

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in tourism employment: employees' perceptions and business strategies

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Ozgur Kizildemir 

*Department of Tourism Management, Sakarya University of Applied Sciences,
Sakarya, Türkiye*

Umit Sengel 

*Department of Tourism Guidance, Sakarya University of Applied Sciences,
Sakarya, Türkiye*

Muzaffer Çakmak

*Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Istanbul Gelisim University,
Istanbul, Türkiye*

Salim İbiş

*Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Istanbul Galata University,
Istanbul, Türkiye, and*

Ramazan İnan

*Department of Travel, Tourism and Entertainment Services, Mugla Sitki Kocman
University, Mugla, Türkiye*

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Abstract

Purpose – The study aims to focus on the challenges that artificial intelligence (AI) brings to career decisions among tourism employees, while on the other hand, it focuses on how tourism employees' AI risk perceptions affect their career decisions. In addition, another aim of the study is to reveal problem-solving strategies and future vision from a sector-based and managerial perspective for possible employment problems.

Design/methodology/approach – In the first stage of my study, which used a mixed-method approach, data was obtained from 423 tourism employees (accommodation, food and beverage and travel) in Istanbul through a survey, while in the second stage, data was obtained from 25 managers (accommodation, food and beverage and travel) working in tourism establishments in Istanbul through interview forms.

Findings – The results of the study revealed that AI risk perceptions affect tourism employees' career decisions, while the professional motivation and anxiety levels of employees significantly mediated this effect. For the potential employment problems that these results will reveal, sub-sectors in tourism are trying to produce solutions with strategies such as technology investments and employee adaptation.

Originality/value – This study fills an important gap in the literature by revealing that AI, which has the potential to increase service delivery and operational efficiency, affects employees' career decisions and that businesses act with the mission of producing solutions with this awareness.

Keywords Risk perception, Tourism, Artificial intelligence (AI), Career decisions, Anxiety level, Professional motivation

Paper type Research paper



人工智能（AI）在旅游就业中的应用：员工感知与企业策略

摘要

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研究目的 – 本研究一方面关注人工智能给旅游员工职业决策带来的挑战, 另一方面探讨旅游员工的人工智能风险感知如何影响其职业决策。此外, 本研究还旨在从行业和管理视角揭示针对潜在就业问题的解决策略与未来愿景。

研究设计/方法 – 本研究采用混合研究方法。第一阶段, 通过问卷调查从伊斯坦布尔住宿、餐饮和旅行行业的423名旅游员工处获取数据; 第二阶段, 通过访谈表从伊斯坦布尔旅游企业中工作的25名管理者处获取数据, 受访者同样来自住宿、餐饮和旅行行业。

研究发现 – 研究结果表明, 人工智能风险感知会影响旅游员工的职业决策, 而员工的职业动机和焦虑水平在这一影响过程中发挥了显著的中介作用。针对这些结果可能引发的潜在就业问题, 旅游各行业正尝试通过技术投资和员工适应等策略提出解决方案。

原创性/价值 – 本研究揭示了具有提升服务交付和运营效率潜力的人工智能会影响员工职业决策, 同时表明企业已意识到这一影响, 并以解决问题为使命采取行动, 由此填补了相关文献中的重要空白。

关键词 旅游, 人工智能 (AI), 风险感知, 职业决策, 职业动机, 焦虑水平

文章类型 研究型论文

1. Introduction

Technological advancements are driving changes in both the business world and employee behavior. The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, one of these technological advancements, is known to be transforming the perceptions and attitudes of employees in various sectors toward their professions (Huang and Rust, 2018). Given the labor-intensive and service-oriented nature of tourism, the impact of AI on employees is of critical importance. The way individuals assess future uncertainties is related to risk perception, which plays a decisive role in employees' professional motivation, anxiety levels and career decisions (Kim and Jindabot, 2022). The tourism sector is being impacted by the changes experienced through the use of AI (Li *et al.*, 2019; Radovanović and Dimitrovski, 2026).

Although the transformative potential of AI in tourism management and customer experience has been explored (Fang and Partovi, 2022), there are limited studies on how AI risk perception shapes employees' psychological and career-focused responses. In particular, empirical evidence on how risk perception reflects on career change intention and the mediating roles of occupational motivation and anxiety in this relationship is quite insufficient. This points to a significant gap in both theoretical and practical aspects for the tourism sector, which is heavily dependent on human labor. Recent studies have examined the impact of AI on employee behavior (Fang and Partovi, 2022); the impact of AI perception on career resilience and informal learning (Kong *et al.*, 2023), the use of augmented reality and AI to address the increasing staff shortage in the tourism and hospitality sector (Yilmazdogan, 2024) and the acceptance and attitudes of tourism sector employees toward AI applications (Shalan *et al.*, 2024).

This study aims to examine the relationship between AI risk perception and career change intentions of tourism employees in the context of the mediating roles of occupational motivation and anxiety. To this end, data was collected from 423 tourism employees (accommodation, food and beverage and travel) in Istanbul and a mixed-methods approach was used in the second phase, combined with a qualitative research design. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test hypotheses and evaluate mediation effects. Thus, by integrating psychological variables into analyses of AI adoption in tourism, the study offers a new perspective on the intersection of technology, employee well-being and career sustainability.

