, 2003: 55).

Monitoring complaints can help companies design products and services to meet customer needs. However, companies are learning how to change their internal processes toward faster and more accurate service and how to create the conditions for better service to customers (Keskin, 2016). In recent years, the Internet has been frequently used as an area where customers can address their complaints directly to companies and the public. The number of platforms where customers can submit their complaints is increasing daily in both public institutions and private companies. These developments force all organizations with customer relations to consider complaints (Burucuoğlu & Erdoğan Yazar, 2020). The complaint management process starts with the receipt of the customer complaint and ends with the follow-up of the complaint. It also ensures internal consistency by providing similar solutions to similar problems (Çakıcı & Güler, 2015). Customers evaluate the goods and services they purchase by performing a cost-benefit analysis based on the price they pay. They make a mental judgment about whether or not the evaluated product is worth complaining about (Huppertz, 2007).

Complaints, negative feedback after sales that expresses that expectations were not met, are a behavior that companies do not want to face. However, complaints are one of the most important means of communication between the customer and the company (Yakut Aymankuy, 2011: 221). Failure to meet the expectations of people who purchase the goods and services offered by companies is the beginning of a complaint (Lapre & Tsirikitis, 2006: 352). Although the complaint statement is initially an adverse judgment, it is a very important competitive tool for hotel companies to identify the company's shortcomings and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty by aligning the quality of service offered with customer expectations. Receiving customer feedback in hotel companies is considered communication between the company and the customer (Kılıç & Ok, 2012).

According to the experience gained, companies improve their performance with satisfied customers. Customer loyalty is the most important result of customer satisfaction (Aydın & Özer, 2005: 486). When companies properly analyze their customers' expectations, needs, and desires and satisfy them at the highest level, it increases their profitability. It also enables customers to think positively about the company and not complain (Albayrak, 2013: 27). Since there is no physical asset for customers to take away in hotel businesses considered in the context of service businesses, as is the case with the purchase of goods, one of the critical issues affecting customers' perceptions of quality in compensating for the resulting failure is trying to find solutions by understanding their problems (Kılıç et al., 2013: 830).

A large number of people work in companies that produce labor-intensive products in the production and consumption stage. Production and service that involves people may also involve errors. The occurrence of errors in production or presentation causes the customer who receives the product or service to be dissatisfied, leading to complaints (Unur et al., 2010: 242). Whether or not positive customer comments, complaints, and grievances about hotel establishments are responded to positively can also affect the demands of potential customers. It is known that the demand for hotel establishments has been influenced by customers' comments in the past (Gürbüz & Ormankıran, 2020: 26).

3. Method

Recreation and animation services are an issue to which hotel establishments have attached great importance in recent years regarding customer satisfaction. Guest complaints are among the most important sources of information for ensuring and understanding customer satisfaction and loyalty. In this context, the study aims to identify the evaluations of people receiving services from hotel establishments in terms of recreation and animation services, in the context of their complaints. It is believed that the knowledge gained from the study can help the actors of the sector to identify the causes of dissatisfaction with animation services in hotel establishments and to eliminate the problems.

In this study, document analysis was used as the data collection method. Providing data by analyzing written documents containing information about the facts and events related to the subject examined within the scope of the research is called a document review. A lot of information about the research field can be obtained by analyzing documents without the need for interviews and observations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 188). The data of the study consists of complaint texts containing the keywords "recreation animation" under the main category "hotel companies" on şikayetvar.com. The data used in the study comes from şikayetvar.com, which was established in 2001. Şikayetvar is a system established on the basis of customers' dissatisfaction with the products and services they purchase and their search for solutions to their problems. As of November 20, 2022, the website had over 9 million members and over 160 thousand registered brands (Şikayetvar, 2022).

The three categories for complaint were adopted from the study of Karaağaç, Erbay & Esatoğlu (2018). Studies on complaint management in the hotel business (Ceylan & Gençer, 2022; Çimenci & Yazıcı Ayyıldız, 2021; Tuncer, 2020; Uçar & Kırhasanoğlu, 2021; Ünal, 2019) were used in creating the complaint categories. The study, 551 complaints were evaluated between May 12, 2019, and November 10, 2022. The study, 317 complaints were investigated because positive comments, deleted or unpublished complaints about recreation and animation services could not be reached. The complaints transferred to the computer environment were analyzed by coding, adding the codes to the complaint themes according to their common characteristics, reviewing and determining the suitability of the codes for the particular theme, and interpreting the categories and complaint themes.

In qualitative research, validity and reliability should be ensured. In this study, to ensure the internal consistency of the research, the researcher first independently analyzed the data set to create main codes and sub-codes. Then, the complaints were categorized by an independent researcher. Miles and Huberman (1994: 64) reliability formulation was used to compare the coding. The number of agreeing codes was determined to be fourteen, and the number of disagreeing codes was determined to be four. As a result of the ratings, the reliability of the study was calculated to be 78%. When the final codes were determined, discussions about the codes were held and the analysis continued with detailed codes. To ensure external reliability, the data collection and analysis method was clearly established. In addition, the coding of the complaints evaluated in the study is kept and ready to be submitted for confirmation review when necessary.

The categories and complaint topics are presented in tables in the findings section. While writing the findings section, the sections related to animation and recreation are given with direct quotations. Since there may be changes in the period after the data collection, such as hotel guests withdrawing their complaints for various reasons, the findings

reflect only the period in which the data was collected. The main limitations of this study are that the study was conducted only through a complaint portal and that the complaints written are assumed to reflect sincere and real opinions.

4. Findings

Table 1. Distribution of complaints according to their purpose

		n	%
Purpose of the complaint	Expressing the complaint	246	78
	Having a resolution	51	16
	Warning	20	6
Total		317	100

Examining Table 1, complaints mainly were made for expressing grievances at 78% compared to other complaint purposes. Complaints made to have a resolution account for 16% of the total complaints. Complaints made for warning purposes were found to be the lowest complaint type among the groups. The following are examples of complaints from hotel customers:

Expressing the complaint

"...It says here animation activities, but I haven't seen 1 activity for 5 days..."

"...The animation team never looks at anyone's face, as if they are forced to be there, let alone smile, as if they want the season to end so they can leave..."

"...The animation is too bad to be worth watching. Very "unattractive" animator with poor language skills..."

Having a resolution

"...The program is not implemented; the sine qua non of a hotel is animation and it's team, I could not see the animation for 1 day. Therefore, I ended my vacation, but my 1 day was not refunded. I will pursue my rights..."

"...My vacation ended one day early due to incorrect information. I want a refund..."

"...The irresponsibility of the hotel, not addressing my issues and a bad holiday..."

Warning

"...the animation team does not work on Sundays, there is no activity in the hotel. It was a week holiday at the ice cream shop. Do not make your vacation start on Sunday..."

"...No entertainment, no animation, nothing. It can't get any worse. You should not be fooled by the images and videos on the internet, we were fooled. It is a big regret to come here..."

"...There is no such thing as animation, don't dream of having fun..."

Table 2 shows the complaint categories, topics, number of complaints, and examples of comments about complaints. There were 317 comments analyzed as part of the study.

Some of these comments included more than one complaint topic. In this context, 317 comments included a total of 465 complaint issues.

Table 2. Categories and subjects of complaints

Categories	Complaint subject	n	Sample complaints
Personnel	Lack of personnel	16	"...They said there is animation at night, the waiters dance the <i>halay</i> and <i>Çiftetelli</i> ..."
	Staff attitude and behavior	64	"...They also select certain families for the animations..." "...The animation team at the hotel is absolutely indifferent to Turks...While tourists are asked one by one to participate in activities, we are ignored..."
	Lack of professional knowledge	42	"...In the name of animation, the tables by the pool are emptied and children are made to sing for 20 minutes by a man aged 45-50..."
Location and physical facilities	Inadequacy of recreation-animation areas	84	"...The animation entertainment team and stage shown on the website does not exist..."
	Location of recreation-animation areas	24	"...The animation team is close to average as in other hotels..."
Fee	Paid activities	14	"...The hotel's own animators only tried to sell t-shirts and bingo..." "...There wasn't even animation in the evenings, they charge extra for everything..."
	Different price practices	20	"...From the hotel staff in the animation group s**** is misleading people. They take money from people by taking them to places that are not connected to the hotel..."
Activity management	Failure to adhere to time and schedule	25	"...They said there was free animation at 22.00 in the evening, more than half of the hotel came to the theater square. We waited until 23.00 and no one came..."
	Duration of activities	12	"...We almost never saw the animation team of the hotel in 4 days. I can say that there is no animation especially during the day..."
	Variety of activities	164	"...Animation is already a comedy. If you had them over at the kindergartens, even kids would not like it, only simple tricks, it is like a bad joke ..." "...Daytime activities are almost nonexistent, the only things offered are dancing in the pool and darts..."

