


## Chapter 38

# COVID-19 and Alternative Tourism: New Destinations and New Tourism Products

**Buket Buluk Eşitti**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5646-6166>  
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey

### **ABSTRACT**

*According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is expected to lose between \$900 billion and \$1.2 trillion in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also estimated that the decrease in the total number of tourists due to the COVID-19 pandemic will occur between 58% and 78%. It can be said that competition in the tourism sector will be experienced intensely among countries with alternative tourism diversity when evaluated in terms of outbreaks that may occur in COVID-19 process and after. In this context, it is seen that natural habitats, physical spaces isolated from society, digitalization, and smart tourism applications will gain more importance in terms of tourism activities and will come to the fore in the destination preferences of tourists. Based on this, this chapter aims to examine the subject of COVID-19 and alternative tourism in the context of new destinations and new tourism products.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

COVID-19 is a virus outbreak that occurred on December 1, 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei region of China (Singhal, 2020). The virus, which has the feature of spreading rapidly, spread to many countries in a short time due to the high active population and international travels. The transmission rate of the virus, which can be transmitted between individuals, has grown in mid-January 2020, and during this period, virus cases have been reported in various countries in Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020a) declared the COVID-19 as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. Then, on March 13, 2020, WHO (2020a) announced that

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## **COVID-19 and Alternative Tourism**

Europe has become the center of the COVID-19 crisis. Since the regions and countries that are within the impact area of the COVID-19 pandemic constitute the most important part of the international tourism market. Tourism sector has been one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (Uğur and Akbıyık, 2020). The policy of combating the pandemic, which was implemented with a focus on minimizing social mobility, negatively affected the airline transport, accommodation and food and beverage sector. It is envisioned that the compensation of financial losses in these sectors, which are the main components of tourism service, will take a long time.

Considering the impact of tourism on employment, it is estimated that pandemic-induced unemployment rates may reach serious levels. COVID-19, on the one hand, restricts the socializing feature of tourism, on the other hand, highlights the relaxing and healing properties of tourism. One of the most important ways to eliminate the psychological effects of quarantine and restriction processes on societies is the internalization of tourism activities. In the new world, “masked and distant” service principles, which has brought to human life by the Pandemic, will be only one of the sectoral practices (Gümüş and Hacıevliyagil, 2020).

What the pandemic brings and will bring in social life, it is thought that regulations will highlight alternative types of the tourism sector and customer preferences and expectations will focus on these types such as nature-based tourism and cultural tourism (Stone, Mogomotsi, and Mogomotsi, 2020; Flew and Kirkwood, 2021). Individual reflexes persuade and buy considering that the effect on the reception processes will be at the forefront not only during the pandemic, where hygiene is prioritized, but also in the post-pandemic process, the possible alternative touristic types should be supported against demand increases and their physical facilities and capabilities should be developed immediately.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which surrounded the whole world and killed tens of thousands of people, still continue today. Although vaccination started in the world as of December 8, 2020 (WHO, 2020b), it is difficult to put forward predictions about COVID-19 completion, and it is very difficult to predict what the consequences will be if it ends. But it is possible to say that in the new term after the COVID-19 pandemic, a high rate of digital age will begin in the tourism sector and a complete isolation period will begin (Barry, 2020). It is among the predictions that the robot age will begin in many parts of the world, that non-contact processes will be made, social distance, hygiene and sanitation will be the primary choice. Sterilized kitchens, disinfected transportation vehicles and hotel rooms, an increase in the demand of tourism personnel and tourists for masks and gloves, new technological systems in bellboy services, contactless use in room door cards and such innovations will be experienced in tourism sector as new tourism products. Although the financial burden of all these is high, it appears as a new marketing technique. From now on, instead of an all-inclusive system, an all-inclusive sustainable system will be offered. It is also envisioned that natural habitats and physical spaces isolated from society will gain more importance in terms of tourism activities and will come to the fore in the destination preferences of tourists. All these show that a new era will begin in tourism with new tourism products (Seyitoğlu and Ivanov, 2020). In this context, this chapter aims to examine the subject of COVID-19 and alternative tourism in the context of new destinations and new tourism products. This chapter sheds light on the new destinations and new tourism products that may be among the key factors in the future tourism preferences after COVID-19 process. First, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism will be explained to the readers. This will be followed by new destinations and new tourism products in the context of new tourism understanding after COVID-19. The chapter concludes with recommendation for future research and conclusion.

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