



**ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGES TOWARDS THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 IN
TOURISM: THE CASE OF TURKEY**

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Abstract

The aim of the current research is to examine the visible and invisible impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the entire tourism industry in Turkey. Data was collected from media coverages from 19 newspapers that were published online between March and December 2020. Qualitative research method was used in the research and analysed through an automated content analysis programme namely MAXQDA. Hotel, support, test, hygiene, certificate, crisis, travel agencies, technology, travel restrictions, new normal, and short-term employment allowance were created as main themes from the data analysis process representing visible and invisible effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further results are discussed and recommendations for future research are also presented.

Keywords: COVID-19; Media coverages, Crisis, MAXQDA, Qualitative research.

Introduction

Epidemics are also labelled as natural disasters and given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is considered to fit into this category even though it has been initially labelled as public health crisis. Recent major critical incidents include the COVID-19 public health crisis which the world is currently experiencing as a new coronavirus pandemic; a health crisis, which emerged in China and which has spread rapidly around the globe (Sharma & Nicolau, 2020; Wen, Wang, Kozak, Liu & Hou, 2020). This crisis has affected many sectors as well as the tourism sector.

Media coverages plays a crucial role within the tourism industry (Chen et al., 2022) and when looking the studies those try to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 it can be seen a number of research that evaluate media news from various insights with regard to social media (Yu et al., 2020), financial markets behaviour (Haroon & Rivzi, 2020), consumption of news during COVID-19 (Casero-Ripollés, 2020), influencers (Abidin et al., 2020), mental health consequences (Su et al., 2021), effects of misleading media reports (Zheng et al., 2020), the role of media coverage in decreasing negative impacts of COVID-19 transmission (Liu et al., 2021) and politicization and polarization in COVID-19 news (Hart et al., 2020).

Despite the large number of research have been implemented to examine the impacts of COVID-19 in media coverage there isn't sufficient study in the literature which investigates the invisible impacts of COVID-19 made on the tourism industry. In relation to this, only existing literature contains a number of studies investigating COVID-19 media coverages in terms of devastating impacts of COVID-19 health crisis (Şengel et al., 2020; Thirumaran et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2020) this researchs that considers measures and recovery process during and after pandemic disasters remains very limited. In this vein, the current research is an attempt to fill the present gap by dealing with the issue of COVID-19. As such, the present paper tries to find answers to the following research question:

RQ1: What are the invisible impacts of the COVID-19 along with visible ones on the tourism industry those are not presented and overlooked in the media coverages?

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Literature Review

The COVID-19 outbreak-led Tourism Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, initiated a global pandemic, confirmed by the World Health Organization as a public health emergency of international concern on 31st January 2020 (Wen, Aston, Liu & Ying, 2020). By 23th October 2020 the virus had infected more than 42,117,097 people from many countries and killed over 1,144,442 (Perić et al., 2021), while in May 2020 the number of confirmed cases were reported as 4,716,965 with 315,248 deaths (Gallego & Font, 2020). Although the pandemic emerged in China, it rapidly disseminated to 146 countries across the globe (Gössling et al., 2020) and is adversely impacting the tourism industry due to the travel bans and visit restrictions imposed by many governments (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Once the adverse effects of the coronavirus became apparent, governments across the world initiated a series of responsive measures, including numerous restrictions on the organisation of events and travel inside and outside countries (Jamal & Budke, 2020). Because of the tourism sector has a fragile structure, the pandemic has had an immediate effect on the tourism industry (Dolnicar & Zare, 2020).

Tourism Crises and Media Coverages

It is commonly known that media plays a crucial role in the hospitality and tourism sector (Chen et al., 2020), as media content can potentially shape not only tourists' appraisal of a particular tourist destination before a visit whilst affecting the selection of tourism products (Liu & Pennington-Gray, 2015) but also shapes public opinion (An & Gower, 2009). It is treated as one of the most effective tools to provide destination image during and after crisis events as well as to restore travellers' confidence again as well as bounce back from detrimental impacts of crises (Avraham & Ketter, 2017a; 2017b). In our modern era, unlike the traditional media outlets and tools, crises events are shaped and effectively and rapidly disseminated via social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia and Reddit (Gozzi et al., 2020; Kousha & Thelwall, 2020). Such social media portals ensure rapid connections for crisis information and forums in terms of interactive public opinion in times of crisis (Zhai et al., 2020). In particular, the effectiveness and important role of social media has increased during the COVID-19 period (Haroon & Rizvi, 2020) and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its news coverage has been deployed through a diverse range of information sources (Tran et al., 2020) that has caused tension across the globe (Robertson, 2021) alongside fear and panic (Thirumaran et al., 2021).

