

Accommodation facilities in northern Turkey in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the situation of owners of accommodation facilities—guesthouses, hotels, guest rooms, and campsites—in Turkey across two distinct periods: the pre-pandemic period and the post-pandemic period, taking into account the current geopolitical context. The pandemic period itself was analysed; however, due to government-imposed restrictions and a substantial decline in occupancy rates of accommodation facilities (below 10%, outside the campsites), it was not possible to conduct reliable comparative analyses for this period. The specific objectives also include examining the relationship between the services and attractions offered by accommodation providers and occupancy rates. The study is based on a questionnaire survey conducted among owners of accommodation facilities in the Turkish regions of Trabzon and Amasya (151 respondents). The results indicate an overall increase in occupancy rates across all types of accommodation facilities in the post-pandemic period, with a particularly pronounced growth observed in campsites compared to the pre-pandemic period.

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Contents:

1. Introduction	22
2. Materials and methods	23
2.1. General characteristic of the regions	23
2.2. General description of the research method	24
3. Research results	26
3.1. Changes in occupancy rates before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic	26
3.2. Analyse the association between the services offered by accommodation providers and the occupancy rates	26

3.3. The association between the type of accommodation and the selected elements of tourist attractiveness . . .	28
4. Discussion	30
5. Conclusions and implications	31
6. Limitations and future research	32
References	32
Appendix	35

1. Introduction

Turkey is a country with a high tourism potential (cultural tourism, urban tourism, nature tourism, health tourism etc.) due to its geographical location, natural landscape components, cultural features and health opportunities (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001). Therefore, tourism is one of the leading sectors of the Turkey's economy and corresponds to 12 percent. The country's GDP and provides about 2.5 million jobs. Although the tourism industry is growing rapidly, it is not safe from global health emergencies, diplomatic warfare, terrorism, and natural disasters (Hallaj et al., 2022). A very important factor that exerted an exceptionally strong impact on holiday destinations, i.a. of people from Europe, but also the citizens of other countries, was the sense of threat resulting from terrorist acts in some countries, and mainly in Tunisia, which was almost completely eliminated from the tourist market in 2016, and also Egypt, which was affected to a great extent. In this context, it is important, to maintain security in the countries offering tourist destinations which also include Turkey. According to Samdin Z. et al. (2021) the outbreak of coronavirus is not the first case to occur in the 21st century (Samdin, 2021), which hampered tourism development in many regions of the globe. The world tourism industry faces multiple issues in tourism demand and supply (Matiza, 2020). It can be said that tourism is one of the sectors that has suffered the most from governments following this pandemic. The pandemic led to restrictions on movement and travel (Nagaj & Žuromskaite, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely changed the situation of tourism, on the one hand, that of a tourist who has been affected by travel restrictions, and on the other, that of the owners of hotels, guest-houses and other persons offering accommodation services, as well as the organizers of tourist trips and providers of complementary attractions in leisure time, who were forced to implement significant constraints and sanitary restrictions, including a temporary shutdown of their facilities. The pandemic had a significant impact on the global economy, which, as a result of introducing further restrictions, also suffered serious damages and losses in the macroeconomic dimension.

Community suspensions, social distance, home stay orders, travel and mobility restrictions have led to the temporary closure of many tourism-related businesses and a significant reduction in demand for businesses that were allowed to continue operating (Bartik et al., 2020).

Preliminary economic modelling typically suggests a significant inverse relationship between the COVID-19 virus and tourism demand (Yanga et al., 2020), but also subsequent research and market behavior confirm this theory. Matiza (2020), Baldwin & di Mauro (2020), Huynh (2020), Ruiz-Estrada et al. (2020), Nicola et al., (2020), Wilder-Smith (2005) highlight the financial losses suffered by countries associated with hampering tourism development as a result of SARS in China, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, Ebola in Sierra Leone and Guinea, MERS in Saudi Arabia and H1N1 in Mexico. Following the pandemic development, most countries were introducing restrictions on travellers (at sea and land borders) and on the import of food products. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions covered the entire world. Almost all countries closed their borders to travellers, accommodation facilities were shut down or a number of restrictions were imposed, including limits on the number of people staying in a facility, maintaining distance, serving meals, and guidelines in a situation when a case of virus infection was detected.

Yu Meng et al. (2022) provides an overview of the main studies on health-related crises in tourism and hospitality in Asia . The author has compiled selected studies conducted since the SARS epidemic regarding the impact on tourism, including: the government's intervention and support in the recovery process (Chien & Law, 2003), cope with health-related crises (Henderson & Ng, 2004), a long-term effect of SARS on tourists' travel preferences and safety awareness (Wen et al., 2005), impacts on domestic travel avoidance in Ebola time (Cahyanto et al., 2016), impacts of MERS on the inbound tourism market in South Korea (Choe et al., 2021), social responsibility vs. negativ impacts organizational performance and future customers' booking behaviours in COVID-19 (Shin et al., 2021).

The Turkish economy was particularly exposed to the consequences of the pandemic due to its

strong integration with international supply chains and relatively high dependence on tourism being an important element of the local service sector (Potera, 2021). The hospitality industry was particularly affected, as it generates high demand for other products and, at the same time, provides employment throughout the country. In turn, Turkey took steps to prevent the spread of the virus relatively early, and as a result of the actions and decisions taken at the national level, the pandemic outbreak on its territory was delayed as much as possible. Since the moment the first infection was detected in Turkey, the local authorities implemented a number of preventive measures, which were partially cancelled or tightened depending on the further course of the disease. Due to the deteriorating economic situation of the country, the Turkish government announced support packages for the private sector in order to prevent the increase in unemployment and shrinking of the private sector. The announced packages were intended to have a positive impact on the process of maintaining refugees, who, similarly to women, were the most affected group of workers (Akyıldız, 2020; Potera, 2021).

