

Managing Crisis in the Tourism Industry: How Pessimism Has Changed to Optimism?

Abstract

This study aims to investigate how the coronavirus has resulted in harmful effects on the tourism industry and how it has most likely shaken the common traditional practices that the industry had followed for years. With a chronological order, this is a case study focusing on personal observations and also personal communication with hoteliers and retailers commencing from the early weeks to the end of 2020 in Turkey. The study has resulted in the categorization of risks, challenges and responses under 10 parts. The study also provides implications for the literature and the industry at the business and destination level altogether.

Keywords: crisis management, disaster management, impact analysis, coronavirus, Turkey

1. Introduction

The butterfly effect, postulated by Lorenz (1963), states that the results of one minor change in one place may be observed with much bigger unexpected impacts on other places. As such, since its occurrence, the outbreak of coronavirus has had a substantial influence on the regular lifestyle of people, economic sectors, and governmental bodies both on a national and global scale. Thus, its economic, social, and psychological effects need to be seriously taken into consideration while developing new effective strategies and practices for the restoration of all parties affected. In a specific reference to the tourism industry, its impacts are also immense from both the supply and demand sides (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020; Ying et al., 2021). For instance, all parties of the tourism industry have had a break in their operations by thinking about different ways of how to respond to such un/official adjustments relating to their service design, in which the safety of customers has become a central issue in managing and marketing of hospitality operations. Despite the risk of such uncertainties in many respects such as psychological, social, and economic, tour operators were among those businesses that decided to sell package tours; hospitality businesses opened their doors in the middle of the summer season of 2020 at least to survive but not being able to maintain a full recovery.

Shortly after the coronavirus appeared, the academic community also started giving a direct response to its in/direct consequences on human beings in various ways by joining their efforts in carrying out empirical studies and sharing their short-term estimations. To date, the tourism literature has also published hundreds of journal articles, mostly with conceptual design with critical commentaries and/or using quantitative methods, despite earlier studies on other forms of crisis management being more qualitative-driven, including case studies (Ritchie & Jiang, 2019). The consideration of managerial perspectives is also useful in developing stronger and more substantial theoretical and practical implications. As such, the literature lacks a critical and continuous investigation of its direct impacts on the tourism industry by looking at the facts in practice for the 12 consecutive months in a whole year.

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As a result, this study aims to fill the gap in how the coronavirus has resulted in harmful effects on the management and marketing of hospitality operations and how it has likely shaken the common traditional practices that the industry had followed for years. It also suggests using all forms of benchmarking to benefit from the lessons learned and best practices applied. The study is based on the first author's observations within a particular hospitality business and personal communication with other hoteliers and retailers operating in Bodrum, an important tourism destination in Turkey, commencing from the early weeks of 2020 to the end of the year.

2. Literature review

As individuals or businesses, we occasionally face unpredictable situations that result in varying degrees of impact in the end. In such cases, as Lorenz (1963) postulated, chaos theory tries to understand how simple systems may change in a sudden, unexpected, or irregular way (Warren, 2021). Lorenz also supports this theory with the butterfly effect, stating that any simple change in one place may lead to much more impactful outcomes in other places. In the tourism context, such a change may create a chaotic system that in/directly leads to re-establishing stability and order in the distribution, management, or service delivery systems, e.g., applying online selling and cost-reduction strategies, delivering restricted services due to social distancing, among others (Altınay & Kozak, 2021). Due to its unpredictable structure, the literature also suggests that chaos theory may be of help for the tourism industry to provide insights in establishing crisis management strategies. For instance, Speakman and Sharpley (2012) emphasized how Mexico benefited from applying chaos theory in responding to the AH1N1 crisis almost a decade ago.

Globally speaking, with its fragile structure, the tourism industry has been easily influenced by the occurrence of various external factors such as natural disasters (e.g., Huang & Min, 2002; Rittichainuwat, 2013), terrorism (e.g., Liu & Pratt, 2017; Seabra, Reis & Abrantes, 2020), political unrest (e.g., Lanouar & Goaid, 2019), and financial shocks (Alonso-Almedia & Bremser, 2013), among others. Unlike other crises, the sudden emergence of coronavirus has become the main generator of a global economic crisis, including the international tourism industry (e.g., Gössling et al., 2020). With its longest-standing effect, COVID-19 has broken its record as the most influential disaster having a negative impact on the success of the tourism industry both on supply and demand sides throughout the world. The declaration of several measures by the World Health Organization and their practical applications by governments have slowed down the life of human beings, e.g., national lockdowns, "stay home" campaigns, social distancing, and travel bans, among others. As a result, although a certain level of fixed and variable costs was still effective, hotel premises welcomed no guests for a while, resulting in financial, social, and psychological problems.

