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*Olgu Sunumu/ Case Report*

## **Accommodation Sector Innovations during the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Conceptual Review**

### **Kovid-19 Pandemisi Sürecinde Konaklama Sektörü İnovasyonları: Kavramsal Bir İnceleme**

**Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Harun ÇALHAN**   
Erciyes Üniversitesi  
Turizm Fakültesi, Kayseri, Türkiye  
**E-posta:** hcalhan@erciyes.edu.tr

#### **Abstract**

Innovation plays an important role for tourism businesses in difficult times such as pandemics. The purpose of this study is to examine innovations that developed and adopted by accommodation businesses during the pandemic, through the literature and webpages of the renowned chain hotels. For this aim, a literature review has been made and nationally and internationally most valuable and renowned hotel chains' (Elite World Hotels, Titanic Hotels, Voyage Hotels, Dedeman Hotels, Swiss Hotels, Intercontinental Hotels, Accor Hotels, IHG Hotels, Hilton Hotels, Marriott Hotels&Resorts, MGM Hotels&Resorts, NH Hotels etc.) web pages were investigated in order to reveal innovations that developed and adopted during the pandemic. The pandemic period innovations were classified according to the operational departments. As a result of the literature review and examination of the web pages, it is understood that technological innovations have been widely adopted in the pandemic process in accommodation businesses.

**Key Words:** Innovation, Covid-19 pandemic, Hotels, Accommodation sector, Tourism.

#### **Öz**

İnovasyon, pandemi gibi zor zamanlarda turizm işletmeleri için önemli bir rol üstlenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, pandemi döneminde konaklama işletmelerinde geliştirilen ve benimsenen inovasyonları literatüre ve ünlü zincir otellerin web sitelerine dayalı olarak incelenmektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda bir literatür incelemesi yapılmış, ulusal ve uluslararası değerli ve büyük otel zincirlerinin (Elite World Hotels, Titanic Hotels, Voyage Hotels, Dedeman Hotels, Swiss Hotels, Intercontinental Hotels, Accor Hotels, IHG Hotels, Hilton Hotels, Marriott Hotels&Resorts, MGM Hotels&Resorts, NH Hotels vb.) web sitelerinde Kovid-19 pandemisi dönemine ilişkin geliştirilen ve benimsenen inovasyonlar incelenmiştir. Pandemi dönemi inovasyonları otellerin operasyonel departmanlarına göre sınıflandırılmıştır. Literatür incelemesinin ve web sayfaların araştırılmasının sonucu olarak, konaklama işletmelerinde pandemi sürecinde yaygın şekilde teknolojik inovasyonların benimsendiği anlaşılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İnovasyon, Kovid-19 pandemisi, Oteller, Konaklama sektörü, Turizm.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism sector plays an important role in the development process of developing countries. Besides the sector revives social, political and economic relations on an international scale, it is affected very quickly by bad events. Events occurring in the world such as terrorism, war and natural disasters adversely affect developing countries' tourism activities. One of them is undoubtedly epidemic diseases (Kivılcım, 2020). The Covid-19 epidemic has caused an unprecedented global crisis around the world (Eryılmaz, 2020). World trade has entered the worst economic recession in history since the Great Depression. The pandemic has become a threat to global supply chains, financial markets, consumer demand and trust in a very short time (Can, 2021). During the pandemic period, travel restrictions affected approximately 90% of the world's population and the hospitality sector was the most affected sector by the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions among other sectors. Since the Covid-19 pandemic emerged in Wuhan, China, according to June 2022 data, approximately 540 million people have been affected by the virus in the world (Worldmeters, 2022).

Practices such as travel restrictions, vaccination and testing to prevent the spread of the virus have created serious consequences for the tourism sector, especially for international tourist activities (Gössling, Scott and Hall, 2020). Due to those constraints, tourists have become a scarce value for accommodation businesses and it has become inevitable for businesses to seek new ways to gain competitive advantage, adopt innovations in the sector and put innovations into practice (Grech, Cuschieri, Balzan, Grech, Fabri and Gauci, 2020). Accommodation businesses are the places that guests stay and spend long time. Therefore, service innovations in tourism sector are important in order to provide customer satisfaction and gain competitive advantage (Baykal and Ayyıldız, 2020; Yıldırım and Karabey, 2016). Innovations were made in many areas in accommodation businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic period. Technological innovations are especially sought to reduce direct human contact and the risk of contamination. Due to the risk of contamination of the Covid-19 virus, accommodation businesses had to adopt innovative practices and apply them at every stage of their business transactions.