By relying on news coverages and official news reports associated with COVID-19 which are disseminated by media and followed by people worldwide to take measures to the daily number of new cases (Liu et al., 2021). There are many research which were led to examine the impacts and/or roles of media coverages during the COVID-19 few of which found that there is reliable and informative news, as well as misleading news (Zheng et al., 2020), misinformation that lead to misunderstanding and social tensions within communities (Motta et al., 2020) or fake news (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). The remaining others also emphasized different topics by taking media coverages into account which address media contents as a central source of information during COVID-19 (Buckman et al., 2020; Cinelli et al., 2020; Gandasari & Diwidienawati, 2020; Obembe et al., 2021). For instance, the issue of mental health arising from COVID-19 led media coverages (Su et al., 2021), communication associated with health crisis on social media amid the COVID-19 (Yu et al., 2020), digital contact-tracing during the COVID-19 (Amann et al., 2021), public's attitude towards news coverage during pandemic of COVID-19 (Dong & Zheng, 2020), influencers and COVID-19 (Abidin et al., 2021), perceived safety (Liu, Li, Zhang & Zhang, 2021) and impacts of misleading media coverages on individuals (Zheng et al., 2020) are the major topics which are dealt with COVID-19 and media coverages in the existing literature. Despite the existing many studies regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on media coverages in the literature there is limited research to analyse inconspicuous side of the pandemic in news coverages.

The Case of Turkey

Turkey's geographical location creates a bridge between Europe and Asia, giving it the role of a transition culture between East and West. Due to its location as a Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Balkan country, Turkey is located at the most important development point of international tourism activities. Due to its geographical location, it is an important settlement for international tourism development (Alipour, 1996). The fact that it has provinces such as Antalya, Muğla, Aydın and İzmir, which are especially important in terms of sea-sand-sun tourism, has made Turkey a center of attraction in tourism. In addition to sea-sand-sun tourism, many alternative tourism types have also developed in Turkey. As a matter of fact, Istanbul has become an

important center of attraction, especially in terms of cultural tourism. Even according to Kladou and Mavragani (2015) Istanbul is the most popular tourist destination in Turkey and is visited by several tourists from a variety of countries.

Tourism has an important contribution to the economic growth of Turkey. In other words, there is a direct relationship between Turkey's tourism revenues and its economic growth (Terzi, 2015). The sector, which has shown a significant growth potential since 1963 in Turkey, is faced with international serious crises (Aslan, 2016). Undoubtedly, one of the most important of these crises is the Covid-19 crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has created economic shocks for all industries, but the impact on the tourism industry has been quite pronounced relative to other industries (Çetin ve Göktepe, 2020). In this context, Covid-19, unlike other viruses in particular, necessitated the introduction of wider and stricter travel restrictions, as this situation disrupted the activities of airline companies, agencies and accommodation businesses (Boone vd., 2020), and these developments negatively affected the Turkish economy as well as the world economies. It has become an important issue to deal with the ignored effects of the crisis as well as the visible effects of the crisis, especially in order for the Turkish tourism sector to come out of the covid-19 crisis effectively.

Methods

Data collection and analysis

Overall, there are 22 newspapers that publish tourism news in total in Turkey and the data of the present research was collected from 19 newspapers' coverages (n=2082) that were published online between March and December 2020. Since the other 3 newspapers are not open access, their data could not be accessed. It can be stated that sufficient sample has been reached since the news about Covid-19 from all open access tourism newspapers because of analyzed. The major online tourism magazines from which data was obtained are Tourism Diary (n=55), Tourism GM (n=81), Turkey Tourism (n=110), The Voices of Tourism (n=232), Tourism News Bulletin (n=98), Tourism News (n=53), Tourism Newspaper (n=110), Tourism Professional's Newspaper (n=185), Tourism News Center (n=344), Tourism Press (n=312), Tourism News (n=73), Tourism Holiday Travel (n=20 News), Turizm Güncel (n=17), Hotel Newspaper (n=3), Tourism Newspaper (n=4), Tourism File (n=310), Tourism News Agency (n=5) One News English, News Tourism (n=20) and Tourism Haber.Com (n=50). The data used in the study are data provided by public and researchers from open sources and do not require ethical committee approval. The majority of news coverages were Turkish which were translated into English for the examination of data analysis. Qualitative research method was used in the research. Qualitative research method is a method that mediates the collection of primary or secondary data necessary to form the whole or theory itself based on different pieces of information (Kozak, 2017). It is seen that the content analysis method is generally used in the analysis of data in qualitative research in the field of tourism (İnanır, 2022). In this context this research data was analysed through content analysis by utilizing the MAXQDA software program to increase the credibility and reliability of the current research. After data analysis process has been completed, 12 themes were created which convey the impacts of COVID-19 on the entire tourism industry (see Figure 1).

