

THE IMPACTS OF THE POST-COVID-19 ON THE INTERNATIONAL TOURISM AND A FIELD STUDY ON THE MIDDLE EAST MARKET

Cuneyt MENGÜ¹

Abstract

The international tourism industry which makes a vital contribution to the macro and micro economies of countries is gaining more and more value every day. Due to the fragile nature of touristic products, epidemics, natural disasters, wars, and economic recessions highly affect the tourism industry negatively and deeply. The Middle East market is an important part of the international tourism industry in terms of outgoing travel and revenue management. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused great decreases in the number of tourist arrivals and tourism revenues in all countries of the world in 2020 and 2021. As of the second half of 2021, after the measures taken by the countries, there has been a significant increase in international tourism movements, and at the same time, the post-COVID-19 concept has been activated. This study aims to examine the changes in tourism demand trends, destination selections, and holiday preferences for travelers in the Middle East Market within the scope of tourism demand on a global basis during post-COVID-19 process.

Within the field study, through a questionnaire, data were collected from the top managers of 121 leading travel agencies operating in the Middle East Market. The obtained data were analyzed by the SPSS package 26 program, using frequency, correlation, and descriptive statistics, and necessary evaluations were made in the conclusion part. This study will contribute to the global tourism literature and can be a road map for tourism and travel agencies.

Keywords: Post-COVID-19, International tourism, Middle East market, Travel agencies, Tourism demand trends,

1. Introduction

From the past to the present, human being has faced mass deaths due to several epidemics. In the times when the phenomenon of travel was not yet developed, epidemics affected only certain regions and led to negative socio-economic changes. Nowadays, as intercontinental travels increase rapidly with the development of international tourism movements, people can easily travel to any region or country they want for tourism or trade purposes. The COVID-19 pandemic that unexpectedly emerged at the end of 2019 has caused both mass human deaths and socio-economic devastation that has never been seen before in any country in the world. As a result of the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, international tourism movements have faced recession and almost all of the countries closed their border gates to foreign visitors, imposed visa restrictions and flights from many different regions have been suspended for certain periods (Ioannides & Gyimothy, 2020; Li, et al., 2020; Altun & Dincer, 2021; Zheng, Luo & Ritchie, 2021).

In terms of tourism movements, it is possible to consider the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic at least from two perspectives. First, particularly in 2020, there was a serious recession in international tourist departures but only a limited number of people were willing to travel (Jafari, et al., 2020). Secondly, due to the precautions taken by the countries, especially in the second half of 2021, there was also a decrease in the number of international tourist numbers in compare to pre-COVID period though a significant increase has seen in the number of international tourists at the same time. In this context, through the positive developments and mobility in tourism. As a result, it has revealed that all countries should examine the concept of

¹ CEO Mercan Tourism DMC, Istanbul University Cerrahpasa Vocational School of Social Sciences, Lecturer, cuneyt.mengu@mercandmc.com

post-COVID-19 based on the global demand and destination selection factors in international tourism in the new era (Riadil, 2020).

According to the UNWTO 2021 November report, during the first half of 2021 all tourism movements were very weak in global term. However, starting from June, international tourist numbers increased especially in the Caribbean, Southern Europe, and North and Central America countries, Turkey, Croatia, and Mexico showed the most visible improvement in tourist flow. Although the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue on a global basis despite the risk of emergence of new viruses. In brief, it became clear that it is not possible to sustain total lockdown policies. Consequently, because of the measures taken and serious studies made, the importance of the post-COVID-19 approach has emerged to keep international tourism alive.

This study consists of three main parts. Firstly, the study focused on the literature review to render the study more clear and showing the gaps in the literature. Hence, the study dealing with a relatively a new research topic. In this regard, the impact of COVID-19 has been widely discussed by examining previous studies. On the other hand, the predictions and possible changes regarding the international tourism movements during the post-COVID-19 phase have been argued. Moreover, the developments regarding the before and after COVID-19 periods has been partly compared. The second part of the study describes research design, data collection techniques, strains about sample and data analysis, respectively. Thirdly, the study drawn some general and specific conclusions.

1.1. Literature Review

Many studies have been found on a national basis regarding the acts of the COVID-19 on the tourism industry (Alaeddinoglu & Rol, 2020; Kivilcim, 2020; Dag, Cavusoglu & Demirdag, 2021; Ugur, Kizilirmak & Dereli, 2021). On the other hand, the studies regarding post-COVID-19 on the tourism industry are also examined (Arslan & Kendir, 2020; Kilic, Aslan & Govce, 2020; Karahan & Ozturk, 2021). During the COVID-19 Pandemic, individuals have drastically changed their lifestyles and have had a hard time to think how they can travel safely without the threat of a pandemic. Therefore, the tourism industry has created “Alternative touristic products” in changing demands of individuals during the post-COVID-19 process which have been shown by empirical findings in different studies (Arslan & Kendir, 2020; Seraphin & Dosquet, 2020; Ma, et al., 2021). It is seen that the pandemic has not completely damaged the tourism industry, but on the contrary, it has increased the demand for some types of tourism (Second home, mountain and rural tourism). This is an indication of how resilient the tourism industry is and that it has a wide range of touristic products (Seraphin & Dosquet, 2020). Although the COVID-19 pandemic has limited people to travel, in addition to a second home, mountain and rural tourism it has led to the emergence of new alternatives such as living in a tent in the open field, life on the boat, nature, and highland tourism, caravan tourism, and living in the slow city (Cittaslow) concepts (Kim, King & Kim, 2022).

In their study on COVID-19, Baser, Ersoy & Ehtiyar (2021) stated that tourism demand from Bulgaria and Romania to Turkey continues, and the touristic demand from Germany and other European countries will increase. In addition, they mentioned that during post-COVID-19 touristic services will show a personal tendency. As it was emphasized in the above study, the demand trends and expectations of the post-COVID-19 process experienced or would be

experienced in the foreign market in terms of Turkish tourism are examined. However, no evidence has been found regarding the demand trends of the markets such as Middle East countries, which are very important for the countries that attract tourists in terms of outgoing tourism on a global basis. According to the econometric study conducted by us on the Middle East Market, it is predicted that the international tourism industry will generate 40-50 million tourists and 50-60 billion dollars in tourism revenue from this region annually (Mengu, 2012). Therefore, according to the figures mentioned above, our study is distinctive research, as it reveals the tourism demand and expectations of tourists originating from the Middle East countries, both traveling internationally and to Turkey.