Four categories were identified as complaint categories: Personnel, Physical Equipment, Fee, and Activity Management. The personnel category identified personnel deficiencies, attitudes and behaviors, and lack of expertise. The complaints from the fee category arise from paid activities and different pricing practices. In the activity management category, non-compliance with the given time, program, duration and variety of activities make up the complaint issues. The analysis of the complaints showed that the lack and variety of leisure and animation activities were the most complained about (n=164). However, most complaints related to the inadequacy of the recreation areas (n=84) and the attitude and behavior of the staff (n=64). Insufficient expertise for the recreational animation services (n=42), non-compliance with the program in the activities (25), location of the rooms (24), different pricing practices (20), and lack of staff (n=16) were other topics of the complaint. The least complaints came from paid recreational and animation activities (n=14) and the duration of activities (n=12).

5. Conclusion

It can be noted that studies on guests' complaints about hotel establishments have increased significantly in recent years. Considering the importance of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the tourism sector, managing customer complaints has become necessary for businesses. Especially with the rapid development, change, and diversity of information and communication technologies, customers share their positive and negative opinions through various tools. In this study, the evaluations by guests of recreation and animation services were analyzed in the context of their complaints against hotel companies.

The purpose of the complaints was evaluated in three categories. When analyzing their distribution, it was found that guests wrote their complaints mainly to express a complaint. This was followed by complaints written to have a resolution and make a warning, respectively. When the categories and topics of complaints are analyzed, the failure of animation and recreation services to meet the expectations at a hotel is seen as an important problem. In the study, four categories were identified for complaint topics. In the personnel category, the behavior of the staff carrying out recreation and animation services stands out as the most complained about issue by the guests. However, complaints about the professional competence of the staff for animation services have an important place. In this context, Demir & Demir (2015: 38) stated in their study that careful selection of the personnel to perform animation services is also very important in terms of quality entertainment service. Mikulić & Prebežac (2011) reached similar results in their study on tourist satisfaction with hotel animation programs, which is a rarely researched subject in tourism research. Too few sports activities, inadequate capacity of facilities, inexperienced/unprofessional, same program every day, and ending too early activities constitute the dissatisfaction of the tourists. In the category of physical facilities of recreation and animation

places, insufficient space is the most complained about the issue. In addition, the location of the areas where animation services are provided is another issue complained about by the guests.

In the price category, different price practices and charging guests for activities are the most frequently complain about issues. In the activity management category, dissatisfaction with animation and recreation activities is the highest complaint in this category in total complaints. Dalkılıç & Mil (2017) state that standardization of the qualities of leisure and animation activities of hotel facilities may affect the quality; therefore, it is necessary to move away from mediocrity and review the activities from time to time. Other complaints include non-compliance with the given program and the activities' short duration. It is important that entertainment services, another specialty within the hotel business, are professionally managed to increase customer satisfaction. In particular, managing customer complaints has become a necessity for businesses. Businesses should listen to their customers and take their complaints into account in order to maintain the highest quality of products and services offered to customers. Companies that listen to their customers can gain a competitive advantage (Kitapçı, 2008: 112). The suggestions developed within the research results are as follows:

- The cost of activities should be clearly stated before booking.
- The professional competencies of the staff responsible for managing leisure and animation services should be questioned and improved.
- Information about activities should be provided when guests check-in.
- Recreation and animation areas should be planned, and animation activities conducted in a way that does not disturb other guests.
- Working conditions in hotels should be improved, and staff motivated.
- Recreation and animation staff should be kept from staff serving in other areas, and guest communication and behavior should be clearly defined and followed.
- The ethical principles for the behavior of the recreation-animation team and the entire staff should be clearly established and followed.

Author contribution statements

The author contributed all to the research's design and implementation, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

References

- Akan, Y. & Kaynak, S. (2008). Tüketicilerin Şikâyet Düşüncesini Etkileyen Faktörler, *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 63 (2), 1-19.
- Albayrak, A. (2013). Restoran İşletmelerinde Müşteri Şikayetleri ve Şikayete İlişkin Davranışlar, *Paradoks Ekonomi, Sosyoloji ve Politika Dergisi*, 9 (2), 24-51.
- Aydın, S. & Özer, G. (2005) National Customer Satisfaction Indices: An Implementation in the Turkish Mobile Telephone Market, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 23 (5), 486-504.
- Bengül, S. S. (2019). Müşteri Şikayet Yönetimi Kalitesi Belirleyicilerinin Marka İmajı ve Marka Bağlılığı Üzerindeki Etkisi, *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, 31, 251-276.
- Burucuoğlu, M. & Erdoğan Yazar, E. (2020). Üçüncü Parti Platformunda Kargo Firmalarına Yapılan Müşteri Şikayetlerinin İçerik Analizi, *Ekonomik ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 16 (1), 99-114.
- Ceylan, U. & Gençer, K. (2022). Devre Tatil Sistemindeki Otel İşletmelerine Yönelik Çevrimiçi Şikâyetlerinin İncelenmesi, *Türk Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6 (2), 540-552.
- Costa, G., Glinia, E., Goudas, M., & Antoniou, P. (2004). Recreational Services in Resort Hotels: Customer Satisfaction Aspects, *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 9 (2), 117-126.
- Çakıcı, C. & Güler, O. (2015). *Şikâyet Yönetimi*. Burhan Kılıç, Zafer Öter. (Ed.), Turizm Pazarlamasında Güncel Yaklaşımlar içinde (Sayfa, 217-254). Beta Yayıncılık, İstanbul.
- Çimenci, M. & Yazıcı Ayyıldız, A. (2021). Pamukkale'de Faaliyet Gösteren 4 ve 5 Yıldızlı Termal Otel İşletmelerine Yönelik E-Şikâyetlerin İncelenmesi, *Türk Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5 (3), 1945-1960.
- Dalkılıç, G. & Mil, B. (2017). Otel İşletmelerinde Rekreasyon ve Boş Zaman Yönetimi: Sahil Otelleri Örneği, *Yorum Yönetim Yöntem Uluslararası Yönetim-Ekonomi ve Felsefe Dergisi*, 5 (1), 29-42.
- Demir, M. & Demir, Ş. Ş. (2015). Otel Animasyon Hizmetlerinin Yöneticiler ve Turistlerin Bakış Açısıyla Değerlendirilmesi, *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research*, 1 (1), 35-48.
- Dinnen, R. & Hassanien, A. (2011). *Handling Customer Complaints in the Hospitality Industry*, *International Journal of Customer Relationship Marketing and Management*, 2 (1), 69-91.
- Goodman, J. & Newman, S. (2003) Understand Customer Behavior and Complaints, *Quality Progress*, 36 (1), 51-55.
- Gürbüz, E. & Ormankıran, G. A. (2020). Müşterilerin Otel İşletmelerine Yönelik Yorum ve Şikâyetlerinin Değerlendirilmesi, *Journal of Applied Tourism Research*, 1 (1), 17-32.
- Huppertz, J. W. (2007) Firms' Complaint Handling Policies and Consumer Complaint Voicing, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 24 (7), 428-437.
- Karaağaç, C., Erbay, E. & Esatoğlu, A. E. (2018). Özel Hastanelere Yapılan Çevrimiçi Şikâyetlerin İçerik Analizi İle İncelenmesi,

- Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 10 (24), 287-304.
- Keskin, M. (2016). Müşteri Sadakatini Sağlamak İçin Şikayet Yönetimi ve Eğitim Sektörüne Yönelik Bir Uygulama, *Toros Üniversitesi İİSBF Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3 (5), 91-108.
- Kılıç, B. & Ok, S. (2012). Otel İşletmelerinde Müşteri Şikayetleri ve Şikayetlerin Değerlendirilmesi, *Journal of Yasar University*, 25 (7) 4189-4202.
- Kılıç, B., Ok, S. & Sop, S. A. (2013). Otel İşletmelerinde Müşteri Şikayetlerinin Değerlendirilmesi ve Hizmet Kalitesi Algısının Müşteri Sadakati Üzerine Etkisi, *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 12 (4), 817-836.
- Kitapçı, O. (2008). Restoran Hizmetlerinde Müşteri Şikayet Davranışları: Sivas İlinde Bir Uygulama, *Erciyes Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, Sayı 31, 111-120.
- Lapre, M. A. & Tsikriktsis, N. (2006). Organizational Learning Curves for Customer Dissatisfaction: Heterogeneity Across Airlines, *Management Science*, 52 (3), 352-366.
- Lee, C. C., & Hu, C. (2004). Analyzing Hotel Customers' E-complaints from an Internet Complaint Forum, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 17 (2-3), 167-181.
- Maurer, C., & Schaich, S. (2011). *Online Customer Reviews Used as Complaint Management Tool*. In R. Law, M. Fuchs, & F. Ricci (Eds.), *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism* (pp. 499-512). Proceedings. Innsbruck, Austria: Springer Verlag Wien.
- Mikulić, J. & Prebežac, D. (2011). Evaluating Hotel Animation Programs at Mediterranean Sun-and-Sea Resorts: An Impact-Asymmetry Analysis, *Tourism Management*, 32 (3), 688-696.
- Miles, M. B. ve Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, Sage: USA.
- Şikayetvar. "<https://www.sikayetvar.com/animasyon/otel/> Erişim Tarihi: 10-19.11.2022.
- Tuncer, M. (2020). Termal ve Spa Hizmetleri Sunan Otel İşletmelerinde Şikâyet Konuları: Bir Şikâyet Portalında Uygulama, *Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research*, 7 (63), 3966-3971.
- Uçar, Ö. & Kırhasanoğlu, M. (2021). Doğu Karadeniz'deki 5 Yıldızlı Konaklama İşletmelerine Yönelik Çevrimiçi Müşteri Şikâyetlerinin İncelenmesi, *Türk Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 5 (3), 2149-2165.
- Unur, K., Çakıcı, A. C. & Taştan, H. (2010). Seyahat Acentalarında Uygulanmakta Olan Müşteri Şikâyet Çözüm Türleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma, *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 13 (24), 241-253.
- Ünal, A. (2019). Otel Müşterilerinin E-Şikâyetlerinin Sınıflandırılmasına Yönelik Bir Çalışma, *Uluslararası Yönetim İktisat ve İşletme Dergisi*, 15 (2), 561-581.
- Yakut Aymankuy, Ş. (2011). Yerli Turistlerin İnternet Ortamındaki Şikayetlerinin Satınalma Kararlarına Etkileri, *Balıkesir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 14 (25), 218-238.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2008). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (6. Baskı). Ankara: Seçkin Yayıncılık.

Journal of Tourism Theory and Research

Volume:9, Issue:1, 2023

Research article

A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman

Raja TUMATI, Mustafa DASKIN, Yusra AL ZAKWANI

A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman

Raja Tumati¹, Mustafa Daşkın², and Yusra Al Zakwani³

¹School of Tourism, Oman Tourism College, Muscat, Oman, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2194-2924>

²Tourism Department, Amasya University, Amasya, Türkiye, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2453-490X>

³Industry Practitioner, Muscat, Oman, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4158-3914>

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the customer selection of restaurants in Muscat based on the effectiveness of the prices and promotions. Besides, this study focused on the factors affecting the customer's selection of restaurants. The survey questionnaire was applied to a sample of customers living in Muscat. A convenient sampling technique was adopted for data collection, and the collected data was processed and analysed using Mini-tab software. The findings indicate that the menu price affects restaurant customers' selection, and restaurants with a high price have better service. As for promotion, the most effective method to advertise is through social media. In addition, the most important factors for Omani people that affect their restaurant selections are tasty food, food quality, cleanliness, quick service, price and value, and sales promotion and discounts, respectively. The current study is preliminary in nature but an unstudied one from the price and promotion approach in Muscat, so it makes an addition to the hospitality literature and sheds light on future studies. The study also provides recommendations for practitioners.

Keywords: Promotion, Price, Restaurants, Food, Oman.

1. Introduction

The hospitality industry is a very important sector within a destination (Camilleri, 2018). While the place where people are is the place where hospitality should be, so, the hospitality industry's goal is to provide guests with everything they need and want in a friendly way. According to Cousins et al. (2018), "hospitality" is the friendly treatment of guests to meet their needs. It includes the hotel and catering industries. The authors added that the catering industry refers to food and beverage facilities that are provided to people and guests to fulfil their hunger. In other words, the catering industry is made up of businesses that work on preparing food and beverages as guests order them, such as restaurants. There are many categories of restaurants, including chain, franchise, and independent restaurants; fast food restaurants; family or casual restaurants; fine dining restaurants; and quick-service restaurants (QSR).

Moreover, restaurants are one of the places that change people's moods, as some quotes say that "good food brings a good mood" or "nothing brings people together like good food." Aydinyan (2021) mentioned that a restaurant is one

of the catering industries, which can be inside a hotel or independent, that serves prepared food and beverages to their guests to order as per their preferences. Every restaurant has a special style and offers different cuisines. It also has various themes depending on the type of cuisine it serves to create a concept and atmosphere that make people feel the food they are consuming (Chua et al., 2020). For example, restaurant owners can design their establishments to attract customers in a luxury or normal way and decorate it with multiple themes, for example, the jungle theme, the country's cultural theme, what people are interested in, and so on. Furthermore, restaurants are one of the businesses that increase the country's income, of course, when they generate so much profit.

Oman has eleven governorates, and one of them is the Muscat governorate, which is located on the shore of the Gulf of Oman and is considered the biggest city in Oman. It has a lot of hotels, restaurants, malls, resorts, parks, coffee shops, Muscat International Airport, clothes shops, and so on (Kwarteng, 2013). In addition, restaurants in Muscat can be found near the beach, malls, hotels, or any other location inside Muscat. However, this research study focused on the

*Corresponding author

E-mail: daskinmus@hotmail.com

Article info: Research Article

Received: 24 December 2022

Received in revised form: 12 January 2023

Accepted: 13 January 2023

Ethics committee approval:

* All responsibility belongs to the researcher. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

To cite this article: Tumati, R., Daşkın, M., & Al Zakwani, Y. (2023). A preliminary research regarding the role of price and promotion on customers' restaurant selections in Muscat/Oman. *Journal of Tourism Theory and Research*, 9(1), 30-40. <https://doi.org/10.24288/jttr.1223557>

influence of price and promotion on customer selection of restaurants in Muscat. Moreover, according to Jain (2013), when a business uses integrated marketing operations to reach out to its target market and learn about their needs, this is referred to as the marketing mix. Typically, the marketing mix consists of the 7 Ps, Product, Place, Price, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. As is known, to start a business, the owner should focus on the marketing mix, which has important elements because of their effectiveness in customer selection, such as price and promotion, which are the main scope of the present work. To explain more about the effectiveness of the price and promotion, the price affects customer selection in a way that people choose to go to restaurants that have high menu prices to get better service and quality, and the promotion affects customers' willingness to come to the restaurant and eat from the restaurant menu. In this regard, the present study aims to examine the customer selection of restaurants in Muscat according to the effectiveness of the pricing and promotion in the restaurants. The research objectives of the current work are as follows:

To determine the factors that affect customer selection of restaurants in Muscat.

To examine the link between the price of the items and the selection of restaurants in Muscat.

To assess the influence of promotion on customer selection of restaurants in Muscat.

To provide recommendations on price fairness and effective promotion of restaurants in Muscat.

2. Literature review

According to Symons (2013), a restaurant is one of the different firms that come up with food and beverage services for their clients. The restaurant is a word that comes from a French word that means "restorer of energy." And it is divided into two classifications: full-service restaurants and quick-service restaurants. Furthermore, the restaurant that has full-service includes at least a dozen main-dish options and cooks according to your requirements. As Symons (2013) mentioned, the full-service restaurant (FSR) focuses on prices, like for the restaurant to be luxury at a high, mid, or low price, the menu, and the restaurant atmosphere, for example, family, luxury, casual, and themes (jungle, flower, etc.). Whereas quick-service restaurants have few choices in choosing the food, prioritize comfort, preparation, and delivery quickly, and service is limited. Moreover, An (2016) noted that quick-service restaurants, which are abbreviated to "QSR," are one of the official restaurant terminologies that specialize in "fast food." Some of the examples of quick-service restaurants are Burger King, McDonald's, KFC, etc. The author analyses restaurants as an industry that provides food and beverage services to their customers and divides them into two types: full-service restaurants and quick-service restaurants.

