



Can we imagine the meal-sharing economy without service providers? The impact of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The meal-sharing economy has taken significant scholarly attention recently; however, no study examines the impact of the current health crisis on meal-sharing economy platforms. This research attempts to bridge this gap by investigating the effect of the COVID-19 on the meal-sharing economy based on the service providers' perspective. For this purpose, thirteen interviews with meal-sharing service providers in Istanbul were conducted, and the data were examined through conventional content analysis. Findings showed that meal-sharing service providers have been facing unprecedented challenges since the outbreak. The findings also reveal a common consensus on the disruptive role of the coronavirus measures in terms of limiting meal-sharing activities. Moreover, it was indicated that the current health crisis has compelled service providers to redesign their events as online virtual activities. The results provide favorable theoretical and practical insights to guide the meal-sharing platforms for a health crisis adoption and revival of such platforms.

1. Introduction

The sharing economy (SE) platforms have provided for travelers to manage their trips in different services (Hossain, 2021), such as accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, and local guiding (Atsız, Cifci, & Law, 2021; Atsız, Cifci, & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). It is reported that the global SE would be one of the leading consumption areas, which is expected to grow to US\$335 billion by 2025 (Kauffman & Naldi, 2020). However, the SE services, as a vital side of the hospitality industry, have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak (Hossain, 2021).

As one of the major platforms, meal-sharing platforms offer travelers a wide range of opportunities to experience the food culture of the destination (Atsız, Cifci, & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). In addition, as a service innovation and contemporary sharing area, it is known as a disruptive business model that enables individuals to experience private social dining (Atsız & Çifçi, 2021; Qian, Law, & Fan, 2020). On these platforms, locals offer their foods and their depth of culinary knowledge as well as share their table manners with travelers (Atsız, Cifci, & Law, 2021), hence, a social interaction occurs among two parties. Although some meal-sharing economy platforms (i.e., Eatwith, and Withlocals) have set some recovery strategies (i.e., considering physical distancing,

hygiene rules, and limiting participants) to overcome the effects of the current health crisis, it is stated that customers would not interact physically with people immediately. In this context, Farmaki et al. (2020) noted that the highly infectious novel coronavirus will continue to thwart meal-sharing economy platforms as well. Not surprisingly the existing research phenomena regarding the effect of COVID-19 on the sharing economy platforms has been hugely based on the peer-to-peer accommodation and transportation sector (Farmaki et al., 2020; Hossain, 2021; Mont, Curtis, & Palgan, 2021). However, other SE services such as meal-sharing have been ignored.

The ambiguity of the pandemic and its possible effect on the meal-sharing economy cause the emergence of crucial questions about the present and future existence of the meal-sharing sector. This research, therefore, addresses two important concerns; (i) pertains to the major effects caused by the COVID-19 on the meal-sharing economy that service providers face amid existing circumstances; and (ii) relates to the perception of service providers toward the present and future of using meal-sharing platforms.

To the best of our knowledge, no research investigates the effect of the ongoing pandemic on the meal-sharing economy platforms based on host perspectives. By comprehensively examining their perception, one can better recognize the connection between meal-sharing economy

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characteristics and hosts' reactions to the pandemic. In this regard, the current study offers an insightful contribution to the relevant literature in terms of capturing the main picture of SE hosts' reactions to the crisis and will be extremely useful for meal-sharing economy platforms to understand their hosts' perception toward the pandemic and facilitate convenient risk management strategies for them.

