

**A Research To Determine The Expectations of Consumers From Halal Concept Hotel
Operations In The Covid-19 Process**

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Abstract

Socio-economic changes that occurred with the effect of globalization naturally affected businesses as well. Undoubtedly, one of the most important of these changes is the formation of a consumer-oriented structure instead of product and profit-oriented models with the increase in value given to the consumer. It is a very important necessity for businesses to determine the expectations of the consumers and to provide products and services accordingly and to produce solutions in accordance with the expectations. In the study, it was aimed to determine consumer expectations in halal concept hotel businesses after the Covid-19 pandemic process and to put forward suggestions on the subject. In this context, this study, which was carried out as a qualitative research, examined the consumer expectations, customer opinions and demographic variables of 26 local tourists who stay in halal concept hotel establishments serving in Turkey and intend to stay in the next period. As a result of the study, according to the statements of the participants, it was determined that in the Covid-19 process, consumers focused heavily on hygiene and cleanliness in room services, food and beverage services, reactive services such as pool, sauna and other entertainment services.

Keywords: *Halal tourism, halal hotel, covid-19, consumer expectations*

Introduction

The Covid-19 epidemic, which emerged in Wuhan city of China's Hubei Province and was discovered in humans for the first time in December, 2019, has led to a new order in the world and urged people to change their living standards (Çiçeklioğlu and Akmaz, 2020). At first, this virus seemed to be very far from Turkey, but spread to the country on March 11, 2020, as it did to other countries around the world within a few months. With the World Health Organization declaring it a pandemic, countries started to take some extraordinary measures.

As of the first quarter of 2021, some measures had to be taken to prevent the epidemic in Turkey, as in the countries of the world. These measures restricted social and economic activities, affecting many sectors including the tourism sector (Sürme, 2020). In this ongoing process, it is likely that expectations, purchasing behaviors, needs and wishes of the consumers will change to some extent. Such changes will, of course, shape the tourism sector. Today, the tourism sector, which is in a constant change, is quickly affected by economic, political, environmental and cultural factors (Türker and Karaca, 2020). The changes in the expectations and behaviors of consumers during the epidemic process will perhaps significantly affect the global economy (Divanoğlu and Resul, 2020). Therefore, this epidemic, which causes a great economic and social tension in the world, inevitably alters the tourism sector (Atay, 2020). This is evident in the 2020 data of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Indeed, tourism revenues decreased by 65.1 percent compared to the previous year to 12 billion 59 million 320 thousand dollars, while the total number of visitors decreased by 69.2 percent to 15.9 million dollars (<https://yigm.ktb.gov.tr/>, Access Date: 01.02.2021). The psychological, sociological and economic impacts caused by this epidemic are felt more and more strongly each day (Demir, Günaydın and Demir Şen, 2020). Also, it is likely that this will mark a new era in the tourism sector, characterized by different expectations, purchasing behaviors, needs and wishes of the consumers (Kıvılcım, 2020).

This study aims to reveal the expectations of the consumers who intend to go on a holiday in halal concept hotel businesses during the Covid-19 epidemic from these hotels. To that end, it first briefly addresses the concept of consumer expectation, the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic on tourist preferences and expectations, the concept of halal concept hotel management in the conceptual framework section and then offers information on research in the relevant literature. Following that, it presents the analysis of the data in the method section and discusses the findings, and concludes with a conclusion and suggestions.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Consumer Expectation

Socio-economic changes, along with the effects of globalization, have directly affected businesses and entailed some changes in their structures. One of the most important changes in this regard is the adoption of a consumer-oriented approach. Hence, the concept of consumer has become a key element for businesses and the main consideration for the decisions to be taken (Çatı et al., 2010).

