Tourist Behaviour and the New Normal, Volume I

Implications for Tourism Resilience

Edited by
Shem Wambugu Maingi
Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar
Maximiliano E Korstanje

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"This book is an indispensable resource for anyone involved in the tourism industry. With its rich insights, practical recommendations, and a deep understanding of the complexities of tourist behavior, it is a roadmap to navigating the challenges and seizing the opportunities presented by the new normal. It is a must-read for tourism professionals, policymakers, and researchers seeking to build a resilient and sustainable future for the industry."

—Dr. Ye (Sandy) Shen, *Assistant Professor at California Polytechnic State University*

"This innovative and new book on tourism behavior explores trends associated with the changes derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. This means focusing on how tourism providers and businesses as well as consumers have changed. This is an important topic and provides for interesting reading. In addition, the book highlights the important role of sustainable tourism development. I highly recommend this book for its creative thinking and novel approaches."

—Vanessa Ratten, *La Trobe University*

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Editors

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Foreword 1

In the midst of the profound disruption wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, no industry has remained untouched by the dramatic shift in paradigms that characterizes our current era, widely referred to as the "new normal". Perhaps one of the sectors most profoundly affected by these changes is tourism, an industry fundamentally predicated on notions of mobility, cultural interchange, and human connection. Within this context, the need for scholarly interrogation that can help navigate these uncharted territories is paramount.

A resonant response to this call for nuanced understanding comes in the form of *Tourist Behavior in the New Normal: Implications for Tourism Resilience (Volume 1)*. This book, meticulously edited by Dr. Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar, Dr. Shem Maingi, and Dr. Maximiliano Korstanje, is a profound contribution to the academic discourse, offering an in-depth exploration of the myriad ways in which the tourism sector is being reshaped in light of the evolving realities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This volume represents a robust, collaborative endeavor that brings together the intellectual perspectives of 22 authors hailing from 14 nations. By capturing such a wide range of viewpoints, the book constructs a comprehensive lens through which the international academic community can view and understand the challenges and opportunities emerging within the global tourism landscape. This multiplicity of

perspectives, which transcend geographical boundaries, imbues the narrative with a richness that underscores both the commonalities and unique nuances of the pandemic's impact across different regions.

In its examination of the tourism landscape, this volume is characterized by an admirable depth and breadth of thematic exploration. It systematically deconstructs the myriad components of the tourism ecosystem, focusing on critical areas including visitor behavior, the experience economy, digital cultures, health measures, and the intersection of family life cycle with employee and visitor behavior. Through this comprehensive analysis, the book serves as a powerful resource that enhances our collective understanding of the diverse elements that define the tourism sector in the post-pandemic world.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a key framework that underpins the discussions in this book. These globally recognized targets offer an overarching roadmap for achieving sustainable development by striking a delicate balance between economic, social, and environmental factors. The editors and authors thoughtfully integrate this framework into their investigation of tourism resilience, providing a nuanced discourse that illuminates the path towards a more sustainable post-pandemic reality for the industry.

As we grapple with the daunting challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic, our ability to comprehend and respond to shifts in tourist behavior has become crucial. This volume offers an in-depth analysis of these changes, providing a comprehensive examination of the evolving patterns of consumption, preferences, concerns, and decision-making processes that characterize tourists in the new normal. Crucially, the book moves beyond merely diagnosing these shifts, delving into the critical question of how these changes influence the broader landscape of global tourism, and what implications this has for resilience and sustainable development in the sector.

Tourist Behavior in the New Normal: Implications for Tourism Resilience (Volume 1) goes beyond merely documenting and analyzing the profound shifts brought about by the pandemic. It explores the potential of these transformations to serve as catalysts for innovation, promoting the emergence of more resilient, sustainable models of tourism that align with the ideals of the SDGs. In doing so, the book offers a forward-looking

perspective, laying out a roadmap for recovery that will guide the industry's evolution beyond the immediate crisis. The book presents a vibrant academic discourse that invites readers to view the pandemic-induced challenges not simply as hurdles to be overcome, but as catalysts for transformation and opportunities for growth.