The performance of the industry has varied from resort hotels to city hotels. The former category of hoteliers appeared to be luckier than the latter as they were able to start their operations in the middle of the summer season. With high levels of stress, they were under pressure to either continue being inactive or start functioning by taking a risk due to the in/direct consequences of unforeseen uncertainty of such a global crisis. Hoteliers have focused on applying new practices to diminish operating costs. For instance, as noted by Hameed et al. (2020), some facilities operating in Portugal have adjusted the style of their buffet services to an assisted form on the basis of the rules of the new normal by keeping the standards of hygiene and sanitation, but most importantly, maintaining the customer experience. This is an example of the chaos theory indicating how the new system has responded to customers' changing needs by reorganizing the structure and order within the delivery of hospitality services.

The quotation by Shedd in 1928 (as cited in Shapiro, 2006) clearly explains why life is full of taking risks: "A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for." This means that one is also safe in their own location but must walk, run, fall and get up again to reach the final destination in their lives. Such a long

and risky journey also needs fewer or higher risks to be taken depending on the time, location, conditions, and environment. Being a leader in hospitality requires having versatile and multitasking skills. Leadership does not mean being safe in one's comfort zone but taking actions to keep communities and businesses stable for the sake of their quality of life. Thus, the industry should be dominated by those human sources who are dynamic and optimistic for the future. In doing so, the industry can safely navigate in free waters in a dynamic structure, just like ships. As widely indicated in the literature, this is how the tourism industry has survived for many decades, regardless of the type or the scale of crisis occurring as a result of health diseases, natural disasters, political turmoil, economic corruption, or terrorism.

The tourism literature has taken the issue of crisis mostly from the local perspective, assuming that crisis may occur specifically in certain destinations. For instance, Sonmez et al. (1994) suggest that a crisis is likely to threaten a destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort on the demand side. The stable operations of local tourism businesses on the supply side are interrupted, causing a decrease in its local economy as a consequence of the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenses. Despite the relevance of such a statement, however, today, the context of crisis has become more global and intensive because new forms of disasters, mainly human-induced, have appeared that influence the comfort of human beings at the global level. Since World War II, the impacts of crises such as SARS, MERS, or Ebola have remained more at the micro-level, while COVID-19 has appeared to be a single disaster itself that took control of the world shortly after its occurrence with a long-lasting impact on national economies, businesses, and societies. In this context, it is a good example of a mega-crisis.

Additional studies suggest that the industry needs to accommodate more professional managers and take effective strategies in carefully managing this global crisis and coping with its challenges at the local scale (Pavlatos et al., 2020). Those suggestions include gaining more support from the government to maintain their liquidity and cash flows stable (Kubickova et al., 2019; Lai & Wong, 2020). The implementation of marketing strategies includes giving the impression that the industry is safe in terms of safeguarding the standards of hygiene and sanitation (e.g., Naumov et al., 2020) or focusing more on family groups (e.g., Haque & Haque, 2018) while attracting customers both from the domestic and international markets. In the case of management implications, the most radical suggestion refers to implementing a number of cost-reduction strategies, e.g., reducing the cost of payroll, staff, and maintenance expenses (Hameed et al., 2020; Pavlatos et al., 2020) or discounts on room rates (Kim et al., 2019) for the national tourism industry.

The consideration of crisis and/or disaster management programs or frameworks also provides avenues for the implementation of benchmarking practices, as each case provides the best lesson to be invested in for the future (Kozak, 2004). Regardless of the contents or tools to use to cope with the consequences of a crisis, each experience is likely to be a lesson learnt to be taken as an example as long as its outcomes are possible. Either the same businesses or destinations may need to keep the records of inputs and outputs of their best practices to be well prepared in responding to similar scenarios that may occur in the future (Faulkner, 2001; Sigala, 2020). As the past experience will be the main source of strengthening the current capacity of knowledge, this contributes to a successful implementation of internal benchmarking. Known as external benchmarking, the success stories of other businesses and destinations offer unique opportunities for their counterparts to exchange of ideas in finding the right way to reach the successful conclusion with much less time and sources.

3. Case study: The Turkish tourism industry

Due to the limited amount of detailed empirical studies on the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry and how the industry has responded to its unprecedented and unpredictable outcomes, this study uses the principles of an inductive approach to reach a final conclusion by collecting the information in pieces.

With its mission to examine the complex phenomena or situations in their natural settings to make them easily understood (Hamel, 1993; Yin, 2003), the case study is a method used to collect detailed data on certain objects, practices or operations by focusing only on a person, group or place as an example. In other words, instead of investigating the similar subject horizontally in different samples, like taking an X-ray or tomography of a person, it refers to the logic of investigating only one sample for a vertical examination from top to bottom.

Over the last year, the pandemic has also created a complex situation and had an adverse impact on societies and businesses across the globe, so the chronological order of problems encountered and measures are taken should be elaborated across a certain period, rather than collecting data all at once. A similar approach, while limited, has been employed in several earlier studies (e.g., Novelli et al., 2018). As a result, in light of its major characteristics as indicated above, the study is based on a case study including the first author's own observations within a particular hotel business and also direct personal communication with other hoteliers, retailers, and guests over 12 months, commencing from early weeks of 2020 to the end of the year.

