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## The two-way perspective of tourism undergraduates towards (post-)viral world: The future of tourism, and vocational development and career

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### ABSTRACT

This timely paper explores the future of tourism and vocational career in the Covid-19 period from the perspective of undergraduate tourism students. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 30 students majoring in tourism faculty departments following the qualitative methodology. The findings demonstrate that vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era and the future of tourism are the main dimensions identifying students' perspectives. The vocational and psychological pandemic effects are shaping the future career decisions of students. Furthermore, the future of tourism includes the elements related to tourist expectations and behaviours and trends in the (post-)viral tourism.

### 1. Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic, which is recognised as the most destructive health crisis that the world has ever experienced (Seyitoğlu & Costa, 2022), has severely impacted the travel, tourism, and hospitality industry since its emergence because a wide range of obstacles related to mobility was applied to prevent the spread of the virus. Following the extreme decrease in general income, the increasing layoffs in the tourism industry are the most substantial impact of the current pandemic. In this vein, the pandemic caused the loss of almost 62 million tourism jobs (18.5% of total employment in tourism and hospitality) (World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2021). The loss of the tourism workforce is critical as it would be challenging to re-gain the pre-pandemic working teams and experienced employees in a short time when tourism demand rises again. A recent study (Seyitoğlu et al., 2022) stresses that training for qualifications and skills, saving qualified employees, and the need for skilled employees are vital in (post)pandemic tourism. In this aspect, Gupta and Sahu (2021) emphasised that tourism education and training can aid the industry in reviving the aftermath of the Covid-19 era. Therefore, tourism education is believed to be the sector's backbone (Kunwar, 2018).

Tourism education is a significant determinant of success in a highly competitive environment (Ayikoru et al., 2009). On the other

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side, tourism students are considered skilled and qualified to provide quality services for customers or travellers (Gu et al., 2007). Moreover, as one of the most crucial tourism industry actors, students are considered future employees of the industry. However, tourism students have been severely affected by the health crisis recently. As the educational institutions were physically closed and tourism companies were not operating for a long time during the pandemic, tourism students could not have the chance to have their practical courses face to face and lost their opportunity to do internships. Besides, senior students lose job opportunities after graduation.

Previous research on tourism education and Covid-19 has mainly focused on online teaching and learning experiences (Lei & So, 2021), students' courses satisfaction (Orlowski et al., 2021), students' internships (Park & Jones, 2021), students' perceptions toward remote learning (Baker, 2021), students' perceptions of tertiary tourism education and their careers (Reichenberger & Raymond, 2021a), challenges faced by the current crisis (Tiwareti et al., 2020), the transformation of tourism education values (Edelheim, 2020) and the role of technology on tourism education amid the Covid-19 (Qiu et al., 2021). These studies are well-documented the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on tourism education from the perspectives of students and teachers. Nevertheless, recent research highlight that there is still insufficient investigation on how to revive tourism education post-Covid-19 (Ye & Law, 2021).

On the other side, the tourism industry highly depends on human power and expects its human resources to be qualified and skilled (Bontenbal & Aziz, 2013). Thus, tourism students are one of the most important actors that meet this expectation. In this regard, their career perceptions toward the industry are essential for the continuity of the tourism industry in terms of providing quality services for customers. In this regard, tourism and hospitality graduates must have positive perspectives towards working in the sector (Richardson, 2010), especially in the (post-)covid period, to regain the industries' pre-covid position. However, although some researchers (e.g. Reichenberger & Raymond, 2021b) explored the vocational career perceptions of tourism students during the Covid-19, there is no clear consensus on their perception of post-Covid-19.

The crisis has led academic and industry professionals to investigate how tourism will be shaped in the future. By doing so, future tourism trends and travel preferences will be explored for tourism destinations, which, in turn, will help reshape the tourism industry's future. In this respect, although many institutions (such as World Tourism Organization), destinations and scholars attempted to examine the industry's future, no research investigated tourism students' perspectives toward the (post-)viral tourism industry. In other words, the questions of "how the pandemic has influenced tourism undergraduates' vocational career" and "what is the perspective of students' towards the future of tourism" seem unanswered in the current literature. These unexplored research domains directed us to focus on investigating the research gaps. Accordingly, this research aims to fill the area's void and shed more light on exploring the undergraduate students' perspectives on future tourism and vocational development and career in the (post-)viral epoch. Thence, Turkish students were chosen as a research unit, and Turkey was selected as a research area to succeed in the mentioned aim.

There are some key reasons why this research considered Turkey a research setting. First, Turkey is a country that is highly dependent on the tourism industry, and 51.7 million tourists visited Turkey in 2019 (Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) (2021). In addition, in the tourism sector in Turkey, the number of qualified and educated people is already insufficient (Bahar, 2004). Thence, tourism education institutions can be the remedy to overcome this obstacle. In this regard, the capacity of tourism education has been growing in the country as there are many tourism faculties in almost all cities of Turkish universities. According to the Association of Turkish Tourism Academics (TUADER), tourism education is provided in 133 universities. These universities have four central departments: tourism management, gastronomy and culinary arts, tourism guiding, and recreation management (Association of Turkish Tourism Academics, 2019). Besides, more than 150 associate degree programs provide tourism education in Turkey (Council of Higher Education (Turkey) (2021).

Additionally, only in 2021, over 5500 students enrolled in programs (tourism management, gastronomy and culinary arts, tourism guiding, and recreation management) of tourism faculties in Turkey (Measurement Selection and Placement Centre (Turkey), 2021). However, other faculties and vocational higher education institutions also provide tourism education. Thus, the importance of tourism education for Turkey is well recognised. In addition, as tourism students' vocational development and career perceptions are significant to keep them in the industry, knowing students' perceptions will be beneficial to retaining qualified tourism employees.

