

Financial Challenges of Small and Medium-Sized Hotel Enterprises in Şanlıurfa: An Empirical Study*

Mehmet BEYAZGÜL, Harran University, Tourism Faculty, Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, mehmetbeyazgul@harran.edu.tr, Şanlıurfa, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0002-3139-4351

Abstract

Financial sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is a critical component of sustainable tourism development, particularly in emerging tourism destinations. However, SMEs in the hotel sector often face significant financial challenges. This study aims to investigate the financial problems encountered by SME hotels in Şanlıurfa and propose potential solutions to these problems. A structured questionnaire was administered to 42 business owners and managers to assess their perceptions of various financial issues, the use of external financing, access to bank loans, and financial planning habits. The findings reveal high interest rates, foreign exchange rate fluctuations, lack of equity capital, and difficulties in obtaining credit are the most critical financial challenges faced by these companies. In addition, bank loans are the predominant external financing instrument, with a strong preference for short-term credit. Key obstacles to effective bank loan utilization include a lack of transparency, insufficient financial knowledge, and deficiencies in financial documentation. The study suggests that public support should be strengthened to improve financial literacy and planning among SME hotels, offering valuable insights for industry and literature in advancing sustainable tourism.

Keywords: *Small and medium-sized enterprises, Financial challenges, Hotel companies, Tourism sector, Şanlıurfa*

* In the article, the Ethics Committee Approval required for the data collection phase is arranged with the Social and Human Sciences at Harran University with decision number 67 and dated February 17, 2025 (Session No: 2).

1. Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a key role in the development of economies globally. They are considered the backbone of almost any national economy because they provide jobs, create value via innovation, and diversify economies. These characteristics also strengthen their central role within economic structures.

In Türkiye, enterprises with less than 50 employees and net sales revenue or total assets that do not exceed 100 million Turkish Lira are defined as small enterprises. Enterprises with less than 250 employees and net sales revenue or total assets that do not exceed 1 billion Turkish Lira are described as medium-scale enterprises (KOSGEB, 2025). According to the World Bank statistics of 2025, SMEs make up about 90% of all enterprises in the world and contribute more than 50 percent of total employment. However, the March 2025 report by the IFC-World Bank on the SME Finance Gap stated that 119 developing countries face a huge funding gap of roughly 5.7 trillion USD. Meanwhile, even when credit supply rose by 7 per cent from 2015 to 2019, the SME finance gap grew annually at over 6 per cent (World Bank, 2025).

Hotel companies in the tourism sector generally fall within the SME category and are important developers of regional tourism. However, SMEs are plagued by several structural and external complications. Foremost among these are access to finance at high-interest rates with volatile currencies, strict credit conditions, and steep operating costs due to very complicated regulatory frameworks. These factors, in addition to others, may prevent growth and affect their viability as companies. Other elements that make them highly vulnerable in the financial system include a high perceived risk profile, insufficient collateral, and a lack of transparent and systematic financial reporting.

Şanlıurfa is widely recognized for its strong tourism potential stemming from its rich cultural and historical heritage, including its status as one of the world's oldest settlement areas and its diverse religious and archaeological assets (Kürkçüoğlu & Erkol, 2013; Birinci, Kaymaz & Camcı, 2018). Despite this significant potential, transforming tourism resources into sustainable economic value at the level of local accommodation enterprises remains a major challenge. According to the Şanlıurfa Tourism Master Plan, financial difficulties constitute a key factor limiting the capacity and development of accommodation infrastructure, which represents the backbone of tourism growth in the city (Karacadağ Kalkınma Ajansı, 2018).

Therefore, the main objective of this study was to determine the financial challenges SME-scale hotel companies face in the center of Şanlıurfa and to propose practical solutions. In this respect, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the main financial issues hotel companies face?
- What is the level of access to external financing, and which financial instruments are preferred by companies?
- What are the main obstacles to using bank loans?
- What is the extent of financial planning habits among these companies?

The research questions were developed based on a comprehensive review of the existing national and international literature addressing financial challenges in SME tourism enterprises (Karadeniz et al., 2018; Uygurtürk & Çetinkaya, 2019; Göktepe, 2022). In addition, the questionnaire structure and research focus were shaped by adapting measurement items used in prior empirical studies. To enhance content validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by two academics specializing in tourism finance. Their feedback was incorporated before finalizing the instrument.