OTS Academy   Eugenia Wickens
Oxford, UK

Foreword 2

New Normal of the COVID-19 and Tourism Behavior

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to activities across sectors of the economy, including the tourism industry which is critical to local and international socio-economic developments. The pandemic has shown that the multifarious facets of society have been impacted, comprising psychological comfort to health issues, social, economic, cultural, political, technological, and environmental, all contributing to intricate scenarios that led to unexpected outcomes (Aldao et al., 2021). In the wake of the global economic recovery, the tourism industry is identifying key factors which influence consumer behavior to adapt to the 'new normal' (Sigala, 2020). In the post-pandemic era, resilience is a new moto in the tourism industry as being highly linked to crisis management in the process of rethinking the industry and promoting sustainable development goals (Sharma et al., 2021; Hu & Xu, 2022; Aldao et al., 2022). Understanding the tourist behavior in the New Normal post-pandemic is central to the growth of the tourism industry, and how it influences the tourist destination selection, the tourists' travel behavior and consumption patterns are significant in an attempt to revive the industry.

I wish to congratulate Associate Professor Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar, Dr Shem Wambugu Maingi, and Professor Maximiliano Korstanje on having edited this book entitled *Tourist Behavior in the New Normal: Implications for Tourism Resilience*. The nine thematic areas proposed in the book seek to address some of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and make novel contributions on multidisciplinary topics related to the dimensions of sustainability, tourists' behaviors and resilience, thus aiming to address the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' behavior. This book is a culmination of extensive research, innovative and creative ideas and approaches as well as practical implications in the context of tourism behavior and resilience from 22 authors from 14 countries. The book provides useful insights to students, researchers, policymakers, and other industry actors in tourism on issues, trends, challenges, and best practices from around the world to restart the tourism activities and on how various destinations can build resilience to deal with the current pandemics and beyond. The edited chapters involving international case studies examine resilience in the tourism industry, sustainable tourism development, and how tourists are adapting to this unprecedented situation and their decision to resume tourism services consumption. The book presents new strategies and protocols for meeting the challenges of tourism resilience and sustainable tourism development in the post-Covid-19 era to better understand the tourist behavior and tourist consumption patterns to consider the industry recovery and also ensure business models' sustainability. The contributions from the global experts to this edited volume have provided some very critical thoughts to identify the actions required to build resilience and sustainable tourism development to restore the tourism industry and recover the tourism consumption in the New Normal.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ATVs	All-Terrain Vehicles
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease
CTS	Cloud Tour Services
EU SME	European Union Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Centre
FIT	Foreign/ Flexible Independent Travel
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEI	Higher Educational Institutions
IBEF	India Brand Equity Foundation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ITB	Internationale Tourismus Borse
JASP software	Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program
JLL	Jones Lang LaSalle
KIPPRA	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
MTW	Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife
NGF	National Golf Foundation
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PMS	Property Management Systems
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Analysis
RMB	Renminbi (Chinese currency)

RT-PCR	Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SARSCOv2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSK	Self Service Kiosk
SSTs	Self Service Technologies
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
VFR	Visiting Friends and Relatives
WHO	World Health Organization
WOM	Word of Mouth
WTC	World Trade Centre
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
WYSE Travel Confederation	World Youth Student Exchange Travel Confederation

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Introduction: The Changing Landscape of Tourist Behavior—Navigating from the New Normal to the Next Normal

Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar, Shem Wambugu Maingi, and Maximiliano E Korstanje ⓘ

The COVID-19 pandemic has been more than a crisis; it is now seen as a global wake-up call for the tourism industry. This is clearly documented in the book published by Gowreesunkar et al. (2021): Pandemic is a new 'P' to be included in the usual list of marketing mixes (product, pricing, place, promotion, people, performance, and process) because it also

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affects customer behavior. According to Gowreesunkar et al. (2021), the success of a post-pandemic tourism industry lies in how destinations explore new opportunities offered by the '*new normal*'. Indeed, the *'new normal'* of the pandemic has shown a series of collective global actions geared toward tourism survival and recovery (Korstanje et al., 2020). This is also evidenced in webinars organized by leading international tourism organizations. For instance, the webinar titled: "Navigating Tourism Challenges During COVID-19: Strategies for Recovery" by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2021) aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the tourism sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic and at exploring strategies for recovery. Experts from various fields interpreted the new normal as a situation where collaboration was needed to survive and recover from the pandemic. Likewise, the WTTC webinar on "Reimagining Tourism in the Post-COVID World" (2021) discussed innovative strategies to recover and revive the sector. From the consumer side, studies show that tourists are now more likely to choose domestic destinations, shorter trips, and more flexible travel arrangements (Sigala, 2020; Prayag, 2023; Gowreesunkar et al., 2022). They are also more likely to be concerned about health and safety, and to be willing to pay more for travel that meets these concerns (Wen et al., 2020). Activities such as hiking, camping, beach visits, and wildlife exploration have gained popularity as people seek to maintain social distancing while enjoying their travel experiences. This trend is supported by a study conducted by Booking.com, which found that 59% of global travelers prefer destinations with natural attractions and outdoor activities post-pandemic (Source: Booking.com, "Back to Nature" Report, 2021).