In their study, Bayram, Arici and Bayram (2021) examined the 21 countries that attract the most tourists in the world during post-COVID-19. They stated that on social media during post-COVID-19 the sharings about public events and historical attractions decreased, but the nature activities and culture-art themes increased. Although the above study is qualitative research, it is seen that individuals are not examined in terms of touristic destination preferences and their expectations, and from the Middle East countries, only Saudi Arabia is shown as an example. Saudi Arabia is one of the 19 Arab countries with distinctive characteristics in terms of the tourism industry. However, in their study, Arslan and Kendir (2020) stated that in post-COVID-19 individuals are moving away from mass tourism and are interested in more separate, social distance-protective tourism types and because of that rural tourism is on the rise. Although the same has been emphasized by Kaygisiz (2021), he stated that in countries like Turkey where mass tourism is intense, in terms of tourism the post-COVID-19 process is disadvantageous, but it would be advantageous to move away from mass tourism and turn to alternative tourism types such as rural tourism. In this context, considering that most of the touristic travels from the Middle East Countries are made as couples or with large family groups. It is predicted that within the scope of the post-COVID-19 process, Turkey and some other touristic countries will become an advantageous position.

Iyem & Islamoglu, in their 2021 study emphasizes that while travel-tourism movements to overseas and distant destinations were more common before the pandemic, there are changes in demand for closer and easily accessible destinations during the post-COVID-19. The proximity of the Middle East countries to our country and cultural similarities contribute to the expansion of Turkey's tourism market and economy.

When all the above studies are examined, they have been conceptually discussed by researchers in the years 2020-2021, when the course of the COVID-19 pandemic was high, generally by making use of secondary data. In the periods when the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic began to decrease, it was concluded that although the studies were practical, field studies were handled with a limited sample group. However, as discussed in our study we have not encountered a similarly comprehensive study in the global and TR Index regarding the potential tourist demands of travel agencies in the Middle East countries. We believe that each of the above studies is valuable, they examine the tourism industry from certain perspectives, and all of them make a significant contribution to the tourism literature.

1.2 The Impacts of COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 Process on the Tourism Industry

Since its existence, the greatest passion of humanity has been to see what is happening outside of its environment and to discover and get to know new places. In addition to the historical

development of travel mobility, from the first ages to the present, inventions in transportation have contributed greatly to the development of tourism and each invention has been a milestone. Tourism is the whole of events arising from the travels of people outside the places where they have their usual needs, and the demands, temporary accommodation, and expenditures of using the products and services offered by tourism enterprises (Xu, 2010). Travel is named with different concepts in many languages. However, all the attention has been focused on a single concept, as the concept of tourism and travel includes its dynamic development and different concepts (Kozak, Kozak & Kozak, 2001). During these travels, people benefited from transportation, accommodation, food & beverage, and similar tourism activities (Misirli, 2015). Tourism is a great power for the world economy. It is a multifunctional industry that offers various positive effects for countries, contributes to the international tourism market, regulates the balance of payments by providing foreign currency inflow, and generates economic growth (Celik, et al., 2013).

The tourism industry has a very fragile structure, and all businesses are adversely affected by sudden and unexpected events. Within the scope of these events, such as the 9/11 terrorist attack, tsunami in far east countries, the Marmara Earthquake, the 2001 economic crisis, never-ending and rising from time-to-time turmoil in the Middle East countries, today the war between Russia and Ukraine, and especially the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been affecting the whole world for the last 2.5 years, have shown their devastating effects. On the other hand, the swine flu epidemic that occurred in 2009 reduced foreign tourist arrivals by 8.7% in Spain, 8.2% in Canada, 5.1% in the USA, and 2.55% in Mexico (Gumus & Hacievliyagil, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to a standstill in terms of tourism, with its life-threatening and high rate of spread. Compared to previous pandemics, high-level restrictions have been implemented by all countries (Baum & Hai, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019 (Huang et al., 2020). Due to the spread rate and life-threatening nature, it was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020 (Baser, Ersoy, & Ehtiyar, 2021) and has spread to almost all countries of the world (Anderson, Heesterbeek, Klinkenberg & Hollingsworth, 2020). In this context, partial and full quarantine practices, closure of schools and workplaces, suspension of national and regional travels, cancellation or postponement of events, visits to relatives, and gathering of people in groups in social areas are prohibited in most countries, and various measures have been taken such as hygiene, vaccination, mask wear, and keeping distance are highlighted. (Skare, Soriano & Rochon, 2021).

When the world tourist statistics are examined, as shown in Table 1, the countries that attracted the most tourists between the years 2011-2021 are listed.

Table1. Tourist number by countries (2011-2021)

Years	France	USA	China	Spain	Italy	Turkey	Germany	England	Malaysia
2011	79,5(1)	62,3 (2)	57,6 (3)	56,7 (4)	46,1(5)	29,3(6)	28,4(7)	29,2(8)	24,7(9)
2012	83(1)	66,7 (2)	57,7 (3)	57,5 (4)	46,4(5)	37,7 (6)	30,4(7)	29,3(8)	Russia 25,7
2013	.....	69,8(2)	55,7(4)	60,7(3)	47,7(5)	39,7(6)	31,5(7)	31,2(8)	Russia 28,4
2014	83,7(1)	74,8(2)	55,6 (4)	65 (3)	48,6 (5)	39,8(6)	33 (7)	32,6(8)	....
2015	84,5(1)	77,5(2)	56,9 (4)	68,2 (3)	50,7 (5)	41,6(6)	35 (7)	34,4(8)	....
2016	82,6(1)	75,6(2)	59,3(4)	75,5(3)	53,4(5)		35,6(7)	35,8(6)	....
2017	86,9(1)	76,9(2)	60,7 (4)	81,8 (3)	58,3 (5)	37,6(8)	37,5 (7)	37,7 (7)	....
2018	89,4(1)	79,7(2)	62,9 (4)	82,8 (3)	61,6 (5)	45,8(6)	38,9(9)	38,7(10)	....
2019	89,7(1)	79,3(2)	65,7(4)	83,5(3)	64,5(5)	51,2(6)	39,6(8)	39,4(10)	....
2020	56,6(1)	19,45(2)	27,2	36,5	25	15,97(7)	12,4	11,1	4,33
2021	82(1)	75	59,3	75,6	52,4	30 (9)	35,5	35,8	Thailand 32,6

Source: Derived from (Mengu, 2022;TURSAB & TUADER, 2017; UNWTO, 2015)

In Table 1. above, the tourist statistics of 9 countries are in a stable order without much variation from 2011 to 2019. However, when the statistics for 2020 and 2021 are examined, it is seen that there has been a decrease of more than 50% in tourist arrivals in all countries. Especially in 2020, the risk of transmission of the COVID-19 pandemic is high. When the table is evaluated in terms of Turkey, except for the years 2016 and 2017 our country was ranked in 6th place in the world until 2020. Due to the plane crisis with Russia in 2016, there was a decrease in the total number of tourists in Turkey (Ertas et al., 2021). On the other hand, France, the USA, and Spain are the countries that attract the most tourists from international tourism. Italy and Turkey had a comparative advantage, Italy kept 5th place and our country was in 6th place except for the years 2016-2017. Looking at the table, there is a rapid recovery in international tourism in 2021.

