



Tourism in the Post-COVID Age

Tatiana V. Skryl and Marina Gregoric

INTRODUCTION

The tourism before and during the pandemic era has dramatically changed, not only in the frequency and the travel patterns together with the service delivery process of tourism and hospitality companies, but also in the tourist perception of certain tourist destinations and the tourism as a general concept. The freedom of travel versus travel restrictions and bans as well as differences in service consumption have changed the tourist needs, wants, and expectations during and after the pandemic. In terms of changing needs and consequences of lockdowns together with restrictions in the hospitality sector (the sector which is highly affected by COVID pandemic by being closed fully or partially for the past year, with the

T. V. Skryl (✉)

Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: Skryl.TV@rea.ru

M. Gregoric

University North, Varaždin, Croatia
e-mail: magregoric@unin.hr

tendency to continue so until the common immunity of world population is accomplished) there has been a significant shift in tourism concepts worldwide. Some destinations reacted fast and adapted to the situation by creating specific offers for domestic tourists and neighboring countries, while others closed their facilities and for the time being restricted international arrivals or banned them completely. Certain destinations were opening their borders during the summer season of 2020, while some still do not open borders for tourists but only for their residences and nationals.

Accordingly, the travel industry is adjusting its services and operations to offer safe and clean travel, while the tourism sector has to create a tourist experience with compliance to safe stays, distance, hygiene, controlled number of tourists in the destinations and sites, measures to enable the minimum risk of infection with COVID and maximum safety and security of tourists and guests. The challenge is seen in traffic control too, boarders crossing, crowds, traffic jams, and long hours of waiting while traveling by car to other destinations due to restrictions on the boarders, by busses, trains, but also by using public transportations in the destinations (taxi, tram, underground, bus, limo, trains, etc.). From the perspective of adjustments and restructuring to restart tourism, it is crucial to acknowledge the role and importance of all sectors involved in tourism and their interrelations (travel and hospitality, trade, ancillary services, amenities, and tourist attractions, together with agriculture, food production and food delivery to tourism and hospitality sector, small handicraft businesses, and infrastructure of destinations, etc.). The destinations must, more than ever, be able to offer medical services on the high level of quality and supply of medicines not only for COVID but also for other diseases because pandemic has led to the denial of many vital and necessary services and medicaments for other conditions and diseases of people worldwide. Understanding the issues with health and medical resources being limited in the past year of the COVID pandemic the tourism sector must adapt and offer tourist products ensuring tourists the safe stays in the destinations. There is a dilemma that needs to be answered and solved; how can destinations guarantee medical assistance to tourists, while at the same time not being able to accommodate their citizens. Those and many other issues are the new reality of tourism and new challenges of all destinations' management that needs to be answered and clarified if they want to retain and gain a certain market share. On the other hand, tourists seek new tourist products with the assurance of

destinations and tourist organizations being capable to satisfy new trends and needs influenced by the COVID pandemic as a disease but also by the consequences of lockdowns and restrictions, masks wearing, distance, self-centrism and psychological impacts on their mind, body, and souls. During the COVID pandemic, people changed mentally, and many are facing fearsome thoughts, depression, and other conditions which can be healed or improved by traveling, changing the environment, enjoying the tourist destination services of specific and selective types of tourism; nautical, medical, wellness, rural, eco, Eno-gastro, sports, cultural, etc. By acknowledging all the facts and circumstances, it is obvious that tourism is facing many challenges worldwide, and the task for destinations is not easy, to overcome the COVID pandemic crisis and recover, rethink, restart, and rebuild tourism into sustainability soon.

METHODOLOGY

As part of the research strategy, an extensive literature review has been applied and the analysis of the results is interpreted. The research is conducted using scientific methods of analysis and synthesis of recently published research papers and findings in the field of tourism, analyzing tourism trends during the COVID pandemic and predicting tourism development, and major changes in the future, known as tourism at the post-COVID age. The methods of induction and deduction in this research aim to identify the major trends and challenges in the tourism sector, but also to indicate the relevance and importance of changes in other sectors relevant for tourism success and modifications in tourist offers, creation of new and modified tourist products and services. The research is also conducted based on sources of domestic and international scientists, researchers, and scholars and their findings related to different aspects and consequences of the COVID pandemic on tourism and its relations to tourism, specific and selective forms of tourism, and the promotion of tourism in the digital era by using virtual and augmented reality.