2. Background

2.1. The impact of COVID-19 on hospitality industry and meal-sharing platforms

The influence of COVID-19 which is the most impactful fact of the 21st century has seemingly been progressing from day to day since reported cases and deaths are on the rise in many countries (Fotiadis, Polyzos, & Huan, 2021). According to Worldometers (2021), more than 4 million deaths and 212 million cases among more than 220 countries and regions were announced as of 22 August of 2021. Despite limited treatments and vaccination that may reduce the infection caused by COVID-19, nonpharmaceutical interventions (i.e., without medication actions) are known as one of the most crucial ways to prevent the spread of the pandemic (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). Considering this, governments have taken some nonpharmaceutical interventions such as lockdowns, closing the borders, stay-at-home orders, social or physical distancing, and self-isolation procedures (Anderson, Heesterbeek, Klinkenberg, & Hollingsworth, 2020; Wen, Wang, Kozak, Liu, & Hou, 2020). These measures have been still legitimated in various countries and unavoidably impacted numerous sectors worldwide (Atsız, 2021). Tourism and hospitality industries that are dependent on travel activities are among the most impacted ones and have been confronted with an unprecedented challenge (World Tourism Organisation, 2020). Indeed, the COVID-19 has almost caused the shutdown of many hospitality businesses and harshly impacted international travel worldwide (Baum & Hai, 2020).

The ongoing pandemic still has a considerable effect on the hospitality industry and various researchers investigated to track the effects of the COVID 19 pandemic on this industry. For instance, most restaurants were forced to shut down owing to quarantine policies in the first part of 2020 (Gursoy & Chi, 2020), and this pandemic discouraged consumers to visit these businesses due to their fear and anxiety (Kim & Lee, 2020). Even after enabling the hospitality businesses to reopen, a decisive list of initiatives and measures by the government are compelled such as focusing on delivery services, limiting seating capacities, and obeying the social distancing rules (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). As above mentioned, the pandemic will continue to show its effects and these measures will be considered by hospitality businesses for a long period (Im et al., 2021). Thus, under these circumstances, it can be concluded that the future of the hospitality industry is catastrophic (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021).

This pandemic has also impacted the SE services in the hospitality environment, which were burgeoning their market share in the hospitality industry before the pandemic (Hossain, 2020). Research on estimating future directions of the SE by Zhu and Liu (2021) highlighted that consumers are concerned about using and sharing their assets on such platforms due to the COVID-19. To overcome this, Batool et al. (2020) suggested the usage of other services such as online shopping and food delivery services that can be more beneficial in conditions of requiring less human interaction. Along with the same line, Farmaki et al. (2020) investigated the effects of COVID-19 on peer-to-peer accommodation platforms from the perspective of hosts. Their research indicated that five main hosts occur based on hosts' responses to COVID-19 such as pessimistic, cautious, ambivalent, indolent, and optimistic.

As a new SE platform, meal-sharing has been evolving rapidly in recent years and has become much more popular among travelers (Atsız, Cifci, & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). On such platforms, travelers are hosted in a locals' home or a restaurant that was previously chosen by a host to

taste locals' foods. Furthermore, some food tours containing also the visitation of local food workshops are organized by a local to be offered for travelers. According to Geissinger, Laurell, and Sandström (2020), food services in the SE are preferred by travelers. As a result of experiencing foods with a local, a close relationship occurs and travelers obtain knowledge about indigenous foods, their ingredients, and even cooking processes (Atsız, Cifci, & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). This is the most desired output of travelers in the destination (Atsız, Cifci, & Law, 2021). Despite the importance of the meal-sharing economy for travelers and hosts, COVID-19 has severely affected the food services offered in such areas since human-to-human interaction is much appreciated between host and guest (Hossain, 2021).

To bear with the COVID-19, meal-sharing economy platforms have taken some measures to protect the hosts and guests. For example, Eatwith (2021) has released guidelines about health safety. It was emphasized that hosts who have a symptom of COVID-19 should not organize an event and inform the platform about it. Further, disinfection of flat, hand sanitation, facial covering, using gloves when making service or foods, utilizing single-use napkins or towels, air circulation, and serving individual plates rather than communal or shared serving are precautionary measures that should be taken into consideration by hosts. Moreover, one of the most important meal-sharing platforms, Withlocals (2021) determined some recommendations that are required to follow by hosts and guests. Generally, wearing masks, hand sanitizer, 1.5-m distance, and gloves for cooking class are obliged to obey during the experience.

The current literature is mainly focused on sharing accommodation platforms and there is no research examining the impact of the COVID-19 on meal-sharing platforms yet. A study to understand the impact of the COVID-19 on SE activities by Hossain (2021) concluded that service providers are coping with the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. According to his study, service providers' income was reduced due to the lack of new bookings and cancellations. As a result of this pandemic, business and economic damage, personal anxiety, and making some decisions about their careers were one of the main mentioned outcomes. To overcome this issue, service providers pause their services, take extra care in cleaning, hygiene, safety, and reassure customers.

