CHOICE OF GOLF HOTELS WITH ARAS METHOD: AN APPLICATION IN ANTALYA BELEK REGION

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Abstract- The hotel selection is being quite important issue for guests and they are often trying to choose the best from more than one hotel. Hotel choice, which contains many factors, is a multi-criteria decision making problem. The aim of study is determination of golf hotels preference ranking based on selection criteria operating in Antalya Belek region. For this purpose, the ARAS method is used in the study which is used in multi-criteria decision making problems. Firstly ARAS method explained, the best golf hotel has been tried to be identified within the framework of the golf hotel selection criteria. Within the scope of the study 10 golf hotels have been selected operating in Belek. The required data about selected golf hotels are obtained from www.booking.com. Selected hotels are compared with Aras method and golf hotels preference ranking revealed.

Keywords: Golf Tourism, Hotel Selection, ARAS, *Multi Criteria Decision Making*

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently the constant changes in tourists' needs and expectations on travel caused the tourism market shape itself according to those changes and individualize the touristic products as much as possible [1]. For tourism industry a new group began to emerge who consider touristic activity different than total entertainment and leisure. Special interest tourism accelerated its growth as it is shaped according to this new group's needs and expectations. Sport tourism which is done in a wide range keeps growing due to this movement. Golf which is well known sports branch emerged as a product that can be suggested to the tourism market which seeks variety. Golf became a tourism type which flourished for those countries that want to develop their tourism industry, more foreign currency flow and create more employment considering golfers' both qualitative and quantitative features. Golf tourism contains travels that are made to golf resorts to play actively or just to watch golf game [2].

Golf travel market became an important part of tourism industry in many travel destinations [3]. Golf tourists (e.g. travel, hotels, restaurants, golf courses, interesting places, entertainment etc.) spend more and have more economic effect than normal tourists [3], [4]. In addition to this golf tourists travels more often, stay longer and spend more than normal tourists [4].

Researches dealing with golf tourists' choices are very limited. Golf tourists consider different criteria while choosing their destination and hotel. For example; golf tourists' one of the main motives is to try a new golf course. Besides they expect the golf courses near the hotels and transfers to be completed in short time [5]. According to a study golf tourists form a market that pays more attention to quality rather than price compared to normal tourists. In 2004 a market survey which was carried out by "Focus Market Analysis" company revealed that golf tourist care more about the quality but less about the price compared to mass tourism tourists [6]. Opening of new golf hotels, increasing the quality of existing golf courses and hotels are the indicators of increasing competition for the golf tourism market among the destinations.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the choice of suitable golf hotel by using ARAS method in the light of hotel comments (e-comments) and scoring on the internet. Thus 10 hotels in Belek which is very popular in four season among the sports clubs operating in many areas and became very important destination in Europe for golf tourism, were chosen. These hotels were evaluated in terms of the criteria set by the website www.booking.com.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Golf Tourism And Golf Turism Destination Selection

Nowadays the relationship between golf and tourism is evident and represents a unique market with its own features to which access is limited to golfers (i.e., those who practice the sport [7]. Golf game turned into a very important industry that attracts millions of players to many different parts of the world [8]. Thus it is accepted that golf tourism contributes to the economic development of tourism destinations [9]. Competition in golf industry increased as the number of golf players and golf courses increased [10]. As the competition among the destinations for golf tourism market increased knowing the variables which can help the destination marketers and destination managers to keep golf players or to attract them to their destinations, becomes more and more important [4].

The variables that affect a golf player can be listed as follows [11];

- Climate
- Price
- Location
- Holiday destination/reputation of the hotels
- Quality of the golf course
- Other attraction centres
- Number of the golf courses in the area
- Shopping possibilities in the area
- Spas
- Closeness to the airport
- Gastronomy
- Nightlife and entertainment

A golf resort is consisted of luxurious hotels which have golf facilities, for it to be called as a golf resort. Those hotels do not rely on to the city or tourist attractions to attract their guests but only themselves [12]. However, there are not sufficient researches on golf tourists' choice about the hotels. The carried out studies revealed that golf tourists mostly use golf hotels for their accommodation during their travel.