This study contributes to the literature by providing region-specific empirical evidence on the financial challenges of SME accommodation enterprises in an emerging tourism destination. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on more developed tourism regions, this research highlights the structural financial constraints faced by hotels operating in a developing urban context. The study adopts a survey-based quantitative approach and analyzes data collected from 42 SME hotel owners and managers in Şanlıurfa. While the findings offer valuable regional insights, the study is limited to accommodation enterprises

located in the city center and relies on self-reported perceptions. Nevertheless, it provides important implications for tourism policymakers and sectoral stakeholders seeking to strengthen financial sustainability in regional tourism markets.

The second part reviews literature related to the subject. The third section involves the data collection and methodology used in the research. The research findings are presented in the fourth section, followed by a conclusion that presents evaluations and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

SMEs are key players of national and regional economies, and they play an influential role through the generation of employment, innovation, and sectoral diversification. In the tourism industry, and specifically the accommodation sector, SMEs are, in most cases, key drivers of local growth. Despite their core role, these enterprises are consistently challenged by numerous financial constraints, which threaten their sustainability and expansion. Literature, both domestic and foreign, gives detailed information on the nature of the constraints and the possible means of overcoming the same.

Early studies of the Turkish situation largely focused on the broad financial structure of SMEs and their difficulties related to capital build-up and strategic planning. Akkaya & İçerli (2001) emphasized the potential role of venture capital funding in helping Turkish SMEs offset chronic capital deficiencies but noted the early stage of this form of financing. Ceylan & İlban (2005), by means of an empirical survey of the situation in Balıkesir, revealed key structural flaws of hotel enterprises, including insufficient liquidity, the maturity of short-term, high-interest loans, and ineffective budgetary processes. Correspondingly, Çetin & Bitrak (2009) revealed investment budgeting and working capital management shortcomings of SMEs surveyed in Antalya, pointing to the tendencies of these enterprises to abandon long-term perspectives and adopt short-term financial reaction modes. These insights were shared by Yılmaz (2007), conducting the comparative analysis of tourist SMEs of Bodrum, where the latter established the role of seasonality in increasing financial vulnerability by comparison with the results of other industries.

During the 2010s, Met et al. (2013) examined the financing of hotel modernization investments in Marmaris and found alarming reliance on bank loans, where higher interest rates and strict collateral demands presented major difficulties. Karadeniz et al. (2015) conducted an empirical study in Van and noted, inter alia, that SMEs in the tourism industry experienced cash flow abnormalities, weakly developed financial planning approaches, and inadequate equity capital. Karadeniz et al. (2018), through a similar study conducted in Kars and Erzurum, confirmed these findings, further observing that external exchange rate volatility and banking regulations added financial vulnerability. These results, together, pointed towards a repetitive phenomenon of systemic financial difficulties facing regional tourism SMEs, and most prominently so, in less developed provinces.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in examining the structural relationship between SMEs and the banking sector. Uygurtürk & Çetinkaya (2019), in their investigation carried out in Safranbolu, noted that small hotel companies exhibited deficiencies in their cost control mechanisms and primarily depended on short-term borrowing. Göktepe (2022) corroborated these observations, underscoring that insufficient credit ratings and subpar financial statements restricted these companies' opportunities for accessing institutional financing. Karadeniz & Hıdır (2022) performed an analysis of the credit structure, revealing that SMEs within the accommodation industry obtain merely a minor proportion of the overall credit volume disbursed by Turkish banks, predominantly owing to their perceived high risk and insufficient collateral.

Global literature captures these themes, particularly within developing economic contexts, emphasizing structural financial constraints such as limited access to formal credit, insufficient collateral, seasonal cash flow volatility, and weak financial documentation. Petrevska and Serafimova (2016) argue that policy frameworks aimed at fostering tourism entrepreneurship should prioritize financial literacy programs and institutional mechanisms that facilitate access to credit. Similarly, O'Rourke (2009) highlights that micro

and small tourism enterprises frequently resort to non-bank financial intermediaries due to distrust in formal banking systems or difficulties in meeting conventional lending requirements. Motta and Sharma (2020) further extend this discussion by demonstrating how fintech-driven credit scoring and digital lending technologies may reduce information asymmetries and expand financial inclusion in the hospitality sector, although persistent data limitations and inadequate financial reporting practices remain major barriers. Within their extensive review spanning the years 2017-2021, Ramli et al. (2022) identified five enduring financial challenges faced by tourism SMEs internationally: insufficient personal capital, insufficient collateral, seasonal cash flow volatility, reduced confidence towards financial institutions, and inadequate public support systems.