It is seen that the closure process due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which started all over the world in 2020, adversely affected the tourism industry. While Turkey hosted 51.7 million tourists in 2019 (T.C. Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020), the number of tourists coming to Turkey in 2020 decreased to 15.9 million during the pandemic process (T.C. Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021). In 2021, with the effects of the pandemic slowing down and the policies regarding the pandemic changing, it became the fourth country with the most tourists with 29.9 million. In 2022, it increased and hosted 51.3 million tourists (Uner et al., 2022; TUIK, 2023; UNWTO, 2023).

The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the situation of owners of accommodation facilities—guesthouses, hotels, guest rooms, and campsites—in Turkey across two distinct periods: the pre-pandemic

period and the post-pandemic period, taking into account the current geopolitical context.

The pandemic period itself was analysed; however, due to government-imposed restrictions and a substantial decline in occupancy rates of accommodation facilities (below 10%, outside the campsites), it was not possible to conduct reliable comparative analyses for this period. The specific objectives included: determining the use of accommodation facilities in the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods; examining the relationship between services offered within accommodation facilities and occupancy rates; and investigating correlations between the attractions of the surrounding area in which a given facility is located and the occupancy rates of accommodation facilities before and after the pandemic. Na temat pandemii COVID-19 powstało wiele artykułów naukowych zarówno w Polsce jak i na świecie. Wybrany przegląd autorów oraz opisywanych problemów dotyczących zagadnienia przedstawił Kawędzki (2022). Wśród autorów opisujących problematykę znajdują się m.in.: Bakar and Rosbi (2020), Collins-Kreiner and Ram (2020), Zawadka et al. (2021), Kawędzki (2022a), Stojczew (2022), Korinth (2022, 2022a, 2023). Previous studies have addressed related issues, including research on the increase in the economic value of places recognizable from films during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Piepiora et al., 2022), as well as analyses of the influence of initial actions and strategies pursued by hotel managers on the recovery of occupancy after crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Hidalgo et al., 2022), among others.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. General characteristic of the regions

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was analysed in a comparative perspective, covering three periods:

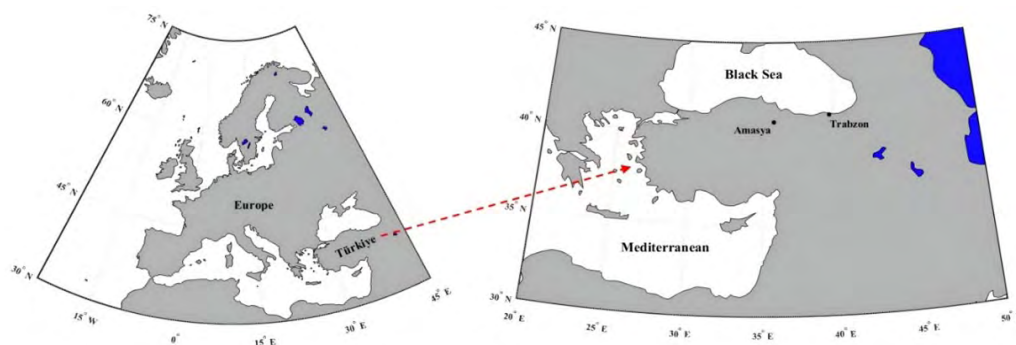


Fig. 1. Location of Trabzon and Amasya regions at the background of Turkey and this part of Europe
Source: own study

the pre-pandemic period, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the post-pandemic period. For the pandemic period, only the occupancy status of accommodation facilities was recorded. The analysis was based on the opinions provided by owners of accommodation facilities in the regions of Trabzon and Amasya. Both regions are located in Turkey in the Black Sea area, with only Trabzon having direct access to the sea. The location of the regions is shown in Figure 1.

Trabzon region (39° 07' 43,8" and 40° 30' 15,5" East Longitude, 40° 31' 31,3" and 41° 06' 27,5" North Latitude) is located in the north of the Black Sea coast of Turkey and has an area of 4628 km². Neighboring provinces of Trabzon are Rize to the east, Karadeniz (Black Sea) to the north, Giresun to the west and Gümüşhane and Bayburt provinces to the south. (Heldak, et al., 2020). Trabzon province has hosted many civilizations throughout its 4000 year history due to its geographical location and being at a complete crossing point. Therefore, the province has natural and cultural values, historical buildings (monastery, church, mosque, tomb, bridge, Turkish bath, mansion, castle etc.), culinary culture and rich tourism potential (culture tourism, urban tourism, health tourism, congress tourism, sports tourism, sea tourism, caravan tourism, youth tourism etc.) (Heldak, et al., 2020; URL-2, 2023). In addition, the province is called as 'The City of Shahzadahs' (URL-1, 2023). It has been entered in the UNESCO World Heritage Site List since 2000, thanks to the Sumela Monastery, a Greek Orthodox monastery and church complex located at an altitude of 1,150 m above sea level, within the borders of Altındere Valley National Park in Maçka district of Trabzon province (URL-3, 2023; URL-4, 2023). Due to these cultural values, cultural and urban tourism is mostly carried out in the province. Also, nature tourism and highland tourism are being done on plateaus and hills. There are various hiking and trekking routes throughout the province. Sea tourism is also carried out in the province, which has a coastline of approximately 115 km (URL-5, 2023).

