

The Effects of COVID-19 on the Tourism Sector and Hotel Businesses: The Case of Marmaris

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of COVID-19 on the Tourism sector and hotel businesses. The study has been examined with the pandemic preparations for the opening of the hotel businesses, tourist expectations for the summer season of 2020, the concerns about the tourists to stay if the hotels are put into service, the measures they have taken and will take to protect the hotel employees, and the preparations to provide training for the hotel employees on Covid-19. Among the qualitative research techniques, a semi-structured interview technique has been used. Interviews were done with the authorities (general managers, restaurant managers and operation managers) (n = 8) determined by the purposeful sampling method. As a result of this test, the domestic and international reservations of the hotels have been canceled due to the bans and restrictions brought by Covid-19, or the postponement of the hotel operators. Even though preparations for the Covid-19 measures are taken, hotel operators are not very hopeful in the 2020 Summer season.

Keywords: COVID-19, tourism sector, hotel management, Marmaris.

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COVID-19'un Turizm Sektörüne ve Otel İşletmelerine Etkileri: Marmaris Örneği

Öz: Bu çalışmanın amacı, COVID-19'un Turizm sektörüne ve otel işletmelerine etkilerini değerlendirmektir. Otel işletmelerinin hizmete açılmalarına yönelik pandemi hazırlıkları, 2020 yaz sezonu için turist beklenti durumları, oteller hizmete açılırsa, konaklayacak turistlerle ilgili kaygılar, otel çalışanlarını korumaya yönelik almış oldukları ve alacakları önlemler, otel çalışanlarına covid-19 ile ilgili eğitim verme hazırlıkları alt başlıkları ile çalışma incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma teknikleri arasında yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği kullanılmıştır. Amaçlı örnekleme yöntemi ile belirlenen yetkililer (genel müdür, restoran müdürü ve operasyon müdürü) otel işletmeleri (n = 8) ile görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bu test sonucunda, Otellerin yurtiçi ve yurtdışı rezervasyonlarının Covid-19 nedeniyle getirilen yasaklar ve kısıtlamalar ile beraber iptal edildiği veya ileri bir tarihe ertelendiği, otel işletme yetkililerinin otellerini hizmete açma beklenti düzeylerinin çok düşük olduğu, Otel işletme yetkililerinin Covid-19 yönelik alınacak önlemlere yönelik hazırlık yapmalarına rağmen 2020 yaz sezonundan çok ümitli olmadıkları tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19, turizm sektörü, otel işletmeleri, Marmaris.

Giriş

Tourism, with its significant economic return, contributes to reducing the balance of payments deficits of developing countries, and has a positive economic effect for many segments of the society thanks to its multiplier effect. The fact that COVID-19 is a global disease has caused strict restrictions and closures in many countries in the world. This disease, which makes people stay at their homes, has caused important collapses in many sectors. Tourism is among the sectors that are affected by COVID-19.

New type of corona virus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease that causes serious respiratory syndrome. COVID-19 has been seen for the first time on 19 November 2019 in Wuhan, China. This disease, which starts with the appearance of a new virus, is a disease that spreads very quickly. According to the latest report from the World Health Organization (WHO), the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in the world is 7,119,054 consist of 407.447 deaths (8 June 2020). COVID-19 can be transmitted by coughing, sneezing, or close relationship as experts say. It is also a disease that can be alive up to 72 hours on the surfaces touched by the infected person and passes easily when the people touch their nose and mouth after touching these surfaces (WHO, 2020).

COVID-19 had significant negative effects on world economy. This disease has led to countries to take a series economic measures. Countries' large-scale quarantines, travel restrictions, and social distance rules created a global recession by causing a sharp drop in consumer and business spending. To reduce the spreading of the COVID-19 virus, governments have taken unprecedented measures to protect human health. These restrictions have caused people to stay at the homes, businesses to lose their income, and people to become unemployed. A number of economic packages have been prepared in order to improve the economic system that has been disrupted by the governments.

Marmaris, where this research was conducted, is the district of Muğla located in Turkey's Aegean Coast. Marmaris was an important trade center that connected the trade routes of Rhodes and Egypt to Anatolia during the 3000s. Marmaris has become one of the Turkey's and world's major tourism destinations thanks to its natural harbor, long coastline and pine forest (Muğla Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate, 2020).