However, Muscat, Oman's capital is a remarkable blend of traditional Omani buildings, modern design, and beautiful

mountains and beaches (Al-Wahaibi, 2016). Moreover, Muscat has a lot of hotels, malls, restaurants, coffee shops, etc. It has so many choices that satisfy customers' selections. For example, restaurants have many types that refer to customer needs. According to Mhlanga and Tichaawa (2016), restaurant clients are usually composed of people from different lifestyles, racial, and economic backgrounds. Most of them have different restaurant tastes and sometimes even conflict with each other. As such, they have distinct features, and, therefore, they tend to select restaurants based on diverse factors. So, to attract and retain more customers, restaurant owners will need to understand their customers' selection criteria better. Furthermore, customers care about the restaurants' "surroundings, customer turnover, location, quality of food, quality of service, type of food in choosing a restaurant, and price," which influences them in selecting this kind of restaurant. As well as that, one of the most important aspects influencing consumer decisions and behavior is menu price. Mills and Thomas (2021) suggest that restaurant customers utilize price as a criterion for restaurant quality, expecting that more expensive restaurants will deliver better food and provide better service. As the authors mentioned above, the proportional impact of restaurant selection considerations varies significantly depending on the restaurant's price. Consequently, restaurateurs must be aware of the various aspects that impact restaurant guests' decisions, as well as their relative importance, so that they may appropriately supply their services and establish strategies.

2.1. Price

Hassan and Raewf (2018) mentioned that the second element of the 4p's in the marketing mix is price, which is also an important element in the 4P's, and it means the amount of money that the customer should pay to get a product or service. Determining the price of the product or service is considered the hardest mission. Because many variables, like the quantity ordered for an item, the quality of the product or service, the cost included the shopper's capacity to pay, the costs charged by competitors for comparable items, government limitations, and so on, must be remembered while determining the price. In addition, the authors of this study added that as pricing is an important element in the marketing mix, its job is to satisfy the customers' needs and wants by focusing on the possibility or income necessary to provide products or services that they will be able to purchase. Furthermore, the pricing technique must analyze the evaluating issues and arrive at an estimating methodology that prevents pricing disappointment while leading to a method to achieve benefits. Consequently, it is important to see what price means in terms of value and benefits. This agreement should incorporate expenses with market-based evaluation and components of benefit. It should then capture the full value through value division, adjust the procedure in an evolving life-cycle climate, and foster models to support expected buyer behavior. In the continuation, it should decide on the imperatives for benefit expansion (Al-Fadly, 2021).

According to Brandau (2021), the restaurant menu plays a big role in the customer's decision. The restaurant menu is often presented in the form of a luxurious leather-wrapped brochure with an attractive design. Inside, you will find pages bearing italicised texts written with mastery, and your eyes are drawn to several items that are printed ornately and provide charming descriptions of a particular type of food. Then you turn your face to the waiter to order your food. So, in addition to its pride, that restaurant's menu offers unbeatable prices, causing customers to select a meal without regard for price, as is common in fine dining restaurants. More than that, Aimé (2019) mentioned that one of the ways restaurants use the psychology of choice to impact their customers is the menu format. While mentioning studies that most people are more likely to select the beginning of the menu items, "one study found that 35% of diners will order the very first item!". Thus, restaurant owners use this to charge their customers, similar to putting foods ranging in price from high to low on their restaurant menu. Furthermore, the price makes people know where to go or which restaurant they will go to; for example, people who care about the food quality and the excellent service without caring about the price, and the important thing for them is to enjoy their meals, always choose to go to luxury restaurants, while other people don't care about the service quality, and their important thing is the low price of the restaurant food, so this will make them go to any restaurant that comes in front of them, even if it's in their neighbourhood, or go to the fast food restaurant where they can get good food.

2.2. Promotion

As Singh (2012) noted, promotion is one of the most powerful tools in the marketing and product placement arsenal. In today's world, there are a lot of things to think about. A well-thought-out promotion is half the battle for a company's success and client acquisition. It is critical to promote a favorable impact on consumer awareness by showcasing the company and its products in the right light and emphasizing their benefits. It is critical to pay attention to the target demographics of consumers when promoting a product. Any modern and successful business must pay attention to promotional changes since they are the only method to attain the company's desired aim. It is the greatest way to promote that product. Otherwise, we risk falling right in front of our eyes (Novak, 2011). Furthermore, according to Ehmke et al. (2021), the goal of promotion is to make people aware of what your product is, what it can be used for, and why they should want it. Your promotional activities should have a clear message that is targeted at a specific audience and delivered through an appropriate channel to be effective. Your target audience will be those who use or influence the purchase of your goods. Your message must be in line with your overall marketing image, capture your target audience's attention, and elicit the desired response, whether it is a purchase or a change of heart. To say more, the authors noted that the purpose of promoting a product is to enable people to understand the product and how they will benefit from it

or how it will satisfy their needs and wants. Also, the ways to promote a product are through radio, newspapers, word of mouth, television, or like in today's way of marketing, through technology, or we can call it "digital marketing," which is advertising the product or service on social media.

According to Chua et al. (2020), each business should focus on promotion as it affects people's decisions. For example, when McDonald's promotes a kind of food that other restaurants also have, for example, burgers or French fries, a lot of people choose to go to McDonald's instead of other restaurants, as McDonald's always brings new things at a low price to keep their customers. Moreover, the product or service that a restaurant offers when people do not know about it is useless, so promotion comes in to make products and services known through advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations, as well as what can be done to assist them. That is why restaurants use promotions to let people know about them, like bringing celebrities and advertising through social media to bring customers and market their food, even if it is in a fine dining restaurant or fast-food restaurant, so that can make customers, while they see the food on social media, feel interested in testing the same food that the celebrities eat (Amofah et al., 2016). More specifically, promotion affects people's decisions when they select a restaurant.

Nowadays, many foods delivery programs such as Ak-eed, Done, and Talabat make it easy for people to get their meals at any time of the day or night, especially at midnight. Kim et al. (2020) mentioned that there is a program that uses chat-bots so that customers can post their feedback and get restaurant information in real-time, such as booking status, seat and menu information, and so on. However, when people open those food programs, it will show up for the restaurants that had offers, and this is what people want, so instead of getting ready to go out to the restaurant that they choose, they can stay at home and order the same food that they want but from a restaurant that has offered. However, all of those different advertising components affect one another. They generate a marketing strategy for a company and treat it properly, which could result in huge success. However, if the business is handled incorrectly, it will take years to recover.

The marketing mix necessitates a great deal of knowledge, market research, and meetings with a wide range of people, from customers to investors. What is more, all businesses are benefiting from these 4P's in a way that makes businesses plan well to become successful businesses in society. In addition, the 4P's, which are product, place, price, and promotion, can be described in another way, such as: the product is all about quality, the design, features, size, packaging, the brand name, the product variety, and so on. But the price is all about discounts, allowances, the bill, the payment period, etc. The promotion also includes announcements, sales promotions, open relations, direct marketing, and sales efforts. Finally, the place, which is the location, channels, inventory, coverage, transport, and assortments.

2.3. Factors effect customers' restaurant selection in Muscat

According to Mhlanga (2016), each person has his own choice of anything in their lifestyle, like their clothes, their food, and so on. Moreover, the people who go to the restaurant are typically made up of people from various cultural, ethnic, and income levels, with the majority of them having distinct and sometimes opposing restaurant tastes. As a result, they have distinct personalities, so they tend to select restaurants based on their own choices. Also, having a better grasp of what consumers look for in a restaurant can give restaurateurs useful data and insights that will help them attract and keep more customers. Also, Islam et al. (2020) noted that one factor that affects customer selection choices is price, as they said that "menu price is one of the major factors determining consumer decision-making and subsequent behaviors." As the researchers confirmed, customers of the restaurant make use of the price as it determines the restaurant's quality. For example, a high-priced restaurant serves tasty food of good quality. Then, the proportional value of restaurant selection considerations varies depending on the restaurant's pricing or the meal. Accordingly, it is important to understand the customer's choice factors because they affect the restaurant owner's decision when they make offers and to update the strategies well.

Akbar and Alaudeen (2012) found that food type and quality, price, atmosphere, new experiences, speed of service, location, and opening hours play important roles for customers. While Keshavarz et al. (2016) report that other factors affect restaurant customer selection, such as cleanliness, parking, the waiter's behaviors, and service quality. Moreover, the author of this research adds some other factors, such as: people in Muscat care about expensive restaurants, which have a high price, because they believe that good food with amazing service quality can only be found in expensive restaurants, so the price is a factor that affects restaurant customers in Muscat. Not only that, but also, according to Kafel and Sikora (2013), the brand image of a restaurant attracts people who are interested in a different theme of a place where they eat their meals, so this can also be considered as a factor that affects customer decisions and the promotion as well. In the same way, when celebrities advertise for one particular food or meal in a restaurant, it makes people curious to know about that restaurant and try that food too. In addition, the location of a restaurant can be an effective factor for the customers. For example, when a restaurant is in the same area as a company or college, it makes it easy for employees or students to go there, and if a restaurant is located in a place where there is no parking, which can also make people not go to that restaurant, which affects those people's decisions. But the location is not as effective as the price and promotion.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sampling and data collection

This study's respondents are fine-dining and fast-food restaurant customers who used to eat in a Muscat restaurant.