Amasya is a city and district in Turkey located in the Middle Black Sea Region, surrounded by Tokat from the east, Tokat and Yozgat from the south, Çorum from the west and Samsun from the north. The total border length of Amasya is 492 km. There are 7 districts in Amasya: Central, Merzifon, Suluova, Taşova, Gümüşhacıköy, Göynücek and Hamamözü. Amasya has a surface area of 5,701 km², including: 44,7% agricultural land, 35,8% forested land, 11,6% meadow land, 7,9% wetlands (Konakoglu et al., 2019). Amasya city has a rich culinary culture, legends, natural and cultural values, where traditional Ottoman houses are located along Yeşilirmak River and Valley.

The city is known as one of the oldest settlements in Anatolia. Amasya province with 7500 years of history has been the scene of Hittite, Phrygian, Kimmer, Scythian, Lydia, Persia, Macedonia, Pontus, Roman, Byzantine, Danishmend, Seljuk, Ilkhanid and Ottoman civilizations from the Chalcolithic Age. The city has been entered in the UNESCO World Heritage Site List since 2015, thanks to the Harşena Mountain in the north of the city and the Pontus King Rock Tombs, which are among the largest rock tombs of Anatolia. In addition, it is one of the 15 brands that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has identified in Turkey Tourism Strategy 2023 due to its natural beauties, rich cultural heritage, architecture, cuisine and tourist attractions. It is also called as 'The City of Shahzadahs' because many sultans were brought up here during the Ottoman period. Due to these cultural values, cultural tourism is mostly carried out in the city. Borabay Lake is under protection. The hiking and trekking routes around Borabay Lake are the longest hiking route in Amasya. Amasya city is famous for its thermal water resources (Konakoglu, 2018; Konakoglu & Kurdoglu, 2021).

2.2. General description of the research method

To achieve the objectives of the study, a survey was conducted among owners of accommodation facilities in the Turkish regions of Trabzon and Amasya. A total of 151 respondents participated in the study. The target group consisted of owners of accommodation facilities, including guesthouses, hotels, guest rooms, and campsites operating in the analysed area. The survey covered three periods: the pre-pandemic period, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the post-pandemic period. Data were collected using an online questionnaire (Google Forms) distributed between May and October 2022. The survey was anonymous. The questionnaire entitled "*Tourism before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the opinions of owners of accommodation facilities?*" is provided as an Appendix to the article.

To answer a number of debatable issues, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What was the level of use (occupancy rates) of accommodation facilities before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Did the range of amenities (services) offered by tourist establishments affect the occupancy rates of accommodation facilities?
3. Do accommodation facilities located in attractive areas achieve higher occupancy rates than those located in less attractive areas?

In order to answer the above questions, statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics package version 25. A number of analyses were carried out using: Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric analysis of variance, Wilcoxon test using the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for multiple testing and Kendall's test of correlation. The classic threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$ was considered the level of significance, however, the probability results of test statistic at $0.05 < \alpha < 0.1$ were interpreted as significant at the level of statistical trend.

The research was conducted in accordance with the following steps:

1. Literature review
2. Defining the research purpose
3. Preparing the survey form
4. Conducting the survey
5. General analysis of the collected data
6. Statistical analyses in terms of:
 - Comparisons of accommodation occupancy rates before and after the pandemic;
 - Analysis of correlations between services offered by accommodation providers and the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities;
 - Analysis of correlations between local attractions and the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities
7. Discussion and final conclusions.

2.3. General characteristics of the respondents

Among the respondents, 90 originated from the Trabzon region and 61 were from the Amasya region. The survey was dominated by men of various ages, who accounted for more than 91% of all respondents (53 people in Amasya and 85 in Trabzon region). The vast majority of respondents were not affiliated with any tourism organization. Among the listed organizations, only two were from Amasya: *Amasya Nature Sports and Research Club*–5 people indicated their membership, *Amasya Tourism Association*–2 people. The respondents were providing accommodation services of various types before, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and also currently, such as: guesthouses, hotels, guest rooms/apartments, camping area/camping site. Some of the owners of accommodation facilities participating in the survey advertise their services on websites. It was recorded that 112 out of 151 respondents use advertising, which is approx. 74% of all respondents (33 from Amasya and 79 from Trabzon).

Respondents represented a significant share of those offering accommodation services. In the Amasya region, this figure was approximately 50%, and in the Trabzon region, approximately 25%. A specific figure is difficult to estimate due to the lack of statistical data.

The owners did not benefit from the state financial assistance (100% responses) provided in connection with the restrictions caused by the pandemic and the resulting financial losses. However, when asked: Were you able to re-establish the size of your business from before the Covid-19 pandemic?, most of them answered “yes”. It was found that only 4 people in Amasya region and 5 people in Trabzon failed to return to their company pre-pandemic income. In total, the decline in profitability of accommodation facilities due to the pandemic affected approx. 5.9% of them.

Another question referring to the main factors driving up the price of travel and leisure services during the Covid-19 pandemic revealed that it was primarily low occupancy rate of accommodation facilities (109 responses), high fixed costs (96 responses) and inflation (84 responses). The respondents could select three responses in the form and the share of provided answers was: 72%, 63.5% i 55.6%, respectively.

In the respondents' opinion, the current geopolitical situation and higher costs of living translate into higher costs of the services provided. As many as 97.3% of the respondents confirmed this situation. Only 4 people in Amasya were of a different opinion. According to the respondents, currently the following factors have the most significant impact on price increase of tourism and recreational services due to the war in Ukraine:

- Higher prices of fuel (78 out of 151 replies – 51.6 %),
- Higher prices of electricity (23 out of 151 replies – 15.2 %),
- Higher prices of gas (61 out of replies – 40.4 %),
- Inflation (90 put of replies – 59.6 %),
- Higher prices of food (56 out of replies – 37 %).