Accommodation businesses that unlike other businesses due to being high human contact and an important part of the service sector, had to manage this troubled period by developing and adopting new technological innovations. In this context, within the scope of this study, innovations made in accommodation businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic are examined from a conceptual perspective based on the literature. In the study, accommodation sector innovations during the Covid-19 pandemic are categorized according to the operational departments such as front office, food and beverage, and housekeeping departments and according to the person addressed such as customers and staff. Within the scope of the study, not only the literature reviewed but also nationally and internationally most valuable and renowned hotel businesses' web pages such as Elite World Hotels, Titanic Hotels, Voyage Hotels, Dedeman Hotels, Swiss Hotels, Miracle Hotel, Intercontinental Hotels, Accor Hotels, IHG Hotels, Hilton Hotels, Marriott Hotels&Resorts, MGM Hotels&Resorts, NH Hotels, Hard Rock Hotels, Henna Hotel, CitizenM Hotel, Rancho Bbernardo Inn, were investigated in order to reveal their service innovations which are developed and adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Innovation and Tourism

Innovation is derived from the Latin word "innovare" and is used to make significant changes in the structure of something existing or reveal something new (Türk and Kara, 2018). The "innovare" word is used as "innovation" in English literature while used as "inovasyon" and/or "yenilik" in Turkish literature (Baykal and Ayyıldız, 2020; Çakıcı, Çalhan and Karamustafa, 2016; Durna and Babür, 2011; Kıyıcı, Aksoy and Koçoğlu, 2020). Innovation refers to the process of obtaining a marketable, useful and tangible result of the outputs using science and technology (Eraslan, Bulu and Bakan, 2008). According to the Oslo Manual (OECD), innovation is defined as the making of a new or improved new product, process, marketing method and organizational method in business practices, organization or relations with customers (Oslo Manuel, 2005).

Innovation is not only the process of obtaining a new output, it also includes many processes such as marketing these outputs, adopting them, turning them into benefits, developing and commercializing a new production method (Eraslan et al., 2008). Therefore, innovations can be classified into different types. The most common classification according to its types is product, process, marketing and organizational innovations, and according to the level of innovation, it is incremental and radical innovations (Oslo Manuel, 2005). Product innovation is defined as the production of a significantly improved good or service to gain a higher market share (Yıldırım and Karabey, 2016; Oslo Manuel, 2005). Process innovation refers to the process of making a technological innovation in the production process or redesigning using an improved technology and increasing the performance of this design (Hjalager, 2002). Marketing innovation includes significant changes made in design, presentation, pricing, positioning or promotion of goods and services in order to increase acceptance in the market (Türk and Kara, 2018), while organizational innovation is the process of developing organizational structure or differentiation in organizational operations and management by using its resources and new technologies (Lam, 2004; Camisón, Fores and Boronat-Navarro, 2017).

Schumpeter (1934) defined the concept of innovation for the first time and made a distinction between invention and innovation. Schumpeter states that the emergence of inventions is associated with scientific or technological research. However, he argues that making inventions will not be enough, and not all inventions may be commercialized. On the other hand, he defines innovation as the processes of idea generation, production and commercialization that enable inventions to be further developed and become useful products (Hjalager, 2002; Türk and Kara, 2018). Rogers (1983) emphasizes that innovation is a process that includes research, development and commercialization of new products, dissemination and adoption by consumers through purchase, use and recommendation. Innovation is a process that takes place through trial and error that uncertainties and risks are high (Yaşar, 2020).

