

A Research on Visitor Opinions Regarding Customer Satisfaction in Thermal Hotels: The Example of Kızılcahamam

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Abstract

Since tourism is a service-based sector, the quality and adequacy of the services offered in tourism enterprises vary on customer basis and hence it is difficult to measure. The demand for health tourism is increasing day by day. Three main types of health tourism are as follows; medical tourism, senior (elderly) and accessible (disabled) tourism; and spa, wellness tourism. The aim of this study is to analyze the current state regarding the level of customer satisfaction of the thermal hotels located in Kızılcahamam district. In this study, which was carried out using the qualitative research technique, the interview tool was preferred as the data collection tool. Our study was on voluntary basis, twenty-five people staying on certain dates in thermal hotels located in Kızılcahamam district were asked for answering fourteen questions regarding their opinions on what level thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam in meeting customer expectations.

Keywords: Health tourism, Medical tourism, Thermal tourism, Customer Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human existence, individuals have had to work in order to sustain their lives. The difficulties of today's work conditions, job stress, and the challenges faced have led to physical and psychological exhaustion. People affected by these adversities seek ways to distance themselves from the work environment and regain their health. Such search for regaining health has attracted the attention of the tourism sector over time, has contributed to the rise of health tourism, which is a sub-type of tourism.

Health tourism can be defined as any travels that contain any activities aimed at preserving, improving, or finding a solution for individuals' health conditions (Şengül & Bulut, 2019). Within the scope of health tourism, there are various types classified according to the categorization made by the Turkish Ministry of Health. According to this classification, health tourism in Turkey is divided into three categories: Medical tourism, elderly (senior) and accessible (disabled) tourism; and thermal health tourism (Şengül & Bulut, 2019).

The first type mentioned in this classification is medical tourism, where tourists engage in medical treatment or surgical interventions as their primary purpose, while also participating in tourism

activities such as relaxation and entertainment (Şengül & Bulut, 2019). The second type is elderly tourism, which encompasses temporary or permanent stays that combine elderly care and tourism, where elderly individuals who require care move from their residence to another location to preserve, improve, rehabilitate, and develop their health (Şengül & Bulut, 2019). According to this classification, the third and final type is thermal tourism and medical spa & wellness tourism. The demand for thermal and spa-wellness tourism is increasing, which aims to enhance the physical and mental well-being of individuals through complementary and alternative therapies such as massage, acupuncture, hydrotherapy, reflexology, as well as activities like manicure, pedicure, exercise, and diet. (Siner & Torun, 2020). Since health tourism, like other types of tourism, is dependent on the services provided, the quality and adequacy of the services offered by health tourism businesses can vary, leading to variations in customer satisfaction levels.

Customer satisfaction, which forms another dimension of our research, is a function based on the benefits expected by the customer from a product or service (benefit package), the burdens relieved by the customer, the performance expectations from the product or service, and its conformity with socio-cultural values. In general, customer satisfaction is defined as the customer's judgment regarding the expected and realized service performance (Şahin & Şen, 2017).

Based on the information obtained from the literature, it has been observed that many studies have been conducted regarding the dimension of customer satisfaction in thermal tourism. However, there have been very few studies conducted specifically for Kızılcahamam district, and these studies are out of date. Hence, our study becomes significant as it assesses both the general situation of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam and evaluates the thermal services they offer, aiming to update previous research on customer satisfaction in thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam.

The aim of this study is to determine the level of customer satisfaction among thermal hotels operating in the Kızılcahamam district. The main interest of the research is to identify the competencies and deficiencies of the services offered by thermal hotels in the Kızılcahamam district. Herewith, the interdependency between the goods and services provided by thermal hotels in the Kızılcahamam district and the level of customer satisfaction would be evaluated, and an interpretation will be made based on the determined results. This study focuses on customer satisfaction in thermal hotels and aims to contribute to the existing literature on the subject.

For this purpose, individuals who stayed in thermal hotels in the Kızılcahamam district on May 20th and 21st of 2023 will constitute the population of our research. Since it is not possible to reach the entire population, it would be assumed that the results collected from interviews conducted with the selected individuals adequately represent the entire population. Another assumption of our research is that the responses are sincere and accurate.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The World Health Organization defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In this definition, physical and mental well-being are the known aspects of health" (Aytuğar and Çılğınoğlu, 2021:1091). Based on this definition, it can be said that individuals are happier, more productive, and more entrepreneurial when they are healthy (Çiftçi, 2018). However, in the 21st century, the conditions people are exposed to in order to satisfy their basic needs and desires can lead to the deterioration of their health and even its loss if preventive measures are not taken.