In contrast to the "new normal," which was primarily focused on survival and recovery, the "next normal" demonstrates inclinations toward developing coping capacity and establishing resilience in the face of future crises (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021). These points are also well developed in the work of Smith and Johnson (2020) "Tourism in the Next Normal: Navigating Uncertainty and Building Resilience"; Davis and Thompson (2021) "Adapting to the Next Normal: Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Recovery"; Adams and Wilson (2022) "The Future of Tourism: Exploring Opportunities and Challenges in the "Next

Normal." As the world is still navigating from the new normal to the next normal, it is observed that the focus has shifted from recovery to resilience. The *"next normal"* of the pandemic shows unpredictable changes in tourist behavior and drastic shifts in their consumption pattern, necessitating a deeper understanding of their preferences, concerns, and decision-making processes. This knowledge is vital for fostering resilience and sustainable tourism development in the post-pandemic era. Undeniably, policymakers adopted new strategies and protocols to recover tourism consumption in a post-pandemic context. For instance, Thailand, Seychelles, and other countries approved programs that would admit tourists from "lower-risk" countries with special quarantine requirements. Fiji created "blue lanes" that will allow seafaring visitors to arrive on yachts and quarantine at sea. The trend also shows that COVID-19 is affecting tourism consumption and the sustainable development pattern of the global tourism industry. The pandemic has created another new reality for tourism, termed the "next normal" and the context shows that tourism stakeholders are looking for strategies and practices that enhance resilience and adaptability. The next normal is therefore defined by the ability to develop coping mechanisms, by embracing resilience-oriented practices, addressing vulnerabilities, and leveraging innovation and technology. A study by Noy and Sharpley (2020) emphasized the importance of building strong coping mechanisms to enable destinations to withstand future crises. Developing effective risk management strategies, diversifying tourism offerings, and strengthening infrastructure and resources are essential aspects of enhancing coping capacity. Resilience is a concept that has gained significant attention in the context of tourism. It refers to the ability of tourism systems and stakeholders to adapt, recover, and thrive in the face of adversity. Resilient tourism destinations and businesses are better equipped to navigate uncertainties, shocks, and changing market dynamics. Research by Ritchie et al. (2019) suggests that fostering resilience in the tourism sector involves building strong relationships, fostering innovation, and embracing sustainability practices. If sustainability practice is explained by maintaining a balance between the economy, society, and the environment, a change in tourist behavior impacts this balance (Gowreesunkar et al., 2023). For the sustainable development of the tourism industry, it is therefore important to

understand tourists' consumption pattern as well as their expectations including emerging trends. It is important to comprehend how changes in tourist behavior have an impact on the global tourism business and what are the implications for resilience and sustainable tourism development.

Against this background, the present book is oriented to give fresh answers to those questions. Drawing from 22 Authors from 14 countries (India, Hungary, Mauritius, Australia, Turkey, Greece, Kenya, UK, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Argentina, Spain, Greece, and California), *Tourist Behavior in the New Normal: Implication for Tourism Resilience* examines the impacts and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourists' behavior. The book seeks to document issues and challenges faced by stakeholders while confronting a resilient tourism industry. The book adopts a multidisciplinary and holistic approach that integrates different perspectives and dimensions of sustainability, such as economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects. The book also incorporates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for analyzing the linkages between tourist behavior and resilience.