Many factors such as the emergence of unexpected events in an industry, conflicts, emerging needs, changes, and new information provide opportunities for innovation, even though risky, difficult and complex. The Covid-19 pandemic started as an unexpected event the modern world has not experienced before and turned into a global crisis. It is a crisis shows that it is possible to innovate and succeed even under difficult conditions, and provides a possibility for businesses to turn the crisis into opportunity (Tekin, 2021). Accommodation businesses that are important part of the hospitality sector, mostly need technological innovations for customer satisfaction and

service quality. It is important accommodation businesses to follow technological innovations closely and benefit from them in terms of competition in the domestic and foreign market environment (Aracı and Ergen, 2021).

## 2.2. Covid-19 Pandemic and Tourism

Despite its emergence in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic became a global epidemic in three months, had many negative effects from curfews to the closure of workplaces, from travel restrictions to tourist mobility coming to a standstill (Gümüş and Hacıevliyagil, 2020). After the pandemic has started, quarantine conditions affected businesses especially in the service sector. Many retail outlets, restaurants, hotels, leisure facilities, and other businesses had to close for a long time, and airline transportation stopped completely due to pandemic bans and cancellations (Can, 2021). Furthermore, unemployment figures have increased all over the world with the addition of the closure of accommodation businesses to the measures taken by the states (UNWTO, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has become a global crisis spreading all over the world and has accelerated the adoption of technological innovations by all sectors. Similarly, due to the pandemic, accommodation businesses have had to experience risks and uncertainty, adopt new technologies and develop new methods in goods and service production processes (Sharma and Nicolau, 2020).

In this period, measures such as hygiene, cleaning, masks and social distancing were implemented by accommodation sector in order to ensure the revival of the sector and to eliminate tourists' fear and concerns (Turkish Standards Institute, 2021). In addition, accommodation businesses had to increase their ability to attract tourists in order to avoid the crisis and increase their preferability (Yaşar, 2020). During the pandemic, accommodation businesses that keep Covid-19 security at a high level and serve according to social distance rule, have been preferred more by tourists (Grech et al., 2020).

It is thought that protection from the epidemic can be possible by focusing more on technological innovations to reduce the risk of contamination of the Covid-19. Therefore, hospitality businesses need to make it clear to their guests that the risk of contamination is reduced by adopting new technologies and that they are safe (Shin and Kang, 2020). For this reason, accommodation businesses both need to innovate and are responsible in taking these measures for their customers. Innovation is essentially an important factor for every business of the hospitality industry to be successful in competition, whether it is an accommodation business or other hospitality businesses (Camisón et al., 2017).

Hospitality services are mostly intangible (with exceptions such as souvenirs) and involve simultaneous production and consumption. Most of the tourism sub-sectors (with the exceptions like air transport) are labor-intensive and their organizational competitive advantage is generally depending on product, process and market innovations (Hall and Williams, 2008). Because of the fact that different types and levels of innovations emerge in hospitality businesses. Accommodation businesses are the places that different goods and services offered together and their innovation practices are also diverse.

## 3. Accommodation Sector Innovations during Pandemic

Accommodation businesses are facilities that many products or services such as food and beverage, accommodation, entertainment are offered together, and the success of

these businesses depends heavily on many factors such as satisfied customers, quality of services, revisitation, meeting tourists' needs and demands (Camisón et al., 2017). The high contagiousness of the new type of coronavirus and the ability to control it through individual hygiene measures have led to a change in preferences in the accommodation sector. Progress in the hospitality sector can only be possible through the correct interpretation of changing tourist preferences and providing services that meet their needs and demands (Akduru, 2020).

Previous studies show that tourists are affected by hygiene and cleanliness conditions when choosing an accommodation business. Hygiene and cleaning issues become extremely important in pandemic outbreaks. For this reason, the accommodation businesses should consider the tourists' high safety expectations during travel in the Covid-19 process, and focus on hygiene and cleanliness issues (Jiang and Wen, 2020). During the Covid-19 pandemic, innovations such as air cleaners, disinfectant diffusers, body scanners, the use of robots for cleaning and sanitation, automatic systems and digital systems that can be used in main works such as check-in, check-out, reservation, customer service can be adopted in the accommodation sector. Using robots to clean and disinfect guest rooms and common areas of the facility can help prevent human contamination of the virus. Adopting these new innovations with less human interaction but greater service efficiency can help building customer trust and attract more customers (Mariam, Singh and Goyang, 2020).