According to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) report, due to the pandemic, in addition to a loss of 5.5 trillion dollars in global GDP, globally 197.5 million people lost their jobs (Baser, Ersoy, & Ehtiyar, 2021). It is important to keep the employment issue in balance which has an important place for every country in the world. In this context, to reduce the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment, which is a rare practice in world countries, within the scope of laws 7226 and 7244 in 2020 our country introduced a short-time working allowance for the employees (Karabulut, 2020). Thus, from March 2020 to July 1st, 2021, including tourism workers all employee's working rights were guaranteed. During this period, 60% of their gross wages were paid themselves as a working allowance. Both the tourism industry and tourism workers were supported during this stagnant period (Mengu, 2022). Together with the decrease in infection spread in the world, there has been a revival in international tourism. Although there has been a partial increase in spread cases from time to time, in our opinion it is understood that countries will not implement the practice of closing their borders again. In other words, considering the destruction of the pandemic to socio-economic life in all countries, the importance of a serious examination of the post-COVID-19 concept emerges.

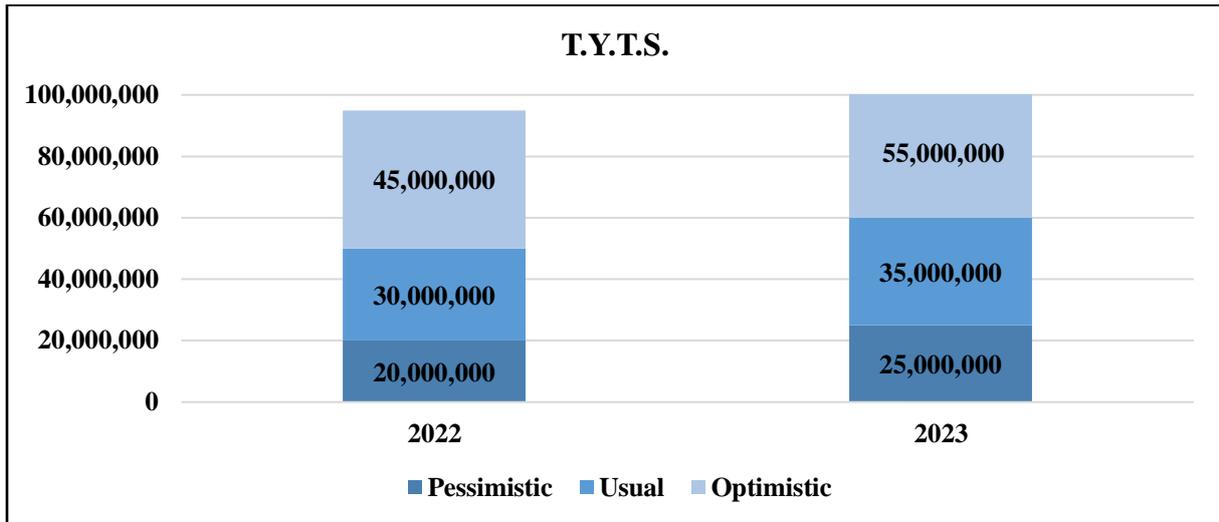
2. Post-COVID-19 and Predictions on Tourism

It is stated that a new impetus to the tourism industry in the post-COVID-19 process will occur with the adoption of innovative and different tourism strategies. Putting innovative tourism strategies into digital systems with virtual reality and online applications will not only eliminate distances by ensuring tourist satisfaction and safety but also enable MICE tourism to be organized internationally (Mohanty, Hassan & Ekis, 2020). In our country, within the scope of the post-COVID-19 approach the replacement of open buffet practices that may create risk factors in tourism with personalized services, and structural changes in hygiene standards and equipment used are among the possible expectations (Cetin & Goktepe, 2020). However, with the post-COVID-19 process considering 2022, there are predictions that while the interest in some of the alternative tourism types will increase, in contrary, the demand for some types of tourism, such as third-age tourism, which carries a risk factor will decrease (Schmocker, 2021).

Kaygisiz (2021), in his study, stated that during post-COVID-19 for supply and demand of Turkish tourism made predictions in two ways as risks and opportunities. Within the scope of the opportunities, it was expected that destinations with shorter distances will be preferred in tourist movements, and therefore, travel demands will increase due to Turkey being closer to Europe when compared to other continents. Middle East countries are regionally close to our country and share similar cultures, we believe that tourist arrivals from these countries will increase in the coming years. In addition, it is predicted that the demand for health tourism will increase due to the high level of confidence in health measures in many countries, including Turkey, during the post-COVID-19 process. In the meantime, within the scope of the foreseen threats, it is predicted that in addition to the adoption of working from home by most businesses and the decrease in the demands for business travel, it is anticipated that the face-to-face working demands will decrease as much as possible, as it is understood that events within the scope of MICE tourism, such as congresses, conferences, and symposiums, can also be held online.

Figure 1. below shows that regression, and forecasting “semi colon prediction analyzes” were made within the scope of econometric applications in the light of post-COVID-19, based on global developments (Mengu 2012; Mengu 2022). According to the model established in this study, if 1.2 or 1.3 billion people travel in the world, the values of the dependent variable (Travel mobility in Turkey) given to the independent variable (International travel mobility in the world, except Turkey) are obtained by point estimation.

Figure 1: Forecast for Turkish tourism



Source: Derived from the author's research in 2012 and 2022.

Figure 1 shows the pandemic is losing its spread effect all over the world in 2022 and 2023, post-COVID-19 tourism predictions for Turkey. In addition, Turkish Culture and Tourism Minister Mr. Mehmet Nuri Ersoy emphasizes that our country aims for 42 million tourists and 35 billion dollars in tourism revenue in 2022, and in 2023, Turkey's tourism will spread to all 81 provinces and tourism revenues will increase with eligible travelers (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2022).