Golf hotels are the hotels which are located in the golf course, are high class and luxurious hotels. As those hotels are more expensive than the other hotels, their guests are wealthy people [13]. Thus golf tourists stay at expensive hotels and spend money at restaurants and other touristic places [14]. Besides if golf tourists had to walk long distances between the hotel and the golf course with their golf bags they wouldn't appreciate this situation [13]. Moreover most of the golf tourists want to play on four different golf courses during their stay [15].

Viewing it from a different perspective, golf as a product, is usually of interest to specific markets and customers who, in their majority, are mostly concerned about the course's and the compound's standards rather than paying any attention to the environmental, or other, consequences these may cause to the surrounding area. Investing financially in an eco-friendly golf course project is many times higher than it would have been in a non-ecological golf course [16].

Nowadays many golf tourists use the internet to search about golf courses, golf holiday packages and golf hotels [15]. Internet is another very important information source that golf tourists use. Today people can reach any information they desire via internet at any time very fast and golf tourists are part of this. Blogs about golf and destinations' golf web sites form the information resources on the internet. Golf tourists desire to know everything about the destinations. As services abstract and cannot be evaluated before they are consumed, using the information provided by the people who experienced those services has a very important effect on destination selection [5].

B. e-WOM (Electronic Consumer Reviews) and Hotel Business

Advances in information technology and the introduction of new methods of communication have led to increasingly significant changes in consumer behaviour. These changes have produced a shift in focus in companies' marketing strategies and business administration, especially in the hotel industry [17]. Most customers choose hotels based on recommendations of a friend, and industrial reports show that word of mouth (WoM) is one of the important factors in the hotel selection decision [18]. Online reviews are considered as the counterpart of the WoM in the cyber world as they share many similarities. However, there are also significant differences between online review and WoM. For instance, while WoM is only effective within people's social network through verbal communication, online reviews can reach all the people having access to the internet [19].

One of the factors evaluated in the consumer decision-making process is word-of-mouth (WOM), defined by reference [20] as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service."

The tourism industry is strongly affected by e-WOM and, within the tourism industry, hotels are probably the most affected. As a quality measure, online customer ratings complement star features by considering subjective quality dimensions, such as how nice hotel staff are, comfort and cleanliness of the hotel room, facilities/services offered to customers and value provided versus the price of the hotel [21].

The eWOM is a significant source of information for companies and increasingly influences their marketing strategies [22]. Electronic word-of-mouth encompasses a variety of media forms and types of websites, of which online consumer reviews and ratings are the most accessible and prevalent [23]. An online consumer review has a dual role: it provides information about products and services, and serves as a recommendation [24]. As informants, online consumer reviewers deliver additional user oriented information. As recommenders, the reviews provide either a positive or negative signal of product popularity. Reference [25] finds a significantly positive relationship between online consumer ratings and hotel performance. Companies who adequately manage e-WOM can have a competitive advantage, directing their actions to specific targets according to the type of the product, as well as influencing clients who could be potentially loyal to their brand, while at the same time maintaining current clients [26]. Reference [27] report that customer ratings have a strong positive effect on customers' willingness to book a hotel. However, a considerable part of the customers has spent significant time for online searches while making decision on hotel booking.

More than %20 of the customers has made researches on more than 30 different websites for the booking decision [28]. Reference [21] suggests that a higher customer rating significantly increases the online sales of hotels. Studies demonstrate the importance of e-comments in accommodation field [29].

C. Additive Ratio Assessment (ARAS) Method

There are many ways to classify Multi Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) methods. The classification of MCDM methods according to the type of information based on the Larichev's (Larichev 2000) proposal is given bellow [30]:

- Methods based on quantitative measurements. The methods based on multicriteria utility theory may be referred to this group TOPSIS (Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution), SAW (Simple Additive Weighting), LINMAP (Linear Programming Techniques for Multidimensional Analysis of Preference), MOORA (Multi-Objective Optimization by Ratio Analysis Method), COPRAS (Complex Proportional Assessment and its modification COPRAS-G (Complex Proportional Assessment method with Grey interval numbers).
- Methods based on qualitative initial measurements. These include two widely known groups of methods, i.e. Analytic Hierarchy Methods (AHP) and fuzzy set theory methods.
- Comparative preference methods based on pairwise comparison of alternatives. This group comprises the modifications of the ELECTRE, PROMETHEE, TACTIC, ORESTE and other methods.
- Methods based on qualitative measurements not converted to quantitative variables.