On the other side, tourism businesses in Turkey that desire to provide quality service benefit exceptionally from graduated tourism students and try to keep them in the sector. For example, an important tourist destination, Alanya, suffers from qualified employees, and the race for qualified employees has started among many hotels (Yeni Alanya, 2021). From a theoretical view, this study explores students' perspectives regarding the future of tourism and vocational development and career in the (post-)viral period. Besides, the empirical findings will help academics, educational institutions, destination managers, and practitioners understand the future of tourism from the viewpoint of tourism students and students' and career perceptions in the (post-)viral tourism.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Vocational career of tourism students and Covid-19

Tourism is a labour-intensive and rapidly growing industry all over the world. Further, the industry highly depends on skilled staff to offer high-quality tourism services for customers (Amoah & Baum, 1997). Hence, well-designed career planning and development are required for the tourism industry to increase labour quality, enhance organisations' productivity, decrease employee turnover and staff cost, improve employee belongingness, and apply modern management approaches (Zengin et al., 2011). In this vein, the career development of any employee in the tourism industry is of paramount importance for a thriving and developing sector. In particular, career development and planning for tourism students as future qualified employees is vital for developing the tourism industry.

Researchers, who have examined tourism students' vocational career perceptions, concluded that vocational career perceptions of

tourism students are shaped by different conditions of tourism sectors (Kusluvan & Kusluvan, 2000; Lusby, 2017; Roney & Öztin, 2007). For instance, a study conducted in Turkey by Roney and Öztin (2007) indicates that students who begin to study tourism perceive the industry as more optimistic than others; however, they perceive the sector as less favourable after experiencing the tourism industry. This can discourage students from committing to working in the industry after graduation. Further, Tuzunkan (2018) clarified the negative aspects of the industry and pointed out that tourism students think of tourism as a threat that may impact their family life due to workload density. Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000, p.261) reported that “stressful jobs, lack of family life due to the nature of work, long working hours, exhausting and seasonal (unstable) jobs, low social status of tourism jobs, unsatisfactory and unfair promotions, low pay and insufficient benefits, unqualified managers, poor attitudes and behaviour of managers towards employees, unqualified co-workers and poor attitudes and behaviour of co-workers, and poor physical working conditions for employees” are significant factors that tourism students perceive the industry negatively and determine their future career decision.

Additionally, a study applied to American and Macau student’s perceptions regarding working in the tourism and hospitality industry found out that unstable jobs, low skill set, low social status and low pay are the key factors that detract students from the industry and create a lack of commitment to the sector (Lusby, 2017). As aforesaid, students’ direct experience with the tourism industry and negative aspects of the industry causes them to have a negative future career perception. Nevertheless, the current pandemic worsened the situation after all the previous industrial problems and negative aspects of working environments in the tourism industry.

The outbreak of Covid-19 has far-reaching and severe impacts on learners and educators (UNESCO, 2020). Since numerous countries applied many measures (i.e., lockdown, closing the borders, travel restrictions, etc.) to stop the spread of the virus, all universities across the globe were closed temporarily, and remote or hybrid education was offered (Tiwari et al., 2020). Significantly, tourism departments dependent on hands-on training were severely impacted. Tourism and hospitality education, primarily based on practical education, was also severely hit by this outbreak. Soon after the emergence of the Covid-19, tourism instructors applied alternative teaching methods to engage students and adapt them to an online teaching environment (Seo & Kim, 2021). Although the impact of Covid-19 has decreased since its first appearance, its effects on tourism and hospitality education continue. Further, even though vaccine programs have started in many countries, some tourism educational institutions have been cautious and have arranged their education to be remote or face-to-face.

Many researchers who desire to revive tourism and hospitality education have investigated the impact of Covid-19 on education. The most important of these studies is to reveal the perceptions and expectations of tourism students regarding their professions in the (post-)pandemic period (Zhong et al., 2021). Zhong et al. (2021) unveiled that engagement activities such as learning with peers, interaction with faculty and campus environment caused pin students’ hope on tourism education and academic satisfaction, which is considered a crucial predictor for tourism students’ majors and career loyalty.

The Covid-19 crisis is regarded as one of the most significant career shocks for those who desire to enter the tourism and hospitality industry (Reichenberger & Raymond, 2021b). Career shock is described as “a disruptive and extraordinary event that is, at least to some degree, caused by factors outside the focal individual’s control and that triggers a deliberate thought process concerning one’s career” (Akkermans et al., 2018, p. 4). Furthermore, the current health crisis may psychologically impact those who launch their career in tourism and hospitality. However, there is no general agreement on how the current health crisis affected the tourism students’ vocational development. To address this need, this study will deeply explore tourism students’ vocational development and career perception in the (post-)viral era.

## 2.2. Future of tourism in the post-Covid-19 epoch

Tourism future has always been a focal point of destinations to forecast future travel preferences and act accordingly. With the Covid-19 pandemic, investigating this topic has increasingly received significant attention (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2022) since the uncertainty still exists regarding tourist demands (Seyitoğlu et al., 2022). According to some experts’ predictions, some emerging travel trends have occurred with the pandemic, and these trends have the potential to shape the future of tourism. Among these, revenge tourism, which refers to an intensive desire to travel due to being unable to travel in the pre-pandemic period, is one of the most mentioned envisaged trends in the media and academic discussion (Girish, 2021; Independent, 2022; Panzer-Krause, 2022). The term “revenge tourism” or, in other words, “revenge travel” was first mentioned by Chinese state media in the news about the willingness of Chinese officials to encourage the pent-up demand of people after almost a year of quarantines, lockdowns, and restrictions (Kuo, 2020).