When compared with the Turkish literature, notable parallels emerge. Like international findings, studies conducted in Türkiye consistently underline short-term borrowing patterns, limited equity capital, weak financial planning practices, and difficulties in accessing bank credit (Karadeniz et al., 2018; Uygurtürk & Çetinkaya, 2019; Göktepe, 2022). However, unlike some international contexts where fintech solutions are increasingly integrated into SME financing ecosystems, the Turkish literature largely emphasizes structural banking constraints and traditional financing limitations rather than digital financial inclusion mechanisms. This comparison indicates that while financial vulnerability is a common phenomenon across developing tourism economies, the institutional and technological responses may differ significantly across national contexts.

3. Data and Methodology

This study was conducted to identify the financial problems faced by accommodation enterprises with SME status operating in the city center of Şanlıurfa and to propose potential solutions. In this context, a quantitative research approach was adopted, and data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The survey instrument was developed by compiling items from previous relevant studies (Karadeniz et al., 2018; Uygurtürk & Çetinkaya, 2019) and was applied to business owners and managers to assess the financial challenges of these accommodation enterprises. The questionnaire included five main sections: company characteristics (type, legal status, years of operation, number of employees), respondent profile, financial challenges, use of external financing and bank loans, and financial planning practices. Financial challenges included insufficient equity capital, high interest rates, and exchange rate volatility. Participants evaluated the severity of these problems using a 5-point Likert scale, enabling the study to identify the most critical financial issues facing the hotels. Since the study primarily employs descriptive statistics and focuses on perception-based evaluation, reliability was supported through the use of established measurement items in the literature and expert review before implementation.

The study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences at Harran University, under the decision number 2025/67 dated February 17, 2025 (Session No: 2). All participants signed informed consent forms, and their identities were kept confidential in accordance with personal data protection protocols.

According to 2025 data from the Şanlıurfa Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, there were a total of 73 accommodation enterprises operating in the city center. Among these, 23 had a tourism operation license, 13 were municipally licensed hotels, and 37 were boutique hotels. Since the research focused on SMEs, five large-scale hotels were excluded from the study. After these exclusions, the remaining 68 SME-status accommodation enterprises constituted the study population. Since the study aimed to reach all SME accommodation enterprises operating in the city center, a census method was adopted. Census sampling is appropriate when the population size is relatively small and accessible (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, due to various constraints such as limited access, time restrictions, and participant refusal, data could not be collected from 16 establishments. Consequently, the survey was completed with 42 hotels.

Data collection was carried out between February 25 and May 30, 2025. The questionnaires were administered through face-to-face interviews and, in some cases, via online forms. The participants included business owners, general managers, finance managers, and other senior executives. The collected data were analyzed using frequency analysis.

4. Findings

This section presents the analysis results of data collected from SME accommodation establishments operating in the Şanlıurfa city center. The data collected within the scope of the research was obtained through a survey conducted by business owners or managers. The findings begin with the demographic characteristics of the participants and general characteristics of the company, followed by an evaluation of the significance of financial problems, the use of external financing sources, access to credit, and financial planning practices. The analysis results are summarized using descriptive statistics. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics related to the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the general features of the participating hotel companies.

Table 1. Participant Profile and Company Characteristics

Company Attribute	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Hotel type	Tourism operation licensed	15	35.7
	Municipality licensed	11	26.2
	Boutique hotel	16	38.1
	Total	42	100
Years in operation	1-5	3	7.1
	6-10	18	42.9
	11-15	7	16.7
	16 and above	14	33.3
	Total	42	100
Number of employees	1-9	23	54.8
	10-49	15	35.7
	50-250	4	9.5
	Total	42	100
Position in the company	Owner	22	52.4
	General manager	15	35.7
	Finance manager	3	7.1
	Other	2	4.8
	Total	42	100

Source: Prepared by the author.