Unlike earlier studies with a specific focus on small and medium-sized hospitality businesses (Alonso et al., 2020), the central focus of this study relies on five-star hospitality businesses operating in Bodrum, Turkey. In order to make the study holistic and chronological, the personal observations in the lobby, restaurant, pool, beach, and back-office and communication with other peers (managers of five-star hotels) in Bodrum were made into a summary report at the end of every week. The communication with peers included telephone conversations (10 hotels), exchange of daily messages via network groups (150 hotels) and informal conversations in person on an irregular basis, and participation in monthly meetings of the city council and weekly meetings of hotelier association. The content of all meetings and messages included the cancellation of reservations, how to offer the service under such circumstances, the opening of hotels, the safe tourism certificate, and financial problems. The study also benefited from the analysis of qualitative and quantitative feedback from the hotel guests and the review of secondary sources such as reports, press releases, media news, etc.

The exchange of ideas continued on telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings alongside the study period. Once the tourism season was over, the authors came together on several occasions to elaborate on the contents of the summary notes and exchange ideas about the structure of the study. This stage resulted in the categorization of results under ten parts, as specifically discussed below.

There has been no doubt that the season of 2020 was exceptionally different than the one in 2019. Despite such a difference, it was also necessary to investigate how such changes reflected on the demand side, particularly understanding the guests' perceptions of their satisfaction with the hotel facilities and services and their behavioral intentions. We benefited from a short and simple survey with a 5-point Likert scale, developed by the hotel administration for their regular records to obtain feedback from its guests every year. The number of guests who participated in 2019 was 392 and 180 in 2020. It was sufficient for a comparison between the two years.

4. Discussion

The outcomes of this case study research, including a full year, are elaborated under ten parts: uncertainty about the tourism season, financial crisis, fluctuations in tourism demand, discounts in high season, opportunistic type of customers, pragmatic changes in traditions, problems in marketing and sales operations, new forms of practices in hospitality services, changes in guest satisfaction, and what is next. Table 1 summarizes critical COVID-19 events observed and actions taken by the tourism industry in Bodrum, Turkey.

Table 1**Summary of critical COVID-19 events observed and actions taken by the industry in 2020**

Date	Critical COVID-19 events	Actions taken by the tourism industry
January 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reservations started coming in. Increase in the bulk of reservations by 15 percent on average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up of room rates with other hotels and doing adjustments.
February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The incoming of reservations for resort hotels is still in progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City hotels obtain information from their counterparts in Asia.
March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outbreak of COVID-19 in Turkey. The first cases of death due to COVID-19 in Turkey. The first cancellation of reservations. The number of incoming reservations slowed down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating with tour operators, other hotels and professional and public bodies. Making plans for May 2020 to open.
April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The discontinuation of sales and reservations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cancellation of opening dates of hotels in Bodrum.
May 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Europe, UK, Russia and Middle-east closed down their borders. The cancellation of reservations in a speedy progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cancellation of opening dates of hotels.
June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cancellation of reservations in a speedy progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opening dates of hotels was postponed. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism set the safety tourism certificate.
July 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The arrival of first tourist groups to Bodrum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels opened, the safety tourism certificate was granted. Inspection of hotels in terms of the codes of safety tourism certificate.
August 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russia, Poland and UK began its flights to Turkey. An increase in the domestic market to Bodrum. An increase in the occupancy rates by 65-75 percent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get used to the conditions of COVID-19. Gaining more experience. Facing problems with those customers who were resistant on hygiene and sanitation. Paying attention to the health and safety of staff and facilities.
September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increase in tourism demand. An increase in the number of flights. The average occupancy rate reached 90 percent in Bodrum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping the room rates little higher. Paying attention to the health and safety of staff and facilities. Finalized the contacts for the next year.
October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Health updated the number of infected cases with 30,000 a day. The discontinuation of all flights by 8 October. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The tourism season was over. The discontinuation of hotel operations.
November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming of reservations for the next year under COVID conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hotels shot down their facilities. The balance of credits and loans was cleared with travel agencies.
December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoming of reservations for the next year under COVID conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The beginning of off-season. Applied to the government for the short-term payment of employee salaries. Completed the planning and budgeting procedures for 2021.

4.1. Uncertainty about the status of the tourism season

As internationally, the full uncertainty has had the largest adverse impact on the Turkish tourism industry as well (Altuntas & Gok, 2021). The number of incoming reservations continued until the end of February 2020, with a normal increase of approximately 15 percent in the whole Bodrum region. Turkey came to a standstill with the first fatalities. Meanwhile, the reports of sickness and death increased in other European destinations such as Spain, Italy, and Greece. It appears that the chain hotels recognized the crisis originated from Asia before the resort hoteliers did. While the resort hoteliers failed to fully understand the problem, the reality was informed by other partner hotels operating in cities. After a period of silence, tour operators

began to signal that both domestic and international travels could be delayed and flights could be canceled. While there were thousands of reservations in the system, none had been meaningful due to the ongoing crisis. It was easily possible to recognize that tour operators had difficulties in understanding and managing the side effects of such a universal crisis.