The book is divided into four parts, each focusing on a different aspect of tourist behavior and resilience. The first part, "Visitor Behavior, Tourist Resilience, and the Experience Economy," examines how travel behavior has changed in the new normal and what lessons can be learned from successful destinations such as the Maldives. The authors of part 1 of the book are Maximiliano Korstanje, Shem Maingi, Vanessa GB Gowreesunkar, Pinaz Tiwari, Evangelia Rapti, Georgia Zouni, Anubha Mahender Singh, Sarah Hussain, Priyakrushna Mohanty, Mahender Reddy Gavinolla, Barak Atasoy, Oguz Turkay, Isaac Kimunio, Martin W. Nandelenga, and Steve Makambi. The second section of the book, "Digital Cultures, Information Resilience, and Visitor Behavior in the New Normal," explores the role of digital marketing, cloud tour services, and tech-savvy millennial travelers in the post-COVID-19 era. The authors are Eliyas Ebrahim Aman, Deborah Kangai, Árpád Ferenc Papp-Váry, I Nengah Subadra and Prithvi Roy, and Aruditya Jasrotia. The third part, "Health Measures and Visitor Behavior in the New Normal," discusses the challenges and opportunities of sports tourism and self-service technologies in the new normal of hospitality services. The authors of this

section are Martín-García María del Mar and Mengni Fu, Charles Arcodia, and Barry Fraser. The fourth part, "Family Life Cycle, Employee Behavior and Visitor Behavior in the New Normal," maps the new normal in Northern California and assesses the firm innovation capability, visitors' behavior, and sustainability of hospitality firms in Kenya. The authors are Pamela Lanier and Lora Templeton and Paul Njoroge and Hannah Bula.

Contributors of this book provide balanced integration of academic research and practical implications in the context of tourism behavior and resilience. They come from a range of global regions, and they provide adequate coverage of the chosen themes. The methodology is inspired by Yin (2012) who posits that the case study method is particularly suitable for developing theories, and this is the need of the day for tourism research in a post-pandemic context. This implies that destination managers from any part of the world may benefit from the book as it offers insightful information on different types of destinations (island destinations, land-lock destinations, desert destinations, culture and heritage destinations, and city destinations, among others). Moreover, the chapters altogether serve as a trusted source of reference to both tourism and non-tourism stakeholders. Ultimately, this comprehensive book, presented in two volumes, brings together a diverse group of authors from various countries, reflecting a global perspective on tourist behavior in the new normal. By covering a wide range of topics and dimensions, this book offers a holistic understanding of new realities that lie ahead in the post-pandemic tourism landscape. This is well represented in the phrase of Irwin LaRocque, secretary general of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM): "There is no way we can grow our way out of this hole we are in—unless we develop resilience" (Source: International Monetary Fund Report, 2020)

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Part I

**Visitor Behavior, Tourist Resilience,
and the Experience Economy
(SDG 12)**

2

How Has Travel Behavior Changed After the New Normal

Maximiliano E Korstanje

Introduction

At the end of 2019, a new virus outbreak was reported in Wuhan, China. Even if the world has faced the outbreak of viruses such as swine flu and SARS without mentioning the frightening Ebola, no less true was that nothing happened as planned for COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2). In a question of months, the first infected tourists arrived in Europe and later in the US. The COVID-1"9 pandemic put the capitalist system to an unparalleled halt. Governments adopted different restrictive measures to stop the circulation which encompassed the closure of borders, and airspaces, as well as the cancellation of international and domestic flights and lockdowns (Jones & Comfort, 2020). Today's statistics reveal that more than 640 million people have been infected while 6 million died globally. The devastating consequences of COVID-19 remain even to date. Having said this, far from being standardized the restrictive measures varied from country to country. Some governments rejected the

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implementation of long-lasting restrictive protocols, while others adopted extensive lockdowns. Whatever the case may be, the tourism and hospitality industries faced long-lasting negative effects that plausibly led them into a gridlock. Some scholars enthusiastically applauded the idea that returning to a sustainable atmosphere mainly marked by de-growth or slow tourism (Hall & Wood, 2021; Hall et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), whereas others focused their attention on how to study tourism in a world without tourists (Wen et al., 2021; Yeh, 2021). Neither as an opportunity toward a more sustainable society nor as a new object of study, COVID-19 ignited a new climate (economic stage) that some scholars dubbed as "new normal" (Korstanje & George, 2021). It is safe to say that the current crisis, which was certainly accelerated by COVID-19, seems to be far from being a founding event. We need to turn our attention to the end of 2001s when emerging global risks placed the tourism industry in jeopardy. Of course, the precautionary doctrine and the risk perception theory (which dominated the content of leading journals in tourism fields) set the pace for a new paradigm based on adaptation. Over the years, scholars hotly debated to what extent we can calibrate the instrument to measure and eradicate risks. The safety-security tourism occupied a central position in these discussions. Nowadays, studies focus on how resilient or adaptable a destination is before a disaster (Korstanje et al., 2022). As Romagosa (2020) puts it, methodologically speaking COVID-19 remains to be a gray zone, where little is known not only about the resiliency of tourism but also about the possibilities of new outbreaks emerging in the not-so-long distant future.

