

Chapter 21

Estimating the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of the Tourism Sector: Implications on Tourism and Sustainability Post Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The tourism sector is a wide-ranging industry that provides myriad job opportunities worldwide, especially for countries whose economies depends on tourism, like Greece, Spain, and Lebanon. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously affected this sector. To better understand the post-COVID-19 situation on tourism, the research is mainly based on different sources (articles, papers, reports, and statistics based on the UNWTO, WTO, WHO, etc.) collected through secondary and primary data interpretation. The methodology has been adapted accordingly to collect data from expert interviews and semi-structured surveys following Saunders et al. As a result, this study aims to gather information about the post-COVID-19 impact on the tourism sector through exploring sustainable tourism as one of the solutions for the speedy recovery of the industry in terms of recovery. The main findings presented in this research have shown that domestic tourism will be more sustainable until international tourism gets back on its feet.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6762-6.ch021

INTRODUCTION

Huang et al. (2020) point out that the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus 2 that causes extreme acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV-2). The first case of COVID-19 was discovered in Wuhan China in November 2019. As such, and after that the disease was deemed as a world pandemic and as a highly contagious disease, it has propagated extremely quickly (Huang et al., 2020). The total cases reported of COVID-19 worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), casualties reached about 4 Million (WHO, 2020, 2021).

This pandemic spreads primarily through the direct contact of an infected person who shows the virus symptoms like coughing, and sneezing. In addition to that, COVID-19 virus lives up to 72 hours on objects and surfaces so by touching these surfaces and objects anyone could get infected (WHO, 2020, 2021). As the globe is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency with the COVID-19 pandemic, travel and tourism are of the most affected industries cancelled flights, hotels and other hospitality businesses, forced to shut down, and travel bans put in place in practically all nations around the world (Poeta & Maragall, 2021).

Furthermore, the tourism industry has experienced tremendous deficits, due to the pandemic, with no chances for immediate recovery, as the UNWTO (2020a, b, c, d) statistics attest. They refer to the terrible effects of the pandemic left on the industry, namely through the global deficit of 900 bn USD. This worldwide loss of revenue for 2020, was a major blow for the economies of countries highly dependent on tourism as their related businesses also suffered greatly. The shock has an effect on both the demand (constraints on freedom of movement, border closures, and visitors' fear of virus) and supply (closure of accommodation and catering establishments as well as leisure and entertainment facilities used for tourism) sides (Ugur & Akbıyık, 2020).

Moreover, the pandemic's impact on global GDP growth is enormous. The COVID-19 economic crisis is the worst since World War II ended. And the World War I Spanish Flu, the pandemic that decimated 50 million people is also important not to forget. According to the World Economic Outlook Report the global economy contracted by 3.5% in 2020 (World Economic Forum, 2020a, b). In the following months, the COVID-19 pandemic may reach a peak and settle, but the already inflicted damage will persist for a longer duration. Thus, countries will need to take short, medium, and long-term actions to curb these severe economic damages (Rogoff, 2020).

However, incomes have been lowered as a result of their respective countries' governments' mitigating initiatives. The work-from-home directive, as well as the restriction of public meetings, the closing of eateries, and the early evening curfew, have resulted in shortened working hours, with certain organizations, particularly MSMEs with erratic cash flows, being forced to lay off personnel, at least, they should be required to take unpaid leave for an unknown period of time. Consequently, incomes have decreased, putting downward pressure on consumer spending (World Health Organization, 2020). Besides that, several recommendations were suggested to avoid the spread of COVID-19 virus: wearing facemasks, washing hands, social distancing, etc. Yet, due to this pandemic, the recovery of the tourism industry worldwide will take some time. In this research a qualitative method was used through conducting interviews and disseminating a google forms survey via WhatsApp, in order to study post COVID-19, tourism and sustainability (cf. Hall, et al., 2015; Kamran, 2020; Woyo, 2021). Our method was drafted from Sargeant (2012).

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