One year ago, the opening of the summer season was announced as the last week of April 2020. However, as the opening date approached, the cancellation of the first reservations started to drop into mailboxes. The hoteliers began to understand how serious the situation was. However, some hoteliers who had not initially faced such a crisis expected that the problem would last for a long time, while the others anticipated the opening in the first week of May 2020. Unlike the previous crises mentioned above, on this occasion, the opening date would be determined by the canceled flights, not the hoteliers. In other words, management of the COVID-19 crisis has now become the absolute determinant factor. The opening date was shifted to the first week of July 2020. Meanwhile, major tourist generating countries such as Europe, Russia, and the Middle East decided to close their borders with effects from April 2020. This means the top markets for the industry had been out of service. In the domestic market, the whole mobility came to an end due to an increase in the number of patients, especially in Istanbul, the highest populated metropolitan city of the country. The overall demand ceased completely for the first time.

As of April, May, and June, a complete pessimism prevailed over the tourism industry. It was very difficult to accept, but hotels phones stopped ringing. Indeed, the possibility of how deep the crisis might get made its impact feel gradual. Many hoteliers decided to open the facility in the first week of July. In doing so, several positive signals occurred, e.g., the open dialogue established by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism with other countries, positive atmosphere approaching, and unofficial news that the UK may start traveling abroad. The primary expectation was for such positive news to come from Russia and Germany. While these countries granted their citizens the permits for outbound travel, they expressed the importance of checking the data such as the number of patients present in host destinations, the number of deaths, and the course of cases to issue the flight permits accordingly.

There was a constant positive change in the public opinion of domestic and foreign travel in order for countries to issue travel permits. The increasing unemployment rate and/or loss of the income of people working at travel agencies, tour operators, airports, airlines, ground services, incoming travel agencies, and hotels put pressure on governments on the largest scale. For example, German travel agencies decided to take action to be continued with additional actions throughout the country. The rationale here can be defined as follows: Travel agencies receive an average of 10 percent commission on sales of a package holiday. The remaining part is paid to the tour operator. With the occurrence of coronavirus, travelers' cancellation of their tours faced travel agents with a refund of tour fares. Returns were made for a while, but the failure to initiate returns from tour operators brought travel agencies, and customers face to face. Therefore, the actions of the German travel agencies were carried out with despair, but they also affected the German state. Later, the statements made in cooperation with tour operators and airline businesses also had an impact on countries. When inter-country negotiations were added, tourists somehow started traveling to Turkey.

In mid-July, England decided to start flights independently from the European Union and continued with the decision to increase its flights as of the end of July. Ukraine, the other important market, decided to start in the first week of July, followed by Poland and Russia in the first week of August. Germany, as an important market, waited for a long time. As of the first week of August, Germany announced obtaining COVID-19 test results as a mandatory procedure for those who wanted to travel out of the country. With its effect on the industry, destination countries such as Turkey required at least three weeks to reach a meaningful seat occupancy rate. With the commencement of the flights, the accuracy of the estimated durations also emerged. With a single plane per week, England increased its capacity of flights to 5 after three weeks and subsequently to 15 flights, like in other European (i.e., England, Germany, Poland, Romania) and Commonwealth of Independent States

(i.e., Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine) countries. Also, the domestic market sales continued at a very low scale until mid-July, but early August indicated much better signs, with 70-80 percent room occupancy.

In September, demand reached its maximum level, achieving 85-95 percent occupancy. While markets such as Russia, England, Ukraine, and Poland remained stable, the domestic market decreased as expected. In the first week of October, the British government declared a 14-day quarantine for the increasing number of its citizens visiting Turkey. As a result, the package tours were completely canceled as of mid-October, whereas only independent travelers continued. Perhaps for the first time, all stakeholders had to improve their decision-making and management skills without predicting what might happen the next day. This has been re-named crisis management where demand cannot easily be seen.