Sustainable tourism has become a major goal of tourism worldwide intending to replace, reduce, and restrict mass tourism destinations and attractions with selective forms of tourism and compliance with the carrying capacity of destinations and sites (Oborin et al., 2018). The relevant sources of UNWTO and other tourist organizations are reviewed and

compared to destinations' compatibility with the UNWTO recommendations, and examples of good practices of selected destinations, tourism, and other supporting sectors worldwide are revealed.

RESULTS

The previous year 2020 has brought many changes in the way people travel but also has created new opportunities in terms of tourism development. COVID pandemic and the crisis that affected economies worldwide had an enormous impact on tourism. According to UNWTO data, in 2020 the tourism declined by 60–80% on the global scale during the COVID pandemic in comparison to 2019 (<https://www.unwto.org/COVID-19-and-tourism-2020>). It resulted in 1 billion of international tourist arrivals loss and the loss in international receipts of 1.3 trillion US dollars with an estimated loss in global GDP of over 2 trillion US dollars. Tourism reached the level of 1990 which is 30 years ago with a total of 338 million international arrivals in 2020 (–74% in comparison to 2019). Such impact results in 100–120 million jobs in tourism at risk. (UNWTO, 2020). Considering the impact of the COVID pandemic on the global tourism situation, it is obvious that the recovery of tourism will need a different development approach and the new era of tourism will begin. Given the characteristics of today's life, COVID-19 has spread globally and become a global problem and global crisis (Matakovic, 2020).

The WHO (World Health Organization) on 30 January 2020 declared the outbreak of COVID-19 to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern and issued a set of Temporary Recommendations. They emphasized that “tourisms response needs to be measured and consistent, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment, involving every part of the tourism value chain—public bodies, private companies, and tourists, in line with WHO's overall guidance and recommendations” (WHO, 2020). Some denied entry to destinations completely for the period of few months while some kept the entry opened but under more control and with introduced testing before or on arrival, with home or hotel quarantine.

Figure 15.1 shows the most common COVID-19 measures taken by governments in destinations as recommended by WHO in most of the countries worldwide (WHO, 2020). WHO states that “tourisms response needs to be measured and consistent, proportionate to the public health threat and based on local risk assessment, involving every part of the

Major COVID - 19 pandemic measures worldwide

- social distancing
- masks wearing
- no public gathering
- closure of hospitality premises (restaurants, bars)
- closure of entertainment and other premises (clubs, bars, cinemas, wedding halls, event halls, beauty salons, wellness, fitness centres, etc.)
- closure of other unnecessary services/shops etc.
- encouragement of online work where possible
- testing before departure
- testing on arrival
- hotel quarantine on arrival to destinations
- vaccinated passengers - free entry (not yet fully implemented)

Fig. 15.1 COVID-19 pandemic measures worldwide (Source: authors' processing)

tourism value chain—public bodies, private companies, and tourists, in line with WHO's overall guidance and recommendations" (WHO, 2020).

Taken into account that destinations worldwide introduced certain measures in early 2020 and continuously improve them until today, while opening and closing destinations for tourists depending on the number of infected people and growth or drop in the epidemic volume, the change in people's habits, daily lifestyle, work styles (transition to online or remote working wherever possible) and overall behavior can be identified. Such changes in people's lifestyle have an impact on their needs and want when it comes to future tourism. Safe destinations are the fundamental fact and trend to be acknowledged and taken into account while creating new tourist products and offers (Osipov et al., 2018). The post-COVID era will be characterized by tourist products and offers but their root can be seen in the change of people's perception about tourism and change in their behavior while consuming tourist products and services. The following cases of different destinations and their solutions to keep tourism at a certain level and to adapt to changed requirements, and still provide tourism services in changed concepts, are presented in research papers of different international and national authors (Gureyeva et al., 2017; Skryl et al., 2018).