The services provided in accommodation businesses can be classified according to various characteristics. Denizer (2012) stated that accommodation businesses can be divided according to two types of criteria. According to the first criterion, departments are divided into two as income-generating departments such as front office, food and beverage, housekeeping and support services such as accounting, sales and marketing, human resource management, while in the second criterion, considering the level of relations with the customers, departments divided in to two as face to face departments such as front desk, restaurant, bar and animation and background sections such as accounting and technical. Kurtlu and Çakır (2019) divided accommodation businesses into four categorizations in their study namely; housekeeping, front desk, food and beverage, and general activities.

From this point of view, innovations made in accommodation businesses are classified and examined according to departments as front office department, food and beverage department, housekeeping department, other departments and according to person addressed such as customers and staff. Within the scope of the study, web pages of nationally and internationally most valuable and well-known hotel businesses such as Elite World Hotels, Titanic Hotels, Voyage Hotels, Dedeman Hotels, Swiss Hotels, Miracle Hotel, Intercontinental Hotels, Accor Hotels, IHG Hotels, Hilton Hotels, Marriott Hotels, Mgm Hotels&Resorts, NH Hotels, Hard Rock Hotels, Henna Hotel, CitizenM Hotel, Rancho Bbernardo Inn, were examined. Innovations made by those accommodation businesses during Covid-19 pandemic are classified and presented in the following sections.

### **3.1. Front Office Department Innovations**

Front office department that have intense customer-employee relations, generates the most revenue among all departments in accommodation businesses (Denizer, 2012). The Covid-19 outbreak has led to the rapid adoption and implementation of innovations in this department. In the pandemic process, various applications have been

developed in front office departments especially for guests. Different applications have been made in terms of service delivery in the pandemic process and new technologies have been adopted quickly. In the first place, social distancing was implemented in the front office operations as an effective strategy against Covid-19 pandemic. Adoption of AI and robots was recommended during this period to protect both staff and guests. During the pandemic process, some technologies that can replace face-to-face services such as robot receptionists, check-in and check-out with face scanning method, product delivery with robots, robot concierge assistants, and voice guest control have gained importance (Wang and Wang, 2021). According to the hotel managers, robot technology can be used in the front office department for issuing and copying various documents, supporting staff at the reception during group check-in and checked-out, presenting general hotel information at the concierge, supporting distribution of promotional materials for marketing etc. (Ivanov, Seyitoglu and Markova, 2020).

The most adopted and applied new service practices in front office department during the pandemic process can be explained as temperature measurement with digital thermometer, HES code application, temperature measurement with thermal cameras, use of RFID card in room keys, contactless reservation transaction using mobile application, individualized check-in transaction, disinfection of the tools and equipment used during check-in process (Aracı and Ergen, 2021). As Xiang, Huang and Lai (2022) stated that during the pandemic process, front desk employees are obliged to wear masks and maintain a safe social distance in communication with customers. For example, Titanic Hotels management has measured the temperature of their guests with thermal cameras that placed at the entrance doors and served their guests with online check-in option to maintain social distance and contactless transactions (Titanic Hotels, 2020). Similarly, MGM Resorts management states that they have implemented smart applications for guests that allow contactless check-in (MGM Resorts, 2021).

Moreover, Henna Hotel management that uses the slogan of hotel providing service using robots, offer robotic check-in to their guests at the front office. They have also placed antiseptic solutions in the lobby area, allowing frequent use by both staff and guests. They emphasized that common areas and elevators for guests in the lobby are disinfected every hour for 24 hours (Henna Hotel, 2021). NH Hotels management has developed various technical and digital solutions to minimize interaction with their guests and direct contact with surfaces. It is stated that with the "FastPass" application, guests' interaction with the hotel staff is reduced, and hotel guests receive online services for transactions such as check-in, check-out and room selection. They also state that they provide "digital guest relations" service so that the guests can instantly communicate with the hotel staff in any situation (NH Hotels, 2021).