This research was conducted to show the effects of COVID-19 on tourism and hotel businesses. Using the qualitative research method and the semi-structured interview form, a series of interviews were conducted with hotel businesses. The data obtained as a result of these interviews were structured and the results were evaluated in the findings section.

Literature Review on the Effects of COVID- 19 on Tourism

"Corona viruses (CoV) is a large family of viruses that cause a variety of diseases ranging from the common cold to more serious illnesses such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV)" on the official website of the Ministry of Health ([https:// covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/](https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/)).

There are various subtypes of corona viruses (HCoV-229E, HCoV-OC43, HCoV-NL63 and HKU1-CoV) in humans that can be transmitted easily from person to person. These subspecies that circulate among people are viruses that cause colds mostly. In addition, there are many corona virus subspecies detected in animals and it is known that these viruses can pass from animals to humans and cause severe disease in humans.

As a result of detailed researches, it was stated that SARS-CoV was passed from musk cats and MERS-CoV was transmitted from single humped camels (COVID-19 Epidemiology and Diagnosis Guide, 2020: 5). It was declared as a public health emergency in the international scale on January 30, 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), and was identified as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, when it was seen in 113 countries

apart from China. After Iran and Europe, our neighbors, the first case was seen on March 11, 2020 in Turkey, (Covidien-19 Epidemiology and Diagnosis Guide, 2020: 5).

COVID- 19 was declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. In order for a disease to be declared as a pandemic by WHO, it must be seen consistently in different parts of the World and effect many people. The swine flu has been recently announced as a pandemic (BBC News, Turkish, 2020). Swine flu had caused human deaths; however, the effects of coronavirus are too much to compare both socially and economically. This virus, which creates great fears on humans, will be discussed in terms of its effects. Both national and international researches on the effects of COVID-19 on tourism are as follows:

Khan and Yasmine Khan (2020) stated that the balance of supply and demand will deteriorate and demand will drop sharply in many countries due to the coronavirus; the demand for food, medical aid and other essential items may increase; however, the demand for non-essential goods such as clothing and various services will be less in their research. It was stated that low domestic consumption will have a negative impact on employment and social needs such as tourism will be postponed (Khan and Yasmine Khan, 2020).

Bakar and Rosbi (2020) evaluated the effect of the supply and demand curve to detect economic changes in their work. The result shows that COVID-19 reduces demand for the tourism industry and causes panic among the public. This is due to the spreading of the disease, including the quarantines and restrictions that have been applied. This scenario contributes to the low demand price by the customer. Therefore, the price of the tourism sector continues to decrease in line with the decrease in demand according to the market balance of the supply-demand theory. This study is very important for the government in terms of preventing and stopping the decreasing demand in the tourism industry. Governments need an antivirus-

enhancing mechanism for the economy as well as COVID-19. If the prevention action does not match properly, the tourism industry will experience lesser effects leading to economic collapse.

Acar (2020) investigated the effects of Covid-19 on tourism. The impression obtained as a result of the research findings is the effects of the new corona virus in the country's economies will create losses that can be felt for a long time on the basis of all sectors and the tourism sector will be directly affected by these losses.

According to the research findings of Hamid (2020), with the start of corona virus in China there are significant effects have been seen all over the world. Due to this virus threat, people are afraid to interfere with the Chinese population. Global tourists cancel their schedules to visit China, and Chinese tourists are prohibited from visiting international nations. The rapid spreading of the Corona virus in China has stopped the regular life of people in China. This fear affected the tourism industry of the country at home and abroad. Airlines canceled their flights to and from China, so the virus did not move to other countries. The country's economy was greatly affected by this. Increasing of the Corona virus is thought to have a long-term effect on China's tourism industry.

The research topic of Ibis (2020) is the effect of Covid-19 on travel agencies. According to the study, Covid-19 has greatly impacted travel agencies and finished income sources completely. International travel restrictions and quarantines have caused a major stop in all economic sectors, including tourism (Nicola et al. 2020; Gösling et al., 2020).