Due to the proliferation of health tourism enterprises in time and the service diversity, customers have sought to benefit from facilities and opportunities that are not available in their own regions in order to receive better healthcare. Therefore, individuals who travel for this sake soon caught the attention of the tourism sector and gave rise to health tourism, which is a niche market within the tourism industry. Health tourism can be defined as travels including all kinds of activities aimed at preserving, improving, or finding a cure for individuals' health conditions (Şengül and Bulut, 2019).

When examining health tourism worldwide, some countries stand out in the field of medical tourism, which are India, Thailand, Singapore, the United States, Malaysia, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, and Costa Rica. The reasons for the prominence of health tourism in these countries include high standards of healthcare services, ease of accessibility to the destination, and the availability of necessary technology, infrastructure, and expertise for healthcare (Çiftçi, 2018). In addition to these above mentioned characteristics, factors such as the affordability, accessibility, suitability to needs, and quality of care provided by destinations have unquestionable influence on the potential of health tourism.

When looking at the motivations that lead people to health tourism, we can see some leading factors, such as (Şengül & Bulut, 2019):

- Inadequacy of healthcare providers in the countries or regions where individuals reside,
- Costliness of healthcare services provided in the countries or regions where individuals reside,
- Insufficiency of technical equipment and personnel in healthcare services in the countries or regions where individuals reside,
- Concern that the health service received would be heard or known in the country or region they live in,
- Opinions and recommendations from individuals who have previously experienced healthcare services in that region.

Health tourism, which has reached a volume of 100 billion dollars worldwide recently, has attracted the attention of all countries with its economic potential. As the world population increases, the average life expectancy is rising, the proportion of the elderly population in the society is going up, and under these conditions the amount spent on healthcare services in total is boosting. People seeking a higher quality and healthier life have sought quality and affordable healthcare services and turned towards countries that would provide them. In addition to basic medical treatments or rehabilitation services, many other treatments such as aesthetic-cosmetic procedures, dental treatments, and other applications that might not covered by health insurance are also considered within the scope of health tourism and are widely used (Şengül and Bulut, 2019: 59-60). Furthermore, in addition to traveling from one country to another for spa treatments that are reported as medically necessary, other factors such as taking advantage of spas in cosy environments for the purpose of relaxation, rejuvenation, and wellbeing are also considered within the scope of health tourism (Çiçek & Avderen, 2013: 26).

Medical tourism is among the fastest-growing sectors in the world, and many countries are currently making legal and practical plans to reduce traveling costs to customers and following a competitive pricing policy to generate higher incomes out of this business. Increasing popularity of preferring to visit distant countries for medical reasons has now become an international trade phenomenon and has a significant economic potential for the global economy. It has been observed

that medical tourism has emerged as a profitable sector, especially for developing countries (Şengül & Bulut, 2019: 60).

There are many reasons for the increasing importance of medical health tourism. The high cost of therapeutic healthcare services in developed countries, the deterioration of healthcare systems, and the increase in population lead to longer waiting times for treatment are some of the primary reasons (Çiçek & Avderen, 2013: 26).

Health tourism generally has two main objectives. The first is to provide treatment for individuals who are overwhelmed by city life, experiencing stress and various health problems, and reintegrate them into society in a healthy way. The second objective is to revive domestic and international tourism, which contributes to the economy and national income in return.

Considering health tourism in Türkiye, it is obvious that Türkiye has great importance as of global health tourism in terms of qualified healthcare institutions, advanced medical infrastructure, and specialists. In this context, in order to increase economic returns of the growing health tourism, it is deemed necessary to determine the current potential of the country and take the proper actions in this direction. In this regard, Türkiye stands out as a country where foreign patients may choose as a destination due to its advantageous geographical location, affordability of healthcare services compared to other countries, and hosting various activities and tourism types within the scope of tourism. It is believed that if these advantages are evaluated, developed, and promoted properly, Türkiye's importance and value in the field of health tourism would increase (Çilginoğlu & Aytuğar, 2021: 1092).