Businesses need to work on the expectations of consumers in order to provide a sustainable competitive advantage and to create a sense of belonging among consumers to businesses. Consumer expectation refers to individuals' beliefs about the benefit they will receive from goods or services (Acuner, 2003). In other words, consumer expectation can be defined as the wishes and desires of the consumers regarding the products and services offered (Sandıkçı, 2008; Avcıkurt, 2015). The expectations and behaviors of consumers are shaped by factors such as individuals' beliefs, personalities, perceptions, attitudes, socio-cultural environments and experiences. It is important for businesses to ascertain the expectations of consumers and to provide products and services accordingly, and to apply appropriate solutions (Ayaz and Sünbül, 2018). In light of that information, the key aspects of consumer expectations can be listed as follows (Akten, 2016);

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- To be valued by businesses,
- To be provided with products and services of lower price and higher quality,
- To be provided with products and services that will meet their demands and needs,
- To have a more efficient and effective communication network.

Businesses can establish good relations with consumers by responding to these demands and expectations. This also contributes to attitudes and behaviors that are extremely important for businesses, such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and customer loyalty. Thus, they will have significant advantages under highly competitive conditions (Çatı et al., 2010).

The Effect of Covid-19 Epidemic on Tourists' Preferences and Expectations

Soon after the detection of the Covid-19 epidemic, its effects started to leave their marks on every sector. The August 2020 report of the Airports Council International reveals that airline traffic decreased by 85.6% worldwide between June 2019 and June 2020 (<https://aci.aero/news/2020/08/28/aci-world-data-shows-covid-19s-dramatic-effect-on-international-air-traffic/>, Access Date: 01.03.2021). Further, if this epidemic continues unabated, it is predicted that there will be a monthly loss of about 35 billion dollars only in airline businesses on a global basis (Demir and Türkmen, 2020). This potential damage to airline companies alone is enough to reflect the seriousness of the situation. Also, this implies that other stakeholders of tourism will inevitably experience a similar loss and that the impact of the Covid-19 process not only on economy but also on other areas will be great.

This process, which had its toll on the world, has brought some changes and innovations in the tourism sector as well as in all sectors. Moreover, this process has also affected consumers, leading them to spend their social lives mostly at home due to the measures taken during the epidemic (Divanoğlu and Resul, 2020). All these caused changes in demands, needs and expectations of consumers. For example, tourists have increased feelings of safety during the Covid-19 epidemic and now prefer individual trips or trips with smaller groups instead of traveling in larger groups. Also, they tend to visit quiet, lesser-known, less preferred destinations, rather than visiting crowded destinations. Further, individuals with health problems and chronic illnesses have avoided traveling unless for essential reasons, even on public and religious holidays. It is predicted that those travelling will prefer facilities with high quality medical equipment infrastructure. Such changes in consumer behavior have entailed businesses to accurately identify consumer expectations. This process has had a major impact on the eating and drinking habits of consumers as well. In this regard, it is notable that this also brings changes to open buffets in hotels and that consumers prefer takeaway services and value sterilization more in restaurants (Yaşar, 2020). During the epidemic process, similar changes have been observed in distribution channels and travel models as well as consumer preferences and expectations; there has been increased interest in online platforms than traditional marketing and sales systems (Aydın and Doğan, 2020; Wen et al., 2020) and tourists have further involved with nature-based tourism activities, and prefer local tourism over foreign one (Losada and Mota, 2019).

Halal Concept Hotel Businesses

Hotels are businesses that provide customers with services such as food and beverage, accommodation, entertainment, etc. (Che Omar et al., 2013). Halal concept hotels are accommodation businesses designed in accordance with Islamic rules (; Arpacı and Batman, 2015; Poyraz and Oktay, 2017; Çalık and Pekerşen, 2020; Akmaz, 2020). Halal concept hotels are businesses that comply with Islamic rules not only in food and beverage departments but also in all departments (Razalli et al., 2012; Arpacı et al., 2015; Chookaew et al. 2015; Yıldırım, 2019). However, as there are few businesses that fully comply with this definition and apply the requirements of the halal concept precisely, Saad et al. (2014) categorized halal concept hotel businesses into three classes as follows:

Dry Hotels: Hotels that do not serve food and drinks considered haram by Islamic rules.