Marriott Hotels & Resorts management offers their guests the opportunity to check-in via mobile or on the web check-in. It is stated that the guests who make transactions with one of these options are notified that their rooms are ready. In this way, guests' waiting time shortens in the front desk. They also state that they have developed and offered mobile applications for guests that can be used instead of room keys, allow food to be ordered to the room, and facilitate processes like receiving the materials arriving at the room door (Marriott Hotels & Resorts, 2021). Rancho Bernardo Inn Hotel management states that they disinfect the room keys and apply social distancing rules during check-in process. They also state that they have developed options for guests that check-out can be done virtually over TV systems or by telephone (Rancho Bbernardo Inn, 2021).

### **3.2. Food and Beverage Department Innovations**

Accommodation businesses will increase the variety of disposable or personalized products in the restaurant services during the pandemic process. For example, tourists will not desire to hold the service spoons, forks and tongs that everyone touches at open buffets. Accommodation businesses will need to offer products such as personalized service sets and gloves to ensure hygiene in the restaurant. Restaurant open buffet services might be completely removed during the pandemic process (Kıvılcım, 2020). According to the hotel managers, robot technology can be used in food and beverage department for washing and cleaning dishes, taking customer orders, cleaning restaurant tables and floors in during the pandemic (Ivanov et al., 2020). The use of digital menus and the contactless reservation systems for restaurants have been the most widely adopted food and beverage department innovations in accommodation businesses during the pandemic process (Aracı and Ergen, 2021).

In the pandemic process, Swissotel the Bosphorus management has increased the Covid-19 measures in the food and beverage areas, and made the food service personnel obliged to wear masks, visors and gloves. In addition, the management reminds the kitchen staff to wash their hands every half an hour by way of an automatic alarm system set up in the kitchen area (Swissotel, 2021). Miracle Hotel management states that they accept guests in the restaurant hall arranged in accordance with social distancing rules by measuring the temperature with a contactless thermometer at the entrance to the restaurant area. In addition, food and beverage service to the guests is carried out by personnel wearing personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves and face shields (Miracle Hotel, 2021).

Voyage Hotels management has specified that they serve with washable table mats instead of tablecloths, forks, spoons, knives and disposable salt, pepper and handkerchief set in their restaurants that they accept guests according to social distancing rules. Moreover, employees can serve to the guests that choose their food at the located points in the open buffet areas (Voyage Hotels, 2021). The management of the Rancho Bbernardo Inn Hotel management states that beyond the implementing takeaway service, they have arranged all food and beverage services in a manner to be enjoyed in rooms, terraces and balconies. The delivery of package services is carried out in the form of contactless room service. In restaurants, the name and surname of each of the dining guests and the phone number of at least one of them are recorded (Rancho Bbernardo Inn, 2021).

Hard Rock Hotels management has created a reservation system to control the number of people in restaurants and bars, hereby they encourage their guests to book for meal. They also state that in these areas, they serve their guests at their tables with cutlery, glassware and napkins that have been disinfected before service. Hotel management states that they have switched to individualized service practice in all their services and that they serve single-use packaged beverages at the tables. Besides all these practices, they try to direct the guests to provide food and beverage services as room service (Hard Rock Hotels, 2021).

### **3.3. Housekeeping Department Innovations**

In the hospitality sector, the cleanliness of guest rooms (bedrooms and bathrooms) is extremely important for the hotel reputation. Previous studies revealed that the general hygiene and cleanliness of the rooms have a significant impact on the hotel choice,

customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Tourists will choose hotels that offer reassuring services and products in terms of hygiene and cleanliness due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, accommodation businesses should implement regular hygiene discipline through manual and robotic automated practices. Considering that cleaning robots can measure the amount of dust in a given area with sensors and produce data that can be useful for cleaning teams, hospitality businesses will need to invest in AI-driven robots to achieve their hygiene and cleaning goals more effectively (Jiang and Wen, 2020). According to the managers of the accommodation sector, robot technology can be used in many areas of the housekeeping department that cleaning the common areas of hotel, garbage collection, baggage handling, delivering new towels, sheets, laundry to customers, working in park, pool and garden services (Ivanov et al., 2020). According to the Aracı and Ergen (2021), new practices such as the use of ULV disinfectant devices, room ventilation systems, hand sterilization vending machines, automatic doors in common areas have been used in the accommodation businesses during the pandemic process.