2.2. Meal-sharing economy in Turkey

The meal-sharing economy had been increasingly popular in Turkey before the emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak (Atsız, Cifci, & Law, 2021). In particular, some meal-sharing platforms (i.e., Eatwith, Withlocals, Airbnb, Travelingspoon) were actively operating in the country as well as numerous service providers were offering their services for customers on such platforms. Initially, meal-sharing services were offered at the host's housing. However, new services such as food tours diversified as long as new hosts and guests participated in these areas. Then, cooking classes were one of the major meal-sharing activities that were preferred by food-lover travelers after the pandemic. Further, the pandemic has led meal-sharing economy activities to break in Turkey since these areas provide people to come together in a narrow area. However, with the removal of the measures that were taken, meal-sharing activities have re-started to operate.

There is a lack of an actual report that releases the situation of the meal-sharing economy in Turkey. However, the use of such platforms by international travelers visiting Turkey has led some researchers to focus on this topic. For example, Atsız, Cifci, and Law (2021) investigated the meal-sharing users' (travelers) experiences in Istanbul (Turkey) while Atsız and Çifçi (2021) explored the major motives for entrepreneurship in the meal-sharing economy from the perspective of the host. These studies emphasized that Turkey has a great meal-sharing potential and people (both hosts and guests) are eager to use such platforms in terms of experiencing different cultures. Both studies highlighted that the meal-sharing economy activities in Turkey will be popular as sharing accommodation sector (i.e., Airbnb) in the forthcoming years.

3. Methodology

Given the purpose of the study, a qualitative research approach was deemed more appropriate due to the current study's exploratory nature and the lack of a well-established framework regarding the effects of the current pandemic on the meal-sharing economy. Specifically, semi-structured interviews via video calls with the meal-sharing platforms' service providers (i.e., Eatwith, Withlocals, Airbnb, and Travelingspoon) were employed. The interviews, of approximately 40 min, were conducted in Turkey between June–November 2020. Interview protocol and questions were created by the emerging literature (Farmaki et al., 2020; Hossain, 2021). After the determination of several open-ended interview questions, an expert panel comprised of two academics in the tourism and hospitality field were set to evaluate as well as provide criticism on the questions. Expert panel results with no modification since both the panelists and the participants considered that the questions were well-structured and understandable (Please see Appendix A for open-ended interview questions).

One of the authors searched for a way to reach the participants through the online platforms by November 2020. A total of twenty-nine hosts in Istanbul were listed on various meal-sharing platforms, but there was no personal communication information of hosts because of the platforms' membership rules. So, a message was sent through the platforms, which was explaining the research aim, and asking their participation for a video call due to the pandemic and the resulting social distancing rules. As a result, thirteen participants were recruited based on the convenience sampling method. After reaching thirteen participants, the authors agreed to end the data collecting phase by following Braun and Clarke's (2021) suggestion regarding the power of the participants' knowledge on the researched topic, since all participants had a solid experience with more than 50 hosting activities in the meal-sharing economy platforms.

Interviews were digitally audio-recorded, and we transcribed each interview verbatim. Participants were asked about the possible impacts of COVID-19 on the meal-sharing sector and whether the effects of possible future pandemics on the meal-sharing economy and their influence on their operations and their guests' behaviors. A conventional content analysis method was applied based on guidelines suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). A hybrid way using both inductive and deductive approaches was adopted and thus all transcripts were read multiple times by authors, and this process was followed by joint discussions on general themes, and reaching a consensus on a final framework in a "theory-driven" manner (Gummerrsson, 2000). The authors compared their separated content analysis and determined a more than 80% similarity between themes, meeting the requirement of the qualitative analysis research standard regarding the validity of the findings (Landis & Koch, 1977). Besides, the original quotations from the respondents were also presented in the study to contribute to the reliability of the findings (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Profiles of participants

Regarding participant profiles, out of 13 participants, 7 were females; their ages ranged between 29 and 65. Eight of them were single and most of them (10) had not had a professional chef or guiding experience previously in advance. Participants' experience in such platforms ranged between 1 and 7 years and had more than 50 hosting experiences. Most of them hosted travelers at their homes or a restaurant that they selected. Among the platforms, Eatwith was the most used meal-sharing economy platform by service providers. Table 1 illustrates the profile of the participants.