In his paper, *COVID-19 crisis, implementation of security measures, and tourism*, Matakovic analyses tourism in the post-COVID era in the

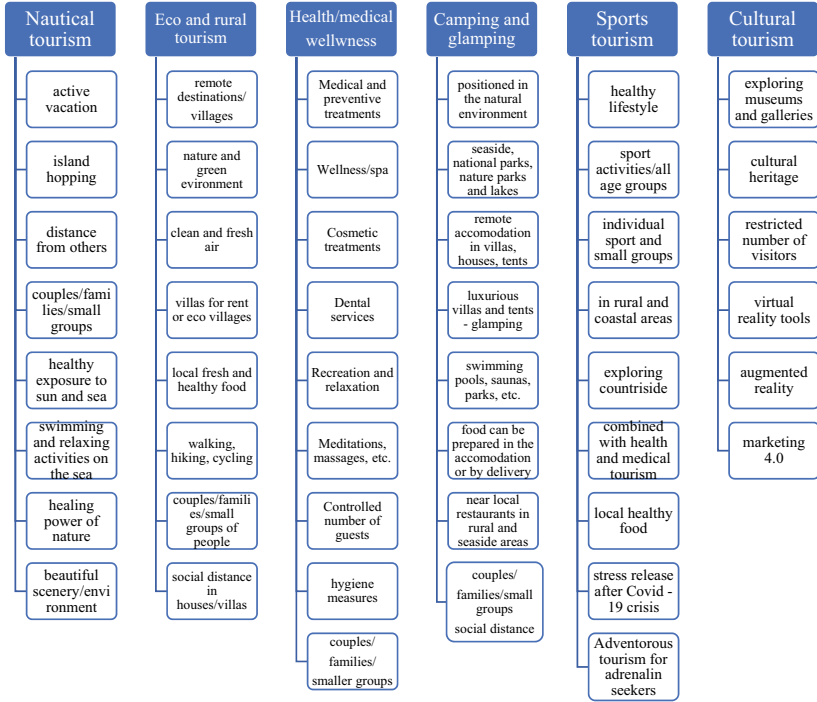


Fig. 15.2 Selective types of tourism and their adaptability to COVID-19 measures (Source: authors' processing)

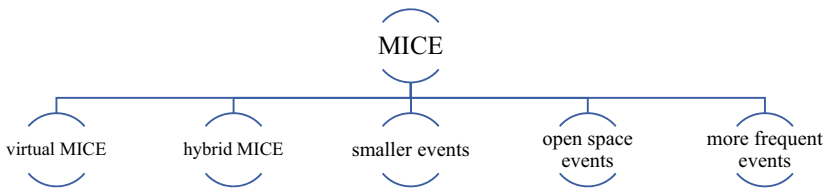


Fig. 15.3 MICE tourism as business tourism and its adaptation to COVID-19 measures (Source: authors' processing)

Republic of Croatia. He analyses measures taken by hotels in terms of detailed cleaning of rooms and their disinfection and concludes that it will still be present in the future because it was always done before too. However, measures of social distancing, such as wearing protective masks or security spacing have so far not been part of everyday life in tourism and it is difficult to assume what tourism will look like in the future. Matakovic predicts that even after the epidemic ends there will be the implementation of two types of safeguards, which should prevent a resurgence of the epidemic: One measure is a ban on foreign arrivals, and the second is the ban of trips abroad. There is also a solution for the Republic of Croatia to sign agreements with the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Austria, and Slovakia, around the opening of corridors for tourists in Croatia. Accordingly, the focus would be on the tourists who will travel by road transportation, mainly cars; not by air and the tourists will not travel too far. The main accommodation types would be campsites, accommodation in nature, private houses and villas, precisely because of the distancing opportunities (Matakovic, 2020).

The fact that Croatia is one of the safest countries in the world: Global Peace Index study from 2019 ranked Croatia 27th the safest country among the 163 countries in the world. Croatia has gone through the COVID-19 crisis less painful than other tourist superpowers such as Italy, Spain, or Austria. This can be seen as a comparative advantage in the future promotion of Croatia as a safe destination (Matakovic, 2020).