IHG group management have developed an agreement program called “IHG Clean Promise”. With this promise, guests are reassured about high levels of cleanliness. It covers clean, well maintained, clutter free rooms that meet global hotel standards. If this is not what guests find when checked-in, then hotel declare to promise to make it right (IHG Hotels & Resorts, 2021). Hilton Hotels management states that they have developed a global program called “Hilton CleanStay” with a method of new hotel cleaning and disinfection standard called “lysol protection”. Within the scope of this standard, the “Hilton CleanStay” room seal is designed and this seal is used to indicate that no one has entered the room after cleaning. It has also been stated that new technologies such as disinfecting mist, electrostatic sprays and ultraviolet light are used for disinfection of surfaces and items in the room (Hilton Hotels, 2021). Dedeman Hotels management states that after cleaning the rooms, disinfection is done with ozonation and/or fogging machines. In addition, it is stated that the disinfected rooms are kept empty for twenty-four hours before accepting new guests (Dedeman Hotels, 2021).

In addition to the similar innovation practices of other hotels, Voyage hotels management also performs air conditioning cleaning on a daily basis and records the room cleaning processes. Moreover, as they stated, check-out rooms are disinfected using ozone generators at first, and then the room is prepared for next guest (Voyage Hotels, 2021). Marriott Hotels&Resorts management has placed disinfecting disposable wipes in guest rooms. They also reported that they applied disinfection with technological electrostatic spraying devices that can clean viruses both on surfaces and in the air (Marriott Hotels & Resorts, 2021). Miracle Hotel management has implemented a cloth coding system during the cleaning process to prevent the risk of cross-contamination during room cleaning (Miracle Hotel, 2021).

By means of contactless transactions mobile application of the hotel that is compatible with android and iphone devices, CitizenM Hotel management provides guests opportunity to remotely check-in and check-out to the hotel, as well as remotely control the room lights, temperature, curtains and blinds in the rooms. With this application, guests can make remotely in-hotel shopping, request services such as extra pillows, bathroom supplies and control all technological devices in the room (CitizenM Hotel, 2021). Similarly, with the digital systems developed for the Hard Rock Hotel, guests can access hotel cleaning applications, menu information from the web portal and TV environments, and also make restaurant reservations through these digital applications (Hard Rock Hotels, 2021).

### 3.4. Common Areas Innovations

During times of pandemic crises, mechanical AI can be used to assist hotel staff in their cleaning, hygiene and sanitation duties. For example, robots can monitor the cleanliness of hotel common areas, corridors and elevators that have high human traffic, and warn the cleaning staff in case of cleaning need (Jiang and Wen, 2020). In addition, during the pandemic process, it will not be possible to immediately disinfect the sports equipment that everyone uses and touches in the hotel gym. Therefore, changeable and single use products such as disposable headgear, cover, etc. will gain importance. Moreover, it would be risky for tourists to enter crowded pools, baths and saunas in terms of hygiene. Accommodation businesses will provide a few smaller pools, baths and saunas for their guests allowing smaller groups or families to use (Kıvılcım, 2020).

Swiss Hotel management states that all surfaces in all common areas and personnel work areas are disinfected using nano-silver technology to prevent virus and bacteria contamination (Swissotel, 2021). Dedeman Hotels management states that they disinfect all their hotels' restaurants and bars, guest rooms, SPA and wet areas, children's clubs and playgrounds, meeting rooms, congress and banquet halls, kitchens, personnel areas, offices, warehouses and all general areas by using materials containing hydrogen peroxide. They also disinfect general areas using fogging machines and ozone devices (Dedeman Hotels, 2021).