Seraphin and Dosquet (2020) emphasised that people can join second-home tourism in rural areas and mountain tourism activities with a placebo impact. Further, people can visit safe destinations in terms of hygiene and go to less crowded areas (i.e., rural destinations and regions) (Orindaru et al., 2021). A recent study (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2022) purports that psychological issues such as fear and anxiety are likely to form tourist behaviour in the (post-)viral tourism. Another trend, technology-based tourism, can also help reduce tourists’ fear and anxiety by providing contactless and safe services. In this vein, technology-based tourism may be beneficial in gaining competitiveness in the post-viral tourism market (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2022). In addition, in an interview with Zoritsa Urošević, Executive Director of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), it was highlighted that significant trends in the tourism sector would be moulded around rural destinations (UN News, 2022). These trends are believed to lead to new opportunities and doors for the rapidly evolving tourism and hospitality industry in the (post-)covid-19 era.

It is evident that the future of tourism was explored from the eyes of managers, institutions, tourists, academics, etc.; however, though tourism students play a vital role in the industry, their perspectives are ignored to complete the main framework of future tourism trends in the (post-)covid-19 era. Consequently, theoretically exploring this topic will help contribute to mainstream literature

on the subject because no study related to tourism students' perceptions of future tourism exists.

### 3. Research methodology

This research explores tourism students' perceptions of vocational development and careers, and the future of tourism. Although prior studies have attempted to understand tourism students' vocational development and career in the pre-Covid-19 period, limited studies have focused on this topic during the Covid-19 pandemic. Further, there are no scholars who investigate tourism students' views on the future of tourism. This article adopted a qualitative case study approach to address these voids and operationalise the research for a deeper description and explanation. According to Yin (2014), this approach can be utilised for the limited amount of existing academic studies or the absence of prior research in the mainstream literature.

The qualitative case study approach can help researchers gather rich empirical outputs to provide insightful theoretical implications (Creswell, 2007). It allows researchers to acquire better insight into the participants' feelings, perceptions, and ideas (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Doing so generates a scope of knowledge and understanding in specific social areas such as tourism and hospitality (Fossey et al., 2002). To achieve these points, rigorous and systematic procedures (sampling, data collection and data analysis) have been followed by researchers, as explained below.

#### 3.1. Sampling and data collection

This research used a purposeful sampling technique. Some criteria were considered for research sample units. First, only tourism bachelors who study in tourism faculties of Turkey were chosen. Second, the students' ability to express their perceptions about the devastating effects of the current health crisis on tourism was determined as another research criterion. The last criteria for sampling were to ensure students had experience in the tourism and hospitality industry.

The sample size for qualitative inquiry differs, and many researchers interpret sample size differently for this approach. Dworkin (2012) offers researchers 5–50 interviews to be enough for qualitative research, while (Patton, 2002) claims that there is no rule for the required sample size in such research design. However, in such research, data saturation and reachability of the target sample are considered for the sample size needed (Marshall et al., 2013). So, this study utilised theoretical saturation. After interviewing 30 tourism students representing eight different tourism faculties in eight Turkish universities (see Table 1), the authors agreed that data reached saturation since no additional insights were provided from the last participants. This process made the sample size appropriate for this research (Marshall et al., 2013).

Research questions (see Appendix 1) were initially derived from the pertaining literature and aimed at understanding students' perspectives on the future of the tourism industry and career perceptions in the (post-)viral era. These questions were sent to tourism

**Table 1**  
Profiles of participants.

Participant	Gender	Age	Class/year	Department
P1	Female	23	Senior	Tourism Management
P2	Male	24	Senior	Tourism Management
P3	Male	25	Sophomore	Recreation
P4	Female	21	Junior	Tourism Management
P5	Male	21	Sophomore	Recreation
P6	Female	23	Junior	Tourism Management
P7	Male	22	Sophomore	Recreation
P8	Female	22	Senior	Tourism Management
P9	Female	22	Senior	Tourism Management
P10	Male	21	Sophomore	Recreation
P11	Female	24	Senior	Tourism Management
P12	Female	22	Senior	Tourism Management
P13	Female	23	Senior	Tourism Management
P14	Female	25	Senior	Tourism Management
P15	Female	23	Senior	Tourism Management
P16	Female	25	Senior	Tourism Management
P17	Female	22	Senior	Tourism Management
P18	Female	24	Senior	Tourism Management
P19	Female	21	Senior	Tourism Management
P20	Male	21	Senior	Tourism Management
P21	Female	21	Sophomore	Gastronomy
P22	Male	21	Senior	Gastronomy
P23	Female	20	Junior	Gastronomy
P24	Female	19	Sophomore	Gastronomy
P25	Female	21	Junior	Gastronomy
P26	Female	20	Junior	Gastronomy
P27	Female	20	Junior	Tourism Guiding
P28	Male	23	Junior	Tourism Guiding
P29	Female	21	Junior	Tourism Guiding
P30	Male	24	Junior	Tourism Guiding

academics who study tourism education for their feedback to ensure the suitability of the questions. Further, the researchers conducted a pilot study with two students to confirm the validity of the interview questions, the appropriateness of the questions, and suggestions from the sample (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Williams-Mcbean, 2019). The data obtained from two students were transcribed and examined by the authors. After receiving the expert opinions and pre-test, the semi-structured question form was finalised. Thus, the authors initiated the interview with students by sending them a formal request to participate in our research. The interviews were conducted by taking students' consent. All interviews were conducted online (i.e., via Zoom, WhatsApp, etc.) because of the Covid-19 conditions. Interviews were conducted in March–June 2021 and were digitally recorded with the participants' permission. The interviews were approximately 45 min in length. Then, the authors transcribed it verbatim for analysis after the interviews ended. Finally, all interviews were conducted in Turkish and later translated into English.