The anxiety, fear and crisis caused by the outbreak bothers both the individuals and sectors. Economic difficulties faced by businesses have been added to sociological and psychological problems, especially at the individual and social levels, and its reflection on people has increased the effects of the epidemic (Barua, 2020; Ho, Chee & Ho, 2020).

Method

The research, which was carried out using qualitative research methods, was carried out with the senior authorities of Hotel management in Marmaris. Qualitative research method is being used more and more in social sciences (Karataş, 2015). Purposeful sampling method was preferred for sample selection. The speciality of this method is to collect in-depth information from the person, events or situations about the targeted purpose (Maxwell, 1996). In qualitative research, interview, observation and written sources are used in order to collect data. The interview used for this research is the most powerful method to reveal people's perspectives, feelings, subjective experiences and perceptions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The interviewees should be directly related to the research topic (Neuman, 2012). In order to obtain the data, semi-structured interview technique, in which some questions were standardized and some questions were prepared as open-ended, was used and approximately 25-45 minutes permanent interviews were conducted in May 15-20, 2020. In the selection of the participants, it was paid attention to have people who are experts in their fields and who have many years of professional experience. The main purpose of using qualitative data collection technique in the research is to reduce the psychological distance between the researcher and the respondent in a comfortable environment without any limitation to the participant, to obtain the most up-to-date, accurate and satisfactory information easily with the Covid-19 outbreak from experts and competent persons, and to discuss and evaluate the situation. Descriptive analysis technique, directly quoted (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008), was used in the analysis of the data by following the original form of the data. For this, firstly, a framework for data analysis from the conceptual structure of the research was formed and data were arranged in the second stage. In the third stage, the data were defined and in the last stage, the findings were explained, correlated and interpreted by interpretation.

Findings

Demographic and Descriptive Findings

Demographic characteristics including gender, age, education, the position of the manager, the work experience of the manager, the number of staff and the star status of the hotels are shown in Table 1. According to this table, the majority of the participants ($n = 6$) are male; more than half of the participants ($n = 6$) are between the ages of 41 and 50; and more than half of the participants ($n = 6$) have bachelor degree. More than half of the positions of the employees ($n = 5$) are general managers. Participant working year is ($n = 1$) between 11-20 years, ($n = 6$) between 21-30 years, ($n = 1$) 30 years and above. Looking at the hotel's star status, more than half ($n = 5$) is five stars. The number of hotel employees of the participants are ($n = 1$) 30-50, ($n = 2$) 51-70, ($n = 3$) 71-100, ($n = 2$) 100 and above.

Table 1: Demographic and Descriptive Information

<i>Demographic and Descriptive Findings</i>	<i>Number of Businesses (n)</i>
Male	6
Female	2
Age	
Between 31 and 40	1
Between 41 and 50	6
51 and above	1
Education	
Primary school	-
High school	2
College	2
Bachelor degree	4
Position	
General manager	5
Restaurant manager	1

Operation manager	2
Work experience	
Between 11 and 20 years	1
Between 21 and 30 years	6
31 years and above	1
Number of Business Personal	
Between 30 and 50	1
Between 51 and 70	2
Between 71 and 100	3
101 and above	2
Star satatus	
Three stars	2
Four stars	1
Five stars	5
Number of Businesses Interviewed	
TOTAL	8

Covid 19, Findings on the Effects of the Pandemic Process on Hotel Enterprises

The response of the O1 hotel representative to the question of how the Covid 19, pandemic process affected your hotel business is: *“Covid 19 effected guests at the hotel, reservations were affected, domestic and international reservations were canceled. We had reservations in March, while we were getting ready to open the hotel, bans came due to Covid-19 and we could not open our hotel. Both our guests and staff were victimized. We are afraid that this will affect us much more. On the other hand, if we look at the answers from the O2 and O3 Hotel officials, they said that: “There were concerns before pandemic reach to Turkey. We have started preparations to open the hotel before the pandemic process. We were even getting ready to call some of our staff. When the pandemic starts in Turkey, we stop to buy all supplies and food. We used to stock up on ma-*

terials for the season, but this time we did nothing. After an uncertainty and the bans started, we completely closed the hotel. The mutual answer of O4, O5, O6, O7 and O8 is: "It affected all aspects negatively. Economically we had a lot trouble. We had to stop everything".