In the paper *Tourism after Corona: What will be different? What can be better?* (Kosuta Telisman, 2020) determines the following changes in future tourism:

1. Relations to space
2. Attitude toward health security
3. Relations to the environment
4. Human relationships and
5. Relations to technology.

All the changes are related to the consequences of the COVID pandemic and the need to adjust the number of tourists at the destinations, their behavior, distancing, travel and tourism patterns of behavior in compliance with pandemic measures, sustainability in all forms of tourism service consumptions and sites management, the relationship between

people with more respect and distancing and relations to technology by using different online possibilities of communication, presentation, and interaction with potential tourists and tourists.

Authors identified major problems in rebuilding its shattered tourism sector of Africa after the COVID pandemic and expect a slow rebuilding process of tourism with highlighting the fragility of the globalized tourism industry and Africa, being dependent on global visitation and global capital. The future may demand greater localization, higher levels of community engagement, and the capacity of policymakers and the private sector to listen to and respond to voices from these diverse African communities. (Rogerson & Baum, 2020).

According to Mekharat and Traore, global travel relies on departures from China, Hong Kong SAR, Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom. They assume that the destinations relying on tourists from these countries will be affected by the speed at which these nations recover, as well as the changes in their customers' behavior (Mekharat & Traore, 2020). Authors identify the importance of location and access (especially if accessible mostly by air) and in the infrastructure of destinations where they divide it into local transport, healthcare infrastructure, and IT infrastructure. Digital infrastructure and informatization of destinations can improve not only the immigration process, informing tourists before and during the travel, minimizing touchpoints but also the promotion and enhancement of experience while visiting tourist destinations and tourist attractions, such as museums, castles, and other cultural sites. As part of marketing 4.0 and digital marketing, the tourism sector already applies augmented and virtual reality in the promotion and service delivery process (Gregoric et al., 2019). The augmented reality helps tourism destinations to reach wider audiences, serving as a technology for delivering attractive media content and mobile applications, tailored to different levels of knowledge of tourists and users and it is used in the promotion of destinations. Virtual reality as part of the 4.0 industry represents the concept of computer simulation that aims to create a sense of presence in a virtual environment (Roncovic et al., 2019).

Authors Roncovic et al. (2019) elaborate how the tourist as a user could be placed in front of some attractive locations or within the destination in northwestern Croatia (or in any other destination) intending to encourage interest in visiting the same. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the research results show that potential tourists would like to gain insight into tourist destinations through new technologies and to promote tourist

destinations through industry 4.0 is a new step in the promotion to attract more potential tourists. (Gregoric et al., 2019).

The information is given to tourists before their travel could be done by using applications of virtual reality and introduce them to the whole process of arriving at the airport, departures, immigration process, tests sites at the airports, procedures, arrival to destination, quarantine hotels, sightseeing tours, health and safety issues in destinations, hotels, and other facilities, tourist attractions and health centers, if needed for the emergency purposes. The applications can be guides to tourists for the entire duration of the trip and assist them in infrastructural issues but also enhancing their experience in the destinations. Therefore, one of the major aspects to be considered in the post-COVID tourism era is the implementation of virtual reality in tourism to enhance the overall quality and satisfaction of tourists as well as the experience. The service industry, such as tourism is highly infused with experience, and today more than ever the tourism sector must create a memorable experience for tourists, especially after the COVID pandemic, when tourists are eager to travel, to relax, to revitalize, and to refresh their mind, soul and body. According to Pizam, the future of tourism could be perceived as a chance to add more quality to future tourist experiences (Pizam, 2010, as cited in Stankov et al., 2020). As a consequence, future travel will be less frequent, and it can be seen as an opportunity to be more valuable and specific. However, the results of market reports show that post-pandemic tourists will require more basic experiences especially as domestic tourists in domestic travel (staycation), and they will value more spending quality time with friends and relatives (Wootton, 2020, cited in Stankov et al., 2020). Stankov et al. (2020) “believe that the current pandemic could give rise to more mindful tourists whilst these, in turn, can give rise to more mindful and, ultimately sustainable tourist experiences”. Authors suggest that it should prompt tourism providers to respond to a new demand by adjusting currently unsustainable product offers to mindful tourists who will be able to promote, connect and support the whole tourism ecosystem for the benefit of all.