As the previous argument is given, this chapter, which is based on John Urry's legacy (above all his contributions in the fields of the tourist gaze), examines how travel behavior has changed in the new normal. In so doing, the chapter introduces a qualitative assessment of how travel behavior has shifted because of the pandemic. At first glimpse, Urry coined the term *tourist gaze* to denote the connection of lay citizens to a cultural matrix, which is constructed by a much deeper sign-exchange process where cultures, people, and landscapes are systematically commoditized. The tourist gaze, doubtless, can be defined as a surfacing process that probes the triumph of globalization over other forms of economic production. In a global world, not only do the national borders blur but

also the shared identities become exchangeable commodities (Korstanje, 2018; Tzanelli, 2015, 2018). For the sake of clarity, a careful review of John Urry will be expanded in the next section.

A Short Companion to the Tourist Gaze

As above noted, John Urry was a senior British sociologist, who does not need the previous presentation. He made substantial contributions to the fields of tourism, globalization, sociology of mobilities, and culture (only to name a few). Unfortunately, he died on March 18, 2016, in which case, he never saw the economic downturn generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To wit, Urry escapes to classic academic doctrines while exerting a radical critique of Marxism, and Althusserian structuralism. Per his viewpoint, citizens move in a cultural landscape (matrix) where ideology does not permeate (at least as Marxists enthusiastically applaud). The agency should be understood as a structuration of both forces, social institutions, and rules, and the self (biographically conditioned). Urry argues convincingly that any agency makes pertinent decisions by evaluating, negotiating, and exchanging with the status quo. The structure of ideology is not enough to explain why two rational agents make different decisions or take different paths (before the same stimuli). To put the same bluntly, there seems to be a type of autonomism that cannot be explained by structuralism. This happens because the relations between the state, the economy, and capitalist society are controversial and obscured by cultural forces (Urry, 1981). This moot point invariably sheds some light on modern sociologists who have turned their attention to the role of civic society in modern capitalism (Greenberg, 1982). In a seminal book, entitled *Economies of Sign and Space*, coauthored with Scott Lash, he contends that the capitalist system goes toward a decentralized facet where the borders between production and consumption are simply merged. The capitalist society is subject to *aesthetic reflexibility*, which is a term fitted against the rational reflexibility vaccinated by Giddens, where landscapes, persons, and cultures are exchanged as real commodities in a liberal marketplace. Citizens not only travel to visit exotic landscapes, they need to possess the "Other" through the tourist

gaze. The concept of tourist gaze is not associated with the Foucauldian term "medical gaze". Rather it is culturally enrooted to a matrix that marks what can be gazed at or not. It is not difficult to resist the impression that the tourist gaze is constructed and negotiated "with the alterity" and never structurally determined. The tourist gaze is structured in how risks are managed. What is more important, the wide net of experts grouped the world in two: the safe (civilized) destinations and the wild areas which are fraught with dangers and risks (Lash & Urry, 1987, 1993; Urry, 1992). Urry alerts that the question of mobilities starts from a philosophical dilemma. Not all agents in the system are mobile or are legally encouraged to move. Despite millions of tourists traveling throughout the globe, migrants and asylum-seekers are traced and deported in the Global North. As a leading paradigm, the mobilities theory should concentrate efforts to describe the material asymmetries of global capitalism. Not only human trafficking, poverty, or violence but also the negative effects of climate change should be placed on the tapestry (as Urry eloquently notes) (Urry, 2012, 2016; Sheller & Urry, 2016; Urry & Larsen, 2011). With the benefits of hindsight, Urry acknowledges that modernity and mobilities open the doorsteps to velocity but lead the agency to resign its natural freedom. The technological breakthrough applied to transport means has created faster machines, expanding the tourist gaze to the confines of the world but paradoxically entrapping the autonomy of the agent into standardized forms of consumption. Of course, drivers freely move, but only on limited (specified) roads. The legitimacy of the nation-state is expressly determined by its capacity to control mobilities and roads (Urry, 2004). Based on a contractual conception of the tourist gaze, Urry overtly accepts that the digitization process substantially shifted how tourist performances are embodied. The gaze is not the end but a vehicle to instrumentalize deep social forces. Since the tourist gaze is culturally framed, no less true appears to be that there are many ways of seeing. In consonance with this, what we gaze at is a previous filter of stereotypes, skills, desires, or expectations conditioned by class relations and education. At the time, the act of gazing at the "Other" is classified according to our inner-world desires, Urry strays further from the idea that the gaze is individually conceived because the figure of gaze is

engulfed in the power of the sign which is culturally performed (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

