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Digital Transformation Perceptions in Tourism Businesses: The Case of Batman Province

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of digital transformation within tourism businesses in Batman Province, with a specific focus on accommodation, food and beverage and tourism agencies. Perceptions of digital transformation are considered to have of growing influence on the tourism business, and the research of these perceptions is a critical study not only for academic research but also for practical applications. Experiences, strategies, and challenges of the businesses in digitalization are studied with qualitative research methods, specifically semi-structured interviews with five businesses running in Batman, Turkey. The findings highlight the varying degrees of digital transformation awareness and the different technologies employed by these businesses. In addition, it identifies the benefits, such as high operational efficiency and improved customer experience, alongside problems like high investment costs and resistance to change. The current research also helps to serve as a source of information to understand in more detail how digital transformation is perceived and realized in the context of the tourism sector, leading to rich insights for future strategic planning.

Keywords: Digital Transformation, Tourism Business, Batman Province

Introduction

Digital transformation has become an indispensable element for businesses and organisations to gain competitive advantage and ensure their sustainability in a rapidly changing and developing technology world (Vial, 2021). Researchers have examined the effects of digital transformation and the importance of transformation and continue to work in this field (Bănescu et al., 2021; Zaoui & Souissi, 2020). Digitalisation constitutes today's new reality. One of the important changes that occur with digital transformation is that our reality is gradually becoming more blended by and through information technologies. In this context, digital transformation creates a world where everything is somehow interconnected (Stolterman & Fors, 2004).

Digital transformation is observed in various forms in different sectors. In particular, sectors such as finance, health, education and tourism are experiencing major changes with the innovations and opportunities offered by digital technologies. In their digital transformation journeys, businesses utilise advanced technologies such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, Internet of Things (IoT) and Blockchain to increase operational efficiency, improve customer experience and create new business opportunities (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). As of the first quarter

of the twenty-first century, the tourism sector has become one of the sectors that feel the effects of technological developments and digitalisation most intensely. Digital transformation has led to changes in many areas from customer relations to marketing strategies, operational processes to business models (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Gössling et al., 2021).

Accommodation, food and beverage companies and travel agencies focus on goals such as improving customer experience, increasing operational efficiency and gaining competitive advantage by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies. Understanding the effects of digital transformation on these businesses and determining how businesses approach this process is of great importance for both academic research and industry practices (Sigala, 2018). In this context, the current study aims to examine the digital transformation perceptions of accommodation, food and beverage and tourism agency businesses and to reveal the opportunities and challenges faced by businesses. The current research aims to contribute to a better understanding of digital transformation in tourism sector in Batman province by analysing the experiences, strategies and expectations of businesses in the digitalisation process.

Literature Review

Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is the radical restructuring of business processes, models and strategies through the integration of digital technologies (Vial, 2021). This process is supported by the widespread use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and enables businesses to become more flexible, innovative and customer-oriented (Bharadwaj et al., 2013). Digital transformation is not only a technological innovation but also an organisational change process (Hess et al., 2016; Cetinsöz et al. 2024). Sharma and Singh (2020) chronologically explain the Industrial Revolutions that form the basis of the digitalisation era. Accordingly; Industry 1.0 emerged with the introduction of water and steam power in the 18th century and continued until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, when Industry 2.0 started, caused by Henry Ford's mass production initiatives. Industry 2.0, in which new services such as the telegraph and railways led to significant developments, continued for many years with its pros and cons. On the one hand, the production of large numbers of the same products contributed to lower prices, enabling many more people to buy them. On the other hand, the production cycle was very linear and any change in production was time consuming and expensive. The 1950s and 1970s, the years when partial automation and the use of computers began, is the time period when the industry 3.0 era began. In this period, also called the Digital Revolution, the transition from analogue and mechanical systems to digital systems took place. In the second half of the 20th century, developments in the electronics industry caused the Digital Revolution to be experienced and strengthened. In Table 1, the basic components and features of the industrial revolution, which are the first stages of the digital revolution, are presented chronologically.

