



## A NEW TOURISM IN TURKEY

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### ABSTRACT

Covid-19 (New Coronavirus) is an upper respiratory tract disease, which first occurred in the animal and seafood market in Wuhan, China. The new coronavirus, which first appeared in December 2019, has affected the whole world in a short time. With the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak to almost all countries, the epidemic has become a pandemic. This pandemic, which affects countries economically, socially, and psychologically, has deeply affected many business sectors. Tourism is the industry that is affected by crises at the earliest and the most. Countries cover most of their current account deficits from the tourism industry known as smokeless chimney. The tourism industry in Turkey, which had often been affected by regional risks, is facing the effects of the pandemic now. This research aims to show the effects of COVID-19 on Turkish tourism and to evaluate the opinions, expectations, and suggestions of the employees of the industry. In line with this purpose, an online interview was conducted, and the participants were asked nine questions. At the end of the analysis, it was determined that the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry was the significant decrease in the number of tourists due to the restrictions and the resulting large income losses. It has been determined that, following the circular issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, businesses took measures to obtain a Safe Tourism Certificate and provided various training to their staff. Fluctuations in macroeconomic indicators of the tourism industry in Turkey were examined. It was understood that the tourism enterprises that experienced a loss of income hope to overcome the crisis with the least damage due to the short-time working allowance, tax reductions, and incentives, and they want to proceed with marketing activities without decreasing the employment rate.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, revenue, tourism

**JEL-Classification:** M52, M31, E24

### 1.INTRODUCTION

Tourism activities cover many areas, especially accommodation, travel, and transportation services. While the countries that carry out tourism activities achieve their current account deficit with tourism revenues, tourism also helps the country's economic growth and development (Kiper, Saraç, Çolak, & Batman, 2020, s. 528). The tourism industry is negatively and rapidly affected by regional events such as war, terrorism, and natural disasters occurring in the world. The tourism industry, which was previously affected by regional risks, has now faced the COVID-19 epidemic (Acar, 2020, s. 8).

The COVID -19 outbreak that first appeared in Wuhan, China in December 2019, spread to about 193 countries. According to the data of the World Health Organization dated 14 November 2020, the number of cases exceeded 54 million, while the number of deaths exceeded



1 million 300 thousand. While the countries most affected by the epidemic are the USA, India, Brazil, France, and Russia, death news mostly comes from the USA, Brazil, India, Mexico, and Great Britain. In terms of COVID-19 cases, Turkey is 25th with 407.939, and 21st in deaths due to COVID-19 with 11.326. China, the capital of pandemic, is currently 60th with 91,807 cases, and 35th with 4,742 deaths (World Health Organization, 2020).

COVID-19, which caused the deaths of millions of people, threatens the tourism industry in Turkey. According to the data of the World Tourism Organization, Turkey was 6th in terms of the number of visitors and 13th in terms of tourism revenue in 2019. However, because of the pandemic, in the first quarter of 2020, the number of visitors was 5,639,413, which is a decrease of 15.1 percent compared to the same quarter of last year. The tourism revenue also decreased in the same quarter by 11.4 percent, ended up being 5,101,206,000\$. In the second quarter, borders were closed due to the restrictions imposed on the country, thus the surveys conducted at the borders could not be carried out. As a result of this, despite the lack of data regarding the tourism revenue, it was determined that there was a sharp decline in the number of tourists in April, May, and June with 99.38%, 99.34%, and 99.34% respectively. The borders have been re-opened with the gradual removal of the restrictions and the 'New Normalization' process. In the third quarter of 2020, the number of visitors was 5,604,155, a decline of 74.1 percent compared to the same quarter of last year, and the total tourism revenue was 4,044,365,000\$, a decline of 71.4 percent (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2020). The human-oriented industry, which employed more than a million people in 2018, saw a 14,3 percent decrease in employment in July 2020, due to a lack of visitors and a sharp decline in income (Tourism Data Bank, 2020).

Studies showed that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens the tourism industry in Turkey, and for this research, interviews were conducted with 10 people from 10 different companies to determine how much the businesses were affected. The strategies implemented by businesses during the COVID-19 outbreak and their predictions for the industry after the pandemic were determined.

## **2.LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1.COVID-19 Pandemic**

COVID-19 (New coronavirus) was first identified in Wuhan, China in late December 2019, in someone with symptoms of high fever, cough, and shortness of breath in Huanan Wholesale Seafood Market. As a result of the studies carried out after the first case appeared in December, COVID-19 disease has been identified on 13 January 2020. COVID-19 infection, known to be transmitted from person to person by contacting and inhaling droplets (aerosol) caused by reasons such as cough or sneeze, rapidly spread to other cities after first seen in the city of Wuhan (Ayдын & Doğan, 2020, s. 94).