### 3.2. Data analysis

Content analysis is “an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communications” (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991, s. 243). This analysis, containing three stages (reduction, displaying, and conclusion verification) (Miles & Huberman, 1994), was deemed appropriate for this research, and a coding procedure was adopted to explore the main themes of the research data. In the initial phase, the raw data filtration was implemented. Next, participants' statements that are coherent with the research objectives were determined. In the following step, an interpretive research paradigm was utilised for coding involving two independent researchers with knowledge and experience in qualitative research methods to further credibility. First, coders read the entire research data from top to bottom a few times. Following that, they started coding the students' responses through line-by-line coding. The coders then explored the meaningful sub-themes (axial and selective coding). This phase enables coders to name themes for a final decision. Eventually, after the coders discussed the themes and sub-themes extracted separately, the results were agreed upon and finalised. As a result of consensus, two main themes and their sub-themes were determined.

## 4. Findings and discussion

According to the data analysis of the present study, two main categories were revealed: (i) vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era and (ii) the future of tourism.

### 4.1. Vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era

As the first category of results, vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 period consist of three main themes (vocational effects, psychological effects, and future career decisions), including sub-themes.

#### 4.1.1. Vocational effects

The first sub-dimension, vocational effects, refers to the influences of the Covid-19 pandemic related to vocational issues that participated students stressed. It includes topics such as *missing the internship opportunities* and *missing the job opportunities*. Accordingly, losing these opportunities prevented students from *obtaining industry experience* and *improving vocational skills* in the covid-19 era.

Initially, most students emphasised that they missed internship opportunities due to the pandemic. In this regard, P1 explained that she could work as an intern again for the tourism company that she had worked previous summer season. However, due to the pandemic, she could not work. She adds that she lost the chance to obtain more industrial experience and improve her vocational skills. P1 also stressed that her classmates also had similar problems that the Covid-19 pandemic caused. Related to missing the internship opportunity and its adverse effects on gaining industry experience and improving the skills, P6 states, “... Last year, in the summer of my sophomore year, I wanted to do an internship. I started to prepare a CV in March before the pandemic began. Unfortunately, after a sudden pandemic, all our dreams fell apart ... I wanted to do an internship. I wanted to learn about the industry and improve my skills as soon as possible. I wanted to get used to the industry, but it did not work ...”. On the other side, three senior students (P17, P19 and P30) hint that they lost job opportunities that they would start after graduation because of the pandemic. For instance, P17 purports that she would begin to work for a company after graduation, but she could not.

As it is widely known, work experience is vital for tourism and hospitality students. Tourism and hospitality students have internship opportunities to obtain vocational experience and improve their skills during their education to be prepared for the industry. In this vein, the internship is an opportunity for tourism students to complete their theoretical knowledge and skills (Chen et al., 2011). In addition, it provides a working environment that gives a chance to practice theoretical knowledge (Seyitoğlu, 2019). Thence, an internship can be identified as a process contextualising students' theoretical knowledge into practice (Stansbie et al., 2016). Withal, internships are critical for students to develop skills such as problem-solving, interpersonal communication, critical thinking, and networking and leadership (Seyitoğlu, 2019). Internships are also advantageous for tourism companies because they can select interns as permanent employees after graduation to reduce the recruiting costs (Lee & Chao, 2013).

Internships are vital for tourism and hospitality students to obtain the necessary skills and vocational experience to help shape their future career paths (Seyitoğlu & Çakar, 2017; Seyitoğlu & Yirik, 2015). Nevertheless, the current pandemic has been a barrier for students to work in the industry since March 2020. This problem continues due to the high number of Covid-19 cases and limited vaccination rates in most developing and under-developed countries. The participants of this study (tourism and hospitality students) are victims of the pandemic regarding vocational experience and skills.

#### 4.1.2. Psychological effects

As the second theme of vocational development and career planning, “psychological effects”, includes sub-themes such as *fear and anxiety towards career development* (P6, P13, P17, P24, P27, P29), *the uncertainty of the tourism future* (P4, P5, P6, P17, P19, P24, P29), and *employment concerns* (P1, P2, P12, P13, P16, P17, P18, P22, P23, P24, P27, P29). These are the pandemic’s negative psychological effects on tourism students’ vocational careers. First, associated with the fear and anxiety toward career development, one of the students (P6) asserts, “The pandemic is frightening. A thought emerges as to what to do when such a situation occurs again in the future ... a process like a pandemic is frightening. For now, it did not affect my long-term plans too much, but it affected my short-term goals ... I do not know what direction I should go or what plans I should make ...”. According to the students’ statements, it can be inferred that the psychological effects have inter-relationships. For instance, the fear, anxiety, and uncertainty of the future, led students to have employment concerns.

In this respect, a student (P13) hints that she feels anxious about her career and job opportunities in the future. She adds that she could not get the industry experience because of the pandemic, which caused anxiety about her future career. She believes that the lack of industry experience gives her the feeling that she will hardly find a job in the future. Another student (P27) implied that there was a hope of finding a position in the industry before the pandemic. However, there is fear and anxiety about finding a job after graduation during the current pandemic.