The study from New Zealand as a destination with lots of natural and cultural attractions directs us to the potential of applying the knowledge, lifestyle, and culture of their indigenous people to be implemented in other parts of New Zealand or any other destination. Indigenous tourism operators can contribute to adaptations and planning for the future welfare of their businesses, the local environment, and affected

communities. “The tourism future can be one encapsulating the indigenous social, environmental and cultural values that underpin ways of being and undertaking business—opposite to neoliberal, corporate models pre-COVID-19” (Carr, 2020). The study conducted in Sri Lanka suggests the future trends in rebuilding tourism and the following is to be considered: the growth of domestic travel compared to international tourism, the growth of tourism demand for tourism products related to the healing, well-being, heritage, culture, ayurvedic and medicine, the drop in demand for big events and festivals, which can lead to a price reduction in that area, but the VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) as a tourist product will grow rapidly. The MICE industry was greatly affected, and the solution is found in virtual and hybrid events which should be done in the future too (Ranasinghe, 2020).

The report of World Bank Group, *COVID-19 and tourism in South Asia, Opportunities for the sustainable regional outcome*, states that tourism pause during the pandemic is an opportunity for reinvestment in the environment, in parks, and cultural monuments, maintain natural parks, plant trees to upgrade the infrastructure within national parks and protected areas, clean rivers, and water channels, restore wildlife habitats, remove invasive species, clean pollution, and other coastal infrastructure (Twining & McComb, 2020).

If we try to explain the relationship between climate change and the consequences of COVID-19, there is a significance in observing how much nature and climate changed globally. The research conducted by Crossley where the intersections between the COVID-19 crisis and climate change was explored to help the understanding of tourist consumer behavior in terms of “persistent attitude-behaviour gap concerning sustainable tourism”. The author explores how the wildlife reclaiming urban spaces emptied by the coronavirus lockdowns, including famous tourist destinations, and much evidence is shared on social media. It can be seen as a “motif of environmental hope that symbolizes life, regeneration, and resilience”. According to the author, there is a challenge to design tourism by harnessing and channeling environmental hope which will heal the natural world (Crossley, 2020). The COVID pandemic and crisis give the perfect opportunity to select the new direction in tourism development by adopting a more sustainable path with the collaboration of the public, private and academic sector toward a greener and more balanced tourism (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020). As recommended by Ioannides and Gyimóthy the academics and scholars should

actively participate in “redesigning the curricula and educational activities to train students to gain skills in complexity-thinking, knowledge of post-capitalist economies and collaborative business models alongside with tourism scholars to build sustainable tourism”. According to the Matrix of potential evolutionary pathways toward tourism transformation, (Brouder, 2020), there is an implication that tourism can transform when there is institutional innovation on both the demand and supply side which will see the emergence of new path creation in the region (Yankovskaya et al., 2020).

The forecasts of the future of tourism in some research studies imply the need to focus on the tourists’ networks and movement of tourists toward different destinations. As per authors Jeon and Yang (2021), in order to satisfy tourist demand, various forms of tourism activities are taking place, evidenced by the discovery of previously lesser-known destinations and the use of contactless tourism services while the tourism market should be encouraged to promote local tourist attractions. Following this idea and research results of different authors we could say that the future of tourism in the post-COVID age has to focus on development of tourist supply and offer in less attractive destinations (which gives opportunity to investment, entrepreneurship, and rebuilding of tourism) while at the same time monitor and control the number of tourists visiting all (major, sites and less known) as well as to ensure so-called “contactless” services wherever possible. The study conducted in four tourist destinations in Japan shows that residents perceived moderate positive and negative impacts toward tourism in the region. The residents were strongly concerned about the effects of COVID-19 and engaged in infection prevention themselves. At the same time, residents felt a negative impact on the regional economy and tourism due to COVID-19. The residents understand the importance of tourism, but it is also important that destination managers can provide stakeholders, including residents, with proposed guidelines for tourists and discuss and modify the guidelines based on stakeholders’ feedback. Such actions and rules will also help tourists feel secure in the area. According to the authors, some DMOs in Japan are considering employing digital platforms as a marketing tool that will include tourist mobility data and it is seen as a good opportunity to add information regarding COVID-19 (Kamata, 2021).