Also, this study reveals how AI risk perception shapes tourism employees' profession change tendency through their professional motivation and anxiety levels. The findings provide original contributions to the existing literature on psychological mediation mechanisms and deepen the AI-employee relationship specifically for the tourism sector. They also offer practical recommendations for managers to develop strategies for enhancing motivation and managing anxiety to reduce turnover.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

2.1 Risk aversion perception

It is known that the use of technology improves the business processes of organizations and increases the productivity and efficiency of their operations (Gomes and Seruca, 2023). On the other hand, the use of technology can also have some negative consequences. Some studies show that new technologies do not only provide convenience to employees but also bring many problems, difficulties and risks (Zhang and Jin, 2023). While the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT in the workplace provides benefits to employees in various areas, it is seen that ChatGPT also raises concerns about the potential of replacing some employees' roles, which is perceived as a risk (Carvalho and Ivanov, 2023).

AI technologies have inevitably begun to replace human personnel in many jobs and pose a threat to employees' professions (Huang and Rust, 2018; Zhu *et al.*, 2021). This concern about AI carries the risk of reducing workplace motivation and loyalty (Vinchon *et al.*, 2024). The emergence of vehicles powered by AI and robotic technologies has strongly affected the hospitality industry and the issue of these technologies replacing human power has become a highly debated topic. The use of this technology in businesses can cause employees to turn to alternative career options (Li *et al.*, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2026). Employees with AI awareness are concerned about the future of their jobs and this awareness creates anxiety and uncertainty, as employees perceive the risk of job displacement (Brougham and Haar, 2018). AI technology can create anxiety and a tendency to leave their jobs due to the perception that it is eroding employees' professional knowledge and the threat of AI can trigger intentions to leave (Li, 2023).

When technology is complex or new, individuals become more dependent on the risk assessments of experts and institutions (Cvetkovich *et al.*, 2002). The safety culture in an organization and the characteristics of the leader affect the risk perception and tolerance of members (Amaya-Gómez *et al.*, 2023). All of this requires managers to understand their employees' attitudes toward AI, analyze how these attitudes influence behavior and take measures to motivate and retain employees for effective AI adoption (Zhu *et al.*, 2021). Recent research on AI has identified negative impacts such as employees' fear of losing their jobs, the risk of changes in their roles and duties and a decrease in social interaction. It has been emphasized that these factors can lead to increased stress and anxiety, negative attitudes, a lack of confidence and decreased productivity (Li *et al.*, 2019; Yadav *et al.*, 2021; Pereira *et al.*, 2023). Based on this information in the literature, the following hypotheses were formulated to suggest that employees' perceived risk could affect their professional motivation, anxiety levels and the tendency to change professions:

- H1. AI risk aversion perception affects the professional motivation of tourism employees.
- H2. AI risk aversion perception affects the anxiety levels of tourism employees.
- H3. AI risk aversion perception affects profession change tendency of tourism employees.

2.2 Professional motivation and artificial intelligence

Motivation is a factor that directly impacts employee performance and satisfaction in the workplace (Locke and Latham, 2004). AI has replaced some jobs requiring mechanical actions in work environments, leading to lower wages for employees, which in turn has led to a decrease in employee motivation and satisfaction (Lin, 2023). The proliferation of AI applications in the hospitality industry raises concerns because it is perceived as a threat to some professions and roles. (Yin *et al.*, 2024). Recent studies have shown that AI awareness weakens employees' organizational commitment, career satisfaction and job involvement,

while increasing their burnout and intention to leave (Brougham and Haar, 2018; Kong *et al.*, 2023). According to research results by Çetiner and Çetinkaya (2024), while AI anxiety among tourism employees does not affect extrinsic motivation, it shows a positive and low correlation with intrinsic motivation. AI can cause workplace anxiety in employees and, consequently, lead to withdrawal behavior (Liu, *et al.*, 2024). It has been stated that while developments in AI may cause anxiety in employees, they can also increase employee productivity and competitiveness by stimulating job design skills through the conservation of resources theory. This effect is particularly pronounced among employees who find their work meaningful (Tan, *et al.*, 2024).

When employee behaviors and actions are rewarded and employees are more supported by organizations, the relationship between AI awareness and intention to leave has been found to weaken (Li *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, as AI technologies are adopted in the hospitality sector, managers must monitor employees' psychological states and take steps to reduce AI-induced job disengagement (Teng, *et al.*, 2024). It has been stated that managers should provide personalized support to employees to ensure their commitment to the organization and their sense of value to mitigate unemployment concerns caused by AI (Başer, *et al.*, 2025).

Digital competence directly impacts employee stress and burnout levels, sustainable development and high employee engagement in the labor-intensive hospitality industry. Therefore, managers must create an open and supportive environment to help employees develop their digital skills (Ye and Chen, 2024). Consequently, understanding the impact of AI on employee behavior and employee attitudes and behaviors toward these applications is critical. Based on this, the following hypothesis was developed:

- H4. Professional motivations of tourism employees affects their profession change tendency.*

2.3 Anxiety level and artificial intelligence

Anxiety is a common mental health problem worldwide (Chellappa and Aeschbach, 2022), caused by the complexity of an individual's roles and diverse responsibilities (Schmid *et al.*, 2011). This process can pose a serious threat to an individual's well-being and quality of life (Racine *et al.*, 2021). Individuals prevent their career decision-making process (Chapman, 2006), weaken the ability to adapt to daily life (Kazdin and Weisz, 1998), increase mental health problems such as depression (Goodwin *et al.*, 2020) and cause some negativities such as not being able to think clearly and feeling panic (Taylor *et al.*, 2007).