The study used a quantitative survey for both genders who go to restaurants aged 18 and up, and primarily people who live in Muscat because data collection was easy from those people because the study was conducted in Muscat. As a result, the current study was only able to collect data from 50 customers because of time limitations and data collection difficulties during the 2021 pandemic period. Moreover, this study conducted a survey using a questionnaire to collect the primary data through an online survey, specifically a Google Form. A convenient sampling technique was used, which is adopted by researchers when they collect market research data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2010), "it is the most commonly used sampling technique, as it is incredibly prompt, uncomplicated, and economical".

3.2. Measure instrument

This study used a questionnaire, which is a primary tool for a quantitative survey. This questionnaire had two parts: the first part was about the customer's demographic profile, and the second part was about questions that related to the objectives of this study. Moreover, there are structured and semi-structured questionnaires, which are the two types of questionnaires. A structured questionnaire contains closed-ended questions as well as all of the answers, which are provided as multiple-choice options for the respondents to tick. Multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and open-ended questions make up semi-structured questions. However, this study's questionnaire contained semi-structured questions, which Davis (2021) defined as a type of interview in which the interviewer asks only a few predetermined questions, and the rest of the questions are not predetermined ahead of time.

So, the questionnaire was done in a semi-structured way and given to the restaurant customer, who lives only in Muscat.

3.3. Data analysis

After completing the online survey, this study filtered the data and analyzed it, and the result was in an excel sheet format. Also, the Mini-tab software is a piece of software that aids in data analysis. This is mostly intended for Six Sigma specialists. It gives you a quick and easy way to enter statistical data, change it, spot trends and patterns, and extrapolate answers to present problems. This is the most extensively used software for small, medium, and large businesses. For the amount of analysis necessary in most Six Sigma initiatives, Minitab provides a rapid and effective solution (Okagbue et al., 2021). After using the Mini tab to analyze the data, the results were presented in different statistical formats, like frequency, Likert scale, etc.

4. Analyses and findings

4.1. Respondents' profiles

The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1, with the majority being female (70%) and male

(30%). Most of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20–30 years, with 98%, whereas only 2% were from the 31–40-year age group. There are no respondents between the ages of 41 and 50, or 51 and up. That shows the respondents are mostly young people. 84% of the respondents were single, and the rest, 16%, were married. According to the findings, only 10% of the respondents were non-Omanis, while the remaining 90% were Omani. Most of the participants were unemployed (61.7%). Besides that, the employed percentage was 38.3%, and the other 3 respondents did not answer this survey question. Finally, most of the respondents' income level was less than 500 riyals, at 78.7%. Furthermore, 14.9% had an income level between 501-1000 RO, while only 6.4% had an income level between 1001-2000 RO. The other 3 respondents did not answer this survey question.

Table 1. Profile of respondents

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Entire Group	50	100
Gender		
Male	15	30.0
Female	35	70.0
Age		
20-30	49	98.0
21-40	1	2.0
41- 50	0	0
51-Above	0	0
Marital Status		
Single	42	84.0
Married	8	16.0
Nationality		
Omani	45	90.0
Non-Omani	5	10.0
Status		
Employed	19	38.3
Unemployed	31	61.7
Retired	0	0
Monthly Income (Omani Rials)		
500 and below	39	78.7
501 – 1000	8	14.9
1001 – 2000	3	6.4
2001 and above	0	0

4.2. Factors affect the customers' selection of restaurants in Muscat

The Table 2 shows the results for the important factors when the respondents chose a restaurant and were rated using a Likert scale. Moreover, the scale focuses on word-of-mouth, online customer reviews, brand reputation and popularity, food quality, personal (past) experience, menu variety, price and value, sales promotion and discounts, location, cleanliness, atmosphere, premium customer service, availability of a variety of foods, protection of privacy, quick service, and tasty food. The responses ranged from "very important" to "not at all important."

The factors that are important to respondents when selecting a restaurant were rated using frequencies. This study

comes up with the results depicted in Table 2. 44 respondents agreed that "tasty food" was the most important factor for restaurant selection. Secondly, 43 respondents agreed that "food quality" was the second most important factor in restaurant selection. Thirdly, 41 respondents agreed that "cleanliness" was the third most important factor for restaurant selection. Fourth, 37 respondents agreed that "quick service" was the fourth most important factor for restaurant selection. Table 2 presents the frequencies for other factors as well. But most importantly, as the scope of this work indicates, the 32 respondents agreed that the "price and value" factor was very important, and at the same time, 18 respondents evaluated it as an important factor. Parallel to this, 18 respondents evaluated the "sales promotion and discounts" factor as very important, and 19 respondents said it was important. Other factors influencing the respondents' selection of restaurants are suggested, such as "the service should be perfect." In addition, they have to contact the customers to get their feedback on food quality, ambiance and service, attractive decoration, staff uniforms, and attitude, fresh and clean food, cultural food, too many people coming, restaurant space, the logo of the restaurant, presentation of food, the fast response to any customer complaints, being tasty and unique, people's opinions, size of the portion, price, quietness, the personality of the staff in the restaurant, friends and family suggestions, the uniqueness of the restaurant, something that makes it stand out, and decorations-lights". While others have had enough with what was mentioned before.

4.3. The link between the price and restaurant selection

As can be seen in Figure 1, most of the respondents generally visit fast food restaurants, and the percentage of those who do so is 38%, while 36% of the other respondents generally visit family-style restaurants. Whereas the percentage of respondents who visit premium fine dining restaurants is 18%, the lowest percentage, which is 8%, belongs to the respondents who visit food trucks, carts, or stands generally. Besides, when respondents were asked if they wanted to visit any other restaurants apart from what was mentioned, they stated that they preferred healthy food restaurants, Turkish restaurants like Hilal al Turki, homemade food deliveries, restaurants with a good view, like beach restaurants, ordering from online restaurants, and restaurants themed around Omani culture.

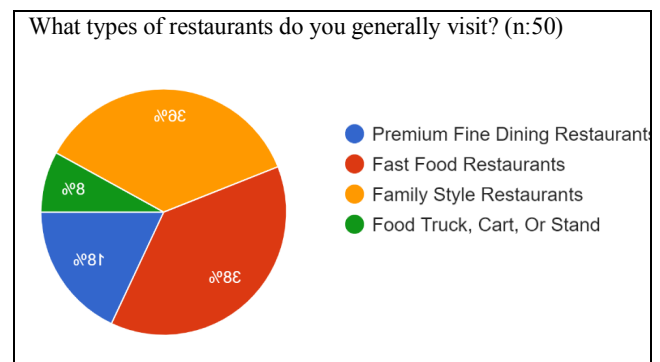


Figure 1. Pie chart of restaurant type

Table 2. Frequency analysis for customers' selection of restaurants (n: 50)

Factors	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Less important	Not at all important
Word-of-mouth	11	25	10	4	0
Online customer review	16	19	9	5	1
Brand reputation/ Popularity	23	19	5	3	0
Food quality	43	5	2	0	0
Personal (past) experience	28	11	10	1	0
Menu variety	26	20	2	2	0
Price and value	32	18	0	0	0
Sales promotion and discounts	18	19	9	3	1
Location	22	20	5	2	1
Cleanliness	41	8	1	0	0
Atmosphere	32	12	3	3	0
Premium Customer service	30	13	6	1	0
Availability of variety of food	31	15	4	0	0
Protection of privacy	29	17	1	3	0
Quick service	37	10	3	0	0
Tasty food	44	4	1	1	0

Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents feel that restaurants with higher costs provide superior service, with 54 percent (27 respondents) agreeing. While 46% (23 respondents) of those polled disagreed, when asked why, they stated, "sometimes the price is high, but the meal quality is extremely average, and it doesn't deserve the price." Others remarked that it does not have to be expensive to be delicious; moreover, sometimes the cuisine could be more delicious, the quantity of food is less than expected, and some restaurants have poor cleaning services. While others have stated that it is always just a show, some restaurants have high prices but poor service, and they can be rude at times. Expensive food only sometimes implies good service; better service depends on good employees, not high prices; high prices are sometimes set due to the decorations and rent of the building, not the quality of the service.