Findings Related to the Removal of the Prohibitions Caused by the COVID-19 and the Opening Plans of Hotel Business

The response of the O1 Hotel official is to the question of what are the plans of the hotel enterprises by the removal of the prohibitions caused by Covid-19 is: "we will open it immediately after getting permission. Now it is planning for June 17. The answer of O2 Hotel is: "According to the statements of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism the hotel enterprises can be opened as of June 17 and there will be foreign entries as of July 1. However, there are very limited preparations on the opening of the hotels. There is no action for open up. For example, we have three facilities. Even if we consider opening one of these three facilities, we do not have any study and/or planning about this. The answer of O3 Hotel is: "we will open the hotels as soon as the official letter comes from the governor's office". The answer of the O4 hotel is: "we do not know when it opens; because we work with 90 % foreigners. The status is very vague and this is also said by the scientists". O6 Hotel's answer is that "if everything goes well, we plan to open it on July 1". There was an uncertainty about the opening of O5, O7, O8 Hotels and they do not have any preparation yet.

Tourist Mobility Expectation Findings on Hotel Businesses in 2020 Summer Season

The answer of O1 Hotel to the question, which is asked to the hotel officials participating in the research, of what is your level of expectation of tourist mobility in the summer season of 2020 is: "we do not expect much mobility, but we think it will revive a little". O2 Hotel's answer is: "We think that tourist mobility will be low. Our hotel open in April and stay 6 months open, we close the hotel at the end of October. We have already lost April, May, June. We think that there will be some mobility in July and August, but we

believe this rate will be around only 20 - 30%. It is already spoken that the rule will be brought to the facilities about 50% capacity, all of these show that even if the hotel is opened, the occupancy rate will be low. For this reason, I think our hotels will not be opened". O3 Hotel's Answer is: "We are making our preparations. We think that the domestic tourism mobility will increase in July and August. We think that the foreign tourism activity will be very low". The mutual thoughts of other hotels about tourist mobility is that relative mobility in July and August will be in the domestic tourism market, which will be around 30%.

Anxiety of Hotel Businesses Related to Tourists Who Will Stay in the Hotels After COVID-19

The answer of O1 Hotel to the question of whether you have concerns about the tourists staying in your hotel with the opening of your hotel business after Covid-19 is: "We will take the highest level of precautions. We are afraid that incoming tourists will be carriers". O2 Hotel's Answer is that: "We were mostly working with British tourists. British tourists are able to sue the hotel even in the smallest cases of illness they have had during their stay at the hotel, and it was mostly resulted with court. If they infected by the virüs whether inside the hotel or elsewhere, we think they will consider the hotel responsible for this. We have concerns about these. We are still in an unstable state about opening the hotel. In addition, business owner think it is better not to open the hotel". O3, O6 Hotels' response is: "We will make the necessary preparations. I don't know, we have lots of worries, but we will open in accordance with the appropriate rules". O4, O7 Hotel official's response is that: "When the customer arrives at the hotel, we will take the necessary precautions, but we cannot keep the customer at the hotel all time. Will the client take their own personal precautions? Whatever we do, problems may occur if the person is not paid attention on these. We cannot know if the virus is transmitted when the customer goes out". The response of the O5, O8 hotel representative is that: "Covid-19 has a 14-day incubation period, we have concerns about whether the customer has corona until the customer has the fire. Also, how the agen-

cies we work with will evaluate customer complaints about Covid 19, and if there are too many penalties about this, this will be a very big problem''.