The respondents stated that the prices for accommodation services were increasing mainly due to inflation. Campsite owners attributed it to low “occupancy rate” less often, as evidenced by the research presented below, which shows, i.a. that the already high occupancy rate at campsites increased even further after the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Research results

3.1. Changes in occupancy rates before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic

Before the pandemic the occupancy rates were significantly higher in hotels and guesthouses than for guest rooms and campsites. During the pandemic, access to all forms of accommodation, except for campsites, was greatly restricted. The occupancy rate at campsites clearly increased during the pandemic. In Amasya 11 of the 12 sites had an occupancy rate of over 90%, the other had an occupancy rate of 81-90%. After the pandemic, the occupancy rate at campsites in the Amasya region (located in central Turkey) stayed at the same very high level as during the pandemic, while the occupancy rates in the Trabzon region (located on the Black Sea coast) continued to rise from a lower base to reach the same level as in Amasya (28 of 32 sites had an occupancy rate of above 90%).

According to the UNWTO (2021) it was estimated a drop of over 73% in the number of international tourists worldwide throughout 2020. At the time, it was expected that the sharp decline in tourist flows would have a stronger impact on destinations highly dependent on international tourism (Hidalgo et al., 2022).

After the pandemic, occupancy rates were significantly higher than those observed before the pandemic for each type of accommodation, which is reflected in the positive changes in occupancy categories presented in Table 1.

The increase in occupancy rates is significantly associated with the type of accommodation (Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric analysis of variance, $p < 0.001$). Greater increases were observed for campsites and guest rooms.

The occupancy rate in hotels was higher than for guest rooms and campsites ($p < 0.001$, Wilcoxon test using the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for multiple testing). The occupancy rate in guesthouses was also higher than for guest rooms and campsites ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.001$ respectively, Wilcoxon test using the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for multiple testing).

The increase in occupancy rate is strongly associated with the type of accommodation (Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric analysis of variance, $p < 0.001$). There is a greater increase in the occupancy rates for campsites and guest rooms. For all types of accommodation, there is a systematic rise in the occupancy rate ($p < 0.001$, Wilcoxon single sample test).

3.2. Analyse the association between the services offered by accommodation providers and the occupancy rates

Almost all hotels, guesthouses and guest rooms supplied what might be called basic services for such accommodation, such as: breakfast, the Internet, towels and television (5 of 20 – 25% of guest rooms did not provide a television). In general, hotels gave a wider range of services. The majority of hotels (but a minority of the other types of accommodation) offered whole board and kettles. In addition, parking was available more often at hotels than at the other

Table 1. Overall increase in occupancy rate according to accommodation type

	significant decrease	decrease	no change	light increase	moderate increase	substantial increase	very high increase	extreme increase
Change in occupancy rate (no. of categories)*	-4	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
Hotel	1	1	30	20	8	1	0	0
[%]	1.61	1.61	4.39	32.26	12.90	1.61	0	0
Guesthouse	0	0	9	13	0	0	0	0
%	0	0	40.91	59.09	0	0	0	0
Guest Room/ Apartment	0	0	3	4	8	4	1	0
%	0	0	15.00	20.00	40.00	20.00	5.00	0
Campsite	0	0	4	7	13	13	6	1
%	0	0	9.09	15.91	29.55	29.55	13.64	2.27

Source: own study, *Note: Values represent an ordinal scale of change in occupancy rate, where -4 indicates the largest decrease, 0 indicates no change, and 5 indicates the largest increase.

two forms of accommodation. A specific characteristic of guest rooms was access to a communal kitchen (13 of 20 – 65% provided such access). No other form of accommodation offered such a facility. Campsites were characterized by: generally not offering the basic services provided by the other forms of accommodation. On the other hand, campsites almost always provided parking facilities and were predominantly pet friendly (other forms of accommodation very rarely accepted pets). Disabled access was rare (in less than a quarter of the hotels and lower in other forms of accommodation).

Due to the clear association between the type of accommodation and the services offered, the effect of the total number of services and particular services on the occupancy rates was analysed for a given type of accommodation (only in cases where sufficient variation was observed within an accommodation type). Since occupation rates do not have a normal distribution, the Wilcoxon test (a non-parametric test) was used to analyse occupation rates according to the presence or lack of a service. Kendall's test of correlation was used to analyse the association between the number of services provided and the occupancy rates.

The number of services is strongly associated with the type of accommodation (Kruskal-Wallis test, $p < 0.001$). Hotels provide the largest number of services on average, while guesthouses and apartments offer a similar, but significantly lower number (Wilcoxon test with Benjamini-Hochberg correction, $p < 0.001$). Campsites provide significantly fewer services than the other types ($p < 0.001$).

Overall, there was a positive correlation between the number of services and occupancy rates before the pandemic ($p < 0.001$) and a negative correlation with the overall change in occupancy rate ($p < 0.001$). After the pandemic, no significant correlation was observed between the number of

services and occupancy rates. This corresponds to the following facts:

Before the pandemic, hotels had the highest occupancy rates, while other facilities—especially campsites—had unused capacity. After the pandemic, occupancy rates were high across all accommodation types. The increase at campsites may reflect their growing attractiveness but could also result from limited capacity in other accommodation types.

Analysing each type separately, a negative correlation was found among guesthouses between occupancy rates (before and after the pandemic) and the number of services ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$). No correlation was found between services and changes in occupancy rates, which may be influenced by the location of individual guesthouses and specific amenities (e.g., parking).

Regarding specific amenities at hotels: before the pandemic, occupancy was higher at hotels without kettles ($p < 0.05$), but hotels with kettles experienced a larger increase over the study period, so that after the pandemic occupancy was independent of kettle availability. Similarly, hotels offering whole board had higher occupancy before the pandemic ($p < 0.001$), while hotels without whole board showed larger increases ($p < 0.01$), so that after the pandemic occupancy rates were similar. Overall, changes in occupancy rates appear primarily associated with whole board availability.