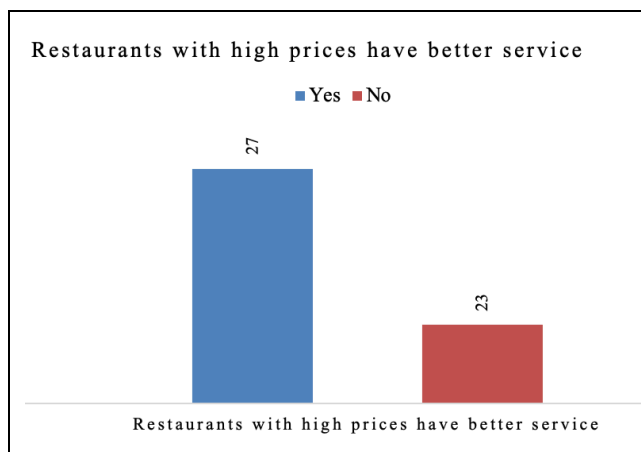


Figure 2. Column chart of relationship between high price and better service

Other respondents claimed that prices are sometimes high, yet service is poor, that not all employees provide excellent service, and that meal delivery can take a long time. On the other hand, some restaurants charge a high price

without taking into account other factors such as clean restrooms, child-friendly arrangements, and a quiet environment. On the contrary, some respondents indicated that some inexpensive restaurants provide friendly service and decent food. Finally, a few people indicated that there needs to be a higher price to guarantee decent food and service.

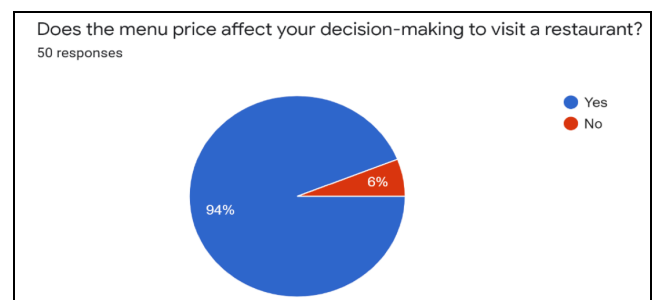


Figure 3. Pie chart for the menu price effectiveness on respondents' decision-making

Figure 3 indicates that only 6% of the respondents said that the menu price does not affect their decision-making. While the majority of the respondents 94% said that the menu price affects their decision-making.

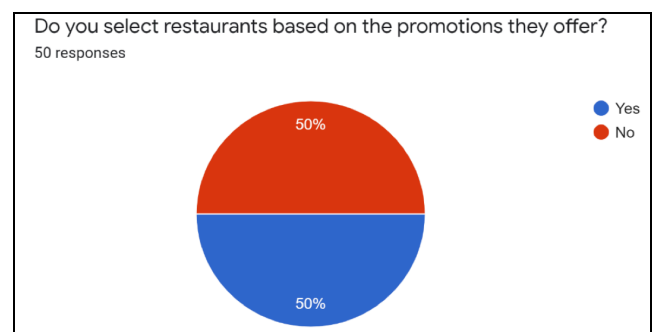


Figure 4. Pie chart of selecting restaurants based on the offers

As can be seen in Figure 4, 50% of the respondents selected a restaurant based on the promotions that the restaurant offered.

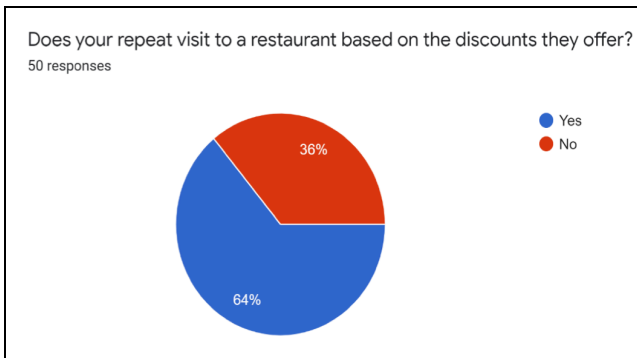


Figure 5. Pie chart of repeat visiting restaurant based on the discounts

Figure 5 displays that 64% of the respondents repeated visiting restaurants based on the discounts that the restaurants offered. Besides that, the remaining 36% of the respondents did not return to the restaurant based on the discounts that they offered.

4.4. The link between the promotion and restaurant selection

Figure 6 shows where the respondents hear about the restaurants they go to. As a result, social media is the first source of information for the respondents about the restaurants they visit, which accounting 100% of them. The second one that comes after social media is through friends and family, where it is 78%. The next one is 48%, which is the percentage of word of mouth. The message received on the respondents' phones is 26%. After that, ads on TV and billboards or promotional posters generate 12%. The tow lowest-performing tools are ads in newspapers (8%) and brochures (6%). Another respondent adds that he/she learned about the restaurants from YouTube ads.

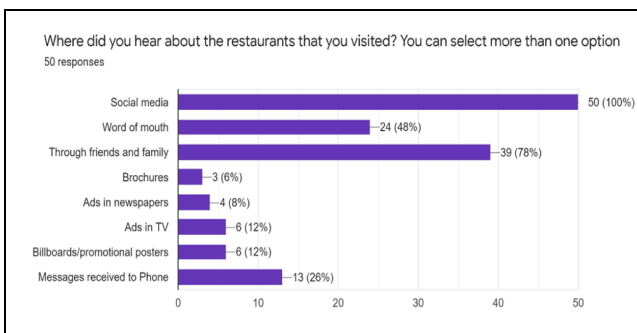


Figure 6. Bar chart of respondents hear about the restaurants they visit

As shown in Figure 7, the majority of respondents (90%) chose Instagram as their preferred social media tool. Snapchat come in second with 76%, and WhatsApp comes next with a percentage of 28%. Then, TikTok, as many people now use it, becomes one of the platforms of social media platforms that informs respondents about a restaurant with 24%. YouTube was selected by 14% of the respondents, and

the last two platforms that came in with the lowest percentages were Twitter (4%) and Facebook (2%).

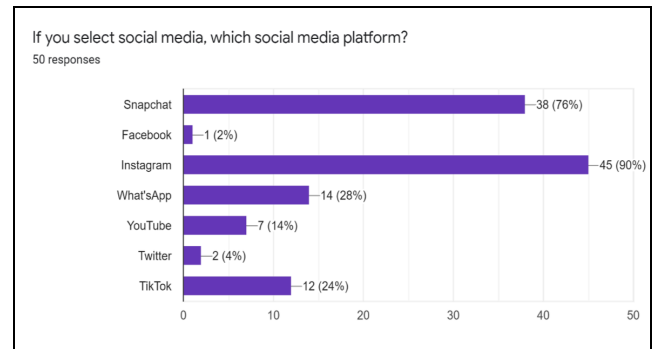


Figure 7. Bar chart of the social media platform

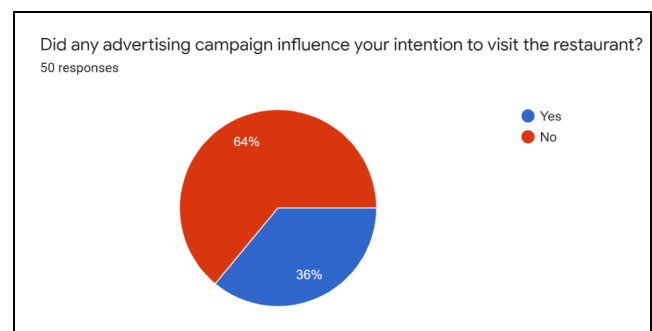


Figure 8. Pie chart of the advertising campaign influencing

Figure 8 indicates that the majority of the respondents (64%) reveal that the advertising campaign has no influence on their intention to visit a restaurant. On the other hand, 36% of the respondents confirmed the influence of an advertising campaign on their intention to visit a restaurant. Moreover, some of the respondents who responded with "yes" added details about the advertising campaign and mentioned that "it was very appealing to see, through social media influencers, a picture of delicious food with the price offer, the used colors, and the effect on the advertising, the details of the advertising, foods, drinks, and sweets."