Findings

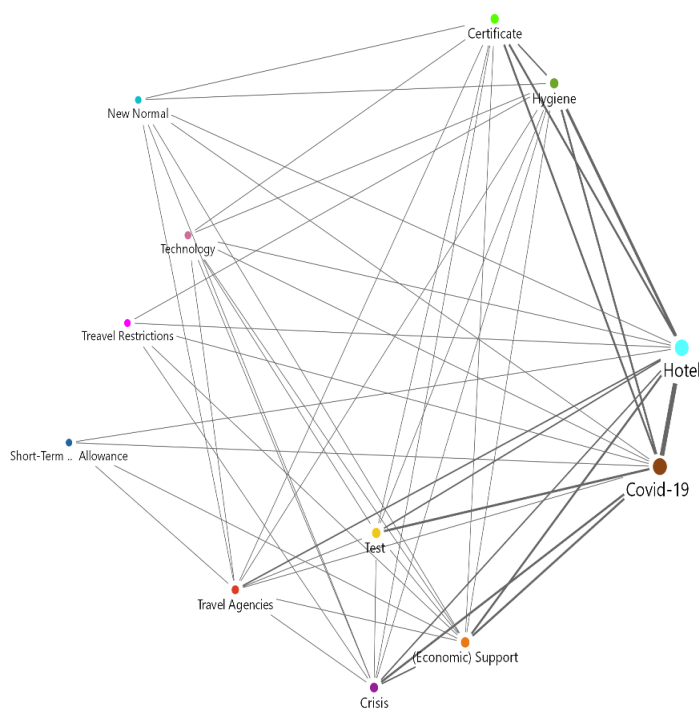
This research constituted a database by analysing 2082 news consisting of 2600 pages regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and its subsectors and a concept map that shows the interrelated relationships among themes that were generated by using a qualitative data analysis program. The major themes which were obtained from news coverages are hotel (n=3671), (Economic) support (n=1165), test (n=1144), hygiene (n=1107), certificate (n=980), crisis (n=911), travel agencies (n=600), technology (n=309), travel restrictions (n=187), new normal (n=169), and short-term employment allowance (n=130). Considering Figure 1, the selected themes are connected by an arrow showing the degree of relations between each other. As such, there is the strongest relationship between COVID-19 and Hotel theme, while a strong relationship was established between the themes Hotel-Hygiene, Hotel-Certificate, Hotel-Test, Hotel-Crisis, Hotel-Travel agencies and hotel-Economic support. Moreover, it can be stated that there is a strong relationship between COVID-19- test, Covid-19- Hygiene, Covid-19-Certificate, Covid-19- Economic support and Covid-19- Crisis. Finally, a strong relationship was established between the Crisis and Economic support.

Hotel: The hotel was found as the most common theme in news related to COVID-19. It was also found in data analysis that there is a high intensity of the relationship between the theme hotel and themes hygiene, certificate, economic support, travel agencies, crisis and test which are correlated. In this vein, measures and regulations for safe tourism as a quick response for the recovery process are intense topics in media coverages

associated with hotel establishments. Another issue mentioned in the new coverages is the dramatic decrease in hotel occupancy rates due to the ongoing negative effects on the tourism sector at the global and local level due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Economic) Support: When the figure 1 is examined; A strong relationship was determined between hotel-economic support, covid-19-economic support, and economic support-crisis. As well as The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the aviation industry first since it has emerged. Content of the news coverage mostly supports the economic damage of travel agencies and hotel businesses across the world. Under this theme, through initiated ‘Tourism Outbreak Support Program’ which led by the government for tourism establishments during outbreak occupies a significant debate within media coverages. It can be concluded from the economic support that the measures are supported to protect employment while ensure financial stability and overcome current challenges in a short period of time.

Figure 1. Concept map of media news related to COVID-19



Test: When the figure 1 is examined; A strong relationship was determined between hotel-test and covid-19-test. As well as, as being the integral part of providing the safe tourism certificate and an important part of the new normal process, the most frequently mentioned issue regarding the theme test within the media coverages was found that employees and customers are obliged to test in convincing they are safe. In addition, it is emphasized that different types of measures are taken for employees and customers with positive tests to prevent the deployment of the virus.