Among the 42 companies surveyed, 38.1% were boutique hotels, 35.7% had tourism operation licenses, and 26.2% held municipal licenses. These figures suggest that boutique hotels constitute a significant portion of the accommodation sector in Şanlıurfa.

In terms of operational longevity, 42.9% of the companies had been operating for 6–10 years, while 33.3% had been in company for over 15 years. Only 7.1% were relatively new, with 1–5 years of activity. These results demonstrate that most companies on the sample possess considerable experience in the tourism sector.

When examining company size based on employee numbers, 54.8% of the enterprises had 1–9 employees, 35.7% employed between 10–49 individuals, and just 9.5% had 50–250 employees. This confirms that most companies included in the study fall under the “small-scale” SME category, consistent with the intended scope of the research.

As for the respondents’ positions within their companies, 52.4% were owners, 35.7% were general managers, 7.1% were financial managers, and 4.8% held other managerial roles. The high representation

of owners and senior-level decision-makers among the participants adds credibility to the data collected, as it reflects informed perspectives on the financial conditions of their enterprises.

Table 2 presents the participants' evaluations regarding the severity of various financial problems encountered by SME hotel companies in Şanlıurfa. Participants rated the significance of each issue on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important). The results indicate that all listed problems were perceived as either "important" or "very important," suggesting a high level of financial pressure across multiple dimensions.

Table 2. Perceived Importance of Financial Challenges

Financial Challenges	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation	Importance
High interest rates	3	5	4.57	0.703	Very important
Foreign exchange rate fluctuations	3	5	4.52	0.634	Very important
Lack of equity capital	2	5	4.40	0.701	Important
Difficulties in obtaining credit	2	5	4.33	0.754	Important
Insufficient working capital	2	5	4.26	0.798	Important
High energy costs	2	5	4.19	0.773	Important
High tax rates	1	5	4.12	0.832	Important
Cash flow imbalance	1	5	4.05	0.962	Important

Source: Prepared by the author.

Among the listed financial challenges, high interest rates emerged as the most critical issue, with a mean score of 4.57 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.703, indicating strong agreement among respondents. Similarly, foreign exchange rate fluctuations were rated with a high average of 4.52, highlighting the sensitivity of local hotel companies to macroeconomic volatility.

The lack of equity capital (mean = 4.40) and difficulties in obtaining credit (mean = 4.33) were also identified as key issues, underscoring the structural limitations SMEs face in terms of both internal and external financing. These findings align with broader literature that suggest SMEs often struggle with limited access to credit due to weak collateral and credit histories.

Operational concerns were also noted. Insufficient working capital (mean = 4.26), high energy costs (mean = 4.19), and high tax rates (mean = 4.12) were considered important constraints affecting business sustainability. These areas suggest a burden of fixed and variable costs that compromise profitability, particularly for small-scale, labor-intensive operations such as boutique hotels and family-run establishments.

Finally, cash flow imbalance was rated with the lowest mean score (4.05) among the listed items but still fell within the "important" category. This may reflect ongoing challenges in managing receivables and payables, especially in a sector affected by seasonal demand fluctuations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that financial constraints among SME hotel companies are multifaceted and interconnected. The prominence of external financing conditions (e.g., interest rates, currency risk, credit access) alongside internal operational limitations (e.g., equity and liquidity issues) points to a need for both macroeconomic stability and micro-level capacity-building interventions.

Table 3. Use of External Financing Instruments

Financing Instrument	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bank loans	3	5	4.50	0.595
Trade credit	1	5	3.21	0.898
Leasing (Financial leasing)	1	4	2.86	0.843
Factoring	1	3	2.05	0.731
Venture capital	1	3	1.83	0.696
Barter	1	3	1.74	0.544

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 3 outlines the average importance ratings attributed to various external financing instruments by SME hotel companies in Şanlıurfa. Participants were asked to rate each instrument on a Likert scale from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important), reflecting their perceived relevance and frequency of use.

The results clearly show that bank loans are by far the most widely utilized and valued financing instrument among the companies surveyed, with a mean score of 4.50 and a low standard deviation (SD = 0.595), suggesting a high level of consensus across participants. This finding supports the broader literature indicating that conventional banking services remain the primary external funding source for SMEs in the hospitality sector.