4.2. Financial crisis

As tourism has a fragile financial structure (e.g., Alonso-Almeida & Bremser, 2013; Kubickova et al., 2019), for many years, as a part of the tour operator-hotelier relationship, advance payments have been an important source for the hoteliers to handle the expenses of pre-season preparations such as maintenance and renovation. As such, a certain amount of capital has been provided to many landowners to build hotels or apartments in Fethiye and Marmaris since the mid-1980s. On the other hand, tour operators have gained discounts and quota advantages in return for such payments. This practice has helped both parties sustain a long-term commercial relationship and provide a standard service in the long term. Such collaborations have significantly contributed to developing tourism on the Aegean coast of Turkey, creating repeat guests, and maintaining positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

As of April 2020, hoteliers were desperately in need of financial sources to cover at least their fixed costs, although they were not in operation. The cash flow was disrupted due to the discontinuation of hotel facilities, employees not being paid, unpaid debts from the past year, disruption of purchases required for the new season, and inability to meet energy expenses. Hoteliers were in trouble with tour operators who asked to return the amount of advance payments they had made for the new season. This had never happened at all before but multiplied the financial difficulties the hoteliers were facing in 2020. A similar problem emerged with the domestic market for which the advance checks issued were requested for return. Under such difficult circumstances, there was only one solution - opening the hotel facilities. At the end of the season, despite varying views, a large number of hoteliers declared in bilateral conversations that they were pleased to open up their facilities. It really made a lot of sense to see the end of the season in a difficult year, but the industry was persuasive, although the pandemic had actually been a more formidable opponent than anything else to date.

4.3. Instable patterns of tourism demand

On several occasions, the Turkish tourism industry encountered similar unstable incidents both for the international and domestic markets in the past (Akkemik, 2012). Still, the pessimistic atmosphere created by the low volume of sales continued until mid-March 2020, and then a halt came, which continued for a long time. Uncertainty emerged as an additional factor for the current situation. With hotels opening slowly in the first week of July, uncertainty moved positively for the first time. The previously developed scenarios anticipated that the domestic market would move faster due to the lockdowns keeping people at home and, as a result, the possibility of a quick start to take vacations. However, it did not work because all parties, such as tour operators, airline companies, customers, and hoteliers, were all worried about the uncertainty. In such a difficult case, everyone had to move forward by supporting each other.

As of early July, there was a public announcement that only England and Ukraine would start flying, effective from mid-July. Hoteliers opened their doors despite there being no additional positive news. A small amount of daily sales and shifts from previous months began progressing slowly. The forecast reports indicate only 10 percent sales in July. Still, uncertainty continued. This was exceptional for hotel businesses to have such a

low occupancy rate in July - the month of peak season in the summer. The matter under debate was how to create demand. The common techniques of help in this context included price discounts, free accommodation, and media support, among others.

4.4. A big surprise: Discounts during the high season

Discounts are also one of the indispensable solutions applied to keep up the industry during the crisis (Kim, Roehl, & Lee, 2019). Generally speaking, two groups of management strategies have been formed in hotel sales over the years: The first is that businesses have tended to invest and produce services in order to be one of the best in their service. This group has constantly renewed its facilities, worked with its staff for many years and closely monitored the satisfaction of their guests. Accordingly, they have also been able to sell their rooms at a closer rate to the level of their announced prices. The level of customer satisfaction and loyalty rates recorded is high. More European customers have been gained as repeaters. The second group is businesses that have targeted a certain occupancy rate anticipated at every price level. They have offered discounts by 40-50 percent for overnight stays requested by their operators. The major issue for these businesses has been to reach the maximum occupancy rate whereas the level of customer satisfaction has been lower. Quality has not been used as the main purpose but as a tool to save the day. Unlike what was stated by (Tasci, Gurbuz, & Gartner, 2005), highlighting that the domestic market is charged more than the inbound market, the domestic market now benefited from the advantages of such discounts.

4.5. More opportunistic customers in search of upgrades

Due to varying degrees of discounts, we also observed opportunistic types of customers (Decrop & Kozak, 2009). Out of decision strategies initiated by Payne et al. (1993), opportunistic strategies refer to customer groups who are open to different alternatives but flexible to await their final decisions until they learn more about their needs. The fact that businesses have applied discounts varying up to 50 percent since the beginning of the season caused prices to drop dramatically. Customers who could not afford to stay in such hotels during a conventional season showed an increasing interest in the summer of 2020. According to the statements by the hoteliers, the industry achieved a much higher proportion of the domestic market than what was expected. A similar density was observed in the international market. In a conventional season, hotels applied discounts of 40-50 percent. Such a price level, of course, did not include the expected level of profitability. However, it caused hoteliers to start functioning and, most importantly, to continue keeping their hopes at least for the coming years. Tour operators and airline companies also applied a similar discount with their package fares. This assisted in increasing the occupancy rate of hoteliers. Although the fares of rooms and package tours became as cheap as possible, the need for concrete sales continued. This caused a boom in demand for hotels.

4.6. Pragmatic changes in traditions

Unlike what happened in the past, the repayment of the early bookings was offset with the number of overnight stays. In very special cases, cash repayments were made for the advances remaining at the end of the season. The situation was very different in 2020. As the prepayments received had already been spent, the decision whether to open or not was not quickly made. The current expenses had to be covered, but uncertainty stopped the influx of cash flow. The repayment of advance payments was requested by tour operators leading to an impactful financial crisis waiting at the gate. The failure to repay advance payments was a new situation that had never happened. How could hoteliers without a stable income cope with such a burden? Almost all hoteliers who opened received more or less payment in advance. If there had been an activity, it would have been possible to reset the advance payments for the overnight stays of customers generated by tour operators. Even this possibility was an important reason to open the hotel facilities. Although hotels were successful in recovering their debts by the end of 2020, there is now another issue if the prepayments for 2021 would be returned.