The literature supports that fear, anxiety and uncertainty are interrelated terms that influence and determine each other. While fear was identified as awareness and assessment of the danger, anxiety is the physiological reaction and unpleasant feeling that emerges after provoking fear (Clark & Beck, 2011). Furthermore, fear and uncertainty about the future can evoke anxiety in the human emotional system (Mahmud et al., 2021). A disruptive pandemic will likely lead to fear and anxiety in a short time among individuals (Ahorsu et al., 2020). Additionally, since the uncertainty about the future career generally causes anxiety (Botha & Mostert, 2013), it is unquestionable that the participated students feel fear and anxiety. Lastly, a recent study (Mahmud et al., 2021) emphasised that during a global pandemic, the anxiety related to the career is likely to rise among the graduates who will delve into the industry shortly.

#### 4.1.3. Future career decisions

The last theme of vocational development and career planning, “future career”, includes the issues associated with students’ future career plans: *changing or postponing the tourism career plan* and *changing the sector/field*. Hereof, one of the students (P2) explains that he changed his career plans during the initial phase of the pandemic because he planned to work with his friends in organising daily touristic tours. However, the pandemic did not let them follow their plan. Then he had to postpone his tourism career plans as there was still uncertainty about the tourism future. On the other side, many students (P2, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P15, P22, and P28) decided to change their sector/field due to the pandemic. Most of these students (P6, P7, P8, P9, P13, P15, and P22) preferred to start an academic career instead of working in the tourism industry. Some related quotations are as follows:

“I always wanted to work in the tourism industry since I was a kid. However, this process (pandemic) led me to think about different areas ... During this time, I changed my idea about my career, and now my way is to be an academic in my field ... Covid-19 pandemic made me quit working in the tourism industry ....” P9

Since tourism students who participated in this study are early-career adults, the Covid-19 pandemic may be their first experience of a significant global crisis for them. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic may have long-term psychological effects on these students. From this point, they likely have concerns about their career plan, which results in changes and different decisions. Moreover, disruption to an early career path caused by a pandemic may have significant career consequences on an individual for several years (Miller et al., 2005). However, there are also some contradictory studies in the literature. First, Rosyidi (2021) concluded that students regarded the tourism industry as a less risky area and emphasised that it is not an industry to fear. Second, Reichenberger and Raymond (2021a) found that most tourism students are optimistic about their future tourism careers.

## 4.2. Future of tourism

The findings demonstrate that the future of tourism includes two significant themes: tourist expectations and behaviours (trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness, avoidance from the crowd, and revenge tourism as (post-)viral behaviour), and trends in the (post-)viral tourism (technology-based tourism, individual travelling and uncrowded environment, and rural and nature tourism).

### 4.2.1. Tourist expectations and behaviours

The results show that students believe tourists’ expectations and behaviours will shift in different directions with the current pandemic. Thus, “tourist expectations and behaviours” were extracted as one of the significant themes of the *future of tourism*. Accordingly, tourist expectations and behaviours comprise sub-themes such as ‘trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness’, ‘avoidance from the crowd, and ‘revenge tourism as (post-)viral behaviour’.

**4.2.1.1. Trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness.** First, according to undergraduate students who participated in this study, tourists will seek *trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness* of the tourism companies in the (post-)viral world. Hence, they will expect *obedience to health measures* from tourism companies in destinations because they will seek an environment where they feel safe. In addition, according to participants, tourists will pursue *hygiene and cleanliness in products and services, cleanliness and hygiene certificates, open*

kitchens in restaurants, and pre-packaged food in the post-viral world. In this aspect, students state that consumers want to feel safe in their touristic activities, putting safety first in the tourism industry. Therefore, hygiene and cleanliness will be significant for tourists in the (post-)viral world. For instance, P1 remarks that "... The tourism businesses ... will be expected to comply with the necessary precautions and measures ... Consumers will check whether the tourism companies obey the pandemic conditions ... Thus, tourism businesses will need to meet consumers' expectations. In this sense, I think consumers will put pressure on businesses".

As Covid-19 is a life-threatening infection and people are losing their lives because of it, trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness, which are critical subjects of health and safety, likely to be considered a priority dimension of travel expectations and behaviours (Awan et al., 2020). Besides, one of the recent studies (Ivanova et al., 2021) also claimed that safety would be a key factor when choosing a destination.

**4.2.1.2. Avoidance from the crowd.** The participants claim that tourists will avoid the crowd in the (post-)viral world. Instead, they will prefer uncrowded environments in their travels. The participants imply that tourists would not want to be in crowded environments where people are psychically close and contacted. P1 asserts that tourists will avoid the crowd and prefer individuals travelling in this aspect. P5 also explain the similar opinion that tourists will be interested in uncrowded environments while travelling. More statements of P29 are presented as:

"... it will be necessary to pay attention to the number of people in touristic activities. Because, for example, tourists will pay attention to the number of people using the pool in an accommodation establishment ... We can think of this for the entire tourism sector ... people will not want to spend time in crowds. Another example: tourists will not want to join a tour with many people in a tour program. They will want to participate in boutique groups that include fewer people". P29

Recent studies (Li, Zhang, et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021) stress that restaurant consumers are sensitive to crowdedness due to the risk of being infected while dining at restaurants in the Covid-19 era. That being the case, crowdedness is considered one of the substantial determinant which impacts consumers' intention to visit restaurants in the future (Wang et al., 2021). Moreover, consumers spending time in crowded environments are at risk of being infected, so they may have safety concerns and avoid such environments (Li et al., 2021a). In this manner, it is not a coincidence that students think tourists will avoid crowded environments in the (post-)viral world.