Health tourism includes various types of tourism regarding resting, treatment, climate therapy, water therapy, natural tourism, and so on. It also includes thermal tourism, where individuals seek healthful aspects of nature, visit hot springs, mineral water sources, baths, spas, and complementary medical services (such as prosthesis) at affordable rates. Some categories contained under this type of tourism in "Türkiye's Tourism Legislation" are as follows (Güvenç, 2007: 24):

- Balneotherapy (thermalium wellness): The treatment involving natural and healing water sources, particularly in thermal spas.
- Climatotherapy: The treatment practised in mountain resorts, utilizing open-air environments. It may be applied together with balneotherapy.
- Uvalism: The introducing of fruits and vegetables grown in certain regions for therapeutic purposes.
- Cave tourism: Traveling to caves for health reasons.

The definitions above shows that health tourism can be categorized into different forms. In Türkiye, according to the classification of the Ministry of Health, the General Directorate of Health Services, and the Health Tourism Department, health tourism is grouped under three main topics (Şengül and Bulut, 2019: 57): Medical tourism, Senior and Accessible tourism, Thermal health tourism and Spa & Wellness

Medical tourism, one of the types of health tourism, is a concept that is progressively growing and developing within the tourism industry. It refers to individuals traveling to other countries with the aim of receiving medical treatment and often combining this travel with vacation purposes. In medical tourism, the "tourist" seeks medical treatment or surgical intervention while engaging in touristic activities such as relaxation and entertainment, as well (Şengül & Bulut, 2019: 58).

Senior tourism involves temporary or permanent stays that bring together elderly care and tourism. It aims to preserve, improve, rehabilitate, and develop the health of elderly individuals who are in need of care and travel from their residence to another location (Şengül & Bulut, 2019: 58-59).

Accessible tourism is a type of tourism that includes all preventive, therapeutic, and rehabilitative health services provided to disabled individuals. The goal of accessible tourism is to treat or rehabilitate individuals with disabilities and reintegrate them into society (Şengül & Bulut, 2019: 58-59).

Thermal tourism is a concept that has been utilized by people for a long time in human history, and it has various definitions. Thermal tourism refers to a type of tourism that combines treatment practices such as thermal mineral baths, drinking water, inhalation, mud baths, along with supportive treatments such as climate therapy, physical therapy, rehabilitation, exercise, psychotherapy, and diet. It also includes the recreational use of thermal waters. Thermal tourism is not limited to use of healing waters alone. With the development of thermal tourism, several other concepts have emerged, such as: (Şengül & Bulut, 2019: 59)

- Climatotherapy: A treatment type that utilizes fresh air in mountains or seaside resorts.
- Uvalism: A treatment type using fruits and vegetables.
- Balneotherapy: A treatment using mineral thermal waters.
- Thalassotherapy: A treatment utilizing seawater and sunlight.
- Hydrotherapy: A treatment using fresh water.
- Speleotherapy: A treatment utilizing caves.
- Peloidotherapy: Mud therapy.
- Heliotherapy: Sunlight therapy.

As the Ministry of Tourism sets out, it would be more convenient not considering the "spa & wellness" as a separate type of tourism under the name of "beauty and fitness tourism," instead including it within the scope of thermal tourism and integrate into the services and activities of thermal tourism facilities. This approach would promote the increase of investments that leverage the potential of thermal waters. Besides, it would expand the concept of thermal tourism beyond the traditional notion of spas, encompassing the concepts of "spa & wellness" and incorporating the characteristics of resort-type hotels (Güvenç, 2007: 25).

Thermal tourism is also defined as "tourism that takes place in regions where therapeutic underground waters with certain temperature and beneficial minerals come naturally to surface, as well as healing mud and vapors emerge to the surface, within unique climatic conditions of the region. It involves a combination of various methods such as thermal mineral baths, drinking cures, inhalation therapies, mud baths, as well as climate therapy, physical therapy, rehabilitation, exercise, psychotherapy, and diet. It includes the recreational use of thermal waters and also aims to take advantage of other attractions of the destination" (Tuna, 2019: 119).