Partially Halal Hotels: Hotels that only serve food and beverages considered halal by Islamic rules, provide services such as prayer rooms in common areas, Quran and prayer rugs in each room as well as offer separate facilities for men and women.

Halal Hotels: Hotels that govern all of its operations and areas by Islamic rules and are sensitive in this regard.

The failure to standardize halal concept hotels brings with it not only some problems but also customer dissatisfaction (Şahin et al., 2014). For this reason, halal concept hotels, which have improved recently and now enjoy a serious market share in the tourism industry, need to shape their services and activities considering consumer expectations. Research on standards and characteristics of halal concept hotels have identified the following key attributes of these hotels (Arpacı et al., 2015; Che Ahmat et al., 2015; Adam and Çalık, 2019):

- Not using non-halal foods and ingredients,
- Offering separate pools for male and female guests,
- Prohibiting games of chance and all kinds of gambling in the hotel,
- Employing staff with religious sensitivity and wearing appropriate clothing,
- Making arrangements in the meal system to serve customers meals at Suhoor (dawn) and Iftar (sunset) during Ramadan,
- Making prayer rooms available in the hotel and providing Qurans and prayer rugs in each room as well as markers indicating the direction of Mecca,
- Disallowing unmarried customers to accommodate at the hotel,
- Offering entertainment activities in compliance with Islamic rules,
- Carrying out financial operations in the hotel through Islamic financial arrangements
- Not positioning beds and toilets to face the direction of Mecca.

Literature Review

There are numerous studies on the relationship between epidemics and tourism in the literature. This section thus discusses and outlines some of these studies on the changes in consumer expectations and in purchasing behaviors, and new expectations in the tourism sector caused by the Covid-19 epidemic process.

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Aydın and Doğan (2020) examined the changes in the decisions, behaviors and expectations of touristic consumers in Turkey after the Covid-19 epidemic, and concluded that tourists will opt for individual and boutique tours in the future, prefer renting seasonal houses, caravans and visiting boutique hotels and tend to make short-distance travels. They also argued that consumer interest in environmental and nature-based activities will increase during the epidemic period, and that health, cleanliness and hygiene will be given more importance than ever before.

Wanchyuni and Kusumaningrum (2020) investigated the travel behaviours of tourists after the Covid-19 epidemic. They ascertained that tourists wish to travel again in the near future, turn to nature-based tourism alternatives, prefer short-term tours, and consider health and cleanliness issues important.

Analyzing the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic on tourist behaviours, Chebli and Said (2020) concluded that tourists prefer less popular destinations, and that their interest in individual activities and travel preferences, sensitivity to cleanliness and hygiene, interest in travel insurance, environmental awareness and tendency to travel in low seasons have significantly increased.

Kılıç, Aslan and Gövce (2020) explored the consumption attitudes of tourists in the post-Covid-19 period. Their study revealed that tourists, who postpone their holiday during the Covid-19 epidemic, tend to go on holiday as the normalization process begins, and give importance to cleanliness, hygiene and social distance, being away from the crowd. They further reported that social-distanced seating in food and beverage businesses and importance attached by staff to cleanliness and hygiene encourage consumers to prefer these businesses.

Yenişehirli and Salha (2020) probed into the reflection of the Covid-19 epidemic process on Turkey's local tourism and changing demands, and found out that consumers believe that people prefer having a holiday in destinations that are not crowded, follow the social distance rules, and value hygiene and cleanliness, and that businesses need to assure consumers in this regard.

Studying the tendency of individuals to go on vacation during the epidemic, Yaşar (2020) stated that consumers behaviours, expectations and preferences have changed to some extent during the Covid-19 process. The findings indicated that consumers avoid crowded environments, prefer non-crowded and, if possible, a la carte food restaurants instead of open buffet restaurants, and opt for nature-centered outdoor activities.

Assessing the effects and consequences of the Covid-19 epidemic on tourism in Turkey, Demir et al., (2020) reported that preventing areas such as beaches, pools and saunas to get crowded, applying daily health measures and offering a la carte service in restaurants are key measures to protect consumers during the Covid-19 epidemic.