In a nutshell, echoing Urry, the tourist gaze mediates between hosts and guests, restructuring the leisure practices as well as the working conditions. Although tourists' relations emerge from the physical movement freely planned by the agency, it is regulated by strong social laws that permeate the organized work. In quest of something that leads us to live some outstanding experience, gazers construct their experiences through signs. In this way, tourists ultimately reproduce while interrogating the social structure. In so far as tourism plausibly derives from a postmodern phenomenon mainly linked to capitalist expansion, Urry reminds us that any epoch (regardless of the means of production may be) keeps its proper travel behavior. For the modern social imaginary, traveling equates to a sign of status that reproduces social inequality. Those citizens who are unable to move are deprived of their status. This suggests that tourism molds inter-class relations as well as the social hierarchy (Urry & Larsen, 2011; Larsen & Urry, 2011). Furthermore, to what extent the tourist gaze is individually or ideologically constructed leads Urry to bolster a hot academic debate with Dean MacCannell. Whereas Urry holds that the ideology never penetrates the agency's elections, MacCannell signals a supra-structure (which emanates from the efficacy of ideology not only to mediate between leisure and work but also to conceive the modern cosmology). Urry goes on to stress:

> We argue in this book for the fundamentally visual nature of many tourism experiences. Gazes organize the encounter of visitors with the "other", providing some sense of competence, pleasure, and structure to those experiences. The gaze demarcates an array of pleasurable qualities to be generated within particular times and spaces. It is the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experience while away, identifying what is out-of-ordinary, what are relevant differences and what is other. (Urry & Larsen, 2011: 14)

This above-cited argumentation poses some dilemmas for Urry's theory, which says that not only the tourist gaze varies on culture or time, but also it transcends the threshold of time (MacCannell, 2001; Korstanje,

2018): how might we interpret the recent COVID-19 outbreak? Is this issue explaining the end of tourism and the tourist gaze (at least as we know it)?

The Crisis of Tourism in a Post-COVID-19 World

Over the years, experts failed to reach a consensus to highlight that the tourism industry entered a terminal crisis (Visser & Ferreira, 2013). In consonance with this, the term "crisis" denotes an ongoing process that straddles the natural reaction of the social system. The specialized literature suggests that crises are often triggered by sudden and global risks which take a hit suddenly leaving the system without an efficient answer (Visser & Ferreira, 2011; Ritchie & Jiang, 2019; Ross, 2017). Under some conditions, these crises evolve toward specific patterns or cycles, while in others they terminate abruptly with the affected destination (Hall, 2010).

As the previous backdrop, Visser and Ferreira (2013) understand that the turn of the twentieth century has brought some global risks which put the tourist system into a serious crisis. These risks include terrorism, political violence, and the economic downturn as well as an acceleration of climate change (without mentioning natural disasters). Per their viewpoint, the current crisis is more palpable in the Global North than the South, but it depends on how its impacts are mitigated. Whereas some countries have succeeded in placating the crisis aftermath, others have succumbed. Even in the constellations of the tourist system, the crisis has different effects in its parts translating into opportunities for some sectors. The opposite is equally true; some sectors face cyclically constant crises no matter their geographical location. In earlier studies, M. Korstanje called attention to the failure of risk management to prevent crises in future scenarios. Based on a precautionary logic, risk perception and risk management devote resources to locate and eradicate those risks that threaten the system. Over the years, these risks have been aggravated or made more complex, leading specialists into a puzzle. As a result of this, risk perception theory has been replaced by resilience or paradigms marked by the figure of adaptation. What is more important is that risk