ARAS method was based on the argument that the phenomena of complicated world could be understood by using simple relative comparisons [31]. ARAS is based on the intuitive principle that the sound alternative should have the biggest ratio to the optimal solution [30], [32], [33] [34]. ARAS method is based on quantitative measurements and utility theory. In this method, a utility function value determines the relative efficiency of an alternative over the other alternatives. This utility function is directly proportional to the relative effect of the criteria values and weight importance of the considered criteria. The utility value of an alternative is determined by a comparison of variant with the ideally best alternative. When literature is examined there are few studies carried out by using ARAS method. Those studies are listed below [35];

- Tupenaite and et.al. vd. (2010) Evaluating Bulgarian cultural heritage renovation by using ARAS Method.
- Zavadskas vd. (2010) Using ARAS Method to determine the construction site of the buildings.
- Bakshi ve Sarkar (2011) used ARAS method in evaluating project choosing.
- Zavadskas ve Turskis (2010) Evaluated buildings' interior atmosphere by ARAS Method.
- Sušinskas vd. (2011) Made the choice of gaint pillars used in building bridges by ARAS Method.
- Zavadskas vd. (2012) Chose project manager by using ARAS Method.
- Dadelo vd. (2012) conducted a study on employee choice by ARAS Method.
- Sliogeriene vd. (2013) used ARAS Method on choosing energy production technologies.
- Kutut vd. (2013) used ARAS Method to choose buildings which are going to be renovated.
- Reza ve Majid (2013) evaluated banks using their turst level of internet banking by ARAS method.
- Chatterjee ve Chakraborty (2013) used ARAS Method on material choice.

The steps of ARAS method are presented as follows [30], [32]:

1) The first stage is decision-making matrix (DMM) forming. In the MCDM of the discrete optimization problem any problem to be solved is represented by the following DMM of preferences for *m* feasible alternatives (rows) rated on *n* signfull criteria (columns):

$$X = \begin{bmatrix} X_{01} & \cdots & X_{0j} & \cdots & X_{0n} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ X_{i1} & \cdots & X_{ij} & \cdots & X_{im} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ X_{m1} & \cdots & X_{mj} & \cdots & X_{mn} \end{bmatrix}; \quad i = \overline{0,m}; \quad j = \overline{1,n}.$$

where:

m – number of alternatives,

n – number of criteria describing each alternative,

X_{ij} – value representing the performance value of the i alternative in terms of the j criterion, X_{0j} – optimal value of j criterion.

If optimal value of j criterion is unknown, then

$$x_{0j} = \max_i x_{ij}, if \ \max_i x_{ij} \ is \ preferable$$

and

$$x_{0j} = \min_i x_{ij}^*, if \ \min_i x_{ij}^* \ is \ preferable$$

Usually, the performance values X_{ij} and the criteria weights wj are viewed as the entries of a DMM. The system of criteria as well as the values and initial weights of criteria are determined by experts. The information can be corrected by the interested parties by taking into account their goals and opportunities.

Then the determination of the priorities of alternatives is carried out in several stages. Usually, the criteria have different dimensions. The purpose of the next stage is to receive dimensionless weighted values from the comparative criteria. In order to avoid the difficulties caused by different dimensions of the

criteria, the ratio to the optimal value is used. There are various theories describing the ratio to the optimal value.

However, the values are mapped either on the interval [0; 1] or the interval [0; ∞] by applying the normalization of a DMM.

2) In the second stage the initial values of all the criteria are normalized – defining values X_{ij} of normalised decision-making matrix $\bar{X}$:

$$\bar{X} = \begin{bmatrix} \bar{X}_{01} & \cdots & \bar{X}_{0j} & \cdots & \bar{X}_{0n} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \bar{X}_{i1} & \cdots & \bar{X}_{ij} & \cdots & \bar{X}_{in} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \bar{X}_{m1} & \cdots & \bar{X}_{mj} & \cdots & \bar{X}_{mn} \end{bmatrix};$$

$$i = \overline{0,m}; \quad j = \overline{1,n}.$$

The criteria, whose preferable values are maxima, are normalized as follows:

$$\bar{x}_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij}}{\sum_{i=0}^{m} x_{ij}}$$

The criteria, whose preferable values are minima, are normalized by applying twostage procedure:

$$x_{ij} = \frac{1}{x_{ij}^{*}}; \bar{x}_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij}}{\sum_{i=0}^{m} x_{ij}}$$

When the dimensionless values of the criteria are known, all the criteria, originally having different dimensions, can be compared.