**4.2.1.3. Revenge tourism as (post-)viral behaviour.** As a new term, "revenge tourism" refers to an excessive desire to travel due to being unable to travel in the previous period. Three of the participated students (P7, P16 and P20) imply that when people feel safer in the post-viral world, there will be a global boom in tourism. They state that since people had to stay in their homes for a long time, in the future, they will be willing to travel more, which will sharply increase tourism mobility. For example, P16 argues, "Since people have been at home for a long time, the need for vacation will arise, and people would be willing to travel more. For this reason, I think there will be an explosion in touristic activities. In my opinion, people's curiosity to go somewhere and see a place will increase more ...". Some more explanations are presented below.

"Since people are close to their homes during this pandemic, they will want to travel more in the future. They will want to see different places more than ever. So, literally, the tourism industry will experience a boom ..." P7

Additionally, P20 states that people would take a vacation more than they ever wanted. Consequently, these behaviours will lead to a considerable increase in tourism activities. She (P20) further implies that the tourism industry's future is bright thanks to consumers' revenge behaviours. These behaviours will help revive the tourism industry in the (post-)viral epoch.

#### 4.2.2. Trends in the (post-)viral tourism

According to undergraduate tourism students, there will be trends in the (post-)viral tourism: (i) technology-based tourism, (ii) individual travelling and uncrowded environment, and (iii) rural and nature tourism.

**4.2.2.1. Technology-based tourism.** First, participants claim that technology-based tourism in the (post-)viral world will be the most significant trend. In this vein, according to their opinions, *online tourism products* (P13), *virtual tours* (P10, P29), and *artificial intelligence-based products* (P10) will be popular. In addition, *digitalisation* (P6 and P9) will accelerate in the tourism industry, especially *the use of technology in food and beverage departments or restaurants* will be widespread. Students indicate that *using robotics in tourism services* will be popular and widespread as tourists seek *contactless services* (P26). The literature also supports that there will be a great demand for mobile and Web-based AR (Augmented Reality) to ensure tourist safety and create accessible, personalised, and memorable experiences in the (post-)viral world (Mohanty et al., 2020).

Technology has been playing a critical role in the current pandemic. For instance, robots have been used to deliver food and medicine and for cleaning to provide physically distant services during the pandemic (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020, 2021). In this respect, robotic technology may play a strategic role for tourism firms in the (post-)viral world. Furthermore, automation technologies, such as self-service kiosks, robots, and artificial intelligence, can improve the financial performance of firms as they decrease operational costs (Ivanov et al., 2020). It is prominent that the Covid-19 pandemic has been increasing the significance of technology.

**4.2.2.2. Individual travelling and uncrowded environment.** Students' explanations demonstrate that individual travelling and uncrowded environments will trend in the (post-)viral tourism. Withal, tourists will prefer *uncrowded and calm destinations* (P5, P20 and

P22) and *individual travelling* (P1, P8, P19, P20, P22 and P28). In this sense, participants add that since tourists would be willing to travel individually, *caravan tourism* (P12, P19 and P22) and *camping* (P12) will be trends. While camping is a developing tourism type, caravan tourism unites sightseeing and leisure desires and the experience of liberty (Galadyk & Podhorodecka, 2021).

As tourists would prefer uncrowded environments in their travel plans, *small-scale boutique tourism companies* (P1, P8, P22) and *special tours with fewer people* (P27 and P29) are likely to be popular in the (post-)viral tourism. Associating to these trends, P8 explains that:

“People started to tend to boutique hotels ... and mass tourism mobilities turned to individual ones ... camping and caravan tourism will come to the fore. So, there will be more individual travels in the future”. P8

Since the Covid-19 threatens lives, the result in avoiding crowdedness among travellers is unquestionable. Therefore, it is likely that potential tourists will have negative perceptions of crowded environments in the (post-)viral world. This may lead to the popularity of uncrowded destinations in the future. In this regard, individual travelling can be widespread (Ni Putu Dian Utami, 2020, pp. 405–420). Hence, tourists may choose individual transportation (Ivanova et al., 2021).

4.2.2.3. *Rural and nature tourism.* Rural and nature tourism was extracted as the last sub-theme of trends in the (post-)viral tourism. Accordingly, P24 purports that rural tourism will be a trend in the future. Moreover, P5 implies that *cultural assets of destinations* will be even more popular and demanded in the (post-)viral world. Another student (P6) stressed that linked to nature tourism, *social responsibility-based tourism activities* (e.g., garbage collection) can be popular in the future. Over and above, one of the students (P7) claims that since tourists will be more interested in nature, the activities such as *outdoor sports and hiking* will be trends of the (post-)viral tourism.

As rural tourism activities are based on the geographic location and traditional culture and production of a specific rural region (Li et al., 2021a), it can be concluded that rural tourism is associated with cultural assets. Furthermore, rural tourism activities close to nature may benefit tourists’ mental health and contribute to regions’ tourism development (Li et al., 2021b).

### 5. Conclusion and implications

Tourism students, one of the most crucial tourism industry actors and future tourism employees, are considered skilled and qualified to provide quality services for customers or travellers (Gu et al., 2007). Moreover, as the tourism industry highly depends on human power and expects its human resources to be qualified and skilled (Bontenbal & Aziz, 2013), tourism students are one of the most important actors that meet this expectation because they are theoretically and practically trained individuals. In this vein, tourism students’ perceptions of the industry are essential for the sake of the tourism industry in terms of providing quality services to customers, especially in the (post-)covid period.