Following bank loans, trade credit was the second preferred financing tool, receiving a mean score of 3.21. However, the relatively higher standard deviation (SD = 0.898) indicates varying levels of dependence or perceived usefulness among companies. This divergence may reflect differences in supplier relationships, negotiation power, or payment terms across the sample.

In contrast, alternative financing methods such as leasing (mean = 2.86), factoring (mean = 2.05), venture capital (mean = 1.83), and barter (mean = 1.74) received significantly lower ratings. These results suggest that such instruments are either underutilized, not well understood, or inaccessible to SMEs operating in the regional accommodation sector. The relatively low variability in responses for these options (e.g., barter SD = 0.544) further implies a consensus regarding their limited relevance or applicability.

Taken together, the findings underscore the dependence of SMEs on bank-centered financing while also revealing a lack of diversification in the external funding landscape. The relatively lower mean scores for trade credit (3.21) and leasing (2.86) suggest that alternative financing mechanisms are either underutilized or not perceived as sufficiently accessible or effective by SME hotels in the region. This may reflect limited awareness of diversified financing instruments or institutional constraints that restrict their practical application. The heavy reliance on bank loans indicates a concentrated financing structure, which may increase vulnerability to macroeconomic fluctuations and tightening credit conditions.

Table 4. Bank credit usage

Credit Usage Question	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you use bank credit?	Yes	29	69
	No	13	31
	Total	42	100
Preferred loan term?	Short-Term (up to 1 year)	25	60
	Medium-Term (1–3 years)	13	31
	Long-Term (more than 3 years)	4	9
	Total	42	100

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 4 presents the findings related to the use of bank credit among the SME hotel companies surveyed. The results show that most of the companies (69%) reported using bank credit, while 31% indicated that they do not currently utilize credit financing. This finding is consistent with earlier results in the study, where bank loans were identified as the most preferred and accessible external financing instrument.

Among those that do utilize bank credit, the majority prefer short-term loans. Specifically, 60% of respondents indicated that they use short-term credit instruments (up to one year), followed by 31% who prefer medium-term loans (1–3 years), and only 9% who reported using long-term loans (more than 3 years).

This distribution suggests a strong reliance on short-term borrowing, which is a common trend among SMEs, particularly in the hospitality sector. The tendency to favor short maturities may be explained by several factors, including the seasonal nature of tourism revenues, uncertainty in future cash flows, or challenges in meeting long-term collateral or documentation requirements.

Moreover, the limited use of long-term credit may reflect structural issues in the relationship between SMEs and financial institutions, such as high interest rates, restrictive lending policies, and insufficient financial documentation factors already highlighted in previous sections of this study.

In sum, while the use of bank credit is relatively widespread, overdependence on short-term instruments may pose risks for liquidity management and long-term financial planning. These results underscore the need for more accessible, flexible, and tailored credit solutions that align with the operational realities of tourism-related SMEs in developing regions like Şanlıurfa.

Table 5. Constraints encountered in bank loan usage

Rank	Problem	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Collateral difficulties	1.52	0.773
2	High interest rates	2.12	0.861
3	Short maturities	2.88	0.968
4	Negative credit history	3.65	0.773
5	Lack of equity capital	4.70	0.828
6	Lengthy bureaucratic procedures	5.58	0.671
7	Deficiencies in financial statements	6.66	0.703
8	Lack of financial knowledge	7.52	0.741
9	Lack of transparency	8.58	0.682

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 5 presents the participants' evaluations of common constraints faced during bank loan usage. The responses were measured on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = not important, 9 = very important), and mean scores and standard deviations were calculated accordingly.

The data reveal that the most significant constraints encountered by hotel enterprises is "lack of transparency" (M = 8.58, SD = 0.682), followed closely by "lack of information" (M = 7.52, SD = 0.741). These two issues indicate critical deficiencies in the clarity and accessibility of financial processes, as perceived by participants.

Another notable issue is "deficiencies in financial statements" (M = 6.66, SD = 0.703), suggesting that many companies may not maintain adequate or accurate financial documentation—a crucial requirement for obtaining loans. Additionally, "lengthy bureaucratic procedures" (M = 5.58, SD = 0.671) were highlighted, emphasizing administrative inefficiencies that may discourage companies from seeking bank financing.