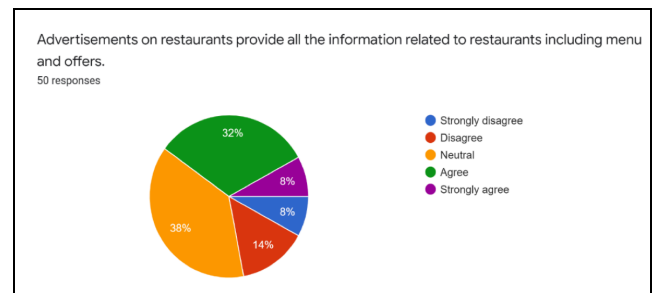


Figure 9. Pie chart of advertisements on restaurants

Figure 9 shows that 32% of the respondents agree, while 8% strongly agree, that advertisements in restaurants provide all the information related to restaurants, including menus and offers. But 38% of them are neutral. Furthermore,

14% of respondents disagreed, and 8% strongly disagreed. Respondents who disagreed claim that ads do not provide enough information related to offers, menu items, and other restaurant-related information.

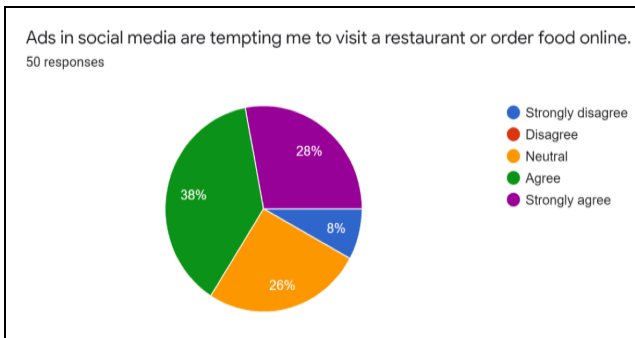


Figure 10. Pie chart of ads in social media

Figure 10 shows that 28% of the respondents strongly agree, while 38% agree that ads on social media are tempting them to visit a restaurant or order food online. In addition, the neutral respondents were 26%. On the other hand, the number of respondents who strongly disagreed is 8%.

5. Discussion

5.1. Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine the customers' selection of restaurants in Muscat based on the pricing and promotions applied to the restaurants. Besides, this study focused on the factors affecting the customer's selection of restaurants, such as tasty food, food quality, quick service, cleanliness, price and value, and sales promotion and discounts, which were rated as the highest by the participants. As a result, the current work generally reveals that menu prices affect restaurant customers' selection. Restaurants with a high price have better service, and regarding promotion, the most effective method to advertise is through social media. More than that, this study provides a critical dialogue that aids in the achievement of the research objectives discussed below.

The current study's first objective was to determine the factors that affect customer selection of restaurants in Muscat. Mhlanga (2016) found that one factor that affects customer selection is price, and he also added that, "menu price is one of the major factors determining consumer decision-making and subsequent behaviors." In addition, Mhlanga (2016) mentions in his study that Akbar and Alauden (2012) found that food type and quality, price, atmosphere, new experience, speed of service, location, and opening hours were all factors. Besides, according to Sikora and Kafel (2013), other factors that affect restaurant customer selection are cleanliness, parking, the waiter's behavior, and service quality. These were the factors that those researchers found in their research. But the current results of this study noted that those factors mentioned above truly affect customer selection of restaurants in Muscat, and the great majority of the restaurant customers (94%) revealed that the

menu price affects their decision-making. Moreover, the food type and quality, the price, the atmosphere, the new experience, the speed of service, location, the cleanliness, the parking, the waiter's behaviors, and the service quality factors mentioned in the findings were found to be important factors effective for the restaurant customers in Muscat. In addition, respondents stated in the survey that the restaurant logo, food presentation, people's opinions, size of the portion, quietness, friends' and family suggestions, and uniqueness of the restaurant are what set it apart.

The current study's second objective was to analyze the link between price and restaurant selection in Muscat. Brandau (2021) mentioned that the restaurant menu plays a big role in the customer's decision. For example, the restaurant menu is often made in the form of a luxurious leather-wrapped brochure with an attractive design. Inside the menus, you will find pages bearing italicized texts written with mastery, and your eyes are drawn to several items that are printed ornately and provide charming descriptions of a particular type of food. Then you turn your face to the waiter to order your food. So, in addition to its pride, that restaurant's menu offers unbeatable prices, causing customers to choose a meal without focusing on a price, which is common in fine dining restaurants. However, the same menu price mentioned in the previous paragraph affected the respondents' decision-making by nearly 100% in the current work.

Furthermore, according to Aimé (2019), the price makes people know where to go or which restaurant they will go to. For example, for people who care about food quality and good service without caring about the price, the most important thing is to enjoy their meals, so those people always choose to go to luxury restaurants. Other people do not care about the service quality, and their important factor is the price of the restaurant's food, which will make them go to any restaurant that comes in front of them, even if it's in their neighborhood, or go to a fast-food restaurant where they can get good food at a low price. As can be seen, Aimé means that the luxury restaurant has good food quality and good service, while the other restaurant has normal food quality and normal service. This was consistent with the current study, which found that most of the restaurant customers agreed (54%) that restaurants with high prices have better service. On the other hand, 46% of the restaurant customers were found to disagree. The results of the study reveal that people in Muscat care about expensive restaurants with a high price because they believe they can find good food with amazing service quality only in expensive restaurants. Hence, price is a factor that affects restaurant customers in Muscat.

The current study's third objective was to examine the link between promotion and customer selection of restaurants in Muscat. Restaurants use social media to promote their food, as Amofah et al. (2016) noted that "restaurants use the promotion to let people know about them, like bringing celebrities and advertising through social media to bring customers and market their food, even if it is in a fine dining

restaurant or fast-food restaurant, so that the customers can see the food on social media and feel interested in trying the same food that the celebrities eat." This point is true where social media ads or promotions affect customers' selection of a restaurant. The result shows that the most common way customers hear about the restaurants they select is through social media, where the percentage is 100%. Then the other tools come, like word of mouth, through friends and family, brochures, newspaper ads, TV ads, billboards/promotional posters, and messages received by phone. More than that, according to Chua et al. (2020), each business should focus on promotion as it affects people's decisions. Whereas the results of the current study are not concordant with those of Chua et al.'s work because the majority of the restaurant customers (64%) revealed that the advertising campaign does not influence their intention to visit a restaurant. Consequently, the result of the study reveals that promotion depends on the method used to advertise, i.e., if it is through social media, it is effective, but if it is through another method, it is not that influential.

The current study's fourth objective was to provide recommendations on price fairness and the effective promotion of restaurants in Muscat. The results of the current study recommend that restaurants in Muscat focus on restaurant menu prices and design them more and more as this affects customers' selections. They should try their hardest to please everyone in terms of food type and quality, price, atmosphere, new experience, speed of service, location, cleanliness, parking, waiter behavior, and restaurant service quality. Moreover, restaurants other than the luxury ones should do their best with food quality and good service, as most of the restaurant customers agree that the luxury restaurants have good food quality and good service. On the other hand, the study's results agree that it is true that it is a luxury restaurant and provides good service and food. Still, sometimes it may be a luxury restaurant, but the food is not delicious, unlike at other restaurants. In other words, when restaurants wish to market their product or cuisine, the study's findings suggest that they do it using social media, as it influences the majority of consumers' restaurant selections.

5.2. Implications

According to the study's findings, menu prices impact the majority of respondents' decision to attend or not visit a restaurant. As a result, it is recommended that fast-food and family-style restaurants concentrate on menu pricing and ensure that they are appropriate for their target clients. Because there is fierce rivalry in the market among fast-food and family-style restaurants, restaurant owners must monitor pricing frequently and strive to offer competitive prices, if not the lowest rates, so that the client base is not impacted. The menu's aesthetics are much more significant at a fine dining restaurant than in other types of restaurants. A well-designed dinner menu with strong restaurant menu descriptions may push the items and convince your clients to purchase more, regardless of price. A good menu may be the distinction

among a restaurant's failure and its success. A fantastic menu not only displays the restaurant's most costly delicacies, but it also draws consumers to items that the establishment is most worthy of. A nicely adorned restaurant with a badly prepared menu, on the other hand, might be damaging to the establishment. Restaurant owners must also work on advertising their menu through multiple means, since the majority of respondents claimed that advertisements influence their decision to visit a restaurant. Promotion using social media platforms appears to be a popular option, as many of the target clients are on social media. Additionally, restaurant owners were encouraged to create specialised pages on Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, as the significant proportion of target clients use these platforms in Sultanate of Oman. Aside from menu prices and restaurant promotion, restaurant owners should pay attention to other variables that may encourage consumers to visit a restaurant in Muscat, such as menu variety, food quality, cleanliness, atmosphere, diversity of cuisine, and tasty food. By focusing on these aspects, restaurant operators may attract consumers and increase their business. Through addressing consumers' requirements, businesses may gain their loyalty, which can lead to higher long-term profits.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

Like other studies, the current work has a few limitations, such as the fact that research team was able to reach 50 customers through the online survey, so the number of respondents was a limitation, and the results cannot be generalizable to all Omani restaurant customers. Besides, people were uninterested in filling out the questionnaire because anxiety and fear were prevalent during the Corona pandemic in 2022-2023, and there was also a time limit for data collection. The current study examined the only the two dimensions of the marketing mix. So, future studies may examine other dimensions with more sampling in Muscat.