To explore the holiday expectations of Turkish tourists during the Covid-19 outbreak, Demir and Türkmen (2020) performed a study, which ascertains that tourists particularly attach importance to hygiene, cleanliness and social distance in tourism, and expect all necessary precautions to be taken, issues such as regular health screening of employees in particular.

Kabadayı and Kardeş (2020) studied the local tourist behaviors and trends during the Covid-19 epidemic, highlighting that tourists attach great importance to cleanliness, that their expectations for

open spaces and nature-centered tourism activities and their interest in individual activities have considerably increased.

Sigala (2020) investigated the effects and implications of the Covid-19 epidemic on the tourism industry and determined that customers avoid populous places and prefer less-crowded areas. The study by Hao, Xiao and Chon (2020) on the Covid-19 process in the hotel industry in China yielded similar findings.

Demir, Demir Şen, Doğanay Ergen and Dalgıç (2021) examined the factors that affect consumers' hotel choices during the Covid-19 epidemic and revealed that factors such as possession of a Covid-19 certificate, provision of hygiene conditions, implementation of general health measures, conscious action of employees on health measures, compliance with social distance rules within the facility are reassuring for consumers and that consumers avoid crowded places and activities.

Method

This study aims to explore the expectations of customers from halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic and offer some suggestions in this regard. To do so, this study draws on phenomenology, which creates phenomena related to the field of study and then examines their nature and meanings (Güçlü, 2019). The method of this study is qualitative research method, which is described as revealing the perceptions and phenomena in their natural environments in a realistic and holistic way, through the use of data collection methods such as interview, observation, and document analysis (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). The universe of this study consists of local tourists staying in halal concept hotels in Turkey and intending to stay in these hotels in the future. Since it is impossible to reach such a large universe in terms of time and resources, this study is based on a sample. That is, it benefits from snowball sampling method, which is one of the non-probabilistic sampling methods and the best possible sample to represent the universe from the elements in the study universe and used for purposive sampling in cases where there is no sample list of the purposive sampling method and the study population or people do not stay at one place (Güçlü, 2019). Thus, the sample of this study includes local tourists who have stayed at halal concept hotels in Mersin, Konya, Ankara, İstanbul and Çanakkale and intend to stay at these hotels in the future. The data were collected through interview method. Due to the restrictions in the Covid-19 epidemic process, the participants in Mersin were interviewed face-to-face whilst a phone interview was conducted with other participants outside Mersin.

The interview form designed to collect the data consists of 4 demographic questions and 5 open-ended questions. Table 1 presents the open-ended questions in the semi-structure interview form. The data were collected from 26 local tourists who intended to go on a holiday in halal concept hotel during the Covid-19 epidemic from March through April, 2021, through face-to-face interviews and phone interviews. The analysis of the data was performed using content analysis method, a systematic and repeatable technique that reduces qualitative texts to fewer categories than coding rules (Güçlü, 2019).

Table 1

Open-Ended Questions in the Semi-Structured Interview Form

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1. What are your expectations from room services in halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic?

 2. What are your expectations from food and beverage services/open buffet services in halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic?

 3. What are your expectations from recreational services such as pool, sauna, bath in halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic?

 4. What are your expectations from beach arrangement and other entertainment services in halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic?

 5. What are your suggestions to hotel businesses (managers) in halal concept hotels for this year during the Covid-19 epidemic?

Findings

Demographic Findings

Table 2 presents information on the participant profiles of this study, which seeks to explore the expectations of consumers from halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic and to offer suggestions. 14 out of 26 participants are male (53.8%); 12 are female (46.2%). Also, most participants are married (80.8%), aged between 31-40 (57.7%) and are post-graduate degree holders (38.5%) and under-graduate degree holders (38.5%).