The Covid-19 health crisis has led academic and industry professionals to investigate how tourism will be shaped in the future. Furthermore, tourism students are vital for the industry’s future because they are potential managers, academics, employees, or key actors in the industry’s near future. However, tourism students’ perspectives on the future of tourism in the post (viral) era are

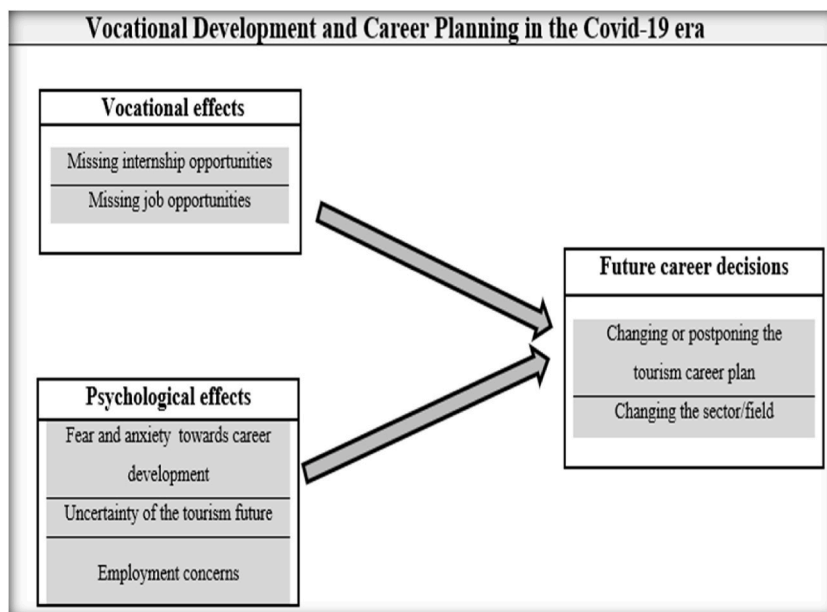


Fig. 1. Vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era.



unexplored. Therefore, combining both subjects and filling the gap, this study investigates the future of tourism and vocational career in the Covid-19 epoch from the perspective of undergraduate tourism students. In other words, the present research answers the questions of “how the pandemic has influenced tourism undergraduates’ vocational careers” and “what is the perspective of students’ towards the future of tourism”.

The main contributions to the tourism and hospitality literature are to provide a model explaining vocational development and career planning of tourism students in the Covid-19 era (Fig. 1) and revealing the dimensions of the future of tourism (Fig. 2).

5.1. Theoretical and practical implications

This timely research provides several theoretical contributions to the tourism and hospitality literature by providing the views of individuals studying tourism and hospitality bachelors in Turkey. The findings are twofold: (i) vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era and (ii) the future of tourism. Consequently, the implications were presented under sub-sections.

5.1.1. Vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era

First, according to the findings of this study, it can be extracted from the students’ statements that “vocational effects” and “psychological effects” play determining role in the “future career decisions”. As an implication, the vocational development and career planning in the Covid-19 era can be explained with a model (Fig. 1).

Regarding the negative influences of Covid-19 on vocational career, missing the internships or job opportunities affects future career decisions. Due to missing the internship or job opportunities, while some students decided to change or postpone their tourism career, others diverted their direction to another sector/field. In this respect, for instance, P15 implies that “The pandemic has hit me hard. I could not work in the industry last season. I could not gain industry experience ... This issue prevented me from improving my skills too. Thence, the pandemic led me to think about an academic career ... and I am more inclined towards an academic career now ...”.

On the other side, the psychological effects of Covid-19 that led to fear and anxiety toward career development, the uncertainty of tourism future, and employment concerns also influenced future career decisions of tourism students. For instance, the uncertainty of the tourism future and employment concerns are the issues that cause students to be pessimistic about their future careers. In this vein, P29 explains that “... Maybe my profession (guiding) will not be popular in the future. The current situation negatively affects me a lot. Everything is uncertain ... This uncertainty makes me think of many questions about the future. Will guiding become popular again in the future? Is guidance will be needed in the tourism industry?.. Because now everything is online. Now, tourists can listen to the information even in museums by wearing a headset without a professional human guide ... Thus, I think that I will have difficulty finding a job in the future ... I have such a thought ...”.

Following these results and the presented model, it is evident that the adverse vocational and psychological effects of Covid-19

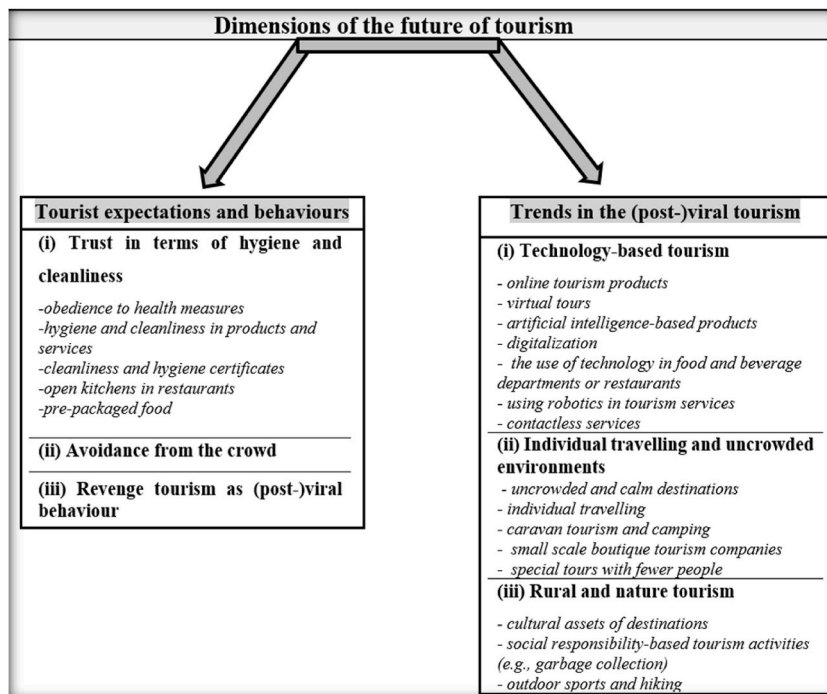


Fig. 2. Dimensions of the future of tourism.

should be decreased to keep tourism students in the sector. Besides, as the vaccination process is improving and the industry has started to recover, educational institutions should collaborate with tourism companies to provide internship opportunities to their students. These efforts will motivate and encourage them to work in the industry. Additionally, senior students also need help to find positions in the industry. The efforts on vocational issues may reduce the psychological effects of covid-19 and raise the possibility of sticking students with the tourism industry.