Author contribution statements

Authors contributed equally to the design and implementation of the research, to the analysis of the results and to the writing of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

Ethics committee approval

All responsibility belongs to the researchers. All parties were involved in the research of their own free will.

References

- Aimé, P. (2019). *How Restaurants Use the Psychology of Choice to Influence You*. Convertize. Available at: <https://www.convertize.com/choice-psychology/> [Accessed 24 October 2021].

- Al-Fadly, A. (2021). Price element of marketing mix: Its effect on customer experience in construction industries. *Management Science Letters*, 10, 3643-3654. doi:10.5267/j.msl.2020.6.029
- Al-Wahaibi, M. (2016). *Muscat City and the Renaissance*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340610661_Muscat_City_and_The_Renaissance [Accessed 28 October 2021].
- Amofah, O., Gyamfi, I. and Osei Tutu, C. (2016). The Influence of Service Marketing Mix on Customer Choice of Repeat Purchase of Restaurant in Kumasi, Ghana. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 8(11), 102-112.
- An, R. (2021). Fast-Food and Full-Service Restaurant Consumption and Daily Energy and Nutrient Intakes in U.S. Adults. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 70(1), 97-103.
- Aydinyan, V., (2021). *Simple Restaurant Marketing Plan for 2021 [PDF Template]*. Available at: <https://www.7shifts.com/blog/simple-restaurant-marketing-plan-for-2021-pdf/> [Accessed 24 October 2021].
- Chauhan, N.B. (2012). *Note of Unit: III. Research and research ethics*. Available at: [http://www.aau.in/sites/default/files/Unit%203%20RESEARCH%20AND%20RESEARCH%20ETHICS%20\(Repaired\).pdf](http://www.aau.in/sites/default/files/Unit%203%20RESEARCH%20AND%20RESEARCH%20ETHICS%20(Repaired).pdf) [Accessed 30 October 2021].
- Resnik, B.D. (2015). *What is Ethics in Research & Why is it Important?* Available at: https://online225.psych.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/225-Master/225UnitPages/Unit_10/Resnik_NIH_2015.pdf [Accessed 30 October 2021].
- Brandau, M., (2021). *5 factors that affect restaurant pricing strategies*. Nation's Restaurant News. Available at: <https://www.nrn.com/operations/5-factors-affect-restaurant-pricing-strategies> [Accessed 24 October 2021].
- Camilleri, M. A. (2018). The Tourism Industry: An Overview. In: *Travel Marketing, Tourism Economics and the Airline Product. Tourism, Hospitality & Event Management (Springer, Cham)*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319085432_The_Tourism_Industry_An_Overview [Accessed 08 January 2023].
- Chua, B., Karim, S., Lee, S., and Han, H., (2020). Customer Restaurant Choice: An Empirical Analysis of Restaurant Types and Eating-out Occasions. *International Journal of Environmental research and public health, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 6276, 1-23. doi:10.3390/ijerph17176276
- Contreras, F.L., & Ramos, M.L. (2016). What is Marketing? A Study on Marketing Managers' Perception of the Definition of Marketing. *Forum Empresarial*, 21(1), 49-64.
- Cousins, J., Weekes, S. and Bisconti, A. (2018). Food and Beverage Service. Hoddereducation.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/media/Documents/> [Accessed 30 June. 2021].
- Davis, B., (2021). What is semi-structured questionnaire research? *MV Organizing, Knowledge Bank: Quick Advice for Everyone* Available at: <https://www.mvorganizing.org/what-is-semi-structured-questionnaire-research/> [Accessed 25 September 2021].
- Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2010). *A reference guide to basic research design for education and the social and behavioral sciences*. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Ehmke, C., Fulton, J. and Lusk, J., (2021). *Marketing's Four P's: First Steps for New Entrepreneurs*. pp. 4-5. Available at: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/> [Accessed 28 August 2021].
- Hassan, T. and Raewf, M., (2018). The Evaluation of Marketing Mix Elements: A Case Study. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 4(4), 100-109.
- Islam, N., Ameen, M., Ahmed, S., Rashid, M., Kabir, A. and Nazrul, T., (2020). Factors Influencing the Selection of Restaurant for Dining in Dhaka City of Bangladesh. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: An Administration and Management*, 18(7), 31-38.
- Işoraitè, M., (2016). Marketing mix theoretical aspects. *International Journal of Research – Granthaalayah*, 4(6), 25-37.
- Jain, M., (2013). An Analysis of Marketing Mix: 7Ps or More. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(4), 23-28.
- Kafel, P. & Sikora, T. (2013). The usage of quality management methods and tools in food sector organizations. *Food Science Technology Quality*, 1(86), 204-216.
- Keshavarz, Y., Jamshidi, D. and Bakhtazma, F., (2016). The influence of service quality on restaurants' customer loyalty. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (Oman Chapter)*, 6(4), 1-16.
- Kim, H., Jung, S. and Ryu, G., (2020). A Study on the Restaurant Recommendation Service App Based on AI Chatbot Using Personalization Information. *International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology*, 8(4), 263-270.
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K. (2014). *Marketing Management*. 15th Edition, Prentice Hall, Saddle River.
- Kwarteng, A. (2013). *Urban Growth of Muscat: Observations and Analysis from Multitemporal Satellite Imagery*. Muscat, p. 1. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/274716517_Urban_Growth_of_Muscat_Observations_and_Analysis_from_Multitemporal_Satellite_Imagery [Accessed 29 June 2021].
- Mhlanga, O. and Tichaawa, T., (2016). What are the current factors affecting consumer selection criteria for informal full-service restaurants in Port Elizabeth, South Africa? *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 5(2), 1-11.
- Mills, J.E. and Thomas, L. (2021). Consumer knowledge and expectations of restaurant menus and their governing legislation: a qualitative assessment. *Journal of Foodservice*, 17, 6-22.
- Nassaji, H. (2021). Qualitative and descriptive research: Data type versus data analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(2), 129-132.
- Next Restaurants Staff. (2020). *5 Benefits of Restaurant Digital Marketing Over Traditional Advertising*. Creative Restaurant Marketing and Promotion Ideas. Available at: <http://nextrestaurants.com/mobile-marketing/5-benefits-of-restaurant-digital-marketing-over-traditional-advertising/> [Accessed 11 September 2021].
- Novak, D. (2011). *Promotion as Instrument of Marketing Mix*. I International Symposium Engineering Management and Competitiveness 2011 (EMC2011), June 24-25, 2011, Zrenjanin, Serbia.
- Okagbue, H., Oguntunde, P., Emmanuela, O. and Akhmetshin, E. (2021). Trends and usage pattern of SPSS and Minitab Software in Scientific research. *International Conference on*

Recent Trends in Applied Research (ICoRTAR) 2020 Journal of Physics: Conference Series 1734 (2021) 012017IOP Publishing. doi:10.1088/1742-6596/1734/1/012017

- Rani, A. (2021). *Methods of Data Collection-Primary and secondary Data*. 2nd ed. Patna. Available at: <https://www.patnauniversity.ac.in/e-content/> [Accessed 25 September 2021].
- Singh, M. (2012). Marketing Mix of 4P'S for Competitive Advantage. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 3(6), 40-45.
- Symons, M. (2013). The rise of the restaurant and the fate of hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(2), 247-263.
- Taherdoost, H. (2020). *Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research*. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM)*, 5(2), 18-27.
- Tanczer, L. (2021). *Learning Development Service*. Available at: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/Filestore/> [Accessed 6 July 2021].
- The Economic Times. (2021). *What is Marketing Mix? Definition of Marketing Mix, Marketing Mix Meaning*. Available at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/marketing-mix> [Accessed 28 October 2021].
- White Rivers Media. (2021). Traditional marketing Vs Digital marketing. *White Rivers Media*, Available at: <https://www.whiteriversmedia.com/traditional-marketing-vs-digital-marketing/> [Accessed 11 September 2021].
- Williams, C. (2007). Research Methods. *Journal of Business & Economic Research*, 5(3), 65-72. doi: <https://doi.org/10.19030/jber.v5i3>