Contemporary thermal tourism establishments should own the following service units (Kozak, 1992: 34):

Treatment Center: Treatment centers are the sections of thermal facilities where patients' conditions are diagnosed, and typically include laboratory units for diagnosis. Some tests may be conducted here to decide whether thermal water is beneficial for the patients' existing conditions or

to identify potential therapeutic effects. Subsequently, necessary treatments are administered under the supervision of physicians and specialists in the balneotherapy units. The mentioned services and units may vary depending on the size of the establishment. The services offered at the treatment center are as follows (Kozak, 1992: 34):

a) Balneotherapy Applications: General swimming pool (bath and dynamic pool), treatment pool (equipped), special treatment baths (with pools, tubs), general bath pools, showers (massage showers, regular showers, jet showers, horizontal showers, horizontal pressure showers), massages (general massage, partial massage, underwater massage), mud baths (general mud bath, partial mud bath, shower after mud bath), steam baths, gas baths.

b) Physical Therapy Applications: Physical therapy applications can be varied according to the physical size of the thermal facility. The most common ones are electro-physical therapy and radiation therapy.

Accommodation Facility: The accommodation facility is the section of a thermal tourism establishment where lodging is provided. This facility would be a conventional hotel, a combination of various types of accommodations, or a resort-like complex. In other words, the accommodation section of a thermal tourism establishment would be a hotel, a combination of both hotel rooms and apartments, or a facility resembling a holiday village (Kozak, 1992: 35).

Recreation Facilities: Recreation facilities are the areas where guests can spend leisure time after undergoing treatments. These areas and units can be expanded in size and number based on the scale and available space of the thermal tourism establishment. The services provided in these areas, which can be listed as walking areas, groves or forests, tea gardens, sports facilities, game rooms, libraries, cinema and TV lounges, cycling routes, horse riding areas, etc., and can be varied even further. These facilities are designed to occupy guests' free time and generate revenue for the establishment (Kozak, 1992: 35).

While various countries are considering and planning to improve thermal tourism, the European continent has an advantageous position in this field. The European continent itself has an average of 1.500 thermal facilities and the number increases. While people in the past applied to health institutions solely to find cures to their illnesses, it is observed that patients and individuals nowadays participate in thermal tourism mostly for relaxation, maintaining their health, healing, and rejuvenation purposes.

Türkiye ranks among the top seven countries in the world in terms of geothermal resource richness and potential, and is ranked first in Europe. The thermal waters in our country have superior qualities compared to the thermal waters in Europe, both in terms of flow rate, temperature, and various physical and chemical properties (www.kultur.gov.tr). Health tourism investments are generally considered to be labor-intensive. It provides substantial employment advantages for healthcare personnel and other qualified personnel (Avcıkurt & Çeken, 1998:34), (Çiçek & Avderen, 2013: 27). Unfortunately, Türkiye cannot make good use of this resource due to unprofessional establishments. Even, some well-known thermal springs do not have websites, it would be difficult to reach price information, the employees are not customer-oriented, and most of them do not speak any of foreign languages. The main and important negative factors in this sector are unqualified personnel and insufficient management. (Çiçek & Avderen, 2013: 27-28).

Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is not an inherent part of a product or service but rather a perception that customers personally attribute to the product or service. Therefore, different customers may have varying levels of satisfaction when exposed to the same experience or service. A customer's perception of a product or service is influenced by their own experiences, socio-economic and cultural environment, values, education, beliefs, psychology, and information obtained through various communication channels. Customers' perceptions of products or services directly and indirectly affect their purchasing behavior and customer satisfaction. From this perspective, customer satisfaction can be seen as a multifaceted and complex concept comprises customers' lifestyles, past experiences, future expectations, and individual and societal values (Burucuoğlu, 2011: 14-15).

As the given definition indicates, customer satisfaction is determined by two factors. The first factor that determines customer satisfaction is customer expectations. Expectations, which can be described as the scientific, managerial, and behavioral characteristics that customers seek or want to see in businesses they receive services from, vary based on customers' age, gender, education levels, socio-cultural characteristics, and past experiences with service providers (Büber & Başer, 2012: 267). The second factor that determines customer satisfaction is customers' perceptions of the services they receive. Perceptions are measured based on individuals' opinions or evaluations regarding the services received and the service process. The perception factor also varies based on customers' characteristics and past experiences with the service providers (Büber & Başer, 2012: 267).