Table 1
Profile of participants.

	Gender	Age	Marital	Hosting Experiences	Platforms
P1	Male	29	Single	200+	Withlocals, Airbnb
P2	Female	60	Married	50+	Travelling Spoon
P3	Female	46	Married	300+	Eatwith
P4	Male	34	Married	60+	Withlocals
P5	Male	34	Single	130+	Withlocals, Airbnb, Eatwith
P6	Female	33	Single	150+	Eatwith
P7	Female	26	Single	200+	Withlocals
P8	Female	30	Single	50+	Travelling Spoon
P9	Male	40	Married	70+	Withlocals, Airbnb, Eatwith
P10	Female	65	Single	50+	Eatwith
P11	Female	31	Single	50+	Eatwith
P12	Male	30	Single	100+	Eatwith
P13	Male	51	Married	200+	Withlocals

4.2. The disruptive impact of the COVID-19

One of the main objectives of this current study was to understand how the meal-sharing sector has been being influenced by the existing pandemic. According to a report by Deloitte (2020), the pandemic has also caused a negative change in travelers' preferences against SE platforms and resulting in a chaotic prospect for SE service providers. Therefore, participants initially were asked whether the current pandemic affected their initiatives. Understanding the pandemic's effect on the service providers will be extremely useful in managing this health crisis within the meal-sharing economy platforms (Farmaki et al., 2020). All participants stated that the pandemic had completely suspended their business activities. Moreover, many participants also highlighted that they could not receive support from the government during this economic downturn as they were not in the official economy. P1 put it this way "Fortunately, as I had two years of experience in this field, I was able to put some money aside. That's why I managed with it for a while, but then when the pandemic extended, I had to look for other jobs since I could not get support from the government."

Due to the fact that sharing economy platforms operate out of the formal economy, the service providers of these platforms have been experiencing a lack of support from governments amid the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the perceived benefits of SE platforms on the economy, society, and environment (Gössling & Hall, 2019), there is still a blurred knowledge about the positive and negative implications embedded in the informal economy approaches (Gurran, Zhang, & Shrestha, 2020). Davlembayeva and Papagiannidis (2021) stated this situation creates a paradox, thereby, needs an urgent balance with a regulatory mechanism by governments.

Despite the prolific growth in the pre-pandemic phase, the sharing economy platforms unlucky witnessed the disruptive standstill amid the pandemic (Meenakshi, 2021). Therefore, the current pandemic has led to questioning the survivability of the sharing economy platforms by a few scholars (Hossain, 2020; Zenker & Kock, 2020). In this term, the practices of the platform operators (i.e., firms) against the reimbursing of all cancellations for the guests and their possible support for their service providers (i.e., hosts) caused speculation regarding loans that redemption the hosts and guests (Carville, 2020). Therefore, when asked whether did the platforms provide support due to the pandemic economic impacts service providers suffered, and their attitude towards customers' cancellation and refund requests of guests. Most of the participants suggested that service providers have not supported hosts for reservation cancellation and refund requests, but for customer satisfaction, guests are loaned with credits that can be used in the future after the pandemic. P5 mentioned, "They could not provide support, frankly, they are the organizations who ate what they earned like us". Similarly, P1 noted as following, "Many of the reservations were canceled a few weeks in advance. When guests cancel their reservations in the last 2 weeks before the tour, they cannot get their money back. [...] if the tour

of the guests is canceled, service providers give them the same amount as credit that they can use it on another activity later.”

Despite the consensus regarding the lack of economic support from service providers, there are also some “howevers”. For instance, P1 highlighted the psychological moral support of the service providers as following: “They organized online seminars as they called it webinars, and they share the information about what they will do in this process, to avoid us getting depressed. Especially, they told us that they are working on some virtual experiences. [...] They gave such suggestions so that we would not lose our hopes”.

