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## Do Turkish Tourism Players Show Interest for Metaverse?

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### Abstract

The evolution of Web 3.0 has brought many new technological transitions to our lives. Although, it is not a very recent application, metaverse has become widely known after Marc Zuckerberg's investment and interest. Meta is a Greek word meaning after, beyond. Metaverse, which is derived from the combination of the word meta and the words "universe" in English, meaning beyond the universe (THY Terminal). The metaverse is a collective, persistent, and interactive parallel reality created by synthesizing all virtual worlds to form a universe that individuals can seamlessly traverse (Gursoy et al., 2022). Metaverse effectively creates a bridge to facilitate the integration of real and virtual presence and experience (Buhalis et al., 2022). Tourism and hospitality industry has been showing attention and interest to metaverse. Both researchers and practitioners have been thinking and searching ways to understand and use metaverse. According to Gursoy et al. (2022), the metaverse is a world where individuals can travel without restrictions whenever and wherever they wish. Metaverse can be used by a tourist before, during and after travelling. Metaverse can be used for various recreational and sportive activities like visiting a museum, concert, theater, kayaking, jumping or even joining a wedding ceremony etc. Tourists may previsit their holiday destination or hotel and decide what to do or where to stay. The facilities to be done in metaverse is almost endless. However, there is a current debate whether metaverse could be the next disruptor for hospitality and tourism, as well (Gursoy et al., 2022). Recently, metaverse has been becoming popular in Türkiye. As an example, Pegasus airlines opened an area called PegasusPort on the Decentraland platform. Visitors to PegasusPort Decentraland, were offered surprise games, and the chance to win international flight tickets. Turkish Airlines created THY Terminal to focus on all new technologies and support creative projects. This research aims to find out whether Turkish Tourism and Hospitality stakeholders have any interest, plan and assessment for metaverse. For this purpose, qualitative research has been preferred to gain a broad perspective about the topic. 5 semi-structured interviews were done with professionals. The results of the interviews point out that professionals have a growing interest in metaverse and current applications are still at the beginning stage being mostly experimental. As soon as the legal problems for cryptocurrencies and some others are solved, it is expected that there will be a high interest for metaverse and many projects will be realised.

**Keywords:** metaverse, tourism, Türkiye

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