When anxiety becomes uncontrollable in the individual and negatively affects the individual's functionality, this situation is associated with anxiety disorder (Borkovec *et al.*, 1998). However, identifying the causes and underlying reasons for the anxiety experienced by the individual can help the individual manage their anxiety (Dugas *et al.*, 2004). In fact, Goodwin *et al.* (2020) state that to create a healthy society foundation in the future, it is necessary to focus on reducing anxiety, which is especially widespread among young adults and to take measures to stop the flow of this problem. To cope with the anxiety that individuals are exposed to, methods such as getting help from family and experts (Kennerley, 2017), exercising (Smits *et al.*, 2008), relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and muscle relaxation (Theodoratou *et al.*, 2023), meditating and doing yoga (Achour *et al.*, 2021), spending time with family and friends (Chernomas and Shapiro, 2013) are used.

Many factors, such as crises experienced in countries in the tourism sector (Karsavuran, 2021), job insecurity (Elshaer and Azazz, 2023), age and work region (Apsari *et al.*, 2024), increase employees' anxiety levels. This process affects employees' intention to leave their jobs and burnout (Yazicioğlu and Kızanlık, 2018), leading to a tendency to move to different sectors

(Elshaer and Saad, 2020). Based on this information, the hypothesis that tests the effect of tourism workers' anxiety levels on their tendency to change professions is given below:

H5. Anxiety level of tourism employees affects their profession change tendency.

2.4 Profession change tendency

Individuals bring their experiences, talents and desires for certain types of work and conditions to their workplaces. However, the increase in an individual's income in their workplaces is often associated with upward occupational mobility (career), which is a form of occupational change (Shaw, 1987). This mobility in an individual's career can be effective in changing occupations (changes that require new skills, routines, work environment, education, training or professional preparation) (Feldman and Ng, 2007). However, during this change, most individuals have to spend significant time learning new skills, building networks and becoming financially ready (Uy, 2020). On the other hand, changing careers within businesses not only causes a serious loss of talent, but also causes significant and greater cost losses (Zopiatis and Theocharous, 2022).

The human factor plays an important role in the provision of services in the tourism sector, the successful operation of businesses in the sector (Gruescu *et al.*, 2008) and in ensuring visitor satisfaction. However, the continuation of poor employment practices in this sector, minimal compliance with the law (Baum, 2007), high labor turnover and working for low wages (Ordanini and Parasuraman, 2011), poor working conditions, long working hours, insufficient personal development opportunities (Teng, 2008), excessive workload (Marhuenda *et al.*, 2005), work-life conflict, dissatisfaction with career advancement and social isolation (Mcginley, 2012) may be effective in changing professions. However, due to the seasonality characteristic of the tourism sector, which seems negative in terms of business (Rahimić *et al.*, 2019), it can have difficulties in providing long-term employment as it cannot guarantee a stable income (Zvaigzne *et al.*, 2022).

AI can perform routine operations and some high-skilled jobs instead of employees (Selenko *et al.*, 2022), making many professions redundant, leading to job losses (Sheikhi, 2022), increasing employees' intention to leave their jobs (Khaliq *et al.*, 2022), causing them to experience employment anxiety about their future (Wang *et al.*, 2024) or prompting them to consider different career paths (Li *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the unique characteristics of the tourism sector can affect individuals' tendency to change professions necessitating this study to reconsider a topic in the literature in the context of risk perception arising from AI. Based on this information, two hypotheses testing the mediating role of professional motivation and anxiety level in the effect of AI risk perception on tourism employees' tendency to change professions are given below:

H6. Professional motivation has a mediating role in the effect of AI risk aversion perception of tourism employees on the their profession change tendency.

H7. Anxiety level has a mediating role in the effect of AI risk aversion perception of tourism employees on the their profession change tendency.

3. Method

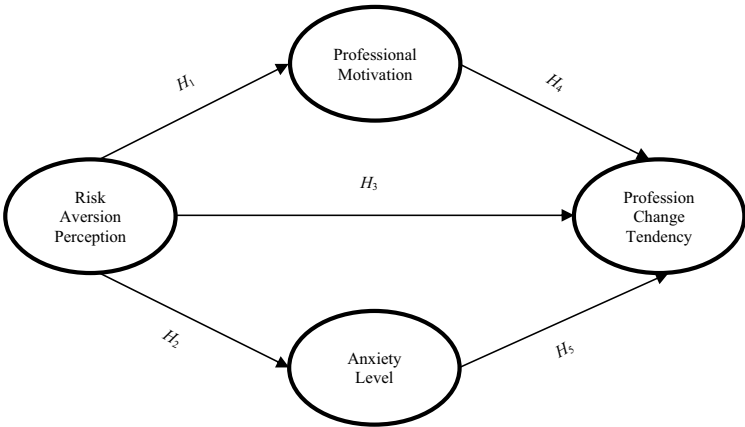
3.1 Research design and questionnaire

In contemporary society, where AI is increasingly becoming a part of life, the idea that the developments will also negatively affect various professions has emerged. In many studies;

tourism is shown among the least affected industries when compared to other industries in terms of the integration and widespread use of technology. However, the developments that are taking place reveal that the effects on tourism are also becoming increasingly noticeable. Based on this information; this study focuses on testing the effect of tourism employees' AI risk perceptions on their tendency to change professions and the mediating roles of variables such as anxiety level and professional motivation in this interaction. It also tries to reveal solution strategies from the perspective of managers for possible problems to be identified for tourism employment.

The quantitative data of the field research was obtained by using scales that are suitable for the purposes of the study and can explain the model. The survey designed as a data collection tool consists of a total of five sections. Section 1 of the survey consists of demographic questions that provide predictions about the descriptive statistics of the participants. The other four sections in the survey consist of scales belonging to the 4 variables in the model. The scales were designed in accordance with the 5-point Likert measurement and included in the survey. The second part consists of questions measuring the participants' perceptions of risk aversion caused by AI (Aydemir and Aren, 2017). This scale was taken and is the final independent variable in the model. The second part of the survey consists of questions measuring the tendency to change profession (Zengin et al., 2020). The fourth part of the survey consists of questions measuring the level of anxiety (Spitzer et al., 2006), while the fifth and last part consists of questions measuring the professional motivation of tourism employees (Şengel et al., 2021).