Consequently, the COVID-19 Pandemic which threatens the health of all individuals living in the world and restricts their daily lives and travel movements has put many industries, especially health, into an economic bottleneck. It has been concluded that, within the scope of the measures taken by Turkey and all countries, quarantines and additional laws supporting businesses, practices that increase the economy and employment have been made. As mentioned in this field study, one of the most affected industries by the pandemic is tourism, it is not possible to eliminate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is possible to minimize the impact of post-COVID-19 on tourism with some strategic practices such as orientation to alternative tourism types, and security and health service guarantee given by the state. At this stage, countries can have a better position in the face of a global threat by concentrating on the activities and areas where they are advantageous in tourism.

3. Field Study and Methodology

In the study, in the post-COVID-19 process, in the international markets and the Middle East market tourist demand trends, holiday preferences, destination selection, and what measures to take against the pandemic are examined. Within the scope of the study, the importance of factors that can be used to consolidate the place of international tourism in terms of countries and to get a larger market share in the Middle East Countries is emphasized. The method of this study is examined below.

3.1. Universal Purpose

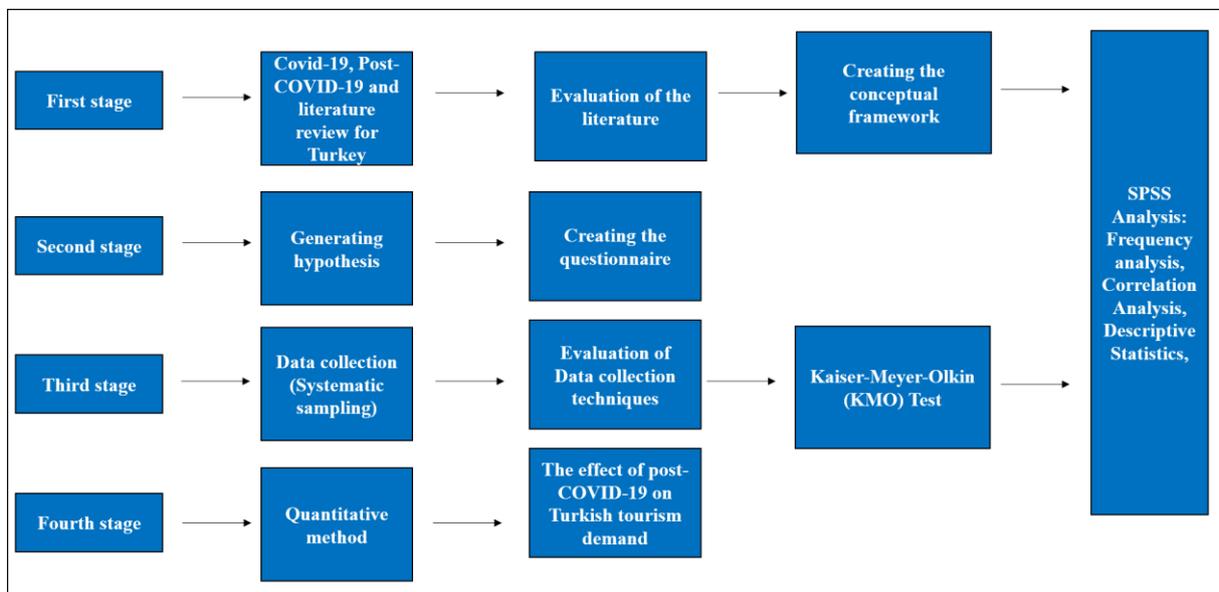
This study aims to reveal the touristic demand trends and expectations by interviewing the managers of the leading tour operators and travel agencies providing services in the Middle East market, which is an important part of international tourism, and to form the universal purpose of the research. Within the scope of the field research, data were collected from 121 managers of travel agencies through a questionnaire face-to-face or on the internet. A face-to-face study was actualized during ATM (Arabian Travel Market) in Dubai held on 9-13 May 2022 and data was obtained from 63 travel agency managers. On the other hand, the questionnaire was sent to the managers as online to 58 large-scale tour operators and travel agencies in the Middle East which were determined systematically beforehand.

3.2. Research Design

The questionnaire technique, which is one of the quantitative methods was used in the research. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was used to calculate the sample saturation point of the study. To reach the sample saturation point, the adequacy of the data set is determined when the value between 0 and 1 is greater than 0.5 (Field, 2017). In addition, it is accepted that the KMO value is between 0.50 and 0.60: bad, between 0.60 and 0.70: moderate, between 0.70 and 0.80: good, and 0.80 and above are perfectly suitable for factor analysis (Durmus, Yurtkoru & Cinko, 2018). In this context, it was concluded that the KMO value of the study was 0.750 for the data test or the sample number was sufficient for the analysis, and since the KMO value was 0.750, it was seen that it was suitable for factor analysis at a good level.

The stages of sampling, data collection, scale development, and data analysis methods, which are outside the conceptual framework of the research, are presented as a model in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Research Design



According to this model, the research consists of four main stages and the research processes are shown in the above figure.

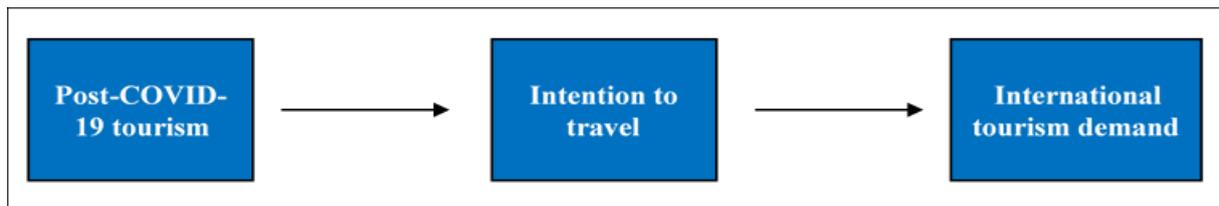
In the first stage of the research, a conceptual framework was created by examining the international and TR Index studies on post-COVID-19 tourism. In the second stage, a survey was prepared within the scope of the questionnaire method, which was determined to be suitable

for the subject for data collection. During the formation process of the questionnaire, scientific studies related to COVID-19 and tourism in the literature were used. In the third stage, data were obtained from travel agencies and tour operators providing services in the Middle East with a systematic sampling method. The validity and reliability of the obtained data were tested. In the last stage, the data for the Middle East market was evaluated and entered into the SPSS program related to the findings analyzed.