Table 1. Basic Components and Features of Industrial Revolution

Industrial Revolution	Term	Key Components	Features
Industry 1.0	Late 18th and early 19th centuries	- Steam Power: Steamer	Transition from manual labour to mechanised production, rise of factories and urbanisation
		- Textile Production: -Iron Production: Iron smelting with coke - Electricity	
Industry 2.0	Late 19th and early 20th centuries	- Mass Production - Internal Combustion Engines	Expansion of mass production, increasing standardisation, large-scale production and the rise of commercial enterprises
		- Communication: Telegraph, telephone - Electronics Microprocessors, integrated circuits	
Industry 3.0	Mid to late 20th century	- Automation Robots, automatic control systems - Information Technology (IT): Computers, software	Transition to automation, computerisation and the use of electronics in production and business processes
		- Internet of Things (IoT)	
Industry 4.0	From the early 21st century to the present	- Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Cyber-Physical Systems - Big Data and Analytics	Integration of physical and digital technologies, decision making and predictive maintenance based on data analysis, collaborative robots and advanced manufacturing techniques

Source: Created by author.

The tourism sector is one of the sectors most affected by digital transformation. The use of digital technologies in the tourism sector offers great opportunities to improve customer experience, increase efficiency and create new business models (Gretzel et al., 2015; Arica et al. 2023). Especially online reservation systems, mobile applications, virtual and augmented reality technologies play an important role in the digitalisation process of tourism businesses (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019).

The perceptions of tourism enterprises towards the digital transformation process are critical for the success of this transformation. Studies show that digital transformation perceptions affect the level of adoption of digital technologies and the effective use of these technologies (Sigala, 2018; Arica et al. 2022). The perceptions of businesses towards digital transformation are generally

shaped in the context of opportunities and challenges brought by digitalisation (Morakanyane et al., 2017). Popova et al. (2023) examined the potential of the Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data Analytics for risk management in digital tourism ecosystems. The paper examines the risk management possibilities provided by IoT and BDA for participants in the digital ecosystems of tourism destinations and identifies the risks and challenges associated with the use of these technologies. As a result, strategic risks, organisational risks, technological risks, socio-cultural risks, ecological risks and economic risks are identified. Yilmazer and Çakmak (2023) revealed that smart applications, one of the important components of digitalisation, are not widely used in hotels in Sakarya province. It was concluded that the main reason for this situation is high cost. A similar result was also found in the study of Kafa et al. (2020). One of the results of the study, which examined the opinions of business managers on smart tourism tools, shows that the high amounts to be spent on infrastructure constitute an obstacle to the use of smart tourism elements in businesses. Kindzule-Millere and Zeverte-Rivza (2022) analyse the effects of digital transformation and industry 4.0 on the tourism sector and the opportunities and challenges presented by this transformation. Digitalisation increases the competitiveness, growth and sustainability of tourism businesses. The article analyses how digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, augmented reality, virtual reality, Internet of Things and Blockchain are used in tourism and the opportunities offered by these technologies. Digitalisation adds value to tourism products and provides businesses with long-term competitive advantage, but there are also challenges in implementing this transformation, such as lack of technical knowledge and high costs.

With the introduction of the industry 4.0 era, innovative technological applications such as virtual reality, smart technologies, the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence and robots are rapidly becoming widespread. These technologies are having a profound impact on a wide range of issues, from individuals' lifestyles to the global economy. The need for society to adapt to this new technological framework, reshape the skill profiles of the workforce, and transform the business processes of enterprises are among the far-reaching effects of Industry 4.0 on society and economy (Bahar et al., 2019). The emergence of digital transformation is having a profound impact on businesses across all sectors as barriers between people, businesses, and things disappear (Schwertner, 2017). The tourism management sector is one of them.

The digital age, which is progressing at a dizzying pace, is transforming the tourism sector as in every sector. With the proliferation of the internet and mobile technologies, travel experiences are no longer just in our suitcases, but also in the palm of our hands, at our fingertips. Digital transformation offers exciting opportunities for the tourism industry. The effects of digital transformation and industry 4.0 can be seen in all areas from travel agency to guiding services, from the entertainment sector to the food and beverage and accommodation service sectors (Beed & Sarkar, 2017; Ercan, 2019). Digital transformation not only makes travelling easier, but also creates new opportunities and challenges in the tourism sector. Advanced technologies such as data analytics and artificial intelligence are used to personalise the travel experience and increase customer satisfaction (Gümüş & Sidal, 2023). According to Statista Mobility Market Insights (2024), the global travel and tourism market revenue was approximately USD 860 billion in 2023, recovering from the impact of COVID-19, including hotels, package holidays, holiday rentals and camping. When the worldwide revenue of travel and tourism was broken down by sales channels, it was revealed that the online channel generated more than two-thirds of the global transaction value that year (Statista, 2024). In addition, Statista data also shows that, with the exception of the

Covid-19 period, the mobility of people in tourism has increased in parallel with digital developments.