In the study, a total of 7 hypotheses were developed, 5 of which measured direct and 2 mediating effects, in which the relationships between variables were tested and the detailed versions of these hypotheses were discussed in the theoretical background section. The summary version of the hypotheses and the model to be tested with the least squares method in the study are given in Figure 1. In the model, the anxiety level and professional motivation were positioned as mediating variables in the effect of tourism employees' perceptions of AI-induced risk aversion on their tendency to change professions.



H₆: Risk Perception >> Professional Motivation >> Profession Change Tendency
H₇: Risk Perception >> Anxiety Level >> Profession Change Tendency

Figure 1. Research model
Source: Authors' own work

3.2 Sampling, data collection and analysis

One of the most critical points of field research is the selection of the population and sampling. While the population describes the group from which the data is collected, the sampling refers to the target participants (a small unit) taken from the population. These two concepts have a very critical role in terms of the generalizability of the obtained data on the relevant subject. Since both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this study, two different groups were determined as the population. The research population from which quantitative field data were collected in the study is tourism employees in Istanbul. In this context, it was aimed to collect data from all employees who may be related to the accommodation, travel and food and beverage sectors. The dynamic structure of tourism employment and the high rate of personnel turnover make it difficult to give a certain number for the population. For this reason, an attempt was made to reach a sampling number of 384, which was taken as a reference for an infinite number of research populations in the study (Coşkun *et al.*, 2019). In addition, since the research model was tested with the Partial Least Squares method and the SmartPLS program was used in the study, the strategy of reaching 10 times the total number of expressions in the scales for the number of people who collected data was also used (Şengel *et al.*, 2023). Especially, SmartPLS was chosen because it provides flexibility in structural equation models and does not require the assumption of normality. It can also provide reliable estimates even in small samples (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). Considering all these criteria, data was collected from a total of 423 tourism employees with the convenience sampling method. Data collection using only a survey method introduced a risk of common method bias. To examine this, a full collinearity test (Kock, 2015) was performed in SmartPLS software. The results revealed that all indicators, except for four (findings, Table 2), had variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 3.3. Because most indicators met the recommended threshold, common method bias was not considered a serious problem in this study.

The research population for the qualitative research methods of the study consists of managers of tourism businesses in Istanbul. A sampling method was not used for the sampling, instead the concept of saturation was used. It was planned to complete the data collection process at the points where the data reached saturation and turned into routine and standard answers by repeating each other very frequently. Based on this information, the data collection process was completed after data was collected from 25 managers and the sampling consisted of 25 people for the interview data. The survey data were obtained in two stages. First, data were obtained from 200 participants in a two-month period between September 15 and November 15, 2024. By analyzing these data, preliminary results were obtained regarding the anxiety status of tourism employees originating from AI and their motivation to continue their professions and a draft list of interview questions was created based on these results. Subsequently, the survey collection process continued between November 20, 2024 and January 20, 2025 and data was obtained from a total of 423 participants. Interview data was obtained between November 20 and December 31, 2025. Prior to the data collection process, all participants involved in the field research were informed about the purpose and scope of the study and their voluntary informed consent was obtained. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. SPSS and SmartPLS programs were used to analyze the survey data and MAXQDA program was used to analyze the interview data. Frequency, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Path analysis were performed for the survey data, while content analysis was performed for the interview data.

4. Results and findings

4.1 Descriptive statistics

When the demographic variables of the participants are examined (Table 1), it is understood that men are more than women with a rate of 57%. More than half of the participants (61%)

Table 1. Participants' identifying information

Variables	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	182	43,0
Male	241	57,0
<i>Age</i>		
30 age and below	260	61,5
31–45 age	103	24,3
46 age and above	60	14,2
<i>Monthly income</i>		
40.000 Turkish Lira and below	238	56,3
40.001–60.000 Turkish Lira	133	31,4
60.001 Turkish Lira an above	52	12,3
<i>Sector</i>		
Hospitality (accommodation and food and beverage)	313	74,0
Travel	110	26,0
<i>Tourism education status</i>		
Yes	233	55,1
No	190	44,9
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	309	73,0
Married	144	27,0

Source(s): Authors' own work

are 30 years of age and younger. Since tourism is a service-oriented industry, there can generally be a decrease in the number of people working in tourism for many years and this is one of the important reasons for the personnel turnover rate in tourism. The distribution in participant ages can be explained by such situations.

According to the monthly income of the participants, it is seen that the concentration (56.3%) is in the lowest income group in the survey. It is known that the wages of employees working in businesses that are new to tourism in Turkey and do not have an advanced management approach regarding corporate identity are low. It can be said that these results are parallel to this information. In the distribution by sectors, there are more participants from the hospitality sector and in the distribution by marital status, there are more single employees. Finally, it is seen that there are more employees who have received tourism education. This situation is important in terms of showing the quantitative increase in tourism education in Turkey in recent years.