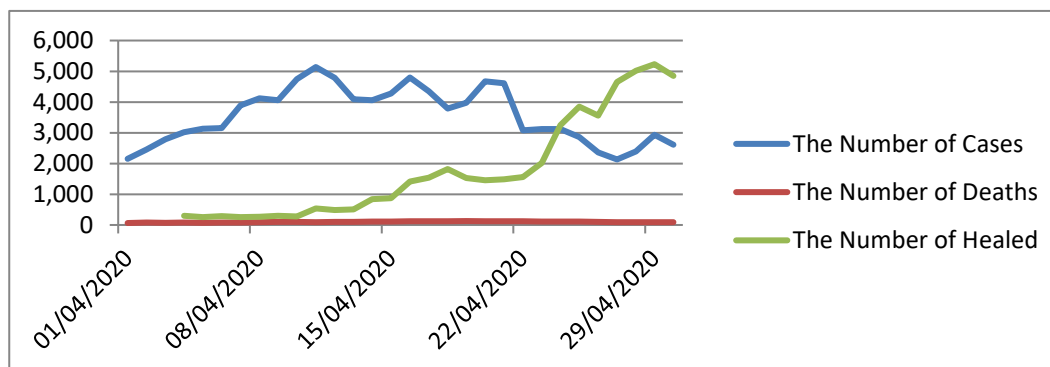
COVID-19, which threatens human life, shows symptoms within an average of 15 days. Further studies showed that the disease has other symptoms as well such as headache, joint pain, loss of taste, and smell. COVID-19, which shows no symptoms in some cases, especially affected people over 65, and those with chronic diseases (Bağcı, Uzun, & Bostan, 2020, s. 332)

As of 14 November 2020, according to the data provided by WHO, the total number of cases worldwide passed 54 million, and more than 1 million 300 thousand people passed away due to COVID-19. The top ten countries with the most cases are the U.S., India, Brazil, France, Russia, Spain, Great Britain, Argentina, Colombia, and Italy. The top ten countries with the highest number of deaths are the U.S., Brazil, India, Mexico, Great Britain, Italy, France, Spain, Iran, and Peru. Ten countries with the highest number of deaths per case, on the other hand, are



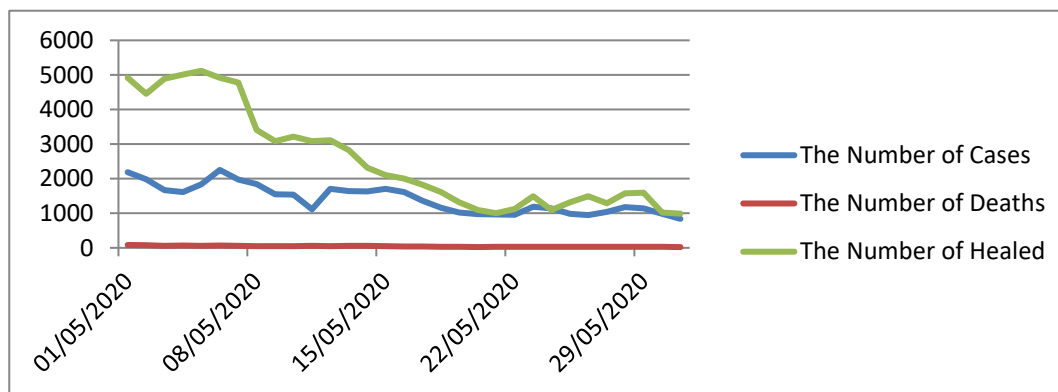
San Marino, Belgium, Peru, Andorra, Spain, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Bolivia, and Mexico. Turkey is 25th with 407,939 cases and 21st with 11,326 deaths. Additionally, the percentage of mortality is 13.8% in Turkey, which makes 80th in the world. China, where the pandemic started, is 60th with 91,807 cases and 35th with 4742 deaths. China is 178th in terms of rate of mortality with 0.3% (World Health Organization, 2020)

The first case of COVID-19 in Turkey was seen on 11 March 2020, and the number of cases kept increasing despite the measures taken. The first death due to coronavirus was announced on 17 March 2020. The number of patients healed was zero until the first week of April.



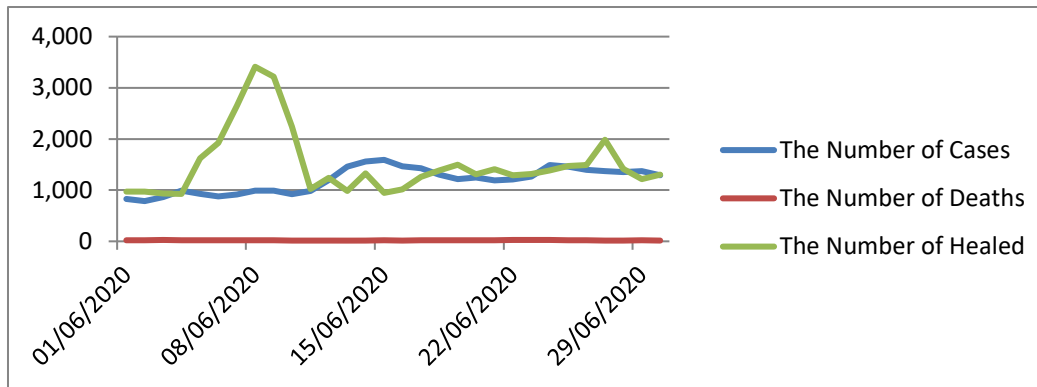
**Figure:1 COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for April**  
(Republic Of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)