perception theory tends gradually to maximize some low-impact risks while other high-impact ones are minimized. Whatever the case may be, the obsession for a risk-zero community leads to an irreversible state of crisis and disaster (Korstanje, 2011, 2020a; Korstanje & George, 2022). It is important to mention tourism was facing a particular crisis when COVID-19 sparked. The pandemic does not mean the end of tourism, but the corollary of an already-existing state of crisis generated by the turn of the century. The concept of the tourist gaze which historically inspired students and scholars in their discussions set the pace for a new "wicked gaze" where tourists are labeled as undesired guests. There are some parallels between 9/11 and COVID-19 that deserve further debate (Barbosa et al., 2021). In the days after the attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC), all potential citizens (above all, minorities) were blamed to be potential terrorists. A neighbor, a colleague, or a partner may be suspected to be a future terrorist. This founding event not only woke up the US as well as the West from the slumber but also inaugurated a new climate of fear where nobody felt safe anytime and anywhere. Without any doubt, the so-called War on Terror declared by Bush's administration began with a climate of paranoia that gradually implanted the doctrine of living with the enemy inside. In the post-COVID-19 context, we are potential terrorists (or carriers of a lethal virus) which may jeopardize the health order. In consequence, the restrictive steps are chiefly accompanied by surveillance technologies and techniques oriented to control "the tourist" (Korstanje, 2020b). Some studies have warned of the risks of geopolitical tensions, expressions of racism or separatism against foreign tourists, or even tourist phobia. In these new (fractured) geographies, the world has been re-feudalism leaving atomized countries with low interaction with neighbors. The pandemic has buttressed not only new travel bans and protocols but also travel behavior worldwide (Korstanje, 2021; Wassler & Talarico, 2021; Mostafanezhad et al., 2020). Notwithstanding this fact, claiming that tourism is in a terminal crisis because of COVID-19 is like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The tourism industry, as well as the global geographies brilliantly described by John Urry, is mutating toward unknown dimensions and shapes. In the next section, we shall discuss in what direction travel behavior goes.

Emerging New Geographies

Without any doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought innumerable changes and challenges to society. The rise of new geographers, as well as geopolitical relationships (among states), has been some of them (Korstanje & George, 2021, 2022). As E. Brunet-Jailly eloquently notes (2022), COVID-19 changed substantially the travel behavior as well as the biological borders of mankind as never before. She offers the metaphor of the Trojan horse to explain better how the virus infects the hosting cells and collapses the human bodies. One of the problems this virus has is not the infection, and of course, this is not a matter of wording, but its velocity of reproduction. Farfetched as it may sound, the overreaction of T-cells may potentially kill the host. Since the virus does not survive a long time out of the infected cells, social distancing or individual distancing helps in stopping the contagion. The biological borders (which means the distance among hosts) mainly marked almost all social interactions in the new normal. Bordering this new COVID-19 tells much about how borders will be constructed in the twenty-first century. The figure of the physical distance represents a gap between death and infection. R. Tzanelli (2021) dubs the term "neocolonial archives of the virocene" to denote a new process of low mobilities where bodies are trapped in quarantine, while the itinerary of viruses on the earth expands. Any emerging pandemic reveals (if not aggravates) the material asymmetries between the Global North and South. One of the conceptual contradictions of the literature suggests that COVID-19 represents a terminal crisis for mobilities today. COVID-19 has accelerated a deep economic crisis while other crises have been overlooked. She enumerates not only the current climate change but also the problems of radicalization, chauvinism, and racism as one of the major risks of the West in the years to come. At the same time, Korstanje and George (2021, 2022) speak to us of the end of hospitality as the precondition for symbolic barriers erected to prevent social relationships. In the new normal, not only "the Other" is demonized and avoided, but also relations are curtailed. Banerjee (2021) alerts us that we are moving toward a state of symbolic fragmentation where the "Other" is plausibly negated. In this fractured society, human emotions are being gradually radicalized generating various negative impacts at different

levels of society. Another paralleled consequence has been the construction of *an artificial world* characterized by a stronger digital interaction designated for the more vulnerable citizens to remain safe at home. Paradoxically, the poorer citizens were encouraged to be essential workers and ultimately have been infected and died. The biopolitical discourse (which consisted of testing, tracing, and isolating) was ultimately the only winner in the pandemic. It is safe to say that COVID-19 initiated the end of the Anthropocene and the rise of virocene (Oakes, 2021; Dalby, 2022; Saunders, 2022). M. Goodchild (2022) overtly said that the crisis (in a post-COVID-19 world) implements the science of knowing where (the new governmental policies) should be applied. The service of GPS, associated with artificial intelligence (AI), allows the fast process of a considerable volume of information to trace back the itinerary of citizens and its potential to infect others. Having said this, the citizens' identities seem to be interrogated further based on public health and national security. It is not difficult to resist the impression that suggestive alterations in the ways of traveling, as well as the notion of the alterity, have been imposed as new challenges social scientists should very well decipher. We shall approach a new argument based on multiple variables such as contemplating, mobilities, human rights, wicked gaze, privacy, and the biological passport.