Before the pandemic, hotels with disabled access had higher occupancy than those without ($p < 0.01$). Hotels without disabled access showed a larger increase over the study period, so that after the pandemic occupancy was no longer associated with disabled access.

Having analysed campsites, it was interesting to note occupancy results of these facilities by standard before and after the pandemic. Although there

Table 2. Occupancy at campsites before and after the pandemic based on the standard of services offered

Standard	Occupancy at campsites before the pandemic based on the standard of services offered					
	41-50%	51-60%	61-70%	71-80%	81-90%	91-100%
Low	1 (10.00%)	3 (30.00%)	2 (20.00%)	4 (40.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Medium	0 (0.00%)	7 (21.88%)	8 (25.00%)	8 (25.00%)	5 (15.63%)	4 (12.50%)
High	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (50.00%)	1 (50.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Standard	Occupancy at campsites after the pandemic based on the standard of services offered					
				81-90%	91-100%	
Low	-	-	-	-	0 (0.00%)	10 (100.00%)
Medium	-	-	-	-	6 (18.75%)	26 (81.25%)
High	-	-	-	-	0 (0.00%)	2 (100.00%)

Source: own study

was no significant association between the stated standard of a hotel and the occupancy rates (or change in occupancy rates), there is a significant association between the standard of a campsite and the changes in occupancy levels. These changes conform to the hypothesis of increasing demand leading to an equalization of the occupancy rates across different forms of accommodation.

Before the pandemic, the occupancy rate at low standard campsites was generally lower than at other campsites (although this difference is not significant, $p=0.053$). After the pandemic, the occupancy rate is very high independently of standard (Table 2).

After the pandemic, guesthouses without parking facilities had a higher occupancy level, $p<0.01$. It should be noted that the guesthouses without parking facilities also had a significantly higher occupancy level before the pandemic, $p<0.05$. This is difficult to interpret due to the small sample size. It may be the case that guesthouses without parking facilities tend to be within larger towns that are more attractive to tourists. The changes in occupancy levels (post-pandemic compared to pre-pandemic) were not associated with the existence or lack of parking facilities

3.3. The association between the type of accommodation and the selected elements of tourist attractiveness

The location of an accommodation facility in a culturally, historically, or nature-attractive place is a basic condition for the profitability of the service provided. The occupancy rate of the establishment is usually related to the attractiveness of the place, which can consist of cultural or natural attractions, either permanent or temporary. There are many definitions of tourist attractions. This concept is highly extensive and covers not only the elements of nature and culture but also, e.g., price levels, attitudes of the local population toward tourists and tourism, tourist facilities including the entire technical infrastructure (Ritchie & Sins, 1978; Kruczek, 2010).

Benckendorffer (2006) divides tourist attractions into those of a cultural-permanent nature among which the following can be listed, e.g., historical sites and museums, art galleries, archaeological sites, shopping centres; cultural-temporary ones, e.g., festivals, music concerts, recitals, religious and sports events. Among the natural-permanent attractions, he includes, e.g., conservation sites, fauna, flora; natural-temporary attractions cover, e.g., volcanic eruptions, coral reef diving, wildlife migrations, astronomical

events. However, according to him, the next twenty years will see remarkable changes in the nature of the tourist attraction sector. The term 'attractions' will encompass a much wider array of facilities offering multifaceted leisure and entertainment opportunities. In the presented research, the attractions included, e.g., a picturesque location, a forest, mountains, an aqua park, sports equipment rental, sports field, museums, periodic events. A total of 15 options, including the option to indicate a tourist attraction other than those listed.

There is a significant association between the range of local attractions and the type of accommodation ($p<0.001$, Kruskal-Wallis test). Hotels and campsites are located in areas with a wider range of local attractions than guesthouses and guest rooms (Wilcoxon test using the Benjamini-Hochberg correction for multiple testing, $p < 0.001$). Campsites are always located in sites described as scenic (particularly in forests). Guesthouses are rarely in such areas, but are relatively common near historical sites (more commonly urban areas). Hotels are relatively commonly located close to water features (rivers, lake, sea) and historical sites.

The analysis of the respondents' answers made it possible to determine the impact of the attractiveness of the surrounding area on the occupancy rates of accommodation facilities before and after the pandemic, taking into account individual types of attractions.

Statistical analyses were conducted to assess the relationship between the availability of selected tourist attractions and occupancy rates in the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

In the case of accommodation facilities located in mountainous areas, the greatest impact of the surrounding area's attractiveness was observed for hotels. Among hotels with occupancy rates of 91–100% in the post-pandemic period, over 84% of the analysed facilities were located in mountains (compared to 65% before the pandemic). For facilities located outside mountainous areas, the share of those with the highest occupancy increased from 31% to 80%. The results of the study are presented in Figure 2.

There is no such significant difference when all the types of accommodation are considered together. The association between occupancy rates at location in the mountains is somewhat difficult to interpret.

An increase in hotel occupancy after the pandemic was also observed for hotels located in historically attractive locations and near rivers (Fig. 3–4). However, the occupancy growth was not limited to these; it was also noted for hotels situated in less historically attractive locations and away from rivers.