The Internet plays an important role in the modern tourism industry, serving as a communication and information tool. Internet applications range from obtaining complex information about specific tourist destinations to travel planning and booking. However, the degree of use of this modern tool in personal travel planning varies significantly in different regions (Bănescu et al., 2021).

Related Studies

Digitalisation gains importance in times of pandemics, crises and natural disasters. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated digital transformation processes and increased the dependence of tourism businesses on digital technologies. Gössling et al. (2021) examined the effects of digital transformation on the tourism sector during the pandemic. This study shows that digital solutions play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability of businesses in times of crisis and that these technologies will continue to be an important component in the future.

Digitalisation has a significant impact on the operational performance of businesses. Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal (2016) examined the role of digitalisation in increasing the competitiveness of tourism businesses. According to the results of the study, effective use of information technologies has positive effects on hotel performance. The use of digital tools, especially in customer satisfaction, operational efficiency and revenue management, significantly increases the competitive advantage of hotels.

Employee productivity is one of the areas that have gained momentum with digitalisation movements. Côte-Real et al. (2017) examined the effects of digital transformation on employee productivity. It is explained how the use of digital technologies optimises internal processes and increases the productivity of employees. The effective use of digital tools increases the overall productivity of businesses by enabling employees to perform their tasks faster and more effectively (Côte-Real et al., 2017).

Apart from employee productivity, customer experience is one of the areas affected by digitalisation. Ivanov and Webster (2019) investigated the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies on customer experience in the tourism industry. The study examines how AI-powered chatbots, virtual assistants and personalised recommendation systems transform the customer experience and the role of these technologies in increasing customer satisfaction. Artificial intelligence increases the competitiveness of tourism businesses by providing fast and effective solutions to customers' needs.

Digital marketing has become a critical tool to help tourism businesses expand their customer base and strengthen their brand. Buhalis and Sinarta (2019) highlighted the importance of digital marketing strategies in the tourism sector and examined the effective use of digital tools such as social media, search engine optimisation (SEO) and content marketing. These strategies are vital for increasing customer engagement and ensuring loyalty (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019).

Digitalisation increases service quality. Bilgihan et al. (2011) investigate the effects of digitalisation on service quality. This study reveals how digital technologies affect hotel customers'

perceptions of service quality and how these technologies can be used to increase customer satisfaction. In particular, digital check-in/check-out systems, mobile keys and digital surveillance services enhance service quality by improving the customer experience.

Methodology

Objective, Method and Analysis

The aim of this study is to examine the digital transformation perceptions of accommodation, food and beverage and tourism agency businesses and to reveal the opportunities and challenges faced by businesses. The study, which was carried out using qualitative research methods, aims to determine the experiences and opinions of food and beverage, hotel and other accommodation businesses and tourism agencies operating in Batman province regarding digital transformation. Qualitative research methods are approaches that are widely used in social and human sciences and aim to understand events, phenomena, individuals and groups in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2002). In the study, interview technique, which is frequently used in qualitative research method, was used. Interviews are conducted face-to-face to explore the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the participants in depth, which makes the data richer and more multidimensional (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The interview technique is a method used in qualitative research to collect in-depth insights and detailed information. It provides direct, face-to-face interaction between the researcher and the participants, which makes it possible to collect detailed data. There are various types of interviews used in qualitative research. These are structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Dömbekci & Erişen, 2022). In the current study, semi-structured interview technique was used. Semi-structured interviews are more flexible than other interview techniques, they have a set of guiding questions and these questions can be adapted according to the flow of the conversation (Türnüklü, 2000). Thus, it is ensured that there is no element that is not understood during the interview. The interview form utilised within the scope of the research is as follows (See Table 2).

Table 2. Semi-structured Interview Form

What do you understand by the term digitalisation?	Schönherr et al., 2023.
What do you think about the current state of digital transformation in the tourism sector?	Gürbüz, 2021
Which components related to Digital Transformation do you use in your business?	Yıldırım, 2020
In which departments of your business do you implement Digital Transformation?	Yıldırım, 2020
What are the reasons that encourage you to digital transformation in your business?	Yıldırım, 2020
In your opinion, can there be problems in businesses at the stage of integrating into digital transformation?	Schönherr et al., 2023; Yağcı, 2023; Yıldırım, 2020
What do you need to successfully face digital transformation challenges?	Schönherr et al., 2023