When asked whether they had ever thought to suspend meal-sharing platforms due to the pandemic, most participants stated that, even if the pandemic persists, there is no harm in continuing this activity with the necessary precautions. According to P3, “First of all, it was mandatory, as I said now, why not with the necessary precautions!” Along with the same line, P10 suggested, “No I have not thought ever. I believe there will be no problem if I take necessary precautions.” These providers are considered as optimistic hosts by adopting hosting practices. A study (Farmaki et al., 2020) that explores peer-to-peer accommodation provider types during the pandemic illustrated that optimistic host would continue on such platforms during and post-pandemic. Thus, our finding is consistent with this study’s host type.

4.3. What changed?

One of the main goals of the study was to understand what kind of changes did COVID-19 lead to meal-sharing applications. According to some participants, the potential changes in the meal-sharing process were limited through general coronavirus measures. Participants frequently mentioned that they would not salute with handshaking anymore and pay more attention to social distance rules as well as using masks and disinfectants constantly. For instance, P3 stated: “wearing shoe covers, whispering disinfectant before the guests enter the house, constantly using masks and plenty of cologne during the event.” These precautions are considered crucial factors in hospitality decision-making, because as Ilhan (2020) states the pandemic has enforced the platforms to establish “trust” and “safety” apart from its common dimension of “sharing” and “collaborating”. This finding confirms Hos-sain’s (2021) study emphasizing that service providers pay more attention to pandemic hygiene rules. Travelers’ COVID-19 risk perceptions are relatively high across all over the world (Yost & Cheng, 2021). Thus, taking these measures may be a good strategy to recover the meal-sharing economy platforms post-crisis (Strielkowski, 2020).

Moreover, a significant portion of the participants emphasized that they had already paid great attention to all hygiene and sanitation practices before the coronavirus. According to P2: “I use everything very hygienically; we give personal apron and towels to those who want. We already use personalized towels in the bathroom, so I don’t think I need to do something extra”. P8 suggested, “It is very hygienic anyway, the kitchen is constantly cleaned every day. But since we use a completely pure kitchen.” This overcoming strategy was confirmed by a prior study conducted by Hossain (2021).

Despite their statement about their hygiene and sanitation practices, some participants mentioned the online virtual activities that their service providers suggested them to perform during the lockdown to challenge this health crisis with a response. For instance, P3: “In the short term, activities stopped completely, but in some countries, various activities started as online virtual courses.” It is broadly anticipated that the pandemic has accelerated digitalization in our lives and ensures virtual social interactions as well as the continuity of digital businesses (Papagiannidis, Harris, & Morton, 2020). The transformation across all spheres of life allowed the new industries have come into play in economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Our qualitative data shows that the meal-sharing economy most properly will be affected by inevitable digitalization, which also generates multiple avenues for scholars to search.

4.4. What next?

One of the main objectives of this study was to anticipate the future of the meal-sharing economy in the shadow of possible pandemics as COVID-19. Therefore, participants were asked about their opinions regarding the future of the meal-sharing economy. Simultaneously, two different perspectives (i.e., supply and demand-side) emerged from the content analysis.

For the supplier side, particularly, two contradictory views were observed. Most of the participants believe that the meal-sharing sector most probably undergoes a high demand shortly just after the pandemic since people have not been able to travel for a long time. Therefore, a travel boom after the pandemic is estimated and considered that the SE would highly take its share from it. This type of customer can be regarded as optimistic hosts and Farmaki et al.’s (2020) study finding also found optimistic hosts can be existing during the pandemic to re-operate their accommodation activities. For instance, P4 suggested that “I think it has a positive effect after the vaccine is available because I think people will miss doing these things like crazy” Similarly, P7 stated “I think that when this risk is eliminated, tourism will explode very well.” Some participants, however, claimed that there would be no change due to the pandemics in the future of the meal-sharing sector. P4 emphasized the following: “I don’t think much will change after the vaccine is found. People will return to their old habits, the social distance will not be paid attention, we will not see more disinfectants.” P10 stated, “I think it will remain neutral. It will neither be intense as before pandemic nor will the situation be very bad in the COVID-19 period”. It is a blurring matter to guess what exactly will happen for sharing economy platforms after the pandemic. Nevertheless, to attain a competitive advantage and reorientation in the post-COVID world, according to Meenakshi (2021), sharing economy companies have to build a new set of values – partnership instead of confrontation, nurturing instead of destructive, open and sharing instead of closed, and empathetic instead of uncaring.