4.7. Problems with marketing and sales operations

As the hoteliers also spent their limited budgets on advertising, the expected response was limited. Google ads were tried in the domestic market with a limited budget. The number of incoming reservations gained momentum as the domestic people felt partly ready to travel (Altuntas & Gok, 2021). Campaigns regarding price discounts also worked well. Some hoteliers assigned their sales and marketing staff to visit Poland and Ukraine. This worked as well. Only for the domestic market, faster internet connection was offered to those customers in need of distance education for their children. Refunds were made within one or two months for those who had a reservation but failed to come in. Hoteliers anticipated that these people would keep their interests or loyalty to come again in the future. The COVID-19 certificate, launched by the government, was used frequently for publicity, but this failed to attract the expected volume of demand both in domestic and international markets.

4.8. New forms of daily practices and services

With the first death in Turkey, the government and citizens were involved in the discussion of how to combat COVID-19. Hoteliers spent some time without knowing what to do because there existed no corporate philosophy, logic, and community memory encountered recently, which could fight such an epidemic. The months of March, April, and May ended with bans, quarantine, and restrictions. With the arrival of the season, in June, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism started to work with a commission that established a series of procedures to prevent virus transmission at hotel facilities. For example, the distance to the reception desk had to be 1.5 m or divided by glass. It has become mandatory for products such as plates, tongs, forks, knives, etc., used in open buffets to become disposable and/or serviceable by the hotel staff. At bars and open buffets, a strip-barrier-glass partition area was created for them in the buffet, based on the social distance of a minimum of 1.5 m. The use of glasses was discontinued. Water was served in 0.33 L bottles. Utensils such as forks, knives, etc., were presented in paper bags. The responsible staff disinfected general areas, WCs, lounge chairs, and rooms several times a day.

Issues arising in these new conditions can be listed as follows: The duration of room cleaning is prolonged. Therefore, it was necessary to keep empty and ready rooms in reserve. Guests were required to sign a COVID-19 commitment form while checking into the hotel. As the service was provided entirely by the staff at bars and restaurants, the delivery of the service to customers was delayed. There was clutter, especially in open buffets. The hoteliers were able to handle the situation when they reached the occupancy rate of 50 percent. As the daily occupancy rate increased, they had to introduce new measures. As in some other countries (e.g., Hameed et al., 2020), the number of open buffet products was reduced, leading to customer dissatisfaction. Disposable materials were suitable for a short time, but using paper products throughout the whole season was expensive. The use of fitness and spa services was restricted. The distance between the sunbeds was 1.5 m, but the guests constantly broke the rules. In the morning of each day, the hotel staff took pictures of tables, chairs, lounge chairs, and umbrellas to keep as proof. It was difficult for the staff to wear masks all the time as implementing all the new rules required a significant workforce. The strict control by ministries and other institutions on a continuous basis was also a challenge. There was a different challenge for each audit to come with its own rules. The call center established by the government was kept busy by various types of complaints reported by hotel guests and even by those people walking by the side of the beach.

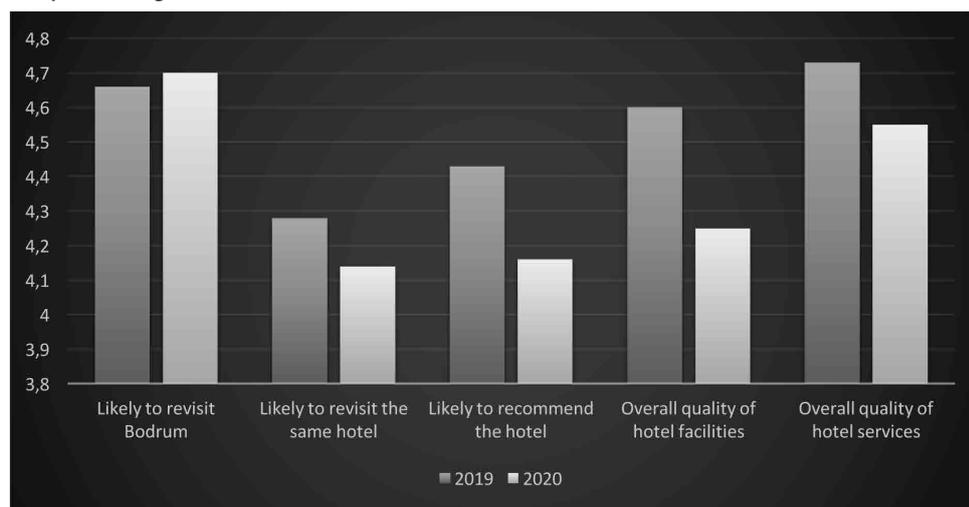
The new situation was different and difficult for everyone. Guests felt unhappier with the service when compared to the previous years. Those from the CIS countries committed to breaking the rules due to the lower number of options on the menu, longer waiting times, and queuing to receive the food items. Those customers from Europe, who are careful and respectful in this respect, had a negative reaction towards such behaviors. With the constant warning of the hotel staff, the number of problems faced in this context was kept at a minimum level.