4.2 Measurement model

After demographic analyses, the first measurement model analysis was performed (Table 2). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to obtain the measurement model results. As a result of the analyses, two expressions of the risk aversion perception scale were disabled to ensure statistical consistency and the success of the measurement model. All expressions of the other scales were included in the analyses as fixed. As a result, a 26-expression and four-dimensional structure was obtained as a result of the CFA. Factor loadings, *t*-values and VIF values for the 26 expressions in the four-dimensional structure are given with the help of

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Dimensions (structure)	VIF	t-value	Factor loading
<i>Anxiety level</i>			
After the developments in AI			
I feel nervous, anxious and on the edge of a cliff	3,279	20.10	0,766
I cannot control or stop worrying	3,809	24.08	0,801
I worry too much about different things	2,982	39.62	0,847
I cannot relax	2,741	45.99	0,853
I'm too restless and fidgety to sit still	1,977	27.48	0,777
I get angry and irritated easily	2,062	28.78	0,787
I'm constantly afraid that something bad will happen	1,889	30.19	0,792
<i>Profession change tendency</i>			
After the developments in AI			
If I had the opportunity to switch to another profession where I could earn the same income as my profession, I would switch	2,165	29.32	0,762
If I had the chance to choose again, I would not choose this profession	2,695	51.03	0,833
I am disappointed that I chose this profession	2,631	44.29	0,796
I started to think that other professions are more vital than my profession	1,961	31.08	0,767
If I receive an offer that offers a higher salary, I would want to change my profession	3,991	33.75	0,793
If I receive an offer from a more prestigious company, I would want to change my profession	3,814	34.18	0,784
Even if I receive a lower salary than I receive now, I would want to switch to a more reliable profession	1,564	22.41	0,690
<i>Professional motivation</i>			
After the developments in AI			
I am happy to be doing my job	3,120	45.30	0,841
I believe that I can do my job professionally	2,987	27.03	0,771
The idea of doing my job makes me happy	4,637	78.10	0,897
After the developments in AI, I sympathize with my colleagues	1,725	20.35	0,695
I think that my job will give me opportunities to create and produce things	2,838	54.25	0,860
I decided that my job is suitable for my lifestyle	2,375	46.50	0,833
I recommend my job to those who prefer a profession	1,864	27.25	0,733
<i>Risk aversion perception</i>			
After the developments in AI			
I do not like taking risks	1,288	7.77	0,622
Compared to most people I know, I like to live life on the edge	1,261	8.73	0,682
I have no desire to take unnecessary risks in some areas	1,279	18.64	0,733
Compared to most people I know, I like to gamble in some areas	1,215	19.17	0,734
I'd rather be safe than sorry	1,590	18.23	0,740

Source(s): Authors' own work

Table 2. Factor loadings take values ranging from 0.897–0.622 for all expressions. Although the SmartPLS program accepts that values of 0.700 and above would be appropriate in measurement models, a few expressions with loading values between 0.600–0.700 were also included in this study. Because there are studies in the literature that put forward opinions on this. In this context, [Hair et al. \(2019\)](#) stated that the structures with factor loadings above 0.700 are better defined and that factor loadings above 0.500 are sufficient for the interpretation of an acceptable structure. It is known that there are different studies

supporting these views (Chen and Tsai, 2007). In cases where significant results are detected in social sciences, the *t*-values should be greater than 1.96 (Schumacker and Lomax, 2010). Variance increase factors (VIF values) should be below 10 to avoid multiple linear connections between independent variables. It is not desired for the value to be above 10 (Işkın et al., 2024). When these reference values are taken into account, the study offers a successful measurement model in terms of *t*-values and VIF values.

One of the basic indicators that the measurement model refers to is the validity and reliability (Table 3) coefficients. Three different reliability coefficients are obtained in the analyses conducted with SmartPLS. According to Table 3, the minimum value for four variables in terms of Cronbach's alpha, one of these three different reliability coefficients, is 0.705. While the minimum value for the reliability coefficient (Rho_A) is 0.732, it is 0.799 for composite reliability. Hair et al. (2011) state that these reliability values should be greater than 0.700 for SmartPLS. At the same time, this value is accepted as the reference value for all social sciences and different analysis methods/ programs (Taberi et al., 2017). This information provides predictions that the expected results regarding the reliability of the study data have been obtained and that the measurement model is successful.

Three different findings (Table 3) were obtained for validity coefficients. These are AVE coefficient, Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio values. The minimum value determined for four variables in terms of the AVE coefficient is 0.547. 0.500 is accepted as the reference value for AVE coefficient in studies in social sciences (Loan et al., 2023). The basic measurement for the Fornell-Larcker Criterion is that the values giving the interaction of one of the variables are greater than the values showing their relationships with other variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The corner values written in bold in Table 2 show the interaction of the variables with themselves and these are greater than all the values on the horizontal-vertical axis. All Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio values are expected to be below 0.900 (Henseler et al., 2015). The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio values of the research variables range from 0.101 to 0.493. The values obtained within the scope of these three different measurements reveal that the validity condition is met. In the study, the structural model can be tested.

4.3 Structural model

Table 4 includes the path analysis results. When the findings are examined in terms of model fit indices (Table 4), it is seen that the structural model produces acceptable results. SmartPLS focuses on SRMR and NFI values in terms of model fit indices. In studies

Table 3. Validity, reliability and correlation

Variables	Fornell-Larcker criterion				Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Anxiety level (1)	0,804				–			
Professional motivation (2)	0,022	0,807			0,101			
Profession change tendency (3)	0,174	–0,470	0,776		0,190	0,493		
Risk aversion perception (4)	0,192	0,250	0,123	0,669	0,209	0,284	0,159	–
Cronbach's alpha	0.910	0.910	0.890	0.705				
Reliability coefficient (rho_A)	0.924	0.919	0.901	0.732				
Composite reliability	0.927	0.928	0.914	0.799				
Source(s): Authors' own work								