3.3. Model and Hypotheses

As explained above, the research model aims to measure the impact of the post-COVID-19 pandemic on tourism demand. This model was created to investigate the decreasing effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and whether there is a change in the travel intentions, holiday, and destination preferences of current and potential tourists who want to travel during the post-COVID-19 period. In this context, hypotheses were formed as a research model as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Research Model



The research focuses on the trends in international tourism demand of real and potential customers of travel agencies and tour operators. Within the scope of the research, two hypotheses were determined.

H1: Post-COVID-19 affects international tourism demand.

H2: Post-COVID-19 travel intention affects the demand for touristic products.

4. Findings and Analysis

The data obtained from the participants of the field study were analyzed in the SPSS 26 program. To test the validity and reliability of the scale, the normality distribution KMO test was applied as explained above. As a result of the analysis, the KMO value of 0.750 was found to be at a good level.

Table 2: Desire of potential customers to travel abroad in post-COVID-19

Even though the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have decreased all over the world, are your customers' desire to travel abroad the same as before?		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No demand	1	,8
	Little demand	5	4,1
	Moderate demand	43	35,5
	Good demand	55	45,5
	High demand as in 2019	17	14,0
	Total	121	100,0

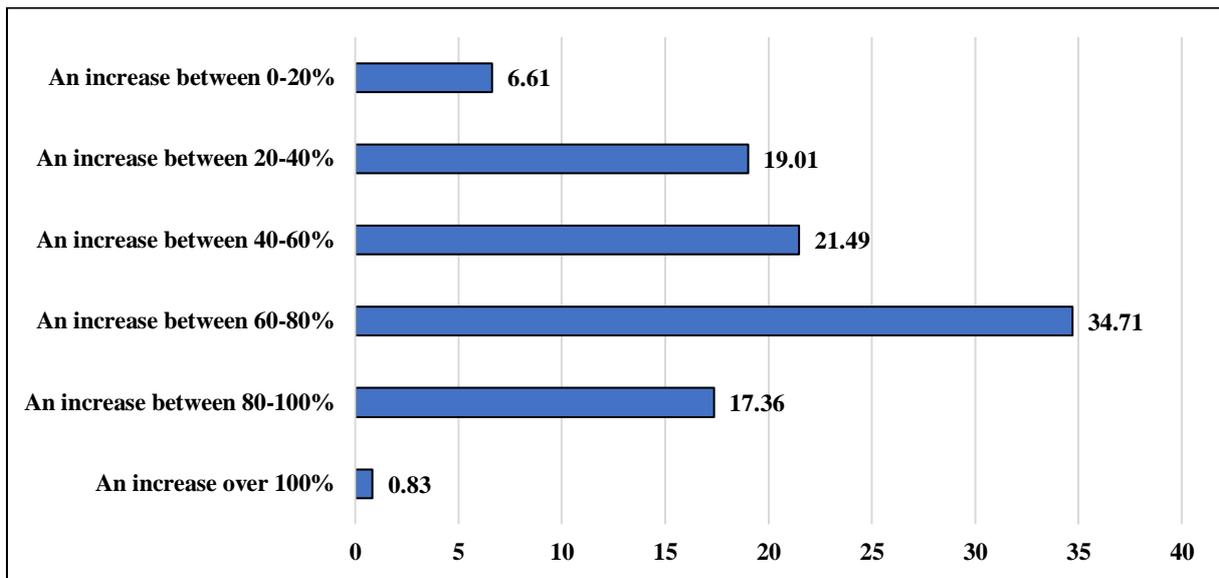
As shown in the table above, the percentage distributions of current and potential customers' desire to travel abroad are given due to the reduction of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. When this table is examined, it is predicted that the willingness of current and potential customers to travel abroad in the Middle East market will show a good distribution at a rate of 45.5% and a moderate distribution at a rate of 35.5% for the years 2022 and 2023.

Table 3: Correlation analysis of current and potential customers of travel agencies and tour operators during the post-COVID-19 process and their Turkey demands.

		Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have decreased all	Travel demands
Effects of the COVID -19 pandemic have decreased in all	Pearson Correlation	1	,475**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	76,430	43,950
	Covariance	,637	,372
	N	121	119
Turkey travel demands	Pearson Correlation	,475**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	43,950	117,580
	Covariance	,372	,996
	N	119	119
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

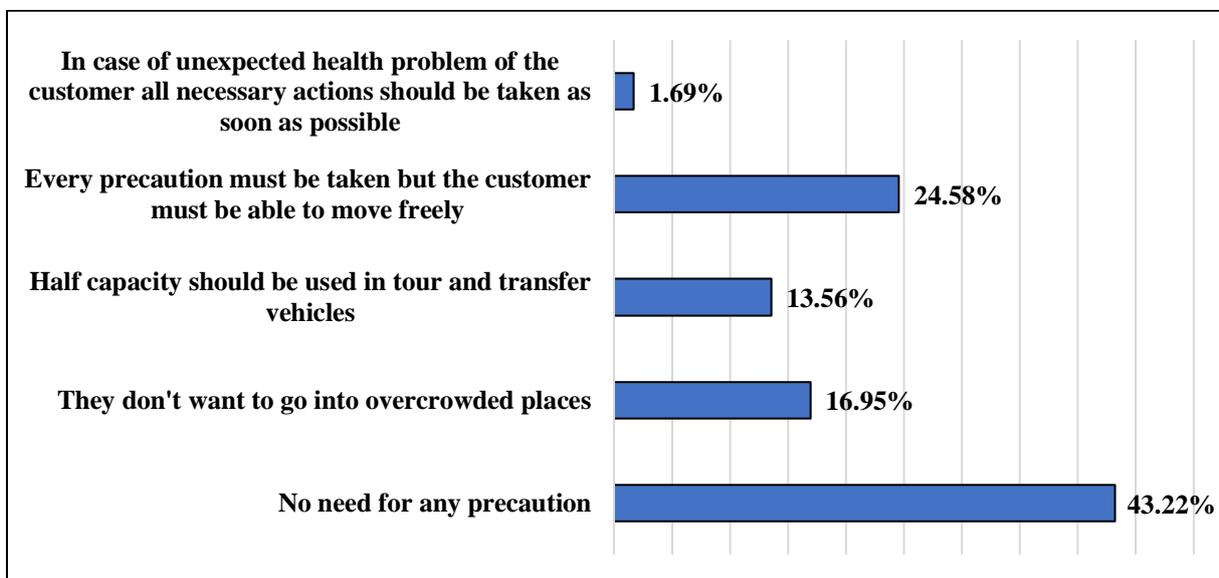
It has been concluded that the effect of the post-COVID-19 pandemic, and the intentions of current and potential customers of travel agencies/tour operators to travel abroad affect the demands of Turkey. There is a positive linear relationship at the 0.01 level and a moderate correlation.