Other moderate-level problems include "lack of equity capital" (M = 4.70, SD = 0.828) and "negative commercial history" (M = 3.65, SD = 0.773), which may hinder credit eligibility due to poor financial reputation or insufficient internal resources.

Conversely, the relatively low mean scores for "short loan maturities" (M = 2.88, SD = 0.968), "high interest rates" (M = 2.12, SD = 0.861), and particularly "collateral difficulties" (M = 1.52, SD = 0.773) indicate that these were not regarded as major barriers by most respondents in the sample.

The prominence of issues such as lack of transparency, insufficient financial knowledge, and deficiencies in financial documentation suggests that internal managerial limitations play a more decisive role than external credit conditions in restricting effective loan utilization. These findings indicate a structural gap in financial literacy and institutional capacity among SME hotel operators. In sectoral terms, such deficiencies may weaken negotiation power vis-à-vis financial institutions and limit long-term investment capacity, thereby constraining the financial sustainability of the regional accommodation sector.

The findings indicate that a significant portion of the companies surveyed engage in financial planning practices. Specifically, 62% of the respondents (n=26) reported that they actively perform financial planning, while 38% (n=16) stated that they do not engage in such practices. This suggests a moderately level of financial consciousness among small and medium-sized accommodation enterprises in Şanlıurfa.

Table 6. Financial Planning Habits

Financial Planning Status	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you engage in financial planning?	Yes	26	62
	No	16	38
	Total	42	100
What type of financial planning do you do?	Short-Term	23	55
	Medium-Term	12	29
	Medium and Long-Term	7	16
	Total	42	100

Source: Prepared by the author.

When examining the time horizon of financial planning, most respondents (55%, n=23) indicated a preference for short-term planning, typically covering periods of up to one year. This may reflect the reactive and risk-averse strategies commonly adopted by SMEs operating in uncertain economic environments. In contrast, 29% of the respondents (n=12) reported medium-term planning practices (1–3 years), while only 16% (n=7) conducted long-term or combined medium-to-long-term planning. The relatively low proportion of companies adopting a long-term financial outlook may imply limitations in forecasting capacity, lack of financial expertise, or a challenging operating environment that discourages extended planning.

Overall, these findings point to the need for enhancing strategic financial planning capabilities in the regional accommodation sector. The predominance of short-term financial planning reflects a reactive management culture shaped by uncertainty and liquidity constraints. While short-term planning may support operational survival, the absence of long-term financial strategy may hinder investment decisions, innovation, and competitive positioning in the tourism market. This structural short-termism may ultimately undermine the resilience of SME hotels in the face of economic shocks. Future training or policy initiatives could target the promotion of medium- and long-term planning competencies among SME owners and managers to foster sustainable financial practices.

5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This study was conducted to identify the financial problems faced by SME hotel companies operating in the Şanlıurfa city center, and it also provided possible policy and sectoral recommendations based on empirical evidence. The results show that the most critical challenges facing these companies are high interest rates, foreign exchange volatility, lack of equity capital, and difficulties in accessing bank loans. Beyond that, the respondents appeared highly reliant on short-term credit and conventional bank loans, with low diversification toward other sources, such as leasing or factoring. At a broader level, persistent financial constraints among SME hotels may have significant sectoral and macroeconomic implications. Limited access to long-term financing and weak financial planning capacity can restrict investment, modernization, and service quality improvements, thereby reducing regional competitiveness in the tourism market. Moreover, concentrating on short-term bank loans may increase vulnerability to interest rate fluctuations and macroeconomic instability. In the long run, such structural fragilities may hinder employment generation, tax revenues, and the overall contribution of tourism to regional economic development.