Table 4. Path coefficients and hypothesis results

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	t-value	p-value	Supported	SRMR	NFI
<i>Direct effect</i>					0,074	0,851
H1. RAP → PM	0,250	4,264	0,000**	Yes		
H2. RAP → AL	0,192	3,722	0,000**	Yes		
H3. RAP → PCT	0,229	4,523	0,000**	Yes		
H4. PM → PCT	-0,530	13,120	0,000**	Yes		
H5. AL → PCT	0,142	3,022	0,003**	Yes		
<i>Mediating effect</i>						
H6. RAP → PM → PCT	-0,133	4,196	0,000**	Yes		
H7. RAP → AL → PCT	0,027	2,542	0,011*	Yes		

Note(s): RP = risk aversion perception, PM = professional motivation, AL = anxiety level, PCT = profession change tendency, *Significant at $p < 0.05$, **Significant at $p < 0.01$, $t > 1.96$

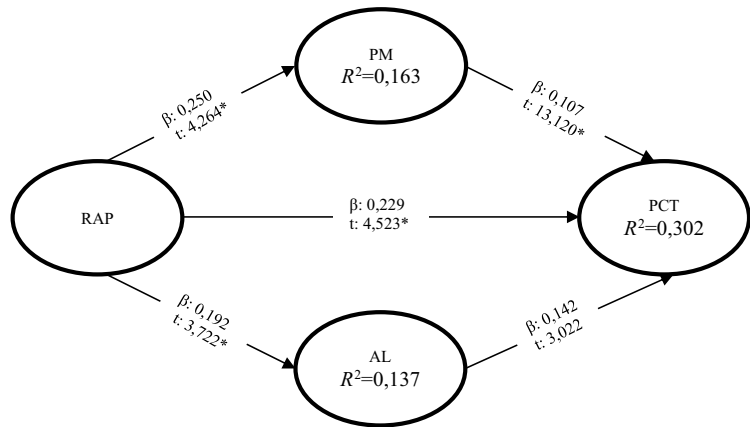
Source(s): Authors' own work

conducted in fields related to social sciences, the SRMR value is expected to be below 0.08 and its value is expected to be greater than 0.80 (Akyürek *et al.*, 2024). The results of this study show that the SRMR value is 0.074 and the NFI value is 0.851. The obtained model fit values explain that the structural model of the study is compatible.

The structural model results obtained within the scope of the study are obtained by performing path analysis. Hypotheses are tested in which both direct and indirect interactions are tested in line with the established model. The main points to be considered here are that the p -value is less than 0.05. In parallel with this result, the t -values is expected to be greater than 1.96 (Şengel *et al.*, 2023). Cheah *et al.* (2020) state that these values should also be supported by the path coefficients.

When the path coefficient and hypothesis results are examined (Table 4), all three hypotheses are supported, where direct effects are tested and the tendency to change profession is at the forefront. In this context, tourism employees' perception of risk aversion related to AI (H3; $p = 0.000$, $t = 4.523$, $\beta = 0.229$), their professional motivation (H4, $p = 0.000$, $t = 13.120$, $\beta = -0.530$) and anxiety levels (H5, $p = 0.003$, $t = 3.022$, $\beta = 0.142$) affect their tendency to change profession. In addition, the hypotheses that the perception of tourism employees' risk aversion related to AI affects their occupational motivation (H1; $p = 0.000$, $t = 4.264$, $\beta = 0.250$) and anxiety levels (H2; $p = 0.000$, $t = 3.722$, $\beta = 0.192$), which measure direct effect, were also supported. There are two hypotheses measuring mediating effects in the study. As a result of the analyses, it was concluded that both hypotheses were supported. The mediating roles of both occupational motivation (H6; $p = 0.000$, $t = 4.196$, $\beta = -0.133$) and anxiety level (H7; $p = 0.011$, $t = 2.542$, $\beta = 0.027$) were determined in the effect of the perception of risk aversion related to AI on the tendency to change profession.

According to the PLS-SEM results of the study (Figure 2), it is seen that all three variables except the final independent variable have a certain explanatory power in the model. The R^2 value for occupational motivation, which is also a mediator variable in the model, is 0.163 and the R^2 value for anxiety level is 0.137. These R^2 values are relatively low considering PLS-SEM studies. Hair *et al.* (2021) state that in PLS-SEM-based behavioral research, external factors determining human perception, attitudes and behaviors can many varies and consider this as one of the most important reasons for low R^2 values. Since there can be many variables, the R^2 value increases as more variables are added to the model. Therefore, although the explanatory power of



H₆: RAP >> PM >> PCT (β : -0.133, t : 4.196)*
H₇: RAP >> AL >> PCT (β : 0.027, t : 2.542)*

Figure 2. PLS-SEM results
Source: Authors' own work

mediating variables is limited, the obtained mediating effects are theoretically significant and will contribute to the literature. The R^2 value for the final dependent variable in the model, the tendency to change profession, is 0.302. Although the results in Figure 2 have produced results that can be considered high in terms of social sciences, it should be stated that this explanatory power is at low levels in terms of PLS-SEM (Chin, 1998). However, as a result of the path coefficient results, all hypotheses are supported and all expected interactions between the variables occur; it can be said that the model works and the variables in the model affect each other.