Thermal Tourism in Kızılcahamam

Kızılcahamam, a district of Ankara, the capitol city of Türkiye, has an increasing importance in thermal tourism throughout history with its thermal baths that have been in use since the ancient Roman era, and rapid development in the tourism sector continues in the region. The region has two significant centers, one in the district center and the other in Seyhamamı. Currently, thermal tourism is the primary source of economic income for the district, with thermal waters serving hundreds of customers every day and reaching significant numbers during the summer.

The study conducted in 2006 (Çontu, 2006) revealed the following findings: During the summer, the accommodation capacity in the region is significantly inadequate. The thermal baths, operating from 6:00 a.m. to midnight, serve an average of 300-400 people during winter and around 3,000-4,000 people during summer per day. This amounts to an average of 20,000 people per month and approximately 250,000 people annually (Çontu, 2006: 59).

Following Mehmet Çontu's research in 2006, the district has experienced development and changes in terms of thermal tourism. The table below shows the number of rooms and beds in active thermal hotel establishments in Kızılcahamam in 2023. The data was obtained from popular reservation websites such as tatilbudur.com, trivago.com, etstur.com, and tripadvisor.com, indicating the presence of 16 active thermal facilities in the district. The data in the table was collected from the hotels' websites and reservation platforms. The missing data (shown as "not available", n.a.) in the table indicates either the absence of information on the hotels' websites or limitations of our research.

Table-1: Thermal Facilities in Kızılcahamam District

Name	Number of Rooms	Number of Beds
Eliz Hotel Convention Center	588	n.a.
Çam Termal Resort	256	n.a.
Başak Termal Otel	110	274
Patalya Termal Resort	159	312
Kızılcahamam Hotel	n.a.	n.a.
Akasya Vadisi	124	n.a.
Kaplıca Termal Otel	33	102
Swiss International Kızılcahamam	580	n.a.
Kızılca Vadi Termal	268	1700
Hotel Şifa Hayat Suyu	52	n.a.
Güven Termal Kızılcahamam	n.a.	n.a.
Soğuksu Hotel	40	110
Üç Su Termal Otel	10	24
Deva Termal Otel	17	n.a.
Ay-Fi Farm	13	28
Ay-Fidam Dağ Oteli	10	24

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Model

In this study, qualitative research methodology was preferred, taking into consideration both the subject of the research and the individuals participated to the research.

In this study, the action research model, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used. Action research is a research approach carried out by the practitioner himself or with an auxiliary researcher, which includes collecting and analyzing data to reveal the problems related to the implementation process or to understand and solve an already emerging problem (Beyhan, 2013: 67).

2.2. Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of customers who prefer to stay in a total of sixteen thermal tourism facilities operating in Kızılcahamam. It would be difficult to reach all of these people, who have the potential to answer the questions of our research and who we define as the universe of the research, due to the limited time and high cost. Therefore, it was decided to select a sample from the research population would be more appropriate. In this context, the voluntary sampling method was used. In cases where the voluntary sampling technique is used, individuals voluntarily participate in the research as subjects or respondents (Turunç, 2021). Accordingly, 25 (twenty five)

individuals who volunteered to participate in the study and preferred thermal tourism facilities operating in the Kızılcahamam district were selected as the sample group.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

The most commonly used data collection techniques in qualitative research are interviews, observations, and document analysis (Turunç, 2021: 36). In this study, the interview data collection tool used in qualitative studies was preferred, and the questions used in the interviews were adapted from the survey and interview questions of previous studies on this subject (Dereli and Temizkan, 2019; Akkuş and Korkmaz, 2022; Kement, Çavuşoğlu, Bükey & Başar, 2019; Çiçek, 2015; Ayata, 2023; Sandıkçı, 2008; Akkılıç & Çetintaş, 2015; Seçilmiş, 2012; Belber & Turan, 2015; Eleren & Kılıç, 2007). The participants were asked to answer the following questions:

- Did you visit thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district for providing thermal health services or just for accommodation purposes?
- Do you find the pricing of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district reasonable?
- Are you satisfied with the service provided by the staff of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?
- Do you think that thermal facilities in Kızılcahamam district are responsive to guests' wishes and complaints?
- Do you find the entertainment and sports facilities offered by thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district sufficient?
- Do you think that thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district fulfill their commitments in a timely and complete manner?
- Do you think that thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district contribute to individuals' socialization?
- Do you think that the health services offered in thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district are effective?
- Are you satisfied with the general cleanliness and hygiene conditions of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?
- Do you find the security measures of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district sufficient?
- What do you think about the decoration, design, and visual appeal of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?
- Are you satisfied with the food and beverage services of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?
- Do you think that you may receive the thermal health services you expect in thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?
- Would you recommend the services offered by thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district to others?