Hotel Business Covid-19 Preparation Findings

The answer of the O1 Hotel representative to the question of what preparations do you plan to make regarding the Covid-19 if you open your hotel is: "As a hotel, we provided training to authorized personnel. We worked well to adapt to this situation immediately. Let me first talk about what we will do in the restaurant. Our facility works with all-inclusive system. Our restaurant will never have tablecloths and runners, disposable salt and pepper will be serviced on the tables, products will be presented one by one in the cold buffet and dessert buffet, one responsible person will serve the dishes in the hot buffet and we will put the strip to reach the food. Our service staff will have masks and gloves, breakfast will be given personally in the breakfast buffet, if the egg requested, it will be ordered in table and served. Of course, this situation will make us to increase the number of staff. We intend to put a glass or mica in our beverage and bar service area, such as a visor between the bar and the guest, as transparent as 2 meters and/or 1 and a half meters. Here we will have disposable hard plastic cups or glass cups as we normally use according to the guest's request, where the cups will come out of the professional dishwasher and their tops will be closed with stretch. Breakfast will be served with a car like coffee and tea service in buses. We have to give the customers what they wants. I studied my lesson well and immediately drew table plans. I left a distance of 1.5 meters between each table and leaving 60 cm between each person for the table layout. The subject that I will try to practice will be to have the same room guest eat at the same table during the holiday, it is not going to be easy, but we will see its progress. Tables will definitely be disinfected as soon as guests leave the table. Let me also give information about the rooms. When entering the rooms, the staff will wear their disposable clothes and a mask. Every room will be disinfected, and no new customers will be admitted to the room for a day. The capacity of our hotel is 1300, and around half of this number, 650 - 700 people, will be

taken in to the hotel. Our reservation status is not certain yet, but as soon as the date of opening is announced, our guests start to come”.

“After the guests pass the security, our guest relations staff will inform our guests before they come to the reception, measure their fires and direct them to the reception. The disinfectants in certain parts of the hotel, especially the entrance area will be put and they will be provided for first guests to use them. Here, we will have strips and warnings for social distance. We will carry the guest’ suitcases to the room after squeezing disinfectant. Our hotel is already in agreement with a hospital, there will be a responsible doctor and nurse, they will do the intervention in any case. We will also separate the sun loungers with clear lines that will create a social distance at the beach. We are working to get a certificate. O6 Hotel representative's response is: “We will have two entries, one for customer and another for staff. We will install thermal cameras. Everyone's fever will be measured. We will stop using the paper and pen. Bellboy and valet service will be removed and guests will park their cars by own. Everything in the rooms will be disposable. Rooms will be left empty for 12 hours, disinfected with ozone, we will keep our guests informed. Social distance rules will be used in all areas. Mini disinfectants and masks will be placed in the rooms. We provide open buffet service. Disposable plates will be prepared behind the visors by staff control. We will suggest customers to use their own restrooms as much as possible. For use for emergencies, only one restroom near the pool will be open. We do not plan to use all of the pools. We will assign employees to inform customers

O2, O5, O8 hotel representatives’ response is: “We work with the HACCP system. We are very careful in hygiene and sanitation. Most of the big hotels in Marmaris work in this way. This system is already above the measures brought by the Ministry of Health. Maybe we will introduce new rules for distribution in the buffets. We introduce rules for the maintenance of social distance”. O3 Hotel's Response is: “We will make preparations within the framework of the rules set by the Ministry”. The response of the hotel representatives of O4, O6, O7 is: “We will try to make customers less contact

with people. We plan to make customer records (check in-check out) online. We plan to make the room service system more active and minimize the contact of customers with other customers. We will use different materials in each room, for example, different gloves for each room. We will provide training for housekeeping employees about this issue. Housekeepers have certain rooms and we will take measures to use different materials in each room. We do not think we will have any problems with cleaning. We can take more precautions by paying attention to social distance rules”.

Findings Related to Providing Covid-19 Training to Hotel Business Personnel

The mutual answer of all hotel businesses to the question of "Do you think to give training to your staff about pandemic?" is: *“We have completed our preparations and we will definitely give training. No training has been done so far, however we plan to do it soon”.*

Findings Regarding Hotel Enterprises To Protect Their Staff During Covid-19 Process