After the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Turkey in March, with the closure of air traffic in April, foreign tourist entry to the country was effectively ended. (The Number of Visitors: April 2019: 3.809.819 – April 2020: 24.238) (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020)



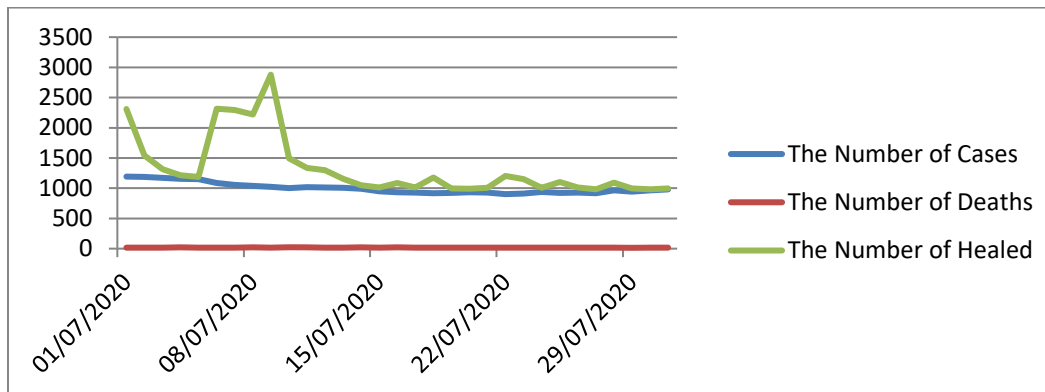
**Figure-2: COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for May**  
(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)

Because the measures taken in April was still in place in May, there was not much of a change in the number of tourists. Compared to May 2019, there was a significant drop. (The Number of Visitors: May 2019: 4.512.020– May 2020: 29.829) (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020)



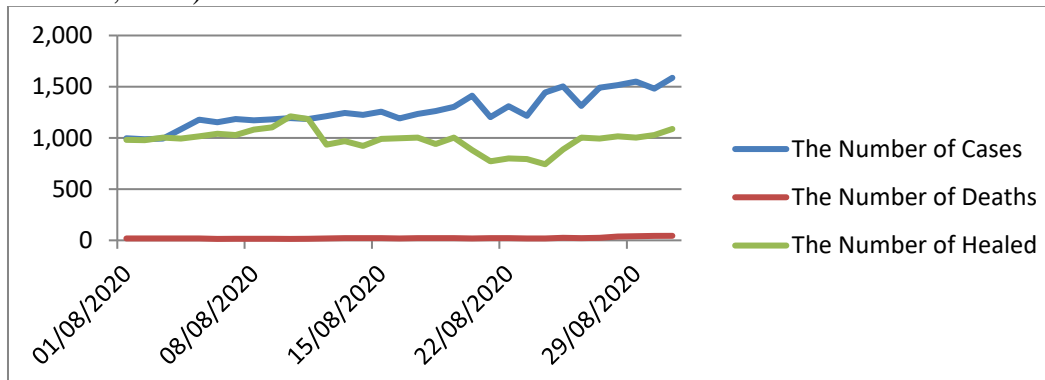
**Figure-3: COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for June**  
(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020).

Due to decreasing COVID-19 cases, in June, "new normal life" process was given a start and some of the restrictions was lifted, which led to an increased in the number of tourist compared to the previous two months. However, the numbers were nowhere near to that of June 2019. (June 2019: 5.969.981 – June 2020: 295.840) (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020).



**Figure-4: COVID-19 Pandemic. Data for July**  
(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)

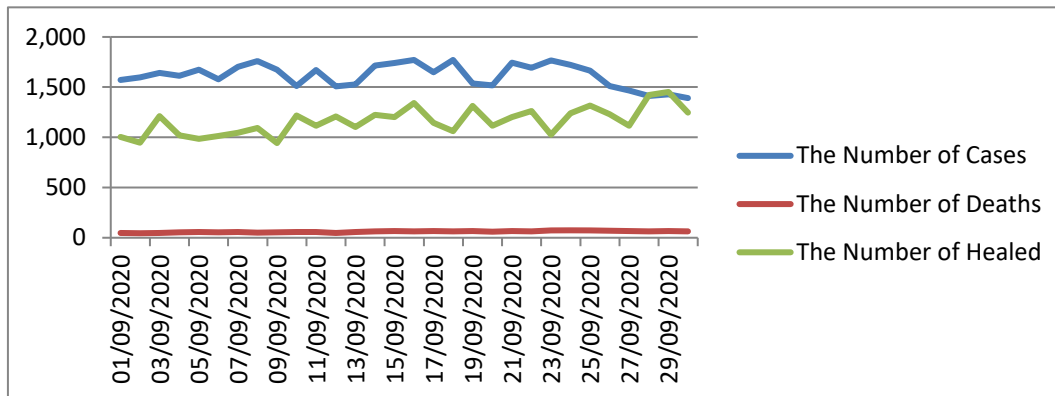
With the acceleration of the "new normal life" process in July, tourist activity increased considerably compared to the previous months, but could not approach the July 2019 figures. (July 2019: 7.413.887 – July 2020: 1.381.804) ) (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020)