2.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis process used in qualitative research is generally concerned with bringing together perceptual pieces to form a whole (Turunç, 2021: 36). In this study, the collected data was analyzed using the descriptive analysis technique under the qualitative research category. The collected data was classified by evaluating similarities. After the classification, interpretations were made, leading to the findings in the conclusion and discussions.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 2. Participants' Demographic Characteristics

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	9	36%
- Female	16	64%
- Total	25	100%
Age Distribution		
- 18-25	6	24%
- 26-35	6	24%
- 36-45	3	12%
- 46-55	5	20%
- 56-65	0	0%
- 66-75	2	8%
- 76+	3	12%
- Total	25	100%
Education Level		
- Primary School	0	0%
- High School	4	16%
- Associate's Degree	0	0%
- Bachelor's Degree	17	68%
- Master's Degree	4	16%
- Doctorate	0	0%
- Total	25	100%
Income status		
- 6.000 TL and below	3	12%
- 6.001-9.000 TL	6	24%
- 9.001-12.000 TL	9	36%
- 12.001-15.000 TL	1	4%
- 15.001 TL and above	6	24%
- Total	25	100%
Marital Status		
- Married	14	56%
- Single	11	44%
- Total	25	100%
Occupation		
- Public Sector Employee	2	8%
- Private Sector Employee	12	48%
- Self-Employed	1	4%
- Retired	0	0%
- Student	4	16%
- Homemaker	1	4%

- Unemployed	5	20%
- Total	25	100%
Place of Visit		
- Domestic	24	96%
- Abroad	1	4%
- Total	25	10

According to Table 2, the distribution of participants in terms of gender, age, education level, marital status, occupation, and their places of origin is as follows: The participants in the research consisted of 64% female participants and 36% male participants. Looking at the age distribution, 24% of participants were in the 18-25 age range, 24% were in the 26-35 age range, 12% were in the 36-45 age range, 20% were in the 46-55 age range, 0% were in the 56-65 age range, 8% were in the 66-75 age range, and 12% were 76 years old and above. In terms of education level, 0% of participants had completed primary school, 16% had a high school degree, 0% had an associate's degree, 68% had a bachelor's degree, 16% had a master's degree, and 0% had a doctorate degree. When examining the income status of participants, 12% had an income of 6000 TL and below, 24% had an income between 6.001-9.000 TL, 36% had an income between 9.001-12.000 TL, 4% had an income between 12.001-15.000 TL, and 24% had an income of 15.001 TL and above. Regarding marital status, 56% of participants were married and 44% were single. Looking at the occupation of participants, 8% were public sector employees, 48% were private sector employees, 4% were self-employed, 0% were retired, 16% were students, 4% were homemakers, and 20% were unemployed. Finally, in terms of the places of origin, 96% of participants were from within the country, and 4% were from abroad.

3.1. Findings on Customer Expectation Leveling

Table 3. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Did you visit the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district for the purpose of receiving thermal health services or solely for accommodation?"

Purpose of Guests' Visits to Thermal Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
For accommodation purposes	9	%36
For receiving thermal health services	16	%64
Total	25	%100

According to Table 3, 36% of the participants stated that they visited the hotels in Kızılcahamam district for accommodation purposes. On the other hand, 64% of the participants mentioned that they visited the hotels in Kızılcahamam district for receiving thermal health services.

Table 4. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you find the service pricing in the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district suitable?"

Opinions on Service Pricing in Thermal Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I find it suitable	8	%32
I do not find it suitable	17	%68
Total	25	%100

According to Table 4, 32% of the participants stated that they find the service pricing in the hotels in Kızılcahamam district suitable. On the other hand, 68% of the participants mentioned that they do not find the service pricing in the hotels in Kızılcahamam district suitable.

Table 5. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Are you satisfied with the service provided by the staff in the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?"