Table -2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

AGE	GENDER	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	CIVIL STATUS
31-40	Male	Under-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Male	Under-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Male	Associate degree	Married
31-40	Male	High school	Married
31-40	Male	Under-graduate degree	Single
31-40	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Female	Under-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Male	Under-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Male	Under-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Female	Post-graduate degree	Single

31-40	Female	Under-graduate degree	Single
31-40	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
50 and older	Male	Associate degree	Single
31-40	Male	Under-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Male	High school	Married
31-40	Male	Post-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
31-40	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
50 and older	Male	Under-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Female	Under-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Male	High school	Single
21-30	Male	Post-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
50 and older	Female	Post-graduate degree	Married
21-30	Female	High school	Married

Findings on the Expectations of the Participants from Room Services during the Covid-19 Epidemic

This study explores the expectations of the participants from halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic through content analysis and discusses these expectations under 3 different dimensions: hygiene, privacy and equipment/facilities. The dimension of hygiene is further characterized by 2 sub-dimensions as atmospheric hygiene and hygiene of staff. Table 3 presents the statistics of the answers of the 26 participants on their expectations from room services. The most common expectations based on a total of 53 statements are related to hygiene (58.5%). Expectations related to equipment/facilities and privacy, respectively, remain at 30.2% and 11.3%. Some of the statements of the participants on their expectations from room services are as follows:

(P1) ... “Change of materials, such as bedding, towels, etc. 2 times a day or absolutely every day, availability of disposable products, such as disposable prayer rugs, etc., daily disinfection of the room” ...

(P10) ... New and well-maintained ventilation systems” ...

(P11) ... “Availability of plenty of hygiene kits with materials such as cologne and disinfectant in the room” ...

(P14) ... “Prioritization of privacy by staff during room cleaning, and clean and hygienic rooms” ...

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(P24)... “Ensuring that staff are trained particularly on hygiene and cleaning issues related to the Covid-19 epidemic and act accordingly”...

Table 3

Statistics of the Consumer Expectations from Room Services in Halal Concept Hotels

Dimensions of Expectations Regarding Room Services	Participant Statements	$\sum i$	$\sum i$ (53)	Within group % (\approx)	Within total % (\approx)	Dimensional % (\approx)
Atmospheric Hygiene	Daily disinfection of the room	16	21	76,2	30,2	58,5
	Well-maintained, hygienic and new ventilation system	5		23,8	9,5	
Hygiene	Staff prioritizing hygiene	5	10	50	9,5	
Hygiene of Staff	Staff trained on hygiene	3		30	5,7	
	Staff responsible for room cleaning being away from the risk of disease	2		20	3,7	
Equipment/Facilities	At least daily change of linens, towels, etc.	7	16	43,75	13,2	30,2
	Availability of disposable hygiene kits in the room	5		31,25	9,5	
	Availability of disposable	4		25	7,5	

	prayer rugs in the room			
Privacy	Staff prioritizing privacy during room services	4	66,6	7,5
	Room balconies designed not to face other rooms	2	6	33,3
				11,3

Findings on the Expectations of the Participants from Food and Beverage Services/Open Buffet Services During the Covid-19 Epidemic

The expectations from food and beverage services/open buffet services in halal concept hotels are addressed under 2 dimensions: cleanliness and hygiene, and food and beverage services, open buffet services, restaurant services and so forth. The dimension of cleanliness and hygiene is discussed under 4 sub-dimensions as atmospheric hygiene, hygiene of staff and service, microbiological hygiene and hygiene in areas in common use. Table 4 shows that the most common expectations from food and beverage services/open buffet services based on a total of 75 statements are related to cleanliness and hygiene by 50.65%, which are emphasized by 26 participants; these expectations are followed by expectations on food, open buffet, restaurant design, etc. by 49.35%. Some of the statements of the participants on their expectations from food and beverage services/open buffet services are as follows:

(P5)...*“I do not find it right or like the fact that my food is placed on my plate by staff, even though this is required by measures taken. I want to choose my food and take it on my plate by myself. I expect that tables are not close to each other and seating is arranged considering social distancing rules and that ingredients are fresh and well-cleaned” ...*