**Figure-5: COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for August**  
(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)



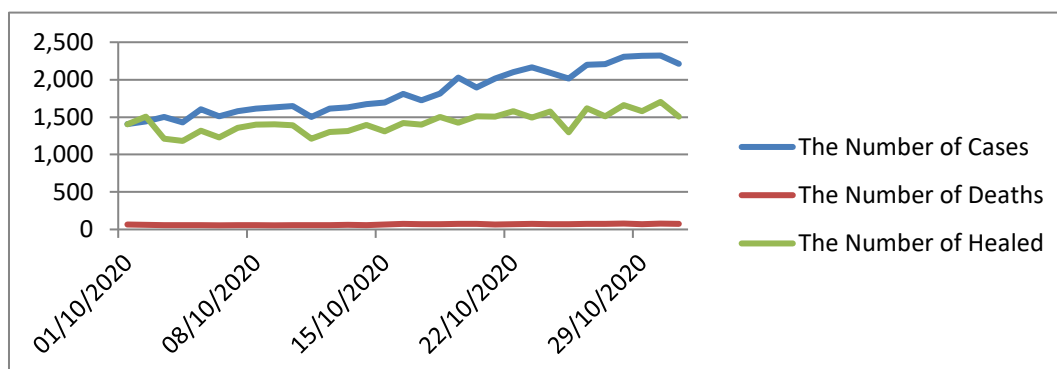
In August, although there was a slight increase in new COVID-19 cases, tourism activity did not slowdown, on the contrary, the number of visitors increased significantly. Yet, the figures were still far off from that of the previous year.( August 2019 : 7.016.330 – August 2020: 2.192.251) (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020)



**Figure-6: COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for September**

(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)

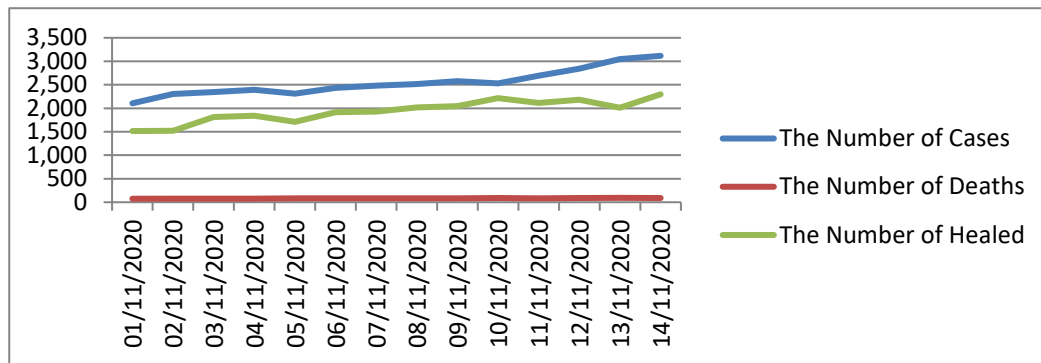
In September, with 2,534,376 visitors, the highest number of visitors in 2020 was reached. Although the figures of the previous years could not be approached, some relief was achieved for 2020.( September 2019: 5.982.789 – September 2020: 2.534.376) (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020)



**Figure-7: COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for October**

(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)

Because the figures for the fourth quarter of 2020 haven't been released yet, the number of visitors for the period is unknown (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020).



**Figure-8: COVID-19 Pandemic, Data for November**  
(Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020)

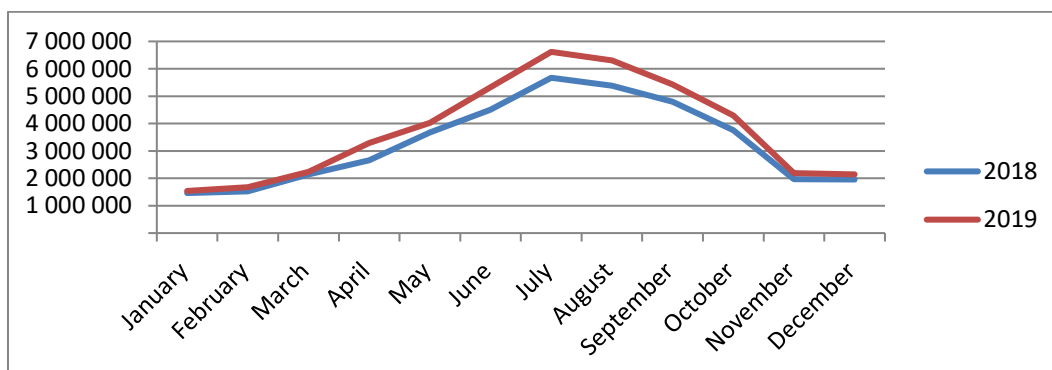
Because the figures for the fourth quarter of 2020 haven't been released yet, the number of visitors for the period is unknown (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020).