Technology: With the COVID-19 crisis, technology-driven travel and tourism have become an intense debate. The importance of technology-oriented robotic services in airports and hotel businesses has dramatically increased, especially with the obligatory of social distance. In this vein, the prevalence of artificial intelligence in the sector has also increased.

Hygiene: The hygiene theme is closely related to the safe tourism certification, new normal and technology themes. In addition, in order to ensure social distance it is stated in the content of news coverages that the widespread use of artificial intelligence and robots due to social distance would support by obeying some hygiene rules. Such rules which are developed by tourism stakeholders to be applied have taken in news coverages are: touchless payment, online reservation facility, digital maps, digital queue management, digital menu and online shopping.

Certificate: When the figure 1 is examined; A strong relationship was determined between hotel-certificate and covid-19-certificate. As well as It is frequently mentioned in the news content that airports and hotel businesses are required to obtain certificates in order to ensure safe travel and tourism, as a condition for the

start of the new normal process. In particular, airline companies and hotel businesses were required to obtain safe tourism certificates, and hotel businesses were periodically audited by Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Crisis: When the figure 1 is examined; A strong relationship was determined between hotel-crisis, covid 19-crisis and economic support-crisis. The debate, which has become widespread with the emergence of COVID-19, is whether this virus is a human-made or a nature-based crisis. Given that the news coverages it can be confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic is neither a tourism-related disaster nor a crisis. Unlike it is a health crisis whose unexpected impacts would continue on the entire tourism sector for many years to recover.

Travel Agencies: When the figure 1 is examined; A strong relationship was determined hotel-travel agencies. Analysis of media coverages also revealed that as travel agencies experienced one of the highest contractions, some chose the downsizing, while others filed for bankruptcy. On the other hand, the remaining others choose to revive through the government-led short-term incentive support in order to sustain their activities.

Restrictions: While the restrictions represent the measures to be taken to reduce the negative effects of COVID-19, on the other hand, they also reflect a starting point of the new normal period. Further, the majority state that the removal of restrictions depends on the widespread use of the vaccine.

New Normal: Some tourism stakeholders consider that the wider applicability of vaccines is a crucial part of successful process of new normal while many of them think the taken measures as insufficient. The meaning which is attributed in media news to new normal is that It is the simultaneous and periodic implementation of a more gradual transition in all sectors.

Short Term Employment Allowance: The prohibition of dismissal, which runs parallel to the Short-Time Working Allowance, is a regulation that has been initiated and implemented by the government from the emergence of the crisis to date. According to this regulation, those working in tourism will continue to be employed with lower wages throughout the COVID-19 period. Thus, this regulation was aimed to prevent the employment problem in the tourism sector during the crisis.

Conclusion, implications and recommendations

The current paper has attempt to explore impacts of COVID-19 on the entire industry through investigating the content of 19 newspapers' coverages. It also aimed to examine the visible and invisible effects of COVID-19 on the tourism sector by analysing the content of media coverages. The study results revealed some key implications as well as gaps to be filled by future research studies. First, as an infectious disease COVID-19 has impacted travel behaviour and destination choice (Liu, Fu, Hua & Li, 2021) and negatively affected travel intentions due to perceived risk (Liu, Shi, Li & Amin, 2021) which results that hotels, along with travel agencies, are the most affected tourism establishments.

First, measures in terms of coping with the negative effects of COVID-19 on visit intention and destination image recovery in post-COVID-19 crisis have not been dealt with in media coverages which generate a huge gap. This result shows that the measures taken by tourism stakeholders and enterprises alongside policymakers are mundanely taken measures and take action rather than medium and long-term responsive recovery processes. Particularly, the issue of providing short-term economic government incentives to tourism entrepreneurs in order to reduce the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak is the content immensely takes place at the central debate in media coverages. Also, to reduce the detrimental impacts of COVID-19 on tourism workers short-term employment allowance was found to be the central issue which immensely endorsed by the government amid the outbreak.

Second, it can be concluded from the content of media coverages that the issues of intensions of tourism workers to stay in the sector and their organizal commitment to their establishment during and after COVID-19 appear to be overlooked which are not discussed by tourism stakeholders. Problems that are likely to occur in the medium and long term seem to have been sacrificed to the short-term economic measures taken to avoid the mundane negative effects of the crisis. This supports that short term daily measures in response to COVID-19 health crisis receive greater attention in the policy agenda by government and tourism entrepreneurs rather than mid and long term measures for recovery process.