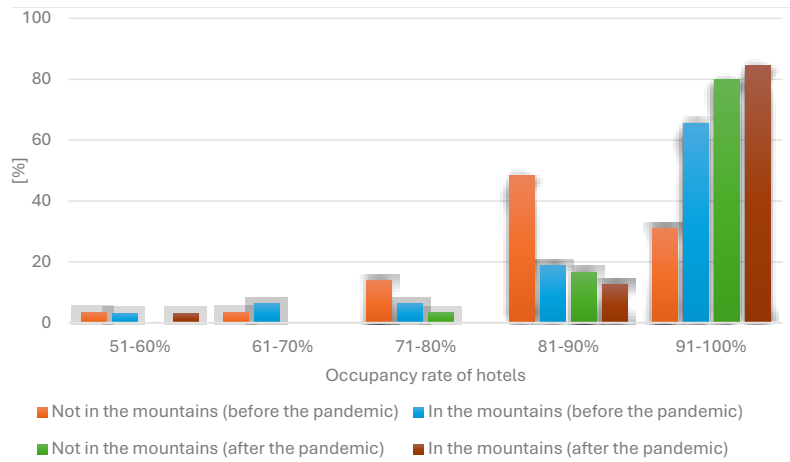


Fig. 2. Occupancy rate of hotels in the mountains before and after the pandemic Source: own study

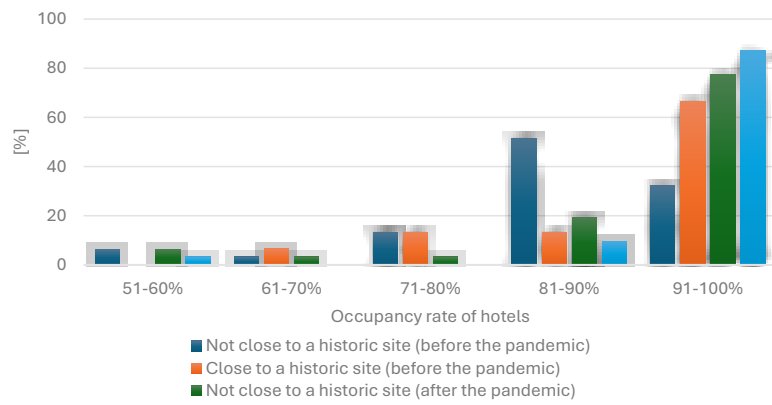


Fig. 3. Occupancy rate of hotels close to historic sites (before and after the pandemic) Source: own study

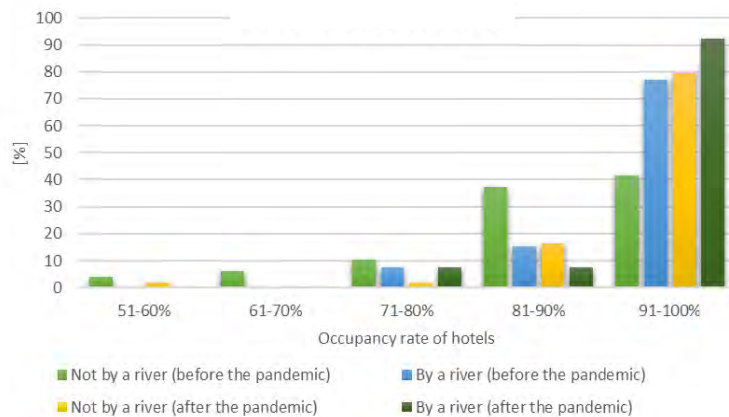


Fig. 4. Occupancy rate of hotels by a river (before and after the pandemic) Source: own study

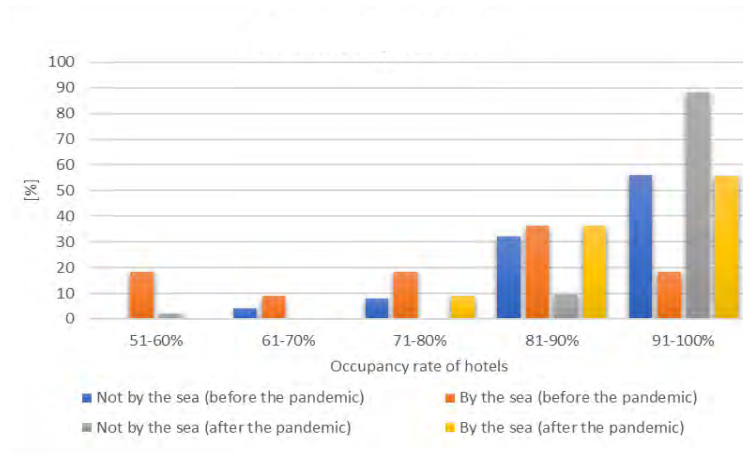


Fig. 5. Occupancy rate of hotels location by the sea (before and after the pandemic). Source: own study

Table 3. Change in Occupancy rate of accomodation location by the sea (no. of categories)

Change in Occupancy Rate (no. of categories)	-4	-1	0	1	2	3
Not by the sea	1 (2.00%)	1 (2.00%)	27 (54.00%)	16 (32.00%)	5 (10.00%)	0 (0.00%)
By the sea	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (27.27%)	4 (36.36%)	3 (27.27%)	1 (9.09%)

Source: own study

Having analysed the impact of the sea on accommodation occupancy rate before and after the pandemic it was found that: before the pandemic, the occupancy rate was significantly higher in hotels not by the sea ($p < 0.01$, Wilcoxon test). After the pandemic, the occupancy rate remained significantly higher in hotels not by the sea ($p < 0.01$, Wilcoxon test). The distribution of hotels by percentage occupancy rate is presented in Figure 5.

However, the increase in occupancy rates was greater in hotels by the sea ($p < 0.05$, Wilcoxon's test) (Table 3).

In some ways, this contradicts the hypothesis that increasing demand has equalized the occupancy rates regardless of the attractiveness of accommodation. However, the occupancy rates in the hotels surveyed was less strongly associated with location with regard to the sea after the pandemic. The market for accommodation by the black sea is more international than the market for accommodation elsewhere in the surveyed regions. Since the survey concentrated on hotels serving the Turkish market, it could be argued that the hotels located by the sea increased their occupancy rates relative to large, high-standard hotels aimed at the international market.