### 3.TOURISM AND TOURISM ECONOMICS

#### 3.1.Tourism and Tourism Economics

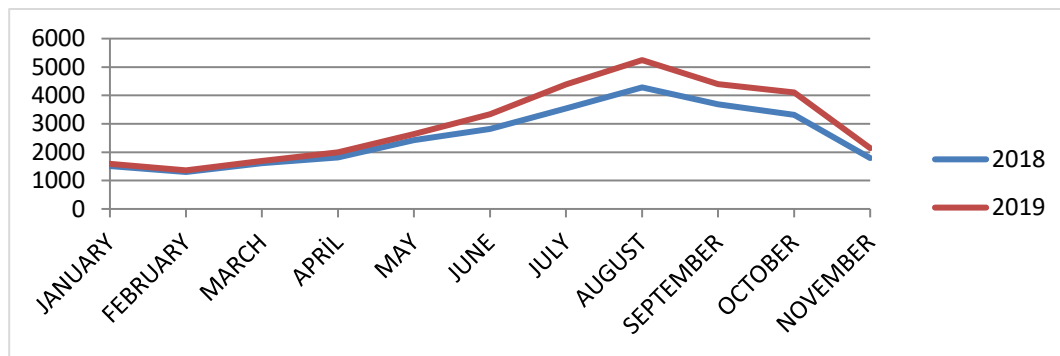
Tourism, which means rotation movement, is derived from the Latin word tornus. There are two dynamic elements in defining the tourism industry. One of them is travel and the other is accommodation. It is the whole of the trips that individuals make by temporarily staying outside their own living spaces for the purpose of sightseeing, having fun and resting (Yıldız, 2020, s. 55).

Tourism, which became popular with the acceleration of the developments and changes in the social structure after the 1980s, started to be revived with the export of goods and services. Based on the data obtained from studies, it is known that tourism is the most dynamic industry within the Turkish economy (Gökdeniz, Dinç, Aşık, Münger, & Taşkı, 2009, s. 217) Turkey experiences four season, which potentially can meet any demand regarding tourism. The importance of foreign exchange income from tourism is huge in Turkey's economy (Republic Of Turkey Ministry Of Culture and Tourism, 2020)



**Figure-9: Total Number of Visitors in 2018 & 2019**  
(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2019)

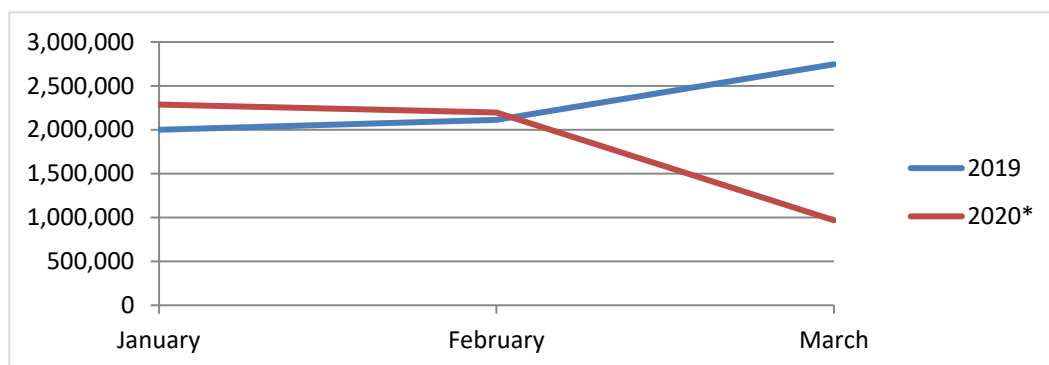
Compared to 2018, the number of visitors increased by 12,22 percent in average in 2019. The increase was 8,5% in the first quarter, 15,3% in the second quarter, 15% in the third quarter, and 13,7% in the fourth quarter (Turkish Istatistical Institute, 2019).



**Figure-10: Tourism Revenues in 2018 & 2019**  
(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2019)

Compared to 2018, parallel to the increase in the number of tourists, tourism revenue also increased in 2019. The increase in revenue was 4.6% in the first quarter, 13.2% in the second quarter, 22% in the third quarter, and 20.6% in the fourth quarter (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2019).