Figure 4: Tourism demand expectations of participants for 2022 (Percentage)



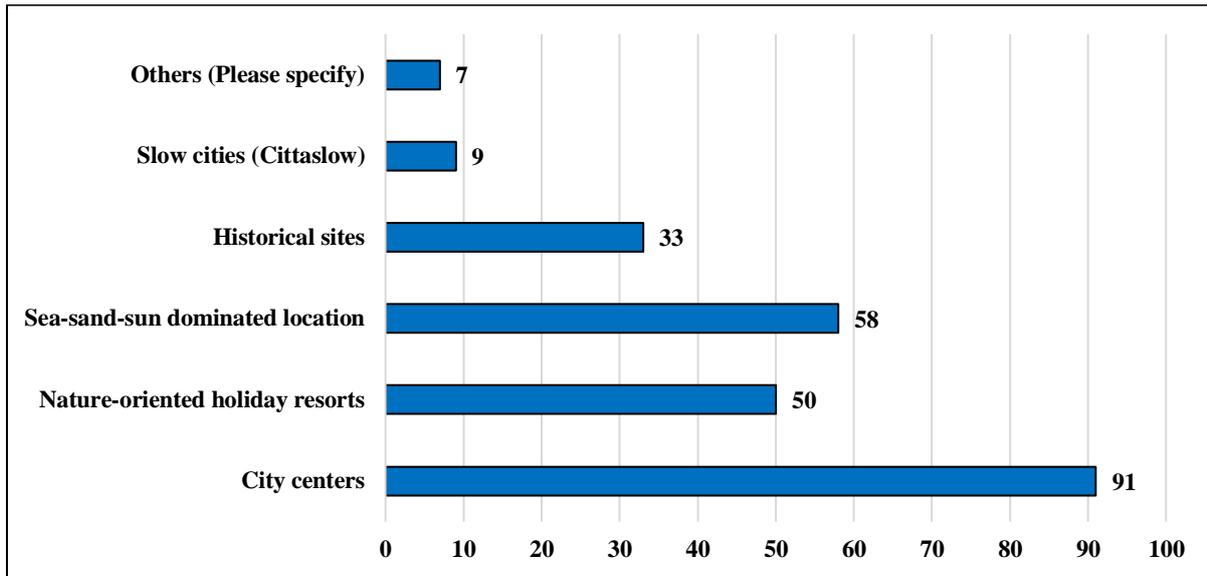
In the above Figure 4, the percentage distributions of the travel agencies/tour operators' expectations for 2022 tourism demands in the Middle East Countries are shared. When the percentage distributions are examined, it is predicted that there will be an increase between 60% and 80%, with the highest distribution at 34.7%. This ratio is a very important indicator for countries that attract tourists in international tourism.

Figure 5: Participants' view regarding precautions (Percentage)



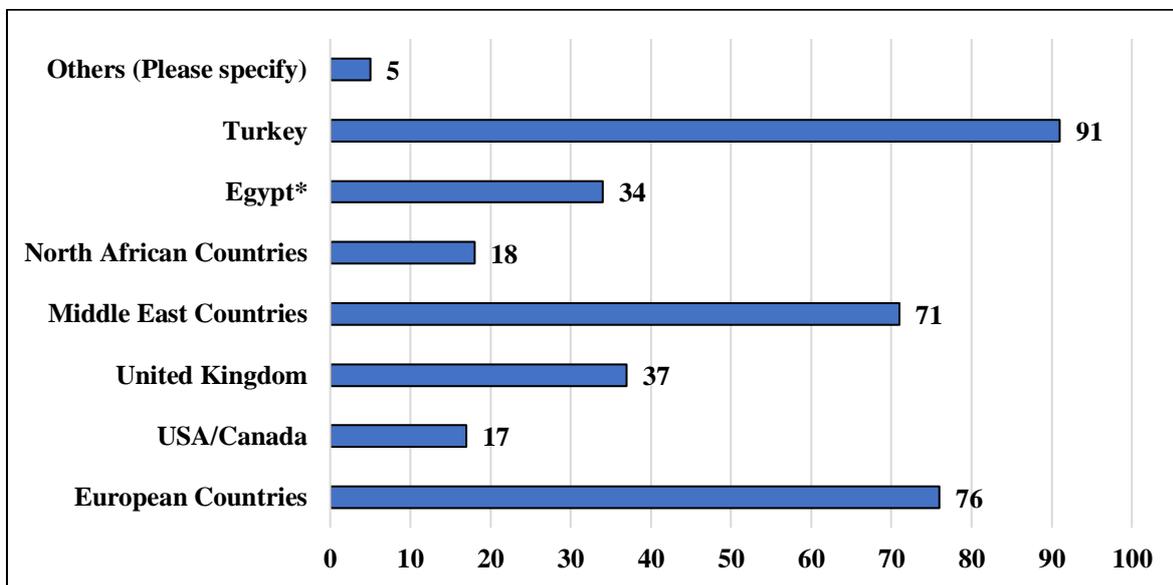
When the percentage distributions in the above graphic are examined; With the highest percentage distribution rate of 42.1% of the travel agencies from the Middle East Countries prefer Turkey, it has been revealed that there is no need to take any precautions in their travels related Turkey due to the post-COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, it has been concluded that there is a demand for the necessary measures to be taken without disturbing the customers, with the second highest percentage distribution rate of 24.0%, which should not be ignored.

Figure 6: Participants forecast regarding the location selection of tourists (Multiple response)



In the figure above, when the distributions regarding the location selection of travel agencies operating in the Middle East Countries are examined; It was concluded that the highest distribution among multiple answers was city centers with 36.7%, nature-based holiday villages with 20.2%, and sea-sand-sun locations with 23.4%. Like the research findings, the result of the nature-based resorts received the second highest percentage of 23.4% (Seraphin & Dosquet, 2020; Ma, et al., 2021) carries.