4. Discussion

The first research question addressed the level of use (occupancy rates) of accommodation facilities before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The analyses indicate that, with the exception of campsites, occupancy rates clearly declined during the pandemic period. In contrast, the post-pandemic period is characterized by very high occupancy rates across all types of accommodation facilities, regardless of their category.

Particularly notable patterns were observed for campsites. In the Amasya region, campsite occupancy increased markedly during the pandemic and remained high after its end. In the Trabzon region, occupancy rates at campsites rose slightly during the pandemic and continued to increase in the post-pandemic period. These findings suggest that campsites have become more attractive compared to the pre-pandemic period. However, the fact that occupancy rates are generally close to 100% across accommodation types indicates that the observed increase is largely driven by a substantial growth in demand relative to supply. In the post-pandemic period, tourists appear

primarily focused on securing accommodation, rather than selecting based on specific preferences.

Although the rise in campsite occupancy could be interpreted as a consequence of increased interest in open-air tourism and positive experiences gained during the pandemic, similar increases were observed for guest rooms, which were subject to access restrictions during the pandemic. This supports the interpretation that the increased occupancy of campsites and guest rooms is primarily the result of capacity constraints in hotels and guesthouses, leading to a redistribution of tourist demand toward alternative forms of accommodation.

The second research question examined whether the range of amenities (services) offered by tourist establishments affected occupancy rates before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show clear differences between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

Before the pandemic, hotel occupancy rates were strongly positively correlated with the availability services, such as full board and bicycle rental, indicating that a broader range of amenities played an important role in attracting guests. In the post-pandemic period, however, no such correlations were identified. This finding supports the limited supply hypothesis, suggesting that the exceptionally high demand for accommodation reduced the importance of service differentiation.

In the case of guesthouses, a negative correlation between the number of services offered and occupancy rates was observed before the pandemic, while no statistically significant relationship was found after the pandemic. These results further confirm that, in the post-pandemic context, the availability of accommodation itself has become more important than the scope of services provided.

The third research question focused on whether accommodation facilities located in attractive areas achieved higher occupancy rates than those situated in less attractive locations. Prior to the pandemic, hotel occupancy rates were strongly positively correlated with locations in mountainous areas and in proximity to historical monuments. After the pandemic, these correlations were no longer observed, again supporting the limited supply hypothesis.

Conversely, before the pandemic, hotel occupancy rates were strongly negatively correlated with coastal locations, while this relationship disappeared in the post-pandemic period. These results suggest that the importance of location-specific attractiveness diminished after the pandemic due to uniformly high demand.

Additionally, the findings indicate that the war in Ukraine has had a stronger negative impact on

occupancy rates in the Trabzon region than in Amasya, likely due to Trabzon's location on the Black Sea and its greater exposure to geopolitical instability. Zenker and Kock (2020) note that crises are often followed by declarations that "things will never be the same," which historically tend to be overstated. However, the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to more lasting changes in tourist behaviour. At the same time, the outbreak of the war in Ukraine appears to have replaced the pandemic as the dominant external shock, with tourists increasingly seeking to compensate for lost travel opportunities.

5. Conclusions and implications

Based on the conducted research, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. There was a clear increase in the occupancy rate of campsites as compared to the occupancy rate of campsites in the pre-pandemic period.
2. Before the pandemic, occupancy rates were the highest in hotels, particularly in the ones which offered full board. After the pandemic, occupancy rates were high, independently of the type of accommodation. This supports the hypothesis that the increasing demand after the pandemic has resulted in an equalization of the occupancy rates.
3. Before the pandemic, a potential customer paid more attention to additional attractions offered by hotels (full board, bicycle rentals), whereas after the pandemic no such correlations were established, which leads to confirming the hypothesis about a limited supply of accommodation facilities after the pandemic.

All types of offered accommodation facilities recorded an increase in occupancy rate. Many amenities as well as the location attractiveness were no longer of such importance after the pandemic period. In addition, the ongoing warfare and the location of the city of Trabzon directly on the Black Sea have a noticeable (negative) impact on the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities.

Our study has made a significant theoretical contribution to the existing source literature covering tourism problems. Firstly, our study initiates the next phase of analyses addressing the situation of accommodation facilities not only during the pandemic, but also after it was over. We are able to determine the actual situation experienced by the

owners of hotels, guesthouses, apartments, campsites during the pandemic period as well as their current post-pandemic status (in the conditions of normal operation of the offered services). Many studies discuss the impact of the pandemic on the occupancy of accommodation facilities, but their minor part addresses the problem of their current functioning as compared to the period of sanitary restrictions, broken down by different categories of the services provided. In this regard, the studies remain highly useful.

It appeared that the current geopolitical situation (the mentioned armed conflict in Ukraine triggered by Russian aggression) has changed approaching the COVID-19 pandemic as a groundbreaking phenomenon that could affect real paradigm shifts. Such a hypothesis was put forward by Zenker & Kock (2020), and also raised by Hu et al. (2021). However, customers quickly forgot about the lockdown and, anxious to make up for the lost time, returned to their habits related to the intensity of using accommodation services. In addition, a certain difference in customer preferences assessed from the perspective of accommodation facilities occupancy has been observed, namely tourists are more likely to seek contact with nature and have lower requirements regarding the standard of provided services, as confirmed by the presented research.

The presented research provides the owners of accommodation facilities with certain important practical insights into the determinants of tourist services functioning in the course of the pandemic period and today. It reveals the actual occupancy during the pandemic as well as the current trends in tourism occurring in the cities covered by the analysis, and allows taking a further development strategy for guesthouses, hotels, apartments and campsites. The findings show how the amenities provided by the accommodation facilities supported by the local tourist attractions can affect the popularity of these facilities, as well as indicate how important they were before (during the pandemic period) and whether they still remain important (in the post-pandemic period).