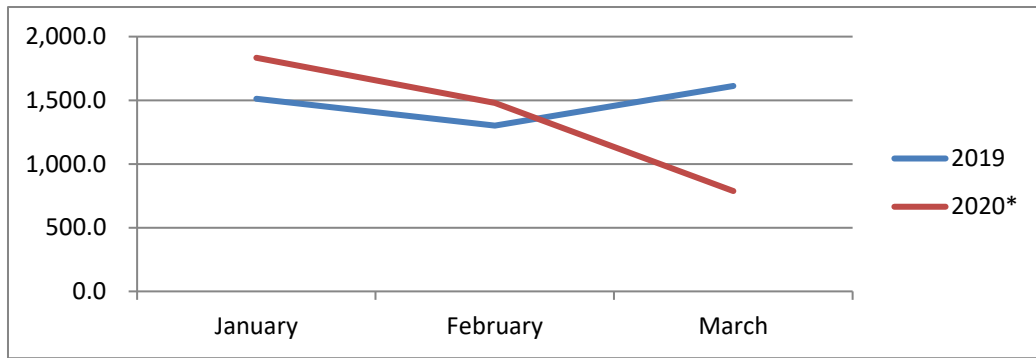
According to the data from the World Trade Organization (UNWTO), affiliated to the United Nations, Turkey was 13th in the world in terms of tourism revenue, and 6th in terms of number of visitors in 2019 (World Trade Organization, 2020). The importance of the tourism industry in regional development is directly proportional to the fact that it is the industry most rapidly affected by regional risks. The COVID-19 pandemic we are going through has caused a serious loss of income in the tourism industry.



**Figure-11: The Number of Tourists in Q1, 2020**  
(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2020)

With 5,639,413 visitors, Turkey saw a 15.1% decline in the number of tourists in Q1, 2020. In January and February, there was an increase of 14.31%, and 3.90% respectively in the number of visitors. In March, when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed, the number of tourists decreased by 64.73% compared to the previous year (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2020).

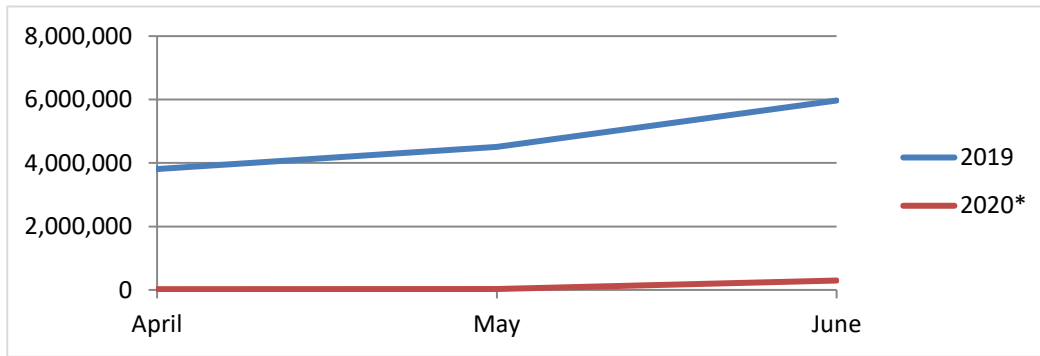




**Figure-12: Total Revenue In Q1, 2020**

(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2020)

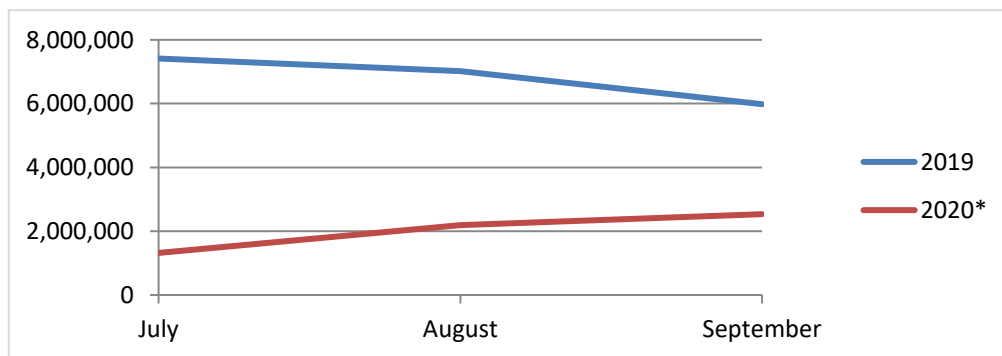
Turkey's tourism income in Q1, 2020 was \$4,101,206,000, a loss of 11.4% compared to the same quarter of 2019. Tourism income increased proportionately to the number of tourists in January and February, however, a sharp decline was experienced in March after the confirmation of the first COVID-19 case (Turkish Istatistical Institute, 2020)



**Figure-13: The Number of Tourists in Q2, 2020**

(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2020)

Due to the closure of borders in Q2, 2020, the number of tourists declined 99.38% in April, 99.34% in May, and 95.04% in June. Additionally, because of the restrictions imposed, surveys conducted at the borders could not be carried out. Consequently, tourism revenue for Q2, 2020 was not disclosed, however, the loss of income can easily be understood from the number of tourists (Turkish Istatistical Institute, 2020).