Unfortunately, observations indicate that none of the customers complied with the use of masks. Occasionally, the law enforcement officers visited hotels upon complaints and warned the hoteliers that there were customers who did not wear masks. However, no power could tell the customer to wear a mask. It seems that money has beaten the mask. As a result, particularly during and after the certification procedures were established, the hoteliers were fined in such cases. Despite hoteliers' complaints, the government paid no attention to answer as to why the hoteliers were responsible for such penalties while all forms of training and materials were provided for the hotel staff and information was provided for customers.

4.9. Changes in guest satisfaction

The level of tourist satisfaction may also vary across the years because consumer behavior is not a stable subject due to the existence of many internal and external factors (Engel et al., 1995). As emphasized above, the season of 2020 was exceptionally different than the one in 2019. Despite such a difference, it was also necessary to investigate how such changes reflected on the guests' perceptions of their satisfaction with the hotel facilities and services and their behavioral intentions. As indicated in Figure 1, unsurprisingly, the perceived quality of services and facilities at the hotel remained lower in 2020 than that of 2019. Guests were also less likely to revisit the same hotel where they stayed and recommend it to others compared to 2019. Perhaps we could suggest the rooms be improved in terms of the quality of services and facilities, but one should also note that this was out of the hoteliers' control. On the other hand, surprisingly, it appears that even there were restrictions and uncertainties in 2020, customers were more likely to revisit the destination in the future. Despite a possible dissimilarity of the respondents visiting the hotel in these two years, the results are still valuable to draw meaningful conclusions about how the hoteliers' customer experiences were affected by the new practices.

Figure 1
Comparison of guests' satisfaction between 2019 and 2020



4.10. What is next?

At least as a successful outcome of 2020, the hoteliers were able to fully recover the payment of their loans and even made profits to be used for the preparations of the following year/s. The government decided to extend the partial payment of employee salaries to the end of June 2021. The staff affiliated with departments such as front office, accounting, security, housekeeping, and maintenance were still on duty. There were one or two reservation requests coming in every week, of which some are from repeat guests, while the campaigns on discounts are still in progress despite instability in lockdowns. Under such circumstances, the next season

also survived with the support of discount-based sales operations, and a quick short-term recovery occurred as a consequence of the vaccination. Due to the strict measures of COVID-19, the lack of the contents of advertised and/or promised services existing on hotels' forms (animation, à la carte restaurants, bars, reduced menus) was the subject of guest complaints. Face-to-face briefing, legal practices, and statements made by the agencies' tour guides failed to handle those complaints under such difficult circumstances. In any case, customers expect to obtain services in return for what they pay. It appears to be inevitable that even if all conditions of 2020 were the same, service standards closer to the ideal level had to be targeted in 2021 and onwards.

At the macro level, the governments in different countries introduced various incentives to combat the crisis in general and specifically help the industry survive but not for a full recovery. In a specific reference to Turkey, the government distributed positive international media coverage, emphasizing that the country was safe for traveling and staying at hotels. As stated above, several safety measures were established at the business level. It seems that such practices were easily utilized both by the hoteliers and customers for the sake of human health. In response, the hoteliers tried their best to restart their operations and sustain them at least for 2020 and 2021. They focused mostly on domestic tourism and partially inbound tourism to partially offset the decline of international tourist arrivals. The government still manages the process by establishing additional circulars. Such practices would be exactly in operation for the tourism season in 2022 despite a possible disappearance of the pandemic.

5. Conclusion and implications

Based on the principles of chaos theory, this study has looked at how the pandemic has adjusted the tourism system and how this has enabled to gain optimistic outcomes in the end of the year. As in many other countries, the Turkish tourism industry has also been severely affected by the negative consequences of such a mega-crisis at the global level. As in the case of Gambia (Novelli et al., 2018), the first step to handle the crisis management by the Turkish government was to prevent the dissemination of the virus into Turkey, but the result was not successful, either. As such, the industry was not well-prepared on how to cope with minimizing risks and challenges, at least on the supply side in the first couple of months. Once the shock was recovered in the first few weeks, the government began to have meetings with the industry's professional bodies to set its own recovery plans during the crisis. Consistent with earlier studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2020; Pavlatos et al., 2020), maintaining the economic welfare of hoteliers and their employees on the supply side and the safety of guests on the demand side was the priority of the government through the establishment of partially effective financial and health measures to be taken into consideration throughout the whole year and even be well-prepared for 2021.