Which department / departments are most affected by this digital transformation in your business? Can you tell 3 of them in order?	Yıldırım, 2020
In which areas does digital transformation create the most value for your business (operational efficiency, customer experience, data and data analytics, strategic decision making, brand and image ...)?	Yıldırım, 2020
Does your organisation have a future vision regarding digital transformation? If so, what goals are envisaged?	Yıldırım, 2020
What percentage of your investments do you make in digital transformation areas in your business? Which digital area do you invest in the most?	Yıldırım, 2020
Do you question the digital competence of the employee during recruitment?	Yıldırım, 2020
Which professions and equipment do you think will gain importance in tourism with Digital Transformation?	Yıldırım, 2020
Which trainings do you think should be taken for your employees to adapt to the transformation process in your business?	Yıldırım, 2020
What kind of effects does digital transformation have on employee motivation? To what extent has the motivation of blue-collar and white-collar employees changed or has it changed?	Yıldırım, 2020
How much of the financial assets in your business do you spend on digital transformation? Which of the digital areas do you focus more on?	Yağcı, 2023
What will happen if you do not carry digital transformation to your business?	Yağcı, 2023
Where do you think the digital transformation process should start in the tourism sector?	Gürbüz, 2021
How does the digital transformation process work in the facility where you work? Please state your views.	Gürbüz, 2021
Are there any risks you observe in your facility in digital transformation? What are they?	Gürbüz, 2021
What can be done to improve the current digital transformation status of the tourism sector?	Gürbüz, 2021

Source: Created by author.

The data collected between 15.04.2024 - 30.04.2024 through face-to-face interviews are aimed at determining the challenges faced by the participants in the digital change process, the changes they have experienced and their future visions. In the semi-structured interviews conducted with 5 businesses, data obtained from 2 food and beverage businesses, 2 hotel businesses and 1 tour agency were processed. The collected data were analysed by content analysis. The findings obtained will be an important source in revealing the perspectives of the actors in the food and beverage, accommodation and tourism agency sectors in Batman province on digital transformation and their future strategic planning. Here is the list of participants:

Table 3. Descriptive Information of the Participants

Participant Code	Gender	Age	Education Status	Position in Business	Time spent in this position
P1	Male	44	Bachelor's Degree	Hotel Manager	20 years
P2	Male	28	Associate degree graduate	Hotel Technician	7 years
P3	Male	41	Bachelor's Degree	Travel Agency Owner-Manager	17 years
P4	Male	32	Bachelor's Degree	Store Manager	12 years
P5	Female	37	Associate degree graduate	Entrepreneur	6 years

Source: Created by author.

Findings

According to the information obtained from the interviews and the relevant literature (Gürbüz, 2021; Ivanov & Webster, 2019; Kafa et al., 2020; Kindzule-Millere & Zeverte-Rivza, 2022; Schönherr et al., 2023; Vial, 2021; Yıldırım, 2020) the themes related to the perceptions of digital transformation in tourism enterprises are as follows:

- Digital Transformation Awareness
- Components of Digital Transformation and Technologies Used
- Benefits of Digital Transformation
- Challenges in Transformation
- Future Vision and Strategic Objectives

Digital Transformation Awareness

Digital Transformation is handled by different business managers/owners from their own perspectives. The data obtained as a result of the interviews require this differentiation to be categorised into categories and codes. Saniuk et al. (2022) state that digital transformation is at the centre of Industry 4.0 and that employees should have a wide range of interdisciplinary knowledge and awareness about transformation. Tourism sector is an interdisciplinary field. In this respect, it was tried to measure whether the enterprises have digital transformation awareness through interviews. Based on the theme of digital transformation awareness, the categories of "digital transformation definition" and "digital transformation perception and importance of transformation" were reached. While defining digital transformation, the answers given by the participants and the data obtained from the literature in response to these answers led to the emergence of the codes "integration" and "information collection and processing". In addition, the codes of "digital transformation requirement" and "the impact of chain hotels on digital transformation" were created in line with the statements of the managers of hotel businesses. Some

of the answers given to the questions asked to test the participants' awareness of digital transformation are as follows:

P1: *“Digitalisation is actually integration with the world, that is, collecting and analysing data and obtaining statistics for the past”*

P3: *“If we think of the term digitalisation in terms of corporate structure in general, we can describe it as the general use of mass media. This is the investments that the business will make within itself. These are briefly web pages, social media accounts, software made for the march of their own business. We can characterise these in general, I understand this from digital transformation in general.”*

P4: *“Now, in today's world, digitalisation, artificial intelligence and mechanisation are the topics that we can call robotisation. In my opinion, we can think of it as providing appropriate environments, making investments, and providing appropriate equipment in the same way.”*

The results obtained from the interviews reveal that tourism enterprises handle the digitalisation process in different ways. There are statements regarding the importance of the data collection process and the necessity of technology and mechanisation for digital transformation. In addition, there is a level of awareness that websites, social media and software are the most needed points in the digitalisation process.