Opinions on the Service Provided by the Staff in Thermal Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I am satisfied	20	%80
I am not satisfied	5	%20
Total	25	%100

According to Table 5, 80% of the participants stated that they are satisfied with the service provided by the staff in the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district. On the other hand, 20% of the participants mentioned that they are not satisfied with the service provided by the staff in the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district.

Table 6. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you think that the thermal facilities in Kızılcahamam district are responsive to guests' requests and complaints?"

Opinions on the Responsiveness of Thermal Facilities to Guests' Requests and Complaints	Frequency	Percentage
I think they are responsive	5	%20
I don't think they are responsive	17	%68
Undecided	3	%12
Total	25	%100

According to Table 6, 20% of the participants stated that they believe the thermal facilities in Kızılcahamam district are responsive to guests' requests and complaints. 68% of the participants expressed that they do not think the thermal facilities are responsive, while 12% of the participants were undecided about the responsiveness of the thermal facilities to guests' requests and complaints.

Table 7. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you find the entertainment and sports facilities provided by the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district sufficient?"

Opinions Regarding Entertainment and Sports Facilities Provided by Thermal Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I find them sufficient	14	%66
I find them insufficient	11	%44
Total	25	%100

According to Table 7, 66% of the participants indicated that they find the entertainment and sports facilities provided by the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district sufficient. On the other hand, 44% of the participants stated that they find the entertainment and sports facilities provided by the thermal hotels insufficient.

Table 8. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you think that the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district fulfill their commitments in a timely and complete manner?"

Opinions Regarding Fulfillment of Commitments by Thermal Hotels in Kızılcahamam	Frequency	Percentage
I think so	22	%88
I don't think so	3	%12
Total	25	%100

According to Table 8, 88% of the participants indicated that they believe the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district fulfill their commitments in a timely and complete manner. On the other hand, 12% of the participants stated that they do not think the thermal hotels fulfill their commitments in a timely and complete manner.

Table 9. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you think that the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district contribute to individuals' socialization?"

Opinions Regarding the Contribution of Thermal Hotels to Individuals' Socialization	Frequency	Percentage
I think there are social environments	10	%40
I don't think there are social environments	15	%60
Total	25	%100

According to Table 9, 40% of the participants indicated that they consider the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district provide social environments that contribute to individuals' socialization. On the other hand, 60% of the participants stated that they do not think the thermal hotels provide social environments that contribute to individuals' socialization.

Table 10. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you think that the health services provided in thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district are effective?"

Opinions Regarding the Effectiveness of Health Services Provided in Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I think they are effective	23	%92
I don't think they are effective	1	%4
I'm undecided	1	%4
Total	25	%100

According to Table 10, 92% of the participants indicated that they think the health services provided in thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district are effective. 4% of the participants stated that they do not think the health services are effective, while another 4% were undecided about the effectiveness of the health services provided in thermal hotels.

Table 11. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Are you satisfied with the general cleanliness and hygiene condition of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?"

Opinions Regarding the General Cleanliness and Hygiene Condition of Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I am satisfied	21	%84
I am not satisfied	4	%16
Total	25	%100

According to Table 11, 84% of the participants indicated that they are satisfied with the general cleanliness and hygiene condition of the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district. On the other hand, 16% of the participants stated that they are not satisfied with the general cleanliness and hygiene condition of the thermal hotels.

Table 12. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you find the security measures of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district sufficient?"

Opinions Regarding the Adequacy of Security Measures in Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I find them sufficient	10	%40
I do not find them sufficient	15	%60
Total	25	%100

According to Table. 12, 40% of the participants indicated that they find the security measures of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district sufficient. On the other hand, 60% of the participants stated that they do not find the security measures of the thermal hotels sufficient.

Table 13. Distribution of Responses to the Question "What do you think about the decoration, design, and visual appeal of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?"

Opinions Regarding the Decoration, Design, and Visual Appeal of Thermal Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	16	%64
Negative	9	%36
Total	25	%100

According to Table 13, 64% of the participants expressed a positive opinion about the decoration, design, and visual appeal of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district. On the other hand, 36% of the participants expressed a negative opinion about the decoration, design, and visual appeal of the thermal hotels.

Table 14. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Are you satisfied with the food and beverage services of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?"