(P15)...*“I do not think that open buffets are not appropriate during the epidemic period. I expect that food is served with minimum contact and disposable serving materials such as plates, forks, spoons and that an extended service period is necessary to prevent the crowd” ...*

(P18)...*“That there is adequate variety of foods, that equipment used by staff during service are hygienic, that service staff pay attention to hygiene” ...*

(P23)...*“That equipment such as tables and chairs used in the restaurant are disinfected after each customer, that staff do not touch ingredients with bare hands while serving” ...*

(P25)...*“That restaurant is sufficiently ventilated to eliminate any odor and to avoid any nauseous feelings during the meal” ...*

(P26)...*“That quality, delicious and hygienic foods are presented” ...*

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Table 4

Statistics of the Consumer Expectations from Food and Beverage Services/Open Buffet Services, etc. in Halal Concept Hotels

Dimensions of the Expectations from Food and Beverage Services/ Open Buffet Services, etc.	Participant Statements	$\sum i$	$\sum i$ (75)	Within Group % (\approx)	Within Total % (\approx)	Dimensional % (\approx)
Cleaning and Hygiene	Atmospheric Hygiene	Preventing cooking smells in the restaurant	3	3	100	
	Hygiene of Staff and Service	Clean equipment used during the service	6		42,85	
		Clean and hygienic staff serving at the restaurant	5	14	35,7	50,6
		Serving foods without bare hand contact	3		21,45	
	Microbiological Hygiene	Using well-cleaned vegetables, fruit and ingredients	8	11	72,7	
		Using fresh ingredients	3		27,3	
	Hygiene for Areas of Common Use	Clean and hygienic tables and seating in the restaurant	6	10	60	
		Clean and hygienic kitchen	4		40	

	Offering a la carte service	9	24,35	
Services such as Food, Buffet, Restaurant Design etc.	Offering adequate variety of foods, high-quality and delicious meals, and preparing them by following hygiene rules	8	21,65	
	Social-distanced seating arrangement	7	18,9	
	Extending service hours to prevent the crowd in the restaurant	7	18,9	
	Using disposable plates, glasses, etc.	6	16,2	
		37		49,35

Findings on the Expectations of the Participants from Recreational Services such as Pool, Sauna and Bath During the Covid-19 Epidemic

Based on a total of 43 statements from 26 participants, the most common expectations from recreational services such as pool, sauna and bath in halal concept hotels are that areas in common use including pool, sauna and bath are disinfected often during the day and follow hygiene and sanitation rules (39.5%), that the number of people allowed at the pool is limited through several practices (28%), that private spaces for families and individuals are offered (18.6%). Table 5 presents any other detailed information on the expectations of consumers from recreational services such as pool, sauna and bath. Some of the statements of the participants on their expectations from recreational services such as pool, sauna and bath are as follows:

(P2)... “If necessary, disposable materials such as disposable slippers, towels, etc. can be used in these areas; if not possible, materials such as towels must be thoroughly cleaned and washed. Also, common areas such as pool, sauna and bath must be disinfected meticulously and often during the day”...

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(P12)... “Areas for personal use and for families should be offered; number of guests should be limited and areas should be frequently disinfected” ...

(P19)... “Practices to prevent the crowd are necessary and special attention should be paid to hygiene and sanitation rules”..

Table 5

Statistics of the Consumer Expectations from Recreational Services such as Pool, Sauna and Bath in Halal Concept Hotels

Participant Statements	Frequency	Percentage (%) (≈)
Areas in common use, including pools, saunas and baths, need to be disinfected periodically every day and these areas should follow hygiene and sanitation rules	17	39,5
Number of guests allowed at the pool should be limited (practices such as limited time, queues, etc.)	12	28
Private areas for families or personal use should be offered	8	18,6
Disposable slippers, towels, etc. should be available; if not possible, materials such as towels should be thoroughly cleaned and washed	4	9,3
Pool water should be replaced and disinfected regularly.	2	4,6