As for the guests, regardless of their predictions on the demand, participants agree on the notion that customer behavior has changed about the number of guests in the activities. P10 proposed, “There will be a difference in organizing food tours with fewer people”. Besides, one of the participants evaluated the attitude of people against COVID-19 and divided the people between two groups as those who fear the pandemic and those who are not. And, she mentioned that those who are not afraid of the pandemic might be potential customers for them. P8 proposed: “While very few people do not care at all, there is also a very careful group. We must focus on it.”

When asked whether the current Covid-19 pandemic or other possible future pandemics creates (or would create) any threat or opportunity. Specifically, two different perspectives (i.e., supply and demand-side) simultaneously emerged from the content analysis. P6 suggested:

“I see the opportunity, I do not see any threat, so it stopped until the vaccine is found, of course, it is a very blow, but which sector was not hit, but I see an opportunity after the vaccination. Because people consider doing something less risk-free in smaller groups, so I think that people will prefer to eat 5 people at home rather than eating with 40 people in the restaurant.”

Some participants even went beyond predicting that guests’ food experience habits may change against street food with a low hygiene image because of the COVID-19 fear. For instance, P4, “On the negative side, especially the demand for street food with a low hygiene will decrease.” Istanbul is a place where street foods are offered for travelers and some of the service providers are organizing some local food tours in the destination. Moreover, previous literature emphasized risk factors of street foods (Alimi, 2016) and this can impact travelers’ behavioral intention (Gupta & Duggal, 2020). Although Cifci, Atsız and Gupta (2021) highlighted that these risks can be overcome with a local guide who knows the street food culture, this pandemic seems to impact

overall travelers' behaviors toward street food tours in accordance to participants' views.

In sum, when we take into consideration meal-sharing economy service providers' responses, it can be concluded that although all hosts feel disappointed in terms of economic support, they consider these times as optimistic toward their future meal-sharing economy activities. Our research indicated that all hosts have been severely impacted by the current health crisis and have not been benefited from the financial assistance from both government and platforms. Despite this, they believed that the current crisis will be finished, or they will continue to offer their services provided that some health precautions were taken. [Farmaki et al. \(2020\)](#) found out that there are five main types of peer-to-peer accommodation hosts including pessimistic, cautious, ambivalent, indolent, and optimistic. Comparing our research findings, meal-sharing economy hosts approach the current situation differently than peer-to-peer accommodation hosts except for optimistic one.

5. Conclusion and implications

5.1. Theoretical contribution

Meal-sharing platforms had become so popular among travelers and locals before the COVID-19 pandemic ([Atsız, Cifci, & Rasoolimanesh, 2021](#)). After this greatest health disaster, these platforms have witnessed the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The coronavirus was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) last year; however, no research has examined its impacts on meal-sharing platforms from the perspective of service providers since then. The overarching aim of this research is thus to understand the perceptions of meal-sharing service providers toward the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the investigation, the main effects of the COVID-19 on meal-sharing service providers were revealed, how the views of hosts changed, and what they expected in the future were illustrated. Therefore, we believe the findings obtained with this research will provide contributions to the pertaining literature in terms of a better understanding of the main impacts of health disasters on meal-sharing platforms. This is the first study, to the best of our knowledge, that examines locals' perspectives toward the COVID-19.