(Low) Mobilities

As widely debated in earlier sections, the question of (im)mobilities has occupied a central position in the academic debate in the new normal. Historically, the ideological core of the modern nation-state, as well as nationhood, is centered on mobility. The authority of nations emanates from the possibility to restrict or encourage their citizens' mobilities (Korstanje, 2018). This conception is more palpable whenever a dissident group or worker unions decide to block roads, highways, or streets (Cresswell, 2008). Of course, this does not authorize all (free) citizens to have the right to travel in the strict sense of the world. As Zygmunt Bauman has brilliantly explained, while some privileged citizens (like tourists) are legally encouraged to travel elsewhere, migrants and

asylum-seekers are doomed to immobility (Bauman, 2017). This happens simply because the sense of mobility is given or rejected depending on social status. Mobilities are mainly based on the power of the market to reproduce the capital. However, these restrictions on mobilities have become a question of security and safety administered by the state during the pandemic. Governments disposed of different restrictive measures to stop public circulation. These measures included the closure of borders and airspace, the cancellations of international flights, as well as the lockdowns, and social distancing. While these steps were temporal, the return of the flights was accompanied by bureaucratic protocols that requested the presentation of new documents. Last but not least, the concept of mobility as a basic right protected by the Constitution was not only affected but placed upside down (Adey et al., 2021; Sheller, 2020). Mimi Sheller (2020) coined the term "dangerous mobilities" to refer to the necessary performative to move in an ever-mutating world where any change in any part affects the system seriously. The pandemic has generated a double effect. On one hand, it traversed all nations and administrations putting all citizens in equal conditions before the risk of being infected. On another, the emptied hotels have been recycled as hospitals to give attention to infected people. At the same time, low-income workers have been enthralled as essential workers exposing them to the virus. As Sheller certainly notes, it is not surprising that some minorities and other relegated communities experienced higher rates of casualties resulting from the health inequalities that have been aggravated during the pandemic. This behooves us to suggest that the problem of rights should be placed in the foreground. Is the pandemic vulnerating human rights?

Human Rights (Right to Travel)

To what extent the right to move or circulate freely is a basic right has been put as a matter of debate in different academic circles (Kaplan et al., 2020). Several studies have denounced the human rights violations at the hands of security forces during the pandemic (above all in undemocratic nations) (Onuoha et al., 2021; Korstanje et al., 2021). Bianchi and Stephenson (2014) have traced back the origin of the right to travel as an

invention of the twentieth century. As a fundamental right, the act of traveling is culturally engulfed in the ideology of the capitalist system (or what authors called the DNA of Westernized society). Tourism and travel are defined as something more complex than leisure activities; they are key forces that drive toward economic prosperity and democracy. However, the flux of first-world tourists contrasts with the surveillance technologies applied to curtail the rights of undesired travelers (which means migrants and refugees). This reminds us that the act of traveling reinforces the problem of status, aggravating inter-class inequalities (Bianchi et al., 2020).

In this vein, M. Korstanje (2021) has scrutinized the right to travel in the context of uncertainty and emergency. For the sake of clarity, we must return to John Urry's sociology and the concept of the tourist gaze. The architecture of the modern nation-state is molded by the possibility to regulate hospitality, which means the right to accept or reject foreigners. Hospitality seems to be not only the basic right of the state but also the cornerstone of Western civilization. Over centuries, the power and expansion of imperial nations have been regulated by hospitality. Having said this, hospitality has been incorporated as a basic right by the Constitution. Korstanje uses the word, *undesired guest*, to denote how the fear of strangers is harming Western hospitality. The "Other" who has been an object of curiosity (as an example in Urry's discussion) is now treated as an undesired guest, as a potential terrorist who carries a silent (deadly) virus. It is safe to say that this is inscribed in the spirit of what experts dubbed "the doctrine of living with the enemy inside" which was triggered just after 9/11. The fear of the "Other" (foreigner) invariably leads to a climate of paranoia and hostility that crystalizes in the *wicked gaze*.

The Wicked Gaze