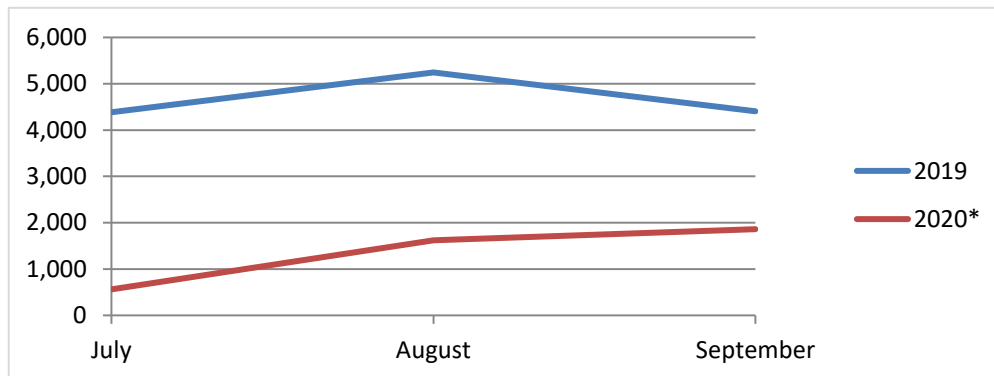
**Figure-14: The Number of Tourists in Q3, 2020**

(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2020)





With 5,604,155 visitors, Turkey saw a decline of 74.1% in the number of tourists in Q3, 2020 compared to that of the same quarter of 2019. The decline was 81.36% in July, 68.76% in August, and 57.64% in September. However, due to the restrictions being gradually removed, Q3, 2020 fared much better than the rest of the year (Turkish Istatistical Institute, 2020)



**Figure-15: Tourism Revenue In Q3, 2020**

(Hotel Association of Turkey, 2020)

Turkey's tourism revenue for Q3, 2020 was \$4,044,356,000, a loss of 71.2% compared to the previous year. Yet, similar to the number of tourists, Turkey fared much better in Q3, 2020 than the rest of year regarding the tourism revenue (Turkish Istatistical Institute, 2020).

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The study aims to evaluate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in Turkey. Due to the continuation of the pandemic, it is thought that determining its effects during these trying times and taking the predictions of the employees of the industry for the upcoming period would contribute to the sector and the areas related to the sector.

The study was carried out with a qualitative approach to examine the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism in Turkey. Semi-structured interview questions were prepared, and the data was obtained by interviewing the participants via ZOOM, due to the outbreak. In the study, 10 employees from 10 different four or five-starred, certified tourism businesses in Turkey were interviewed.

#### 5. RESULTS

The frequency distribution of the participants regarding their gender, age, educational status, marital status, and total experience is given in Table 1. 60% of the participants in the study are male, and 40% are female, of which 60% are married, and 40% are single. Most of the participants (60%) are over the age of 30. As the study targets experienced participants, 50% of the participants have more than 11 years of experience, while 30% of them have 6-10 years of industry experience. 60% of the participants have been working in the same company for 0 to 5 years. Most of the participants (40%) are F&B managers, while housekeeper managers and assistant directors are also in the majority (20%).

**Tablo 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Education Level	Total Experience	Time Spent in the Current Company	Position
P1	Female	43	Married	Universty	20 Years	10 Years	Housekeeper Manager
P2	Male	44	Married	Universty	22 Years	11 Years	F&B manager
P3	Male	28	Single	Universty	5 Years	5 Years	Manager
P4	Male	43	Married	Universty	22 Years	3 Years	Assistant Director
P5	Female	24	Single	Graduate	2 Years	2 Years	Sales Manager
P6	Male	69	Married	Universty	10 Years	10 Years	F&B manager
P7	Male	43	Married	Universty	23 Years	4 Years	Assistant Director
P8	Male	27	Single	Universty	5 Years	5 Years	F&B manager
P9	Female	48	Married	High school	15 Years	5 Years	Housekeeper Manager
P10	Female	29	Single	Associate Degree	8 Years	7 Years	F&B manager

**Q.1 Findings Regarding the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism in Turkey**

The participants were asked about the precautions they had taken before the COVID-19 outbreak spread in our country, and the strategies they have implemented since the start of the pandemic in Turkey. Additionally, they were asked of their plans for the aftermath of the pandemic, and their predictions regarding the future of tourism in Turkey.

**Q.2 Before the COVID-19 pandemic had been seen in our country, had measures been taken on behalf of the enterprise and for the personnel?**

When the participants were asked whether measures were taken on behalf of businesses, personnel, and customers before the COVID-19 outbreak, it was determined that each enterprise took measures within its own structure. It was understood that they wanted to raise awareness with online training, and they paid more attention to hygiene.