DISCUSSIONS

The vaccination of people will play an additional role and there are already destinations accepting and planning to accept vaccinated people to enter destinations without quarantine and testing. The idea of introducing “COVID passports” may become a future reality, but there are some contradictions within the population on whether this is acceptable and in line with the freedom of people to choose. Some future development will show us the path when it comes to the treatment of vaccinated versus not vaccinated people. The authors recommend the following idea and model of redefining specific types of tourism. The model is based on the type of tourism perspective (creation of tourism supply) which can accommodate and satisfy the needs of tourists according to their preferences related to changed behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The major characteristics of tourists’ preferences to be included in all tourist products are related to health issues, hygiene, distance or contactless services, relaxation, passive and active sports and recreation, fresh air, sun and green scenery, wellness in a controlled environment, and availability of medical help (emergency).

The major corresponding types of tourism that could quickly adapt to COVID-19 measures are as follows:

- Eco and rural tourism
- Nautical tourism
- Health and Wellness
- Camping and glamping
- Sports tourism
- Adventurous
- Cultural tourism
- MICE

Other types of tourism can follow the examples of the proposed ones, but mass tourism such as SSS (sea, sand, and sun) must consider strong control over the carrying capacity at beaches, hotels, and resorts.

Besides health tourism, sports as one of the most important categories of tourism in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity to add value with the implementation of Aromatherapy and Aroma cosmetics to the post-COVID tourism forms. According to the research

conducted in Croatia, Aromatherapy and Aroma cosmetics are represented in some regions, but still, the majority of tourists are not aware of its healing effects on the human being. Authors find the aromatic positive impact in several different areas: from natural preparations, health food, festival of medicinal plants to festivals of certain aromas applied in the production of natural cosmetics which can be part of post-COVID tourism. Health tourism is seen as a positive contribution to tourism development, education, and the setting of new trends concerning the users of services appearing in health tourism can be applied in Croatia but in other countries worldwide too (Gregoric et al., 2020).

MICE tourism (meetings, incentive trips, conferences, and exhibitions) requires special attention due to its specific nature: business users, demanding guests, the most profitable tourism sector, high expenditures, seasonal character, and use of digital technology in organizing and delivering events, and follow-up activities. The most prominent cities in this sector of tourism Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Opatija, and Istria, and congress tourism represents an excellent way of promoting a destination because 40% of guests return to the destination in a private arrangement with their families or friends (Gregoric et al., 2017).

Considering current trends in the MICE industry, there is a growth of the demand of the buyers in MICE, for virtual events, and it will certainly be one of the trends that will continue in the post-COVID age.

CONCLUSION

Post-COVID tourism must focus on the development of new tourist products in the area of selective forms of tourism, emphasizing the well-being of tourists, health, safety, and security issues, and sustainability. In terms of the new selective approach the mass tourism is no more trend, the ways of travel change, aviation industry goes through a significant change of service concepts, COVID passports including vaccine certificates might be introduced and tourism on the global scale becomes known as rethink, rebuild and restart tourism.

The promotion of tourism and product development has already been introduced and will be more and more using virtual and augmented reality together with tools of marketing 4.0. In terms of benefits for destinations, domestic tourism already started to grow due to travel restrictions which will contribute to further development of destinations but also new opportunities for supporting industries. The challenges of

the tourism sector are many and there is a need for coordinated planning and restart of industry and strong cooperation with hospitality and travel sector that already started offering different services in line with social distancing, health, and safety, such as digital nomad packages, bubble trips and virtual meetings, virtual tours, etc. Some destinations already created new tourist products and are working on improvements taking advantage of the situation and improving the tourism results. In the future, it is expected competitive tourist market and sustainable destinations to be on the top of tourist choice.

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