These results are consistent with those of existing literature. For instance, Karadeniz et al. (2018) and Göktepe (2022) pointed to issues of access to credit and poor financial record-keeping among SMEs in the accommodation sector. Uygurtürk & Çetinkaya (2019) similarly reported a predominance of short-term borrowing and an underdeveloped financial planning approach, reflecting the evidence of short-termism. However, the findings of this study differ in some key respects. For example, while earlier literature, such as Met et al. (2013), discussed the challenge of high collateral requirements, the present study suggests that collateral problems were not seen as one of the most significant constraints by participants, either because banking practices have changed or firms have become more familiar with the conditions

surrounding short-term credit. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing tourism destination that has received limited academic attention compared to more established tourism regions in Türkiye. While previous research has predominantly focused on larger metropolitan or mature tourism markets, this study highlights the structural financial constraints faced by SME hotels operating in a culturally rich but economically transitioning urban context. In doing so, it addresses a regional research gap and extends the understanding of financial sustainability challenges in emerging tourism cities.

The findings of this study are particularly valuable to tourism policymakers, academics, and practitioners as they provide evidence-based insights into the financial positions of small hospitality firms in a developing region.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for targeted financial literacy programs specifically designed for SME hotel operators, focusing on financial reporting, credit negotiation, and long-term planning skills. Public institutions, development agencies, and local tourism authorities could collaborate with financial institutions to establish advisory support units or sector-specific financial consultancy services. Furthermore, credit guarantee schemes and flexible loan structures tailored to the seasonal revenue patterns of tourism enterprises may enhance financial resilience. Encouraging digital financial tools and simplified documentation processes could also reduce structural barriers to credit access.

These findings can inform the development of future financial literacy programs, encourage the design of more inclusive credit products responsive to the seasonal and liquidity-sensitive nature of tourism companies, and support public initiatives aimed at reducing administrative barriers and improving overall transparency in the financial system. While this study contributes to the understanding of the financial issues and behaviors of SME accommodation operators in Şanlıurfa, much remains to be explored. This research was based on a relatively limited sample of enterprises in a single urban context; thus, its findings may not be fully representative of the diverse financial realities across different tourism regions and models of hospitality business operations. Therefore, future research is encouraged, with particular emphasis on comparative regional research, the role of digital financial technologies such as fintech, and longitudinal assessments of financial planning behavior within the context of post-pandemic recovery.

Acknowledgement and info

Support Info: No aid/support, in kind or in cash, was received from any individual or institution during the preparation of this article.

Ethical Approval: The article complies with national and international research and publication ethics. Otherwise, *GSI Journals Serie A: Advancements in Tourism Recreation and Sports Sciences Journal* has no responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the article authors.

Ethics Committee Approval: In the article, the Ethics Committee Approval required for the data collection phase is arranged with the Social and Human Sciences at Harran University with decision number 67 and dated February 17, 2025 (Session No: 2).

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest or gain in the article.

Contribution Rate of Researchers: The study was prepared with the contribution of one author. Contribution rates; 1. Author = 100%