Third, One of the important issues emphasized in media coverages in order to get rid of the crisis is the digital transformation of the tourism sector. Here, issues that are more relevant to guests such as contactless room entry, online reservation, digital menu, online shopping, advertising and promotion are discussed here. however, adaptation to digital transformation emerges as an important issue for employees as well. because employees who cannot keep up with this transformation may move away from the sector. For this reason, the

issue of digital leadership, which is an important factor on employees in the transition to the digitalization process, has not been mentioned to media coverages, but it emerges as an important issue that needs to be addressed. Lately, the current paper has benefited from the content of online media coverages that are limited to 19 newspapers representing the limitation of the study. It is recommended future research conducting a study to deal with impacts of COVID-19 on employees' intention to stay or continue in the industry either conducting face-to-face interviews or through utilizing a survey.

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Table 1. Publications towards COVID-19 and news coverages

Author(s)	Title	Aim(s) & objective(s)	Context	Key findings	Key themes emerged
Gabore (2020)	Western and Chinese media representation of Africa in COVID-19 news coverage	To examine as to how different countries perceive and shape news frames on media coverages for events in a single country.	Wester, Chinese and Africa.	News/media coverages have been found positive and negative which depend on the perception of countries' sources.	Conflict, Negativity, Human interest, Impact, Eminence, Novelty.
Casero-Ripollés (2020)	Impact of Covid-19 on the media system. Communicative and democratic consequences of news consumption during the outbreak	To investigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on news coverage, the trustworthiness given by citizens to the media as well as their capability to elicit fake news.	United States	The study results confirm the occurrence of significant improvements such as the rebound of the role of legacy media, especially television and support that people who often remain away from the information have reconnected with the news.	News influencers, News bystanders, Those checked out of news.
Basch et al. 2020	News coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic: Missed opportunities to promote health sustaining behaviors	To analyse the content of news coverage associated with COVID-19 posted online.	International and United States	Prevention information on reducing transmission was rarely covered in the news videos included in this sample; Death and death rate were the most commonly mentioned aspect of COVID-19 in these news videos	Death, death rate, anxieties, coughing, facemask, Disinfection.
Yu et al. 2020	Communication related health crisis on social media: a case of COVID-19 outbreak	To elicit the key characteristics of tourist communication on social media related to COVID-19 health crisis and ensure insights and recommendations for future research.	International	As compared to the classical crisis lifecycle, more acute peaks of communications may emerge in the case of the health crisis reach at a global scale.	tourists' risk perception, the effects of tourism enterprises' service quality in crisis, the quarantine issues in public health, the authenticity of media coverage, and racial discrimination.
Hart et al., 2020	Politicization and Polarization in COVID-19 News Coverage	To investigate the level of polarization and politicization in	United States	The study results found that the high degree of politicization and polarization in initial COVID-19	Polarization, Politicization, COVID, Coronavirus, Corona.

		COVID-19 related news coverage.		coverage might have increased polarization in COVID-19 attitudes.	
Inanir (2021)	Second Home Tourism During COVID-19: The Case of Turkey.	Depending on the developments in the second home tourism experienced during the Covid-19 process, this study aimed to examine the media reports about the issue in Turkey	Turkey	As a result of the researches, it has been revealed that 23 news reports have been made on different news sites related to the subject. Based on this news, it has been concluded that the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the second home tourism in behavioral, environmental and economic aspects.	Behavioral, Environmental, Economic.
Amann, Sleight & Vayena (2021)	Digital contact-tracing during the Covid-19 pandemic: An analysis of newspaper coverage in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland	Based on the Daily newspapers, to analyse the different aspects of discussion concerning digital contact tracing in German-speaking media.	Germany, Austria, Switzerland	Results illustrate that the media discourse was shaped by conflicting insights on the role and procedures of digital contact tracing app.	1) data governance; 2) role of IT giants; 3) scientific rigor; 4) voluntariness; 5) functional efficacy; 6) role of the app.
Abidin, Lee, Barbetta, Miao (2021)	Influencers and COVID-19: reviewing key issues in press coverage across Australia, China, Japan, and South Korea	To explore the influence of the COVID-19 on influencers, and influencers' engagements with and reactions to the pandemic.	Australia, China, Japan, Korea	Findings indicated that local backstories and contexts are of great importance to resolving why news angles tend to present specific stories to influencers.	Income loss, Backlash, COVID-19 campaign, Misinformation, Influencer strategy, Brand leverage, and Industry shifts.