Digital Transformation Components and Technologies Used

Westerman et al. (2014), who succinctly defined digital transformation as the use of technology to improve business performance, found that customer experience, operational processes and business models are important parts of digital transformation. Kraft et al. (2022) define digital tools as software and applications that utilise the availability and connectivity of information. In the light of the information obtained from the interviews, the theme of components and technologies consists of the categories of "technologies used" and "integration between departments". The answers given in response to the technologies used were tried to be explained with the codes "automation software" and advanced technologies", and the category of inter-departmental integration was tried to be explained with the codes "integration with global systems and networks". Some of the answers given by the participants to the question "Which components of digital transformation do you use?" are as follows:

P1: *“Software, automation programmes etc. There are different software for each department, provided by the fact that this is a chain hotel. We use them. In fact, everything is digital from top to bottom. There is nothing we keep manually.”*

P4: *“Examples include electronic billboards, the use of digitalised computers with artificial intelligence (AI) at checkout points, the use of cash registers, and the use of mobile applications.”*

P5: *“We currently use an online ordering system, social media marketing and basic data analytics tools.”*

Benefits of Digital Transformation

Căpuşneanu et al. (2021) argue that the digital tools offered by the digitalisation universe (systems such as cloud storage, internet of things and big data analysis) have created a digital culture in both users and business managers. Thanks to this culture, businesses can adapt to digital transformation and innovations more easily. It also enables them to offer an improved customer experience while increasing their market value. The benefits of digital transformation were analysed under the categories of "operational benefits" and "customer satisfaction" with the codes "information management", "operational audit and control" and "enhanced customer experience". The responses of the participants indicate the level of benefit from digital transformation:

P1: *"If you cannot ensure operational efficiency, you cannot ensure guest satisfaction; if you cannot ensure guest satisfaction, you cannot maintain profitability. In that sense, all of these stages are actually integrated with each other. You know, one cannot be separated from the other, and if you go into much more detail, it goes all the way to the purchasing process. As I said, the most important thing here in digitalisation is that everything remains in memory. It can be processed retrospectively and future-oriented data can be processed."*

P4: *"Digital transformation creates value for our business in almost every field, but if we say that we should list it, of course, customer experience is the first, then operational efficiency and data analysis and strategic decision-making. However, the last brand and image comes by itself."*

P5: *"Increasing competition, changes in customer expectations and the need to increase operational efficiency are the main reasons that encourage us to digital transformation. Thanks to digitalisation, we can provide better service to our customers and increase our market share."*

Challenges in Transformation

As frequently mentioned in the previous sections of the research, digital transformation creates many opportunities and offers significant benefits to businesses. However, it also involves some challenges. Altuntaş (2018) emphasises the need to overcome challenges such as working with skilled personnel with the right competencies, strong leadership, creating a digital transformation culture in the enterprise, and organising the corporate organisation. The answers given by the participants regarding the theme of the challenges brought by the transformation, which is tried to be explained with the codes "high cost and sustainability", "personnel training" and "resistance to change" under the categories of "cost and investment" and "employee adaptation", are as follows:

P1: *"Of course, there is a cost related to digitalisation, but you can get its return in a short time."*

"Of course, there may be problems with the personnel who can use that digitalisation and the continuous training of those personnel."

P3: *"Namely, in general, digitalisation equals the internet environment in problems that may be experienced. Problems that may be experienced in the internet environment will naturally affect this digitalisation. But apart from that, when we look at the analyses made, I honestly do not think that this will bring any handicap"*

P4: *“There is a classic statement that every change is painful, but you know, this is something that can be completely adaptable. Because the trainings you will make about it, the investments you will make, the financial investments and the investments you will make in artificial intelligence in the digital world may have some difficulty at first, but of course we can observe how easy and usable it is when you get used to it.”*

When the answers of the participants to the problems that may be experienced in the digital transformation process are analysed, it is stated that some problems may be experienced. However, it is extremely important that all three participants stated that these difficulties can be overcome in some way and that these difficulties will not create problems that cannot be overcome. This situation also shows that the participants have internalised the digital transformation processes and that they should be sustainable.