Figure 7: Participants forecast tourists location preferences (Multiple response)



In Table 4, when the country selection distribution of travel agency/tour operator customers in the Middle East Countries is examined; It was concluded that the highest distribution among multiple answers was Turkey with a rate of 26.1%, European Countries with a rate of 21.2% and Middle East Countries with a rate of 20.3%. In this context, it is seen that Turkish tourism can take the highest share of the Middle East market in 2022 and thus, will make a significant contribution to the number of foreign tourists visiting Turkey from the Middle East Countries.

Table 4: Participants view regarding customers accommodation preferences

Which type of accommodation would your potential customers prefer on their trips aboard?	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Luxury hotels, high price, high quality	58	23,0%	49,2%
Big hotels, mid-price, high-service quality	52	20,6%	44,1%
Big hotels, mid-price, mid services quality	28	11,1%	23,7%
Mid-range hotels, mid-price, mid-service quality	63	25,0%	53,4%
Mid-range hotels, low price, mid-service quality	22	8,7%	18,6%
Small boutique hotels, low price, high services quality	12	4,8%	10,2%

According to Table 4, it is seen that middle-class hotels, price, and service quality are requested at a rate of 25% when their customers in the Middle East countries travel abroad for touristic purposes. The rate of 23.0% of those who prefer luxury hotels, high prices and service quality is a significant indicator. On the other hand, economy, medium, and small boutique hotels, low prices, and medium service quality have emerged with very little preference by customers from Middle East Countries.

Table 5: Participants view regarding travel motivation of customers (Multiple response)

When they arrive in any country, how they may spend their time?	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Leisure (Vacation) travel	80	23,4%	67,8%
Business Travel	34	9,9%	28,8%
Shopping & food experience	71	20,8%	60,2%
Sightseeing (Cultural&History)	41	12,0%	34,7%
Package Holidays	40	11,7%	33,9%
Group travel	23	6,7%	19,5%
City Break	12	3,5%	10,2%
Sun and fun	13	3,8%	11,0%
Nature Escape	27	7,9%	22,9%
Others (Please specify)	1	0,3%	0,8%
Total	342 ²	100,0%	289,8%
a. Group			

When Table 5 is examined; It is seen that customers from Middle East Countries mostly prefer to spend their vacation and leisure time on their international travels. Among the percentage distributions above, Holiday is 23.4%; shopping and dining experience have the highest distribution at 20.8%.

Table 6: Participants view regarding their customer groups willingness of travel (Multiple response)

² In multiple responses, N number exceeds the sample size.

Which part of the customers will be willing to travel more?	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent	
Solo traveler	22	7,2%	18,6%
Youngs	33	10,8%	28,0%
3rd age travelers	29	9,5%	24,6%
Couples	65	21,2%	55,1%
Small families	71	23,2%	60,2%
Big families	50	16,3%	42,4%
Groups	33	10,8%	28,0%
Others (Please specify)	3	1,0%	2,5%
Total	306 ³	100,0%	259,3%
a. Group			

According to Table 6 above; It is seen that the highest rate of 23.2% of customers in the Middle East Countries vacation with small family groups. It was concluded that couples are the groups that travel the most, with a rate of 21.2%.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Within the scope of the research, both seen in this study and the other literature studies, the COVID-19 Pandemic caused unprecedented socio-economic damage to the economies of countries, especially the tourism industry when there was a high risk of transmission in 2020 and 2021. Countries tried to take measures within the scope of seeking ways to get rid of this force majeure, and thanks to the measures taken, a revival in international travel started and the post-COVID-19 approach began to be adopted.

The main purpose of this research is to determine the direction in which factors such as possible structural differentiation, travel trends, and destination selection may occur in tourism demands on a global basis for 2022 and beyond during post-COVID-19 process. In this context, the scope of the post-COVID-19 pandemic was revealed through the leading travel agencies operating in the Middle East market.

As stated in this study, the Middle East tourism market is a very important part of the international tourism industry in terms of outgoing travels and revenue management. Within the scope of the hypothesis analysis of the research, it has been concluded that the desire of the Middle East country customers to travel abroad will be highly demanded, as seen in Table 1. This is a sign that those countries will not take measures such as the closure of borders and quarantine implementation.

On the other hand, customers in the Middle East Market have a very high travel intention to Turkey, European countries, and other Middle East countries. On the other hand, due to the social problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of the agencies who participated in the survey study did not pay very much attention to the measures taken. In the study, it is important in terms of international tourism that the desire of Middle East customers to travel on a country basis is proportionally close to each other in terms of touristic countries. Another important point is that the customers of the Middle East Countries are medium, luxury

hotels, service, and quality are high, which is an important indicator of the revenue of the international tourism industry.

When the frequency analysis of post-COVID-19 of tourism location selection is examined, 36% prefer city centers and 20.2% nature-based holiday villages among the multiple answers. When viewed in terms of hotel preferences; it is seen that middle-class hotels, medium-quality service, and quality are preferred mostly by 25%. Another important feature of Middle Eastern customers is that they travel for long periods with small family groups. In this context, travel agencies which are one of the important stakeholders of the tourism industry should organize different tour programs and events for their Middle Eastern customers, which will contribute positively to the foreign exchange revenue of the concerned country. Consequently, we believe that this study will be beneficial both to the international tourism literature and to travel agencies/tour operators operating in any country.