O1, O5 Hotel representative's answer to the question asked to the Hotel Management officials who participated in the research, whether you have taken any precautions to protect your personnel during the Covid 19 process is that: *“We have tried the keep only core staff. We couldn't hire other staff since we worked seasonally”.* The response of the O2, O7, O6 hotel officials is: *“90% of our staff has been suspended. The core staff was kept inside. Suspended staff benefited from the support paid by the government in this process. The personnel inside benefited also from the same support. Currently, our situation is still not predictable. Neither the suspended nor the core staff is still called”.* O3, O8 hotel official's response is: *“We tried to keep the core staff inside. We couldn't hire other staff since we worked seasonally”.* O4 hotel official's response is that: *“We continue to keep our current staff inside. There is a housekeeping team outside. If our personnel reach us, we try to support them. If the hotel provides 50% service, then we will have to reduce our staff. Basically, there is no clarity yet, there are uncertainties”.*

Conclusion

This research was carried out to determine the effects of Covid-19 on the tourism industry and hotel businesses in Marmaris. The area where the research is carried out is a destination with high potential for coastal tourism, where tourist entrances and exits are very intense in the summer season and welcoming tourists from many parts of the world.

The effect of tourism income on GSYH is quite significant. According to Karabulut (2020), Turkey's tourism income in 2019 was 34.5 billion dollars. The ratio of this to GSYH corresponds to 4.7%. This means that the virus continues, tourism in Turkey loss of about 17 billion dollars in tourism revenue with the assumption that if reduced by 50%, which corresponds to 2.3% of GSYH. Therefore, Turkey takes a part of measures with the support program as other countries. These supports should be continued throughout the crisis in order to sustain the tourism sector.

The new type of corona virus (COVID-19) resulted in the cancellation of previous domestic and international reservations, and all preparations, material and food purchases of hotels that are preparing to open hotels have stopped. In addition, it has caused much damage economically and is thought to cause more damage. Even if the bans of COVID-19 have been removed, it has been determined that there are uncertainties about the start-up of hotel businesses, and most hotels do not have any preparations for opening. Most hotel directors think that even if the hotel is opened, the income to be obtained will remain at a level that will not cover the costs.

The general opinion of the hotel authorities is that the domestic tourism activity (maximum 30%) will be in July and August in the 2020 summer season, where the tourist expectation level will be low, and the foreign tourists will not come this season. Because it is still stated by all the authorities that the uncertainties are very high.

Even if hotel businesses are opened after COVID-19, hotel authorities have concerns about the tourists who will stay in their hotels. Their concerns based on the fact that the new type of corona virus has an incubation period of 14 days. Some people are carriers without symptoms or there are cases of corona virus in hotels because tourists may not stay at the hotel all the time, they may be together with other people in other places, they may be in court and pay fines by countries sending tourists.

It has been determined that since the hotel businesses are closed they keep most of their employees exposed, and those who meet the necessary conditions use the state employment allowance. In this ongoing process, both hotels and hotel employees should continue to be supported.

Covid-19 will cause hotel businesses to take a series of new measures to re-accept customers. The measures to be taken by the hotel authorities in the various departments of the hotel are as follows.

- Tablecloths and runners will not be used in restaurants.
- Disposable spices and salt will be used.
- Desserts and salads in the cold buffet will be placed on single plates, while the hot will be served by a responsible person in the buffet.
- Service personnel will wear masks, visors and gloves.
- Transparent 2 or 1.5 meters will be placed between the bar counter and the guest in the bar department. Efforts are being made to minimize the contact of customers with customers and employees as much as possible.
- At least 1-5 meters distance will be placed between the tables in the hotel and the same customer will be allowed to eat at the same table during the holiday and the tables will be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the guest leaves.
- The staff will use different disposable items (gloves, masks) when cleaning each room, each room will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after the customer leaves and the room

will remain empty during one day.

- There will be strips to many points of the hotel in order to protect the social distance, continuous social distance alerts will be made by the staff.
- The fever of hotel guests will be measured at the entrances of the hotel and their suitcases will be disinfected.
- Check-in and check-out will be done online before the customer arrives at the hotel.
- Valet service will be removed and customer car parks will be made by the owners.
- Hotel employees will be given Covid-19 training.

Hotel owners are upset that the decisions regarding when and under which conditions the hotels will be opened are not clear among the new decisions taken within the scope of the COVID-19 Normalization calendar. Mutual agreements should be made with foreign countries and steps should be taken for tourist visits. Increasing the occupancy rates of at least July, August and September will give to hotels and employees some relief.

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