Future Vision and Strategic Objectives

In the digital transformation process, having a future vision is an important issue for an enterprise to ensure its continuity. Yıldırım (2020) states that in order for businesses to have a future vision, concepts such as being digital, creating a digital twin, and conducting AR-VR themed studies should be brought to the fore. In addition, Albukhitan (2020) states that the vision should coincide with reality. According to the author, strategic goals are an important issue for businesses to achieve their current goals. In this context, the categories of "planning" and "continuous development" were created based on the theme of future vision and strategic goals. Within these categories, the codes "vision of integration with digital tools" and "continuous investment" were obtained from the answers given by the participants. Some of the answers given by the participants within the framework of the relevant theme are as follows:

P2: *“In our future vision, the development of electronic components of all our rooms comes first. At the moment, all our rooms work with the card system and electricity. Without the guest inserting the card into the room, there is no electricity. We are trying to develop this further. We will change all our televisions and switchboard systems. We will try to do it with buttons and touch screens. We will have a study on this subject.”*

P3: *“Rapidly already technology is constantly changing. Especially in recent periods, Artificial Intelligence technologies that have emerged in the last year bring convenience in terms of the work of businesses. Therefore, it can be created by receiving such support in the work done. We think that new advertising and marketing strategies will add value to the business in this sense. Therefore, we will have moves to use this.”*

P4: *“I can say that I am not fully familiar with the figures, but while we can currently reach up to 40% of our guests through our mobile application, which is a digital area, I am talking about the guests who visit our store daily, we aim to increase this to 60%. While doing this, we incentivise our guests with some actions. For example, a gift will be present if they spend ... amount for purchasing some specific products, or paying less for the sake of customer satisfaction. Of course, in order to fulfil this goal, we need to make our financial investments more efficient.”*

Based on the responses of the participants, it is possible to say that the enterprises have a future vision and take actions in line with their strategic objectives. In addition, it can be stated that they

have a certain level of awareness in terms of ensuring the continuity of investments in order to achieve their strategic objectives.

Conclusion and Discussion

This research paper focuses on the perception of digital transformation by tourism businesses in Batman Province in the accommodation, food and beverage and tourism agency sectors. A series of semi-structured interviews with business managers and owners convey much insight into how digital transformation is perceived, technologies utilized, benefits realized, and issues currently being faced by these businesses. The findings herein signify that digital transformation has been identified to hold much weight and importance in line with operational effectiveness and the satisfaction of customers. An array of various tools and technologies, such as automation software, AI, and online systems, has been used to provide competitive and improved services. Its benefits have been evident in the better management of data, streamlining of operations, and improvement in customer experiences. However, key associated issues include the high cost of investment, the need for constant training of personnel, and resistance to change. Future visions and strategic objectives of these businesses are likely to further focus on heavy investments in digital technologies and continuously integrate such advanced systems for acquiring more added value concerning efficiency and customer engagement. This paper aims to underline the proactive measure in digital transformation since one has to constantly adapt and invest to attain long-term success within the dynamic tourism sector. Thus, the study, in a nutshell, is conducted because it contributes essential information concerning the state of digitalization within the tourism businesses in Batman Province, hence shedding more light on the opportunities and challenges thereof. It provides a foundation on which further studies and strategic planning can be made for firms that desire to succeed in the digital era.

The findings obtained in this study significantly overlap with Yıldırım's (2020) study. Concepts such as operational efficiency, customer experience and data analytics as the values created by digital transformation in businesses are common findings. The reasons for businesses to adopt digital transformation and adapt to digital transformation in order to move their vision forward are also similar to each other considering the findings of both studies. In addition, “the high costs” factor was identified as an obstacle to digital transformation in current study, Yıldırım's (2020) and Beed and Sarkar's (2017) studies. Kindzule-Millere and Zeverte-Rivza's (2022) study has something in common in terms of advantages and barriers for digital transformation of tourism stakeholders. Both studies reveal that digital transformation enables customer expectations and satisfaction and suggest that digitalization require high costs, which is a barrier for it.

Present study has some limitations. Since this study was conducted with qualitative method, only a limited number of enterprises were interviewed. Therefore, the data obtained may not be generalised. In this sense, it is recommended to reach more comprehensive results with scales to be developed for further studies. Suggestions that can be developed for tourism sector stakeholders are as follows: Employees should be supported through digital literacy and training programmes. A unique customer experience can be provided through the integration of automation systems with artificial intelligence and related tools. With cost-benefit analyses, digital tool investments can be made in accordance with the structure of the business. Finally, in order to integrate with digitalisation, having a digital culture or mindset can contribute to the digital sustainability of the enterprise.

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