4.4 Qualitative findings: Problem solving strategies of managers

The quantitative findings in this study have determined that variables such as risk aversion, anxiety level and professional motivation related to AI are effective in the career decisions of tourism employees. When considered in parallel with this result, it is clear that there is an uncertainty regarding the direct impact of AI on tourism employment in the future. In this case, the risk perception and anxiety levels of tourism employees are increasing. It is of critical importance for tourism businesses to be prepared for this possible scenario. In this context, the second phase of the study focuses on the qualitative data obtained from hotel, restaurant and travel agency managers and the problem-solving strategies that businesses act with in the face of this possible scenario. The issues considered as problem-solving strategies in the study were determined as research themes and the evaluations were carried out on these themes. In this context, 5 themes were determined with the exploratory method with high frequency values that could be problem-solving strategies with the word cloud analysis applied to the interview data and the analyzes were carried out on these themes. In this context, it was thought that businesses could adopt strategies such as preferring to stay in response to developments, motivating their employees with increasing anxiety levels, making technology investments on the subject and adapting to current developments and in-service training and an evaluation was made on this axis.

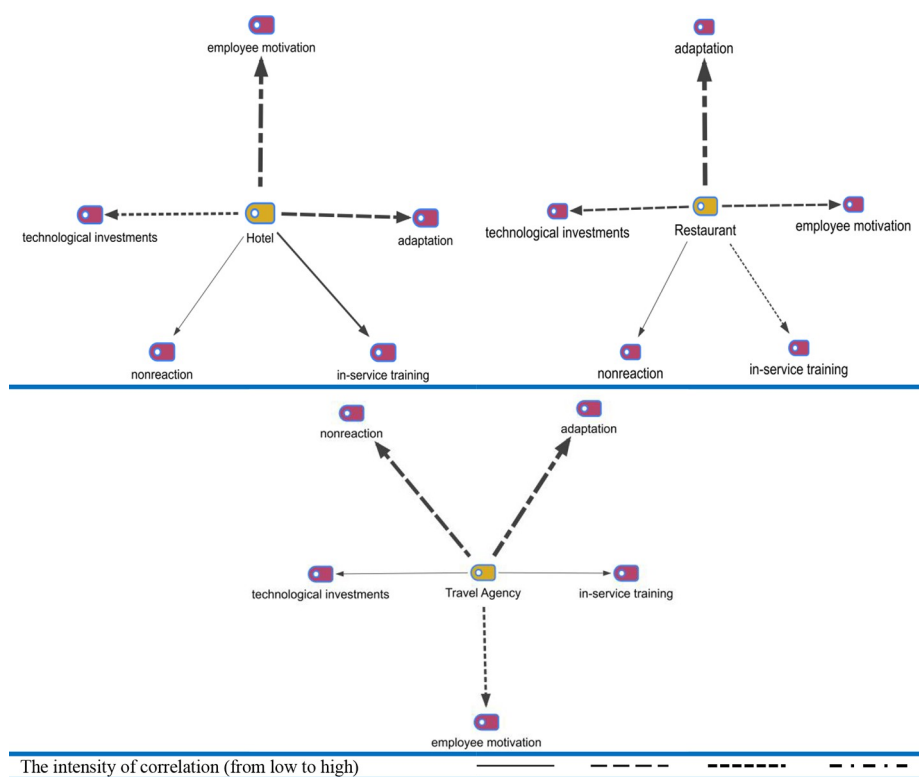


Figure 3. Solution strategies of business

Source: Authors' own work

The views of business managers operating in three different sectors in tourism regarding the problem-solving strategies on the subject are given in Figure 3. The appearance and thickness of the lines in Figure 3 show the solution strategies implemented by business managers in different sectors for the current problem. While managers attach importance to the tendency of their employees to change their professions depending on their risk perceptions and anxiety levels toward AI, the short-term solution strategies for this problem vary significantly according to the sectors. It was determined that hotel managers focused on studies aimed at increasing employee motivation in the face of the current situation (7 pax). Subsequently, adapting to developments on the subject (5 pax) and focusing on technological investments (4 pax) stood out as the most emphasized solution strategies. In addition, hotels carry out studies to solve the current problem through in-service training.

Restaurant businesses use adaptation (7 pax) as an important short-term strategy for their employees' tendency to change their professions due to AI. The strategies that stand out after this are strategies such as increasing employee motivation (3 pax) and making technological investments (2 pax). Although the most important strategies for hotels and restaurants change, the first three ranks are strategies with different interaction levels but the same solution (technological investments, adaptation and employee motivation).

For travel agencies, just like restaurants, adaptation to the current situation (7 pax) stands out as the most preferred solution strategy. There is an interesting finding in the second rank. For hotels and restaurants, not showing reaction, which produces very little interaction, emerged as the second most important theme for travel agencies (6 pax). In other words, travel agencies also prefer not to take into account their employees' tendency to change their professions as a strategy. On the other hand, some agency managers exhibit an attitude toward increasing the motivation of their employees (4 pax). Compared to hotels and restaurants, technological investments and in-service training are not preferred strategies for travel agencies to solve the problem.

5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusions

The effects of AI on tourism have generally been examined as both a threat and an opportunity. [Ivanov et al. \(2017\)](#) stated that the increase in the use of robotics and AI will lead to a decrease in purchasing and maintenance costs and an increase in usage alternatives in travel, tourism and accommodation companies. [Yilmazdogan \(2024\)](#) states that AI and AR technologies will contribute to improving employee job satisfaction, commitment and career opportunities, reducing job stress and recruiting and retaining the right employees. [Zvaigzne et al. \(2025\)](#) state in their study that the widespread adoption of AI in tourism carries some risks, such as a decrease in human employment in tourism and in guest-service provider communication. These studies in the literature show that the use of AI, as in many fields, can offer opportunities in tourism as well as cause threats. This study has shown that AI risk perception reduces professional motivation while increasing anxiety levels and that these factors directly affect career change tendencies. According to these results, the study provides support to the literature revealing the negative effects of AI, especially in the context of tourism employment and tourism workers.