3) The third stage is defining normalized-weighted matrix – $\hat{X}$. It is possible to evaluate the criteria with weights 0 < *wj* < 1. Only well-founded weights should be used because weights are always subjective and influence the solution. The values of weight *wj* are usually determined by the expert evaluation method. The sum of weights *wj* would be limited as follows:

$$\sum_{j=1}^{n} w_j = 1.$$

$$\hat{X} = \begin{bmatrix} \hat{x}_{01} & \cdots & \hat{x}_{0j} & \cdots & \hat{x}_{0n} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \hat{x}_{i1} & \cdots & \hat{x}_{ij} & \cdots & \hat{x}_{in} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \hat{x}_{m1} & \cdots & \hat{x}_{mj} & \cdots & \hat{x}_{mn} \end{bmatrix};$$

$$i = \overline{0,m}; \quad j = \overline{1,n}.$$

Normalized-weighted values of all the criteria are calculated as follows:

$$\hat{x}_{ij} = \bar{x}_{ij} w_j; \qquad i = \overline{0,m},$$

where:

w_j – the weight (importance) of the *j* criterion,

X_{ij} – the normalized rating of the *j* criterion.

4) The following task is determining values of optimality function:

$$S_i = \sum_{j=1}^{n} \hat{x}_{ij}; \quad i = \overline{0,m},$$

where S_i is the value of optimality function of *i* alternative. The biggest value is the best, and the least one is the worst. Taking into account the calculation process, the optimality function S_i has a direct and proportional relationship with the values x_{ij} and weights w_j of the investigated criteria and their relative influence on the final result. Therefore, the greater the value of the optimality function S_i, the more effective the alternative. The priorities of alternatives can be determined according to the value S_i. Consequently, it is convenient to evaluate and rank decision alternatives when this method is used.

The degree of the alternative utility is determined by a comparison of the variant, which is analysed, with the ideally best one S_0. The equation used for the calculation of the utility degree K_i of an alternative *ai* is given below:

$$K_i = \frac{S_i}{S_0}, \quad i = \overline{0,m}$$

where S_i and S_0 are the optimality criterion values, obtained from equation. It is clear, that the calculated values K_i are in the interval [0, 1] and can be ordered in an increasing sequence, which is the wanted order of precedence. The complex relative efficiency of the feasible alternative can be determined according to the utility function values.

III. CHOOSING GOLF HOTEL ACCORDING TO ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS BY USING ARAS

In this section we consider a case study of ranking some Belek Golf Hotels. Advantages of Antalya-Belek region for golf can be listed as follows; perfect climate, 30-km far international airport, high quality of the services at the hotels near the golf courses, designer courses (ıt has golf courses designed by famous golf architects). The golfers, who chose Turkey as their most liked country, participated the survey pay more attention to quality of the golf courses and hotels. However, they think that even Turkey is above the world standard, it is close to it. Apart from this they consider Turkey as sufficient in the following areas; climate, security, and cost of practicing the sport. They also mention that Turkey is above the standard in climate compared to the other countries [36].

For this reason in this study 10 golf hotels operating in Belek region were chosen. In literature criteria for choosing golf destination are mentioned yet criteria for choosing golf hotel aren't mentioned. Thus the hotels chosen for the study were evaluated according to criteria stated on www.booking.com. The criteria that were used listed below; cleanliness, comfort, location, facilities, staff, volue of money, and free WIFI. The weight of those criteria was decided by the help of academicians and golf hotel managers in Belek region.

IV. FINDINGS

The following steps were followed during the analysis of the study:

- ✓ Defining the decision problem and defining the target, criteria and alternatives clearly for forming the hierarchical model.
- ✓ Determining the criteria and their weight.
- ✓ Determining the order.
- ✓ Forming the decision matrix.
- ✓ Normalization procedure
- ✓ Gaining the weighted normalize matrix.
- ✓ Ranking of Alternatives

The results of the study are given below in details. Table 1 shows the hotels selected from Belek region.