**Q.3 Have you implemented the measures enforced by the Ministry due to the COVID-19 outbreak?**

All the participants stated that the measures enforced by the Ministry of Health were followed and that "Safe Tourism Certificate" was obtained.

**Q.4 Considering the annual income rates, how much loss has been experienced since March, when the COVID-19 epidemic reached our country?**

When asked about the annual income rate of their respective businesses, it was seen that 2 participants were affected by 80%, 5 participants by 70%, and the rest by over 50%.

**Q.5 How the economic recession caused by the pandemic would affect the cost and prices in the Tourism Industry?**



When the participants were asked how the economic recession caused by the pandemic would affect the costs and prices, all participants stated that the recession would result in increased costs and prices for a couple of years, which would lead to a more competitive market. Besides 20% of the participants said that if the government would reduce the interest rates to support the businesses, tourism could get a boost.

**Q.5 Do you think that measures and incentives should be taken to stimulate the domestic market if the foreign market activity does not return to the previous levels in the long term?**

All participants stated that they were impacted by the lack of foreign guests, and that they could not catch up with their previous levels of occupancy due to anxiety and economic reasons in the domestic market, and that many businesses will not be able to survive without support. In addition, 50% of the participants stated that the opening of the health sector to the foreign market would positively affect tourism.

**Q.6 Can Turkish tourism turn this into an opportunity after the COVID-19 pandemic is over or after a vaccine is developed?**

When asked whether the Turkish tourism industry can turn this into an opportunity after the pandemic is over, 90% of the participants stated that every crisis is open to new opportunities and that it can be taken advantage of, if not in a short period. It is thought that if the measures taken are explained by underlining that the rules are enforced, Turkey is safer than most other countries, and the hospitals have high capacities, the situation could be turned into an opportunity. However, 10% of the participants stated that because the economies should recover their own market first, there was no opportunity to be spoken of, and that recovering from the damages would take a long time.

**Q.7 Regarding the tourism industry, what strategies should Turkey implement after the COVID-19 pandemic is over?**

All the participants answering the question stated that measures must be taken for the sake of hygiene and that arrangements must be made in a way that costumers feel safe. Besides, they stated that tourism could bring additional income to the regions and that regional potentials should be evaluated and branded, and nationalized through visual broadcasting channels. In addition, 40% of the participants stated that the focus should be on attractive promotions that are accessible to all and meet the demands.

**Q.8 Do you expect any changes in tourist behavior after the COVID-19 pandemic?**

When participants were asked about changes in tourist behavior after the pandemic, hygiene was the priority of all participants, like the answers received in the previous question. There is also an anticipation that the anxiety experienced due to the pandemic could not be overcome for a long time, thus the costumers will be suspicious and request attentive personnel.

**Q.9 Does the COVID-19 pandemic pose a risk to mass tourism?**

When asked about the impact of the pandemic on mass tourism, most of the participants (70%) stated that it would be difficult to break the habit of people for a long time, but enterprises could create a feeling of trust by taking necessary measures and implementing conscious strategies. In other words, they said that there is a risk in the short term, however, it could be eliminated in the long run. Other participants (30%) predict that the COVID-19 outbreak will not affect mass tourism.

Besides, each company must perform its risk assessments according to the suitable scale and simulations should be done even by gamification methods (Akkartal, Barooti, & Akkartal, 2019).



## 6.CONCLUSION

The study showed that COVID-19 pandemic had a negative effect on the tourism industry in Turkey. Support programs should be provided for the tourism industry, which especially has an important place in the service sector, otherwise, many non-chain or non-corporate businesses will not survive. Tourism enterprises have taken measures for their businesses and their personnel even when there were no cases in Turkey, but the measures taken could not prevent the impact of the pandemic. The rapid increase in COVID-19 cases all over the world made people fear for their lives, which led to stagnation. Sightseeing and recreational activities have been shelved and, of course, health has been the priority for everyone. Closing the borders due to the increase in cases brought tourism to a halt. Tourism enterprises have lost an average of 68% of their income. Although our country has experienced many crises before, the most serious loss is seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism in Turkey will not come alive immediately. It should be understood that domestic tourism, just as foreign tourism, is important for businesses in the service industry, and actions should be taken to stimulate domestic tourism after the pandemic. By paying special attention to hygiene, measures should be taken to increase service quality. Businesses with disinfected rooms, restaurants, and public areas will be preferred. Plans should be made taking into account the safety and health of both foreign and domestic customers. The main effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on people is the psychological effect. It will take time for people to recover from the pandemic they've been struggling with for about 9 months now, and the effects of new norms such as social distancing, staying away from crowds, and wearing masks will continue. Tourism enterprises in Turkey should take attractive actions within everyone's reach and in line with the demands.

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