References

- Akkaya, G. C., & İçerli, M. Y. (2001). KOBİ'lerin finansal problemlerinin çözümünde risk sermayesi finansman modeli. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 3(3), 61-70. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12397/5416>
- Birinci, S., Kaymaz, Ç. K., & Camcı, A. (2018). Göbekli Tepe'nin arkeolojik turizm potansiyelinin değerlendirilmesi (Şanlıurfa). *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 22(3), 1351-1367. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://izlik.org/JA69WZ42FA>
- Ceylan, A., & İlban, M. O. (2005). Otel işletmelerinin finansal sorunları: Balıkesir ilinde bir alan araştırması. *Seyahat ve Otel İşletmeciliği Dergisi*, 2(1), 12-18. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://izlik.org/JA59BM64CM>
- Çetin, A. C., & Bıtrak, İ. A. (2009). Antalya ili küçük ve orta ölçekli işletmelerinde finansal yönetim, işletme sermayesi ve yatırım bütçelemesi uygulamaları. *Uluslararası Alanya İşletme Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1(1), 119-137. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://izlik.org/JA24YT75RK>
- Göktepe, S. (2022). Küçük ve orta ölçekli otel işletmelerinin karşılaştıkları sorun ve engeller üzerine bir çalışma. *Electronic Turkish Studies*, 17(5). 1055-1072. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7827/TurkishStudies.62020>
- Karacadağ Kalkınma Ajansı, (2018). Sürdürülebilir Turizm Politikası ve stratejik Eylem Çerçevesi, Şanlıurfa Turizm Master Planı 2019-2023, *Vizyon 2030*, Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://sanliurfa.ktb.gov.tr/Eklenti/120050,00-sanliurfa-turizm-master-plani-v2-2019-2023-vizyon-20-.pdf?0>
- Karadeniz, E., & Hıdır, E. (2022). Türk bankacılık sektörünün konaklama şirketlerine sunduğu kredilerin analizi. *Çatalhöyük Uluslararası Turizm ve Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, (9), 28-43. <https://doi.org/10.58455/cutsad.1183478>
- Karadeniz, E., Koşan, L., & Geçgin, E. (2018). Kobi kapsamındaki otel işletmelerinin finansal sorunları: Kars ve Erzurum illerinde bir araştırma. *Seyahat ve Otel İşletmeciliği Dergisi*, 15(2), 302-319. <https://doi.org/10.24010/soid.453163>
- Karadeniz, E., Unur, K., Köşker, H., & Zencir, B. (2015). Van ilinde faaliyet gösteren kobi statüsündeki konaklama ve seyahat işletmelerinin finansal sorunlarının analizi. *Çukurova Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 24(1), 85-98. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://izlik.org/JA84SC73MS>
- KOSGEB, (2025). KOBİ tanımı güncellendi: Daha fazla işletme kamu desteklerinden yararlanabilecek. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://www.kosgeb.gov.tr/site/tr/genel/detay/9276/kobi-tanimi-guncellendi-daha-fazla-isletme-kamu-desteklerinden-yararlanabilecek>
- Kürkçüoğlu, S.S., & Erkol, G (2013). Şanlıurfa kültür ve inanç turizm potansiyelinin değerlendirilmesi, Kar, M. (Editör). *Uluslararası İnanç Turizmi ve Hoşgörü Konferansı*, Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, Konya. 795-813.
- Met, Ö., Özdemir, İ., & Erdem, B. (2013). Otel sektöründe yenileme yatırımlarının finansmanı: Marmaris'te bir araştırma. *Sosyoekonomi*, 19(19), 264-276. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://izlik.org/JA83YZ55ZN>
- Motta, V., & Sharma, A. (2020). Lending technologies and access to finance for SMEs in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 86, 102371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102371>
- O'Rourke, T. (2009). Access to finance: delivery structures and the problems faced by micro and small tourism entrepreneurs. In J. Ateljevic and S. Page (Eds) *Tourism and Entrepreneurship: International perspectives*. Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann: 301-311.
- Petrevska, B., & Serafimova, M. (2016). Assessing access to finance for tourism development: Entrepreneurial approach. *International Journal of Information, Business and Management*, 8(1), 35-45. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://eprints.ugd.edu.mk/id/eprint/14220>
- Ramli, A. M., Asby, P. N. K., Noor, H. M., & Afrizal, T. (2022). Challenges encountered by SMEs in tourism industry: A review from 2017 to 2021. *Journal of ASIAN Behavioural Studies*, 7(21), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.21834/jabs.v7i21.405>

Beyazgöl, M. (2026). Financial Challenges of Small and Medium-Sized Hotel Enterprises in Şanlıurfa: An Empirical Study. *GSI Journals Serie A: Advancements in Tourism, Recreation and Sports Sciences (ATRSS)*, 9 (1): 511-522

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research method for business: A skill building approach*. Hichester : John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Uygurtürk, H., & Çetinkaya, C. (2019). Safranbolu ilçesindeki konaklama işletmelerinin finansal sorunları üzerine bir araştırma. *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokulu Dergisi*, 22(2), 758-773. <https://doi.org/10.29249/selcuksbmyd.566061>

Worldbank, (2025). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Finance, Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/smefinance>

Yılmaz, H. (2007). Turizm sektörü kobilerinin finansman sorunlarının diğer sektörlerle karşılaştırmalı analizi: Bodrum örneği. *Muhasebe ve Finansman Dergisi*, (33), 162-170. Retrieved February 26, 2026, from <https://izlik.org/IA93WM62TS>



All articles published in this journal are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license permits the copying, distribution, and reuse of the published articles (the work) for non-commercial purposes, provided that appropriate credit is given. Commercial use is subject to permission. Authors retain the copyright of their published articles and grant the journal a non-exclusive right to publish and distribute the work.