This study contributes to the pertaining theory of knowledge in many ways. The prior research was mainly focused on the relationship between pandemics and hospitality ([Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021](#); [Kim & Lee, 2020](#)). Moreover, the research conducted on SE providers' perceptions toward the COVID-19 is limited to accommodation services ([Farmaki et al., 2020](#)). However, no research has been conducted so far investigating the meal-sharing providers' perception of this pandemic. Moreover, these platforms are newly evolved and have taken scholars' attention in recent years ([Atsız, Cifci, & Law, 2021](#)). This research represents the first attempt to reveal the effects and associated responses of a health crisis in a meal-sharing context. Thereby, it could be claimed that this study fills an important knowledge gap in the field of hospitality. This study also provides an outline of pandemic effects to be overcome in such a health crisis and a framework for forthcoming empirical studies. These findings also may be used to comprehend service providers' perception of meal-sharing economy platforms. We believe the findings obtained with this research will provide contributions to the pertaining literature in terms of understanding the main impacts of health disasters on meal-sharing platforms.

5.2. Managerial and practical implications

The following suggestions are provided to the meal-sharing platforms based on the findings obtained from this research. Hosts' perceptions can be extremely helpful to meal-sharing platforms since this research offers considerable insights about the improvement of these platforms' governance. Moreover, all service providers did not take any support from the government due to these platforms' informal economy

features. Further to this, some participants said that if this pandemic last, they could stop using these platforms. It is suggested that destination managers should encourage locals to utilize these platforms to promote their attractions and reduce employment. Thus, destination managers can help them and support them in terms of economics. By doing so, destination managers and practitioners can determine how many people are benefited from these platforms and can make tax planning against them. This will create a mutual advantage for both sides.

Meal-sharing providers emphasized that platforms organized some psychological moral webinars. As a good recovery strategy, this implementation can be useful in the development of crisis management policies and strategies. On the contrary case, meal-sharing platforms can face some risks such as the loss of members. Considering that many travelers desire to experience the local culinary culture, such a risk may result in being unprofitable for meal-sharing platforms. In this regard, meal-sharing platforms can take responsibility toward their service providers and can inform policymakers to support them in designing proper strategies and policies to regulate the meal-sharing markets.

5.3. Limitations and future research lines

This study examined the views of the meal-sharing hosts in Istanbul. Future researchers could conduct their studies in different regions. Further, the present study was concentrated on only the food service of the sharing economy. To extend the SE literature about this issue, future research can focus on this pandemic's impact on other services of SE activities such as local guiding or ride-sharing that are unexplored in the relevant literature to capture the main picture of locals' perceptions toward this crisis. In the current literature, no research attempts to develop a tax strategy for meal-sharing platforms. Therefore, we suggest for researchers apply tax planning theory for taxation of these platforms. Finally, this research ignored the travelers' perception toward using these platforms in the future. Therefore, future research can make interviews with travelers who used these services in advance and found out considerable suggestions for the literature which investigates customer experiences in the SE and important practical implications for these platforms that try to get insight into their perceptions to post COVID-19.

Appendix A

Interview questions.

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Marital Status
4. How many years and how many times have you been a host on meal-sharing platforms?
5. In which meal-sharing platforms do you serve?
6. Would you say you have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic? So how?
7. What are the short-term economic effects of the pandemic on your meal-sharing activity?
8. How has been your meal-sharing activities changed as a result of the pandemic?
9. Do you think global pandemics like Covid-19 will change the behavior of meal-sharing guests? Will this change be positive or negative?
10. What kind of measures are you planning to take to ensure good hygiene in your foodservice?
11. Have you received any requests or questions regarding hygiene from guests?
12. Have you received petitions of cancellations of bookings asking for a 100% refund pushed by the platforms?

13. Have you received phone calls from 'customers service' to encourage you to cancel bookings?
14. Have the platforms (e.g., Eatwith, Withlocals) been supportive in terms of the impact of the impacts hosts have incurred as a result of the pandemic?
15. Have you received any support from the government due to the pandemic?
16. What do you think the long-term economic effects of COVID-19?
17. How do you foresee your meal-sharing activity will change in the near future post COVID-19?
18. How do you think the pandemic has changed the meal-sharing industry? Are there any long-term threats or even opportunities arising from this situation?
19. Have you ever thought of taking a break from meal-sharing platforms due to the epidemic? Why?

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