Elite World Hotels management states that during the Covid-19 pandemic, they established a special team that called "Elite World CARE (Covid-19 Anti-Risk Team)" including healthcare professionals and food engineers. The task of this team is to implement the "Elite World Hotels Coronavirus Facility Management Practices Regulation" that the business has issued within the scope of the measures determined by the relevant ministries and health institutions (Elite World Hotels, 2021). Hard Rock Hotels management explains that temperature controls are made using infrared thermometers, especially in guest entrance areas. In addition, these measurements are made for both guests, employees and suppliers in all closed areas such as restaurants, SPA, gym and children's area (Hard Rock Hotels, 2021).

### 3.5. Innovations related to Customers and Staff

The management of InterContinental Istanbul Hotel has agreed with a private health institution within the scope of the obligation to test for Covid-19 in Turkey. With this agreement, guests are allowed to give Covid-19 tests within the hotel (Intercontinental Hotels, 2020). Sandıklı Thermal Park Hotel management has announced that they have established an innovative management process, the Covid-19 measures monitoring and implementation board that includes all senior management (Sandıklı Park Hotel, 2021). Accor Hotels management has created the "AllSafe" label that represents the new cleaning hygiene rules and standards. Within the scope of this label, many innovations have been put into practice, from developing digital applications for guests to make contactless transactions to establishing a guest line to answer the guests' questions (Accor Hotels, 2021).

Hyatt Istanbul Hotel management states that employees are obliged to wear masks and visors in common areas, and there is a paid home leave application if employees show signs of illness (Trip Advisor, 2021). The management of Elite World Hotels has created the "EW-CARE" logo to be placed in the areas that indicate compliance with health and hygiene rules within the hotel. The hotel management

demonstrate that they care about the health of their guests and employees through this logo and guarantees health and hygiene standards applied in every area where the logo is placed (Elite World Hotels, 2021). Dedeman Hotels management organizes trainings for all of their employees to be followed the Covid-19 Pandemic preservation rules and regularly controls their staff. In addition, regular temperature measurements are made, and in case of any employees with signs of illness, the employee is sent away from the business by giving a paid home leave (Dedeman Hotels, 2021).

#### **4. Conclusion**

Innovation is an important way of gaining competitive advantage for accommodation businesses, enables to differentiate from competitors and especially in times of crisis supports existence of the business. In the beginning of the 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was declared as a global epidemic in the world and hospitality sector has faced an economic crisis like most of other sectors. In order to survive in the pandemic environment, to cope with crises and to be preferred more than their competitors, accommodation businesses had to follow actual innovations and adopt them quickly.

In this study, innovations developed and/or adopted in accommodation businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic process were examined. As a result of the study, it can be said that during the Covid-19 pandemic process, especially technological and digital innovations are mostly adopted by accommodation businesses. According to the given literature and examined hotel web pages, it is obvious that traditional hotel transaction processes have been altered that check-in and check-out processes in accommodation businesses are now contactless through technology. Considering the Covid-19 measures, innovative accommodation businesses have reorganized their guest services, and adopted more individualized technological innovations. It is understood that digital applications and contactless practices that limit relationships and face-to-face contact with guests have gain highly importance.

Cleaning and hygiene practices during the pandemic period in accommodation businesses is the most important issue. As it is not known how long the pandemic will continue, these innovations are expected to become more widespread and adopted extensively by accommodation businesses. Businesses care about the health of their guests are now measuring the temperature of their guests, employees and suppliers with technological products, and disinfecting guest rooms, general areas and personnel usage areas. In addition, practices such as new restaurant services that reduce physical contact with customers, the obligation to wear masks, gloves and visors also emphasize the change in service processes. It seems that online reservations, online check-in and check-out, and digital menus that require less physical contact, will continue to be used for a longer period of time, instead of traditional close contact services.

In this study, innovation practices of accommodation businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic period were examined within some limitations. Some of the information presented in this study is limited as detailed information is not available on the websites of the hotels. In addition, it is accepted that the information regarding the new applications shared by the hotels on their websites is correct and applied. The same subject can be examined as a field study in accommodation businesses in future studies. In addition, new studies can be conducted on the positive-negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on employees and/or management. The Covid-19 pandemic is

an unpredictable process. Therefore, the long-term effects of this process in the context of innovation can be evaluated.

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