References

- Alaeddinoglu, F., & Rol, S. (2020). Covid-19 Pandemic and Its Effects on Tourism. *Van Yuzuncu Yil University the Journal of Social Sciences Institute (Special Issue of epidemics)*, p.p. 233-258.
- Altun, S., & Dincer, M. Z. (2021). Impact of the novel coronavirus outbreak on tourist guides package tour management process. *19. Traditional Tourism Symposium* (p.p. 195-213). Kocaeli: Kocaeli University Publishing.
- Anderson, R. M., Heesterbeek, H., Klinkenberg, D., & Hollingsworth, T. D. (2020). How will country-based mitigation measures influence the course of the COVID-19 epidemic?. *Lancet (London, England)*, *395*(10228), 931–934.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30567-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30567-5)
- Arslan, E., & Kendir, H. (2020). Rising Trend Rural Tourism After the COVID-19 Pandemic: Case of Zile. *Journal of Turkish Tourism Research*, *4*(4), p.p.3668-3683.
[https://doi: 10.26677/TR1010.2020.584](https://doi:10.26677/TR1010.2020.584).
- Baser, G., Ersoy, A., & Ehtiyar, R. (2021). *COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis and Tourism: Multiple Perspective* (First Ed.). Ankara: Detay Publishing
- Baum, T., & Hai, N. T. (2020). Hospitality, tourism, human rights and the impact of COVID-19. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *32*(7), p.p.2397-2407.
- Bayram, M., Arici, S., & Bayram, U. (2021). *COVID-19 and Tourism: Comparative analysis of countries crisis management strategies*. Ankara. Gazi Publishing.
- Celik, A. K., Ozcan, S., Topcuoglu, A., & Yildirim, K. E. (2013). Effects of the tourism industry on the balance of payments deficit. *Anatolia*, *24*(1), 86-90.
- Cetin, G., & Goktepe, S. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on tourism industry. In: *Economic, Social and Economic Impact of COVID-19* (p.p. 87-97). Istanbul: Istanbul University Publishing. <https://doi:10.26650/B/SS46.2020.005.06>
- Dag, K., Cavusoglu, S., & Demirag, B. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour: A study on domestic tourists. *Vizyoner*, *12*(32), p.p.1160-1175.
- Durmus, B., Yurtkoru, S., & Cinko, M. (2018). *Data Analysis via SPSS in social sciences* (7th Edition.). Istanbul: BETA Publishing
- Ertas, M., Sel, Z. G., Kırlar-Can, B., & Tutuncu, O. (2021). Effects of crisis on crisis management practices: a case from Turkish tourism enterprises. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *29*(9), 1490-1507.
- Field, A. (2017). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS* (5th Edition). Londra: Sage Publication.
- Gumus, A., & Hacievliyagil, N. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 epidemic on stock market: An application on tourism and transport indices. *Journal of Academic Approaches* *11*(1), p.p. 76-98.
- Ioannides, D., & Gyimóthy, S. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for escaping the unsustainable global tourism path. *Tourism Geographies*, *22*(3), 624-632.
- Jafari, K., Saydam, M. B., Erkanlı, E., & Olorunsola, V. O. (2020). The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the consumer behavior of Turkish tourists. *Revista Turismo Estudos e Práticas-RTEP/UERN*, (5), 1-17.

- Karabulut, S. (2020). Regulations for COVID-19 pandemia in the short-time working allowance. *Cimento Isveren*, 34(5),p.p. 8-19. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344362898_Kisa_Calisma_Odeneginde_COVID-19_Koronavirus_Pandemisi_Nedeniyle_Yapilan_Duzenlemeler
 Accessed: 20.04.2021
- Karahan, S., & Ozturk, Y. (2021). Overtourism after the COVID-19 epidemic: A content analysis of e-news related to international destinations. *Balikesir University The Journal of Social Sciences Institute*, 24(46), p.p. 1371-1385. <https://doi.org/10.31795/baunsobed.1023312>.
- Kaygisiz, A. D. (2021). Potential Oppotunities and risks after COVID-19 for Turkish tourism industry Covid-19 *Bartın University The Journal of Economic Sciences Faculty Dergisi*, 12(23), p.p.79-95.
- Kilic, B., Aslan, H., & Govce, M. (2020). Tourist’s Consumption Attitude After COVID-19. *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences*, 19(Special Issue), p.p.554-570. <https://doi.org/10.21547/jss.787982>
- Kim, J. H., King, B. E., & Kim, S. (2022). Developing a slow city tourism evaluation index: A Delphi-AHP review of Cittaslow requirements. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 30(4), 846-874.
- Kivilcim, B. (2020). Covid-19 (Yeni Koronavirus) Probable effects of COVID-19 (New coronavirus) pandemic on tourism sector. *International Journal of Western Black Sea Social and Humanities Sciences*, 4(1), p.p. 17-27. <https://doi.org/10.46452/baksoder.727208>.
- Kozak, N., Kozak, M. A., & Kozak, M. (2001). *General Tourism*. Ankara: Detay Yayıncılık.
- Li, J. Y., You, Z., Wang, Q., Zhou, Z. J., Qiu, Y., Luo, R., & Ge, X. Y. (2020). The epidemic of 2019-novel-coronavirus (2019-nCoV) pneumonia and insights for emerging infectious diseases in the future. *Microbes and Infection*, 22(2), p.p. 80-85
- Ma, S., Zhao, X., Gong, Y., & Wengel, Y. (2021). Proposing “healing tourism” as a post-COVID-19 tourism product. *An International Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 32(1),p.p. 136-139. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2020.1808490>.
- Mengu C, (2012) The Situation of and expectations from tourism relations between Turkey and Arab World. *Middle East Strategic Research Center* 42(4). p.p. 102-112
- Mengu, C., (2022). Situation of Turkish tourism during COVID-19 pandemic. *7th International Erciyes Conference on Scientific Research* (P.p. 287-298). Kayseri
- Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2022). basin.ktb.gov: <https://basin.ktb.gov.tr/TR-318949/bakan-er-soy-haberturk-tv39nin-canli-yayin-konugu-oldu.html>,
 Accessed: 05.06.2022.
- Misirli, I. (2015). *Travel Agency and Tour Operator*. Ankara : Detay Publishing.
- Mohanty, P., Hassan, A., & Ekis, E. (2020). Augmented reality for relaunching tourism post-COVID-19: socially distant, virtually connected. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 12(6), p.p. 753-760. <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-07-2020-0073>
- Riadil, I. G. (2020). Tourism industry crisis and its impacts: investigating the Indonesian tourism employees perspectives’ in the pandemic of COVID-19. *Jurnal Kepariwisata: Destinasi, Hospitalitas Dan Perjalanan*, 4(2), 98-108.

- Schmocker, J. D. (2021). Estimation of city tourism flows: challenges, new data and COVID. *Transport Reviews*, 41(2), 137-140.
- Seraphin, H., & Dosquet, F. (2020). Mountain tourism and second home tourism as Post COVID-19 lockdown placebo? *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 12(4), p.p. 485-500. <https://doi:10.1108/WHATT-05-2020-0027>.
- Skare, M., Soriano, D. R., & Rochon, M. P. (February 2021). Impact of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism industry. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Volume 163.
- Ugur, N. G., Kizilirmak, İ., & Dereli, G. (2021). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on intention to travel. *Balikesir University The Journal of Social Sciences Institute*, 24(46), p.p. 1274-1262. <https://doi.org/10.31795/baunsobed.939125>
- Xu, J. B. (2010). Perceptions of tourism products. *Tourism management*, 31(5), 607-610.
- Zheng, D., Luo, Q., & Ritchie, B. W. (2021). Afraid to travel after COVID-19? Self-protection, coping and resilience against pandemic 'travel fear'. *Tourism Management*, Volume 85.