Findings on the Expectations of the Participants from Beach Arrangement and Other Entertainment Services During the Covid-19 Epidemic

Based on a total of 38 statements from 26 participants, the most common expectations from recreational services such as pool, sauna and bath in halal concept hotels are that sunbeds on the beach and seatings in the entertainment areas are social-distanced (29%), that entertainments organized in the areas on the beach follow hygiene and sanitation rules (21%) and that entertainment activities are performed several times during the day to prevent the crowd (15.8%) and that outdoor sports areas should be designed, and outdoor and nature-based activities should be increased (15.8%). Table 6 presents information on the expectations of the consumers from beach arrangement and other entertainment activities in halal concept hotels. Some of the statements of the participants on their expectations from beach arrangement and other entertainment activities in halal concept hotels are as follows:

(P3)... “Sunbeds on the beach should be arranged in line with the rules and measures taken; entertainment activities should be performed several times during the day and

guests should not be allowed to enter in groups or seating should be social-distanced in outdoor activities as well as indoor activities” ...

(P9)... “That more outdoor activities, nature-based activities should be offered and outdoor sports areas should be designed” ...

(P16)... “Beaches should be kept clean and hygiene rules should be followed in entertainment activities” ...

(P21)... “That separate bins should be available for used masks and gloves” ...

Table -6

Statistics of the Consumer Expectations from Beach Arrangement and Other Entertainment Services in Halal Concept Hotels

Participant Statements	Frequency	Percentage (%) (≈)
Sunbeds on the beach and seating in entertainment activities should be social-distanced	11	29
Entertainments organized in the areas on the beach should follow hygiene and sanitation rules	8	21
Entertainment activities should be performed several times during the day and a limited number of guest should be allowed	6	15,8
More outdoor activities, nature-based activities should be offered and outdoor sports areas should be designed	6	15,8
Entertainment activities should prioritize privacy and follow measures taken during the epidemic	3	8
Frequent disinfection of toys in children’s clubs and park areas	2	5,2
Separate bins should be available for used masks and gloves	2	5,2

Findings on the Suggestions to Managers in Halal Concept Hotels During the Covid-19 Epidemic

Based on a total of 49 statements from 26 participants, most participants expect from hotel managers not to further increase accommodation prices (22.5%), to provide a cleaner and more hygienic environment following social distance rules and measures taken during the Covid-19 epidemic (20%) and to offer further promotions on the measures and services taken by the hotels related to the epidemic and to make efforts to inform consumers about such promotions (15%). Table 7 presents information on suggestions of the consumers to managers to halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic.

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Some of the suggestions of the participants to hotel managers in halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic are as follows:

(P3)... “That consumers should be informed starting from their arrival for them to feel safe, that more attention than ever before should be paid to cleanliness, that staff should be asked to ensure that consumers feel safe”...

(P7)... “That they inform consumers about the measures taken and promote their services through webinars” ...

(P14)... “That they do not increase their already high prices” ...

(P20)... “They should phase out all inclusive and open buffet system and instead offer a la carte service” ...

(P21)... “That capacity should be reduced and activities that cause large crowds should be avoided, that activities should be performed with specific time intervals, that attention should be paid to hygiene, cleaning and social distance rules, that staff should be trained about the epidemic and hygiene and prices should be reasonable” ...

Table 7

Statistics of Consumer Expectations on Hotel Businesses (Managers) in Halal Concept Hotels

Participant Statements	Frequency	Percentage (%) (≈)
There should not be further increase in accommodation prices	9	22,5
Hotel should provide a cleaner and more hygienic environment that follows social distancing rules and measures taken during the Covid-19 epidemic	8	20
Efforts should be made to promote the services and measures taken for the Covid-19 to customers	6	15
Customers should be felt safe and staff should be particularly asked to ensure their safety	5	12,5
Hotel should introduce à la carte dining system in restaurants that requires reservations	4	10
Staff should be trained on the epidemic and hygiene	4	10
Activities that cause large crowds should be avoided	3	7,5