Table I:: Hotel Names and Hotel Codes

Code	Name of the Hotels
H1	Gloria Golf Resort
H2	Regnum Carya Golf & SPA Resort
H3	Kempinski The Dome Thalasso & Golf Resort
H4	Maxx Royal Belek Golf Resort
H5	Kaya Palazzo Golf Resort
H6	Cornelia Diamond Golf Resort & SPA
H7	Sueno Hotels Deluxe Belek
H8	Titanic Deluxe Belek
H9	Robinson Club Nobilis
H10	Crystal Tat Beach Golf Resort & SPA

In Tablo 2 ratings for the criteria taken from the www.booking.com are mentioned for the chosen hotels.

Table II: Raiting Criteriaof Hotels

Hotels	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8	H9	H10
Cleanliness	9,1	9,6	8,9	9,5	9,1	9,2	8,9	8,6	9,4	8,4
Comfort	8,8	9,8	8,9	9,6	9,4	9,2	8,9	9	8,9	8,3
Location	8,5	9,4	8,7	9,6	9,3	9,1	9,3	8,7	9,1	8,4
Facilities	8,9	9,6	8,6	9,7	9,2	8,8	8,9	8,7	8,9	8,1
Staff	8,6	9,4	8,7	9,4	9,3	9	9,3	8,4	9,5	8,2
Value of Money	7,7	8,7	8,1	8,7	8,4	8,2	7,8	7,9	8,5	8,3
Free WİFİ	8,2	9,2	8,9	9	8,2	8,4	8,8	8,3	8,3	7,3

In table 3, it is possible to see the weights of the criteria determined by the evaluation of the academicians and golf hotel managers.

Table III: Weight Importance of Criteria

Criteria	Criteria weights
Cleanliness	0,07
Comfort	0,25
Location	0,2
Facilities	0,1
Staff	0,15
Value of Money	0,18
Free WİFİ	0,05

After determining the weights of the criteria, the order was decided. Following this decision matrix was formed and normalization process was applied. In table 4 weighted normalization matrix is shown after normalization process.

Table IV: Weighted Normalization Matrix

	S_i								
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,10	K_i
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,899**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,10	**0,993**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,915**
S_0	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,10	**0,991**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,960**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,939**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,933**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,904**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,09	**0,948**
	0,01	0,02	0,02	0,01	0,01	0,02	0,00	0,08	**0,872**

Table V: Ranking of Alternatives

	Hotels	Rank
1	Regnum Carya Golf & SPA Resort	0,993236
2	Maxx RoyalBelek Golf Resort	0,991462
3	Kaya Palazzo Golf Resort	0,959841
4	Robinson Club Nobilis	0,94758
5	Cornelia Diamond Golf Resort & SPA	0,939396
6	Sueno Hotels Deluxe Belek	0,933414
7	Kempinski The Dome Thalasso & Golf Resort	0,915126
8	Titanic Deluxe Belek	0,904474
9	Gloria Golf Resort	0,899356
10	Crystal Tat Beach Golf Resort & SPA	0,872056

The ranking of the hotles are shown in Table 5. As a result Regnum Carya Golf Spa Hotel was in the first place and Crystal Tat beach Hotel was in the last place in Belek region according to rating values that guests gave and specialist evaluating weights.

V. RESULT

Word-of-mouth communication, which is an important marketing tool, is leaving its place to word-of-mouth communication, guest comments and ratings on the internet. It is evident that potential tourists began to make decision to buy or not to buy a touristic product by using comments and ratings about the relevant product. Especially the booking.com has an important place among the online purchase channels. Shortly booking.com sends and invites the customer to fill a customer satisfaction questionnaire who made an online reservation right after their stay. Comments made by the guests affect the potential tourists' purchasing decision.

In this context 10 hotels operating in Belek region were evaluated by using the rating system stated on booking.com web site. The criteria on booking.com were used identically. 10 hotels were put in an order by the help of criteria weights and booking.com ratings by using ARAS Method. The most important factor for the golf tourists is comfort and the least factor is

free WIFI. The study was only carried out for the hotels operating in Belek region. Carrying out new studies for putting golf hotels and resorts in an order may have valuable contributions to the literature.

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