Opinions Regarding the Food and Beverage Services of Thermal Hotels	Frequency	Percentage
I am satisfied	22	%88
I am not satisfied	2	%8

Average quality	1	%4
Total	25	%100

According to Table 14, 88% of the participants indicated that they are satisfied with the food and beverage services of thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district. 8% of the participants stated that they are not satisfied with the food and beverage services, while 4% of the participants mentioned that the food and beverage services of the thermal hotels are of average quality.

Table 15. Distribution of Responses to the Question "Do you think you receive the thermal health services you expected at the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district?"

Opinions Regarding Receiving Expected Thermal Health Services	Frequency	Percentage
I think I receive them	24	%96
I don't think I receive them	0	%0
I haven't received any health services	1	%4
Total	25	%100

According to Table 15, 96% of the participants stated that they think they receive the thermal health services they expected at the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district. None of the participants indicated that they do not think they receive the expected thermal health services. However, 4% of the participants mentioned that they have not received any health services at the thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam district.

Table 16. Distribution of participants' responses to the question "Would you recommend the services offered by thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam to others?"

Responses Regarding Recommending the Services of Thermal Hotels to Others	Frequency	Percentage
I would recommend	23	%92
I would not recommend	2	%8
Total	25	%100

According to Table 16, 92% of the participants stated that they would recommend the services offered by thermal hotels in Kızılcahamam to others. On the other hand, 8% of the participants indicated that they would not recommend the services of thermal hotels to others.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Customer satisfaction is a multidimensional concept that varies according to various factors. What makes this concept special is its differentiation based on customers' lifestyles, past experiences, future expectations, and individual and societal values. From this perspective, ensuring customer satisfaction under all circumstances becomes challenging.

With the adoption of the relationship marketing approach by businesses, the concept of the customer has gained importance, and businesses have started aiming for long-term profitable relationships with their customers. This study aimed to measure the level of customer satisfaction of thermal hotels operating in the Kızılcahamam district. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with twenty-five individuals who stayed at these thermal hotels. In line with the findings obtained from these interviews, recommendations were made on the subject.

When the demographic characteristics of the participants in the study, as shown in Table-1, are examined, it can be seen that the majority of the participants are married women working in the private sector, between the ages of 18-35 and with a bachelor's degree. Additionally, the majority of these participants are domestic visitors. The results obtained from the questions measuring the level of customer satisfaction are provided below.

It is observed that the majority of participants visited the thermal hotels for the purpose of receiving health services. This indicates that participants prefer these thermal hotels not only for accommodation purposes but also for health purposes. Furthermore, it is concluded that the participants are satisfied with the services provided by the hotel staff, the entertainment and sports facilities, the timely and complete fulfillment of commitments, the effectiveness of the thermal health services, the general cleanliness and hygiene conditions, the decoration, design, and visual appeal of the hotels, the food and beverage services provided, and the health services provided, and they would recommend the services to others.

Furthermore, based on the findings obtained, it is concluded that the guests visiting thermal hotels in the Kızılcahamam district find the hotels' response to guest requests and complaints, socialization opportunities, and security measures inadequate, and they do not find the pricing of the services suitable. The reasons for these dissatisfactions can be attributed to the high costs of the thermal tourism services offered by the hotels, economic factors, high inflation, the depreciation of the Turkish Lira against foreign currencies due to the changing global economic conditions during the period from 2020 to 2022, the high costs of desired activities or facilities in Türkiye, and the hotels' management perceiving the reasons for guests' visits to thermal hotels as the need for relaxation and solitude, which leads to insufficient emphasis on social activities. These four dimensions need to be considered by the hotel managements, and necessary measures should be taken to address them. The following methods can be used to address these issues:

- Instead of using customer feedback forms, which are still commonly used in service businesses, businesses can utilize Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, which is developing with technology. With this approach, customer feedback and complaints can be analyzed objectively and quickly delivered to the management in the form of reports. In addition to traditional forms, customers can express their feedback and complaints through online reviews and evaluation platforms. This way, both employees and hotel management can be informed about the wishes and complaints of customers.

- To increase the sociability of thermal hotels, hotel managements can collaborate with the Ministry of Tourism to host events and festivals. Additionally, hotels can open new areas for different sports activities that can attract the interest of customers.

- Recommendations for increasing security measures in thermal hotels include increasing the number of security personnel in proportion to the size of the hotels, installing emergency buttons to call security personnel on each floor and in public areas, increasing the number of surveillance cameras in the hotel, and working with professional security companies specialized in the security sector.

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