Hotel should require guests to show their Covid health status or vaccination status.	1	2,5
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Results, Discussion and Recommendations

The Covid-19 epidemic, which struck all the world, influenced Turkey as well on March 11, 2020 when the first case was announced in the country. Hence, people have had to postpone their travel plans due to the drastic measures and restrictions enforced due to the epidemic, as well as the fear of being infected with the disease. To adapt their life to this new order dominated by these measures and restrictions, people have made both physical and mental efforts. This process seriously affected employers, employees and particularly consumers in the tourism sector as in every sector. Not only the resulting economic costs but also changes in customer behaviours and expectations have entailed businesses to come up with new plans, programs and practices.

This study, which seeks to explore the expectations of consumers from halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic and to present some suggestions to businesses and managers, ascertains that consumer attitudes, behaviours and expectations have changed to some extent during this epidemic. This finding is congruent with the findings of Akbaba (2020), Aydın and Doğan, (2020), Chebli and Said (2020) and Yaşar (2020). The findings of this study indicate that the expectations of the consumers from room services, food and beverage services, recreation services such as pool and sauna and other entertainment services mostly revolve around hygiene. Further, this study emphasizes that hotel businesses need to be more sensitive about atmospheric hygiene, microbiological hygiene, hygiene in service, areas in common use and staff hygiene and cleaning. This finding is supported by Aydın and Doğan (2020), Chebli and Said (2020), Demir and Türkmen (2020), Kabadayı and Kardeş (2020), Kılıç et al. (2020), Wanchyuni and Kusumaningrum (2020), Yenişehirli and Salha (2020), and Demir et al. (2021).

Based on the answers of the participants, it appears that they have certain expectations on food and beverage as well as entertainment. Indeed, the participants stated that they mostly prefer activities done individually or with the family and that social distancing rules should be followed in areas in common use. They further emphasized the necessity to make some efforts to prevent the crowd both in food and beverage areas and in entertainment areas. This finding adds to the findings of Aydın and Doğan (2020), Chebli and Said (2020), Çetinkaya, Özer and Kandemir Altunel (2020), Kılıç et al. (2020), Yenişehirli and Salha (2020), Yaşar (2020), Demir et al. (2020), Demir and Türkmen (2020), Kabadayı and Kardeş (2020), Sigala (2020), Hao et al. (2020) and Demir et al. (2021). Moreover, the participants reported that more outdoor activities and nature-based activities should be performed during this epidemic process. This further supports the findings of Aydın and Doğan (2020), Wanchyuni and Kusumaningrum (2020), Yaşar (2020), Kabadayı and Kardeş (2020).

As for the expectations of the participants from food and beverage services/open-buffet services, etc., most of them emphasized that hotels should offer a la carte service. This finding is congruent with the findings of Yaşar (2020) and Demir et al. (2020). The participants lastly made some suggestions to hotel businesses (and/or managers) based on their answers. Highlighting that the prices of halal concept hotels are already higher than the prices of other hotels, the participants firstly recommended managers

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not to further increase their prices during the epidemic period. The second suggestion of the participants is that social distancing and hygiene rules should be strictly followed during the epidemic period and that hotels need to publicize their efforts towards this through campaigns. These findings add to the findings of Çetinkaya et al. (2020) and Sürme (2020).

As this study is among few research attempts in understanding the expectations of tourists in halal concept hotels during the Covid-19 epidemic, it will hopefully offer unique insights for the tourism literature. To help businesses survive and generate profit, further studies on consumer expectations are importantly needed during this pandemic. It is also necessary for businesses to gain a thorough understanding of consumer expectations, to prioritize hygiene and social distancing, which are highly valued by consumers, and to design policies in this regard. Furthermore, it is plausible to argue that availability of disposable prayer rugs to enhance hygiene and cleanliness at halal concept hotels, training staff to value customer privacy and to keep prices reasonable would attract more customers to halal concept hotels. This will contribute to the development of the tourism industry and increase its market share.

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