From the literature point of view, tourism is a platform to generate wider job opportunities for the local, national and international community (e.g., Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). As the tourism industry requires intensive teamwork and solidarity among employees (e.g., Pizam & Shani, 2009), and also among each of industry partners and governments (e.g., Kubickova et al., 2019; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019), entrepreneurs need to consider the rights of their employees, regardless of the appearance of any crisis either before or during the season. Also, the hospitality businesses may be likely to be forced into adjusting their daily operations by monitoring the upgraded standards of health and safety measures and awaiting new protocols to be released by the government (Alonso et al., 2020). Such empirical evidence may be of help to emphasize the value of conducting more interdisciplinary-oriented studies in association with tourism and other fields such as health (Wen et al., 2021).

From the methodological point of view, this study makes a contribution to filling the gap by conducting a real case study research that looks at the issue from the industry managers' broader perspectives and real first-hand cases to deepen the cause and effect of particular cases. Those studies published to date on COVID-19 have been more conceptual and short-sighted only by considering the findings of secondary data or collecting the primary data at once without deepening the case. Unlike the methodological design of earlier studies, the

current study considers taking the full picture of the industry across a full consecutive year in terms of better understanding the perceived impacts and how to develop coping strategies to handle the crisis and maintain recovery and sustainability both at the business and industry level. The outcomes of such a long-standing observation also indicate how things may have changed from pessimism to optimism, primarily regaining the momentum of tourist arrivals.

From the marketing perspective, the season of 2020 was dominated by the period of a mega-crisis when the hotelier and tour operator cooperation was exceptionally the most intense and difficult. Still, their close cooperation partially removed the stress, as suggested by earlier studies (e.g., Henderson & Ng, 2004). Next, customers were able to take advantage of opportunistic strategies in decision-making (Payne et al., 1993). However, the level of guest satisfaction appears not to maintain its stability with the quality of hotel facilities and services across years as it is more resilient towards the appearance of unpredictable and uncontrollable external factors such as health diseases. This is a negative outcome resulting in failures to maintain the interactive quality (Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1991) due to the strict rules of social distancing. Reducing the number of service offers is also associated with an increase in the number of customer complaints, leading to weakening the competitive advantage (Alonso-Almeida & Bremser, 2013). On the other hand, implementing radical changes in the design of open buffets by reducing the food items or avoiding self-service is expected to positively influence customers' feelings of trust (Hameed et al., 2020). Finally, a certain degree of discounts appears to work in maintaining optimism at least to cover operating costs on the supply side.

As to the practical implications and suggesting the industry's experience in 2020 as a common part of lessons learned, it appears that hoteliers' coping strategies when dealing with the consequences of COVID-19 were partially effective and offered the assistance at least to eliminate short-term financial and social problems. As in the case of establishing new safety measures and their impacts on consumer decision making on the demand side (Ivanova et al., 2020; Naumov et al., 2020) and on hoteliers, managers, and employees to cope with stress and uncertainties on the supply side, the tourism industry may extend its cooperation with the external bodies such as health businesses to maintain the well-being and self-esteem of all parties (Alonso et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2020; Wen et al., 2021). Despite this study being central to Bodrum, a resort destination located in the Aegean part of Turkey, the findings and implications can be extended to other destinations, specifically in Turkey and other countries in general.

Furthermore, in light of the mission of benchmarking both at the business and destination level (Kozak, 2004; Sigala, 2020; Altuntas & Gok, 2021), all parties must share their individual experiences about crisis management with each other to be more efficient in finding solutions and being ready for possible similar scenarios in the future (external benchmarking). Both positive and negative experiences can be potentially relevant as a benchmark for those who may need to learn more from the previous lessons (internal benchmarking). For instance, establishing an emergency fund (Novelle et al., 2018) and/or considering liquidity management (Chen et al., 2020) would still help remain self-sufficient in such cases. As noted by earlier studies (e.g., Novelle et al., 2018; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019), in the case of releasing new protocols for health and safety measures and subsidizing the financial structure of hospitality businesses, the collaboration between international organizations and governments and between governments and industry bodies should be intensified to become more solution-oriented (generic benchmarking). There is a need to point out the positive impacts of tourism on local and national economies by creating new job opportunities and so on.

Despite the nature of a case study including a full year, this study is not free of limitations that may open new avenues for future research. It is still early to fully anticipate the possible continuation of the in/direct consequences of pandemic over the coming years. This study has provided partial information about the progress of the tourism industry in a specific reference to the year 2020. However, we need the continuation of similar studies to better articulate the potential side effects of coronavirus in the future in the context of the sustainability of natural and cultural sources, impacts on the management and marketing strategies of tourism and

hospitality operations, impacts on employees, local communities and service encounters. To accomplish this, we need more empirical evidence and/or observations to complete the full picture by drawing concrete conclusions.

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