The findings of the study offer practical insights for managers of hotels, guesthouses, and similar accommodation facilities, which may be useful in shaping the future development of their businesses. Campsites have become particularly popular in Turkey, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the results of the research confirm that this trend is continuing.

6. Limitations and future research

This study is not without certain limitations. Firstly, reaching accommodation providers proved to be challenging, as many were unwilling to participate, and among those who agreed, men were clearly the dominant group. To further develop the research problem, it is suggested to conduct follow-up comparative analyses in other countries. The collected data differentiate accommodation facilities by type (hotels, guesthouses, apartments, campsites), identify the amenities provided on site, and show the attractions offered in the surrounding areas. Based on this material, analyses were conducted focusing on occupancy rates during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies reflect the opinions expressed by the owners, which could be further validated in subsequent research, for example by comparing them with the views of customers (service recipients).

Additionally, future research could explore regional differences in accommodation facilities and their characteristics, as indicated above, as well as other factors such as market structure, social aspects, and spatial patterns. Such analyses would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the sector and its development, while also allowing verification of the current findings in different contexts.

This research shows that the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities during the pandemic, apart from campsites, clearly decreased. After pandemic the strong rise in the occupancy rate at campsites results from a rise in the attractiveness of campsites.

Our findings suggest that before the pandemic, occupancy rates were the highest in hotels, particularly in the ones which offered full board. After the pandemic, occupancy rates were high, independently of the type of accommodation. This supports the hypothesis that the increasing demand after the pandemic has resulted in an equalization of the occupancy rates. Many amenities as well as the location attractiveness were no longer of such importance after the pandemic period.

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Appendix

The questionnaire form used in the study entitled: Tourism before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the opinions of owners of accommodation facilities.

1. What type of tourist and recreational services do you offer?	
Guesthouse	Guest rooms/apartment
Hotel	Camping area/camping site
2. Are you a member of an organization associating agritourism farms, ecological farms, other forms of tourism in rural areas?	
Yes	No
3. If yes, please provide the name or abbreviation of the organization	
.....	
4. Have you used any programs supporting entrepreneurs/farmers in connection with the losses caused by lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic:	
Yes	No
5. If yes, to what extent they have covered the lockdown losses	
Up to 10 %	51-60 %
11-20 %	61-70 %
21-30 %	71-80 %
31-40 %	81-90 %
41-50 %	91-100 %
6. How do you assess the occupancy rate of the accommodation you offer in the season before the COVID-19 pandemic?	
Up to 10 %	51-60 %
11-20 %	61-70 %
21-30 %	71-80 %
31-40 %	81-90 %
41-50 %	91-100 %
7. How do you assess the occupancy rate of the accommodation you offer during the COVID-19 pandemic in the holiday season ?	
Up to 10 %	
11-20 %	
21-30 %	
31-40 %	
41-50 %	
8. How do you assess the occupancy rate of the accommodation you offer now (after the COVID-19 pandemic in the holiday season):	
Up to 10 %	
11-20 %	
21-30 %	
31-40 %	
41-50 %	
9. Do higher costs of living translate into higher prices of the services you provide	
Yes	No
10. Have you managed to return to the size of your business from before the COVID-19 pandemic?	
Yes	No
11. What, in your opinion, was the most severe factor influencing the increase in the prices of tourism and recreational services during the COVID-19 pandemic ? (please mark max. 3 answers)	
Low accommodation occupancy	Increase in money supply resulting in higher interest rates on loans
High fixed costs	Other
Inflation	
Higher prices of building materials	

12. What, in your opinion, has, at present, the most severe impact on higher prices of tourism and recreational services in connection with the war in Ukraine ? (please mark max. 3 answers)	
Higher prices of fuel	Higher prices of building materials
Higher prices of electricity	Higher interest rates on loans
Higher prices of gas	Influx of population from Ukraine, high demand for accommodation
Inflation	Other
Higher prices of food	
13. What facilities does your centre/guesthouse offer (apart from accommodation) – multiple answers:	
Breakfast	free Internet access
Full board	free parking
Common kitchenette	towels and basic toiletries
kitchenette in the room	kettle in the room without a kitchenette
fridge in the room	TV in the room
access to a washing machine	pet-friendly accommodation
facilities for the disabled	other
14. What attractions does your farm/recreational centre/guesthouse offer – multiple answers possible:	
horse ridding	watching wild/farm animals
bicycles	watching work at the fam
barbecue area/gazebo	possibility of setting up a tent
sports ground	participation in workshops
swimming pool/paddling pool/river	possibility of buying farm grown, healthy, organic products
SPA/Wellness zone	other
playground for kids	
15. What are the most important attractions in the vicinity of your farm/recreational centre/guesthouse - multiple answers possible:	
picturesque location, landscape	Playground
forest	Outdoor gym
river	Sports ground
mountains	Cafes, restaurant
sea	historical buildings, museums
lake	cyclical events
aqua park/swimming pool	other
16. Do you run a website of the offered tourist and recreational service?	
Yes	No
17. Is it possible to book accommodation/stay in your farm/recreational centre/guesthouse online?	
Yes	No
18. How many beds does your business offer	
10 and less	37-42
11-16	43-48
17-24	49-54
25-30	55 and more
31-36	
19. How do you rate the standard of provided services	
High	low
average	
20. Sex:	
Female	Male
	I will not give
21. Age range	
25 and less	56-65
26-35	66-70
36-45	Over 70
46-55	

Source: own study