It has been observed that the perception of job insecurity among employees in the tourism sector is high, which increases anxiety levels and triggers career change tendencies. It is understood that professional motivation and anxiety levels play a decisive role in the effect of AI risk perception on career change tendencies. It is also among the findings that AI awareness weakens employees' career satisfaction and organizational commitment and this situation increases their intention to leave their job. [Brougham and Haar \(2018\)](#) found that smart technology, AI, robotics and algorithms (STARA) awareness is negatively related to organizational commitment and career satisfaction and positively related to turnover intentions, cynicism and depression. This situation shows that the results of the study are similar to the literature. Behaviors toward changing professions bring about the need for qualified personnel in the sector ([Mamadiyarov and Mahmudova, 2024](#)) and this situation may cause an increase in the turnover rate and a decrease in the job satisfaction of individuals over time ([Nassar and Elsayy, 2025](#)). Therefore, increasing this and similar studies and transferring the developments in AI applications in the sector to students and sector representatives are important in reducing these concerns.

Sub-sectors in the tourism industry (accommodation, travel, food and beverage) are aware of the effects of developments in the field of AI on their employees and resort to various problem-solving strategies, especially for employment losses that may occur in the long term. Strategies vary by sectors. The travel sector also uses not showing any reaction as a strategy. Accommodation and food and beverage sectors develop solution strategies for both themselves and their employees, such as technology investments and personnel motivation. These results show that the research model indicates that technology investments are being made to eliminate the negative effects of AI on employment. Furthermore, the mediating effect in the model reveals that professional motivation can mitigate the risks associated with

job loss caused by AI. The fact that the accommodation and food and beverage sectors adopt personnel motivation as a problem-solving strategy demonstrates the agreement between qualitative and quantitative results. Moreover, it has been revealed that AI risk perception increases job insecurity as well as professional dissatisfaction and anxiety, ultimately leading employees to change professions. It is seen that businesses in the tourism sector take into account these results, which have emerged based on employees' views. While sector managers aim to minimize risks for their businesses through technology investments, they should also support professional motivation and adaptation processes to reduce employees' concerns and prevent their possible tendencies to change professions.

5.2 Theoretical implications

AI contributes to the literature by demonstrating that risk perception is a significant factor influencing tourism employees' career decisions. The study demonstrates that AI awareness reduces employees' professional motivation, increases their anxiety levels and triggers their tendency to change careers. First, it supports the technology and job insecurity literature while also offering a new perspective on studies addressing the psychological effects of AI awareness.

Second, uncovering how the effects of AI risk perception on professional motivation and anxiety levels shape career change decisions makes significant contributions to the career psychology and organizational behavior literature. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that AI awareness is related not only to technical competencies but also to employees' psychological responses. Third developments in AI may lead to diversification or increased demand in the sector, as well as to increased risk perception among employees. Therefore, studies and research activities aimed at reducing and understanding employees' risk perceptions are necessary. [Gretzel et al. \(2015\)](#) stated that smart tourism applications will provide more comfortable, safe, exciting and sustainable living spaces for locals and tourists, offering more flexible tourism experiences and greater opportunities for new services, business models and markets.

Finally, they emphasized solutions such as technology adaptation, technology investments, employee motivation and in-house training to address potential employment-related problems. These solutions contribute significantly to the theoretical framework on technology adoption ([Cimbaljević et al., 2024](#)). Given the rising cost of education, it is inevitable that individuals will stay in areas that are more likely to provide them with employment ([Brougham and Haar, 2018](#)). Some sectors, however, attempt to address problems by remaining inactive and responding to the situation. This finding supports the literature on the existence of apathy in tourism ([Zhang et al., 2021](#)).

5.3 Practical implications

The findings of this study can contribute to the development of important strategies to understand and address the concerns of employees in the tourism sector regarding AI technologies. First, managers need to establish more effective organizational support mechanisms to increase employees' professional motivation and reduce their anxiety levels. [Cimbaljević et al. \(2024\)](#) found that employees are willing to adopt new technologies and their attitudes and intentions toward technological innovations are affected. Second, employee adoption of AI technologies can be supported by providing training programs and skill development opportunities. It is stated that young employees are more open to AI technologies and have higher attitudes toward using technology ([Morris and Venkatesh, 2000](#); [Shalan et al., 2024](#)). This will increase employees' career satisfaction and reduce their tendency to change professions. Furthermore, it is important for managers to individually engage with employees and provide personalized support to reduce

AI-related concerns. In this context, psychological support mechanisms can be established to manage employee anxiety levels. Managers must allocate more resources to employees, as businesses' ability to maintain existing employment in the face of AI largely depends on it.

Finally, transparent policies should be developed in the tourism sector regarding how AI technologies will be implemented to reduce the perception of job insecurity and increase professional motivation. In addition to these policies, the results of the study suggest strategies for resolving potential personnel-focused crises of similar but different magnitudes.

5.4 Limitations and future studies

The study is limited to tourism workers in Istanbul. In addition, the study covers a certain time period, which brings with it a problem such as not being able to fully determine the change in the perception of AI and job insecurity over time. The VIF value was examined for common method bias and the values of four indicators were above the reference value. Therefore, common method bias was not completely eliminated and it is acknowledged that this constitutes a limitation in the interpretation of the results. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies mitigate this risk by using different data sources or time-lapse designs. Studies can be conducted to eliminate these two limitations that arise depending on time and place. Also, they can be conducted using some more human parameters to compare with AI. The dynamic structure of AI technologies necessitates that studies with similar themes be conducted at certain periods.

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Corresponding author

Umit Sengel can be contacted at: umitsengel@gmail.com