It is especially significant to keep senior tourism students in the industry because it would not be easy to obtain skilled employees and create teamwork in a short time in the (post-)viral tourism in case tourist activities suddenly increase. Hence, as senior students are skilled, tourism companies will likely provide high-quality service with this educated and talented workforce. Therefore, a qualified and skilled workforce will help to enable high-quality experiences for tourists in the (post-)viral era to revive the industry.

Lastly, educational institutions and industry representatives need to be aware of how tourism students perceive the effect of Covid-19 vocationally, psychologically and in terms of their future career decisions. Moreover, the policymakers should consider these research findings while making an economic revival plan and offer some forms of special incentive packages favouring the young, educated tourism workforce. With these efforts, the future of the tourism industry is likely to be brighter because tourism graduates are an educated and capable workforce that can develop the sector in the post-viral world.

### 5.1.2. Future of tourism

After analysing the qualitative data, a model was developed to illustrate the dimensions of the future of tourism (see Fig. 2). It consists of two main dimensions: tourist expectations and behaviours, and trends in the (post-)viral tourism. The model demonstrates that the main drivers of the tourist expectations and behaviours include (i) trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness, (ii) avoidance from the crowd, and (iii) revenge tourism as a (post-)viral behaviour. Furthermore, (i) technology-based tourism, (ii) individual travelling and uncrowded environments, and (iii) rural and nature tourism are forming the trends in the (post-)viral tourism with their sub-themes. Besides, from a practical point of view, this study provides a better understanding of the future tourism dimensions from the perspectives of undergraduate tourism students. In this sense, the findings can guide destination managers, tourism companies, and policymakers to design future strategies and actions to revive the tourism industry in the (post-)viral world.

In the initial stage, since the current pandemic has been affecting people psychologically, tourists are likely to have different expectations and behaviours in the (post-)viral world. The literature supports that the Covid-19 pandemic may change tourists' travel expectations and behaviours, as pathogenic threats generally lead to behavioural changes (Zenker & Kock, 2020). Hence, tourism and hospitality companies should understand tourist behaviours and meet their expectations for success in the (post-)viral world (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). Furthermore, it is evident from Fig. 2 that trust in terms of hygiene and cleanliness can be a priority for potential tourists in the (post-)viral world; thus, tourism services and products should be provided by considering these issues. Hereof, tourism companies may obtain consumers' trust towards their services or products in the covid-19 era by obeying the health measures and giving importance to hygiene and cleanliness. For example, tourism companies can use their initiatives regarding these issues in their promotions through videos or posts.

Additionally, the tourism facilities and products should be provided in uncrowded environments to meet the potential tourists' expectations. As the last subject of tourists' expectations and behaviours, revenge tourism can be an emerging term in the industry. It is based on the idea that people will be highly willing to travel after a long time of a compulsory break. Thence, there will be a boom in tourism mobility once the virus is less or ineffective. From this point, tourism companies must be ready to address the possible high demand in the (post-)viral world. Destinations should also be prepared with infrastructure and superstructure facilities to meet the extreme demand.

Awareness of the possible trends in the (post-)viral tourism is also crucial to preparing for the future. Accordingly, following these potential trends, tourism companies and destinations should position in the market in line with their targeted tourist profile. Since different tourist types have always sought other products and services, tourism companies and destinations should design their products and services according to their consumer profile. Hereof, it may be beneficial to research the potential visitors or consumers of specific products or services to learn their expectations. In this way, tourism companies may be able to meet their potential consumers' expectations and desires.

### 5.2. Limitations and future research directions

Considering the limitations of this study, first, the results comprise the data of 30 Turkish tourism undergraduate students studying in different universities in Turkey. Thence, the results may not be generalised in a broader context. Future research may be conducted in other countries to have broader perspectives. Moreover, future studies may assimilate quantitative approaches to provide more generalisable findings in national or international contexts to expand these results further. Another suggestion for future research is to investigate the perspectives of potential visitors to explore their expectations and desires in a cross-countries context. Additionally, after the pandemic is over, future studies can be implemented to explore tourism students' vocational development and career planning perceptions and their thoughts about the future of tourism.

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## Author Contributions

Faruk Seyitoğlu: Supervision, conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis, writing—original draft, writing—review & editing.

Ozan Atsız: formal analysis, methodology, writing—original draft, writing—review & editing.

Fazıl Kaya: investigation, data collection.

Sedat Taş: investigation, data collection.

## Declaration of competing interest

None.

## Appendix 1

1. Has the current pandemic affected your perspective of the tourism industry? If so, in what ways?
2. Has the pandemic process affected your career planning?
  - If so, what were your previous career goals and how have your goals changed? Would you explain?
3. Would the pandemic impact your career in the future? If yes, would you explain in what aspects?
4. Do you think the current pandemic would influence the future of the tourism industry?
  - Would the current pandemic lead to any changes in the future of the tourism industry?
  - What would be the trends in the future of tourism?
  - What the expectations of consumers would be? (What would people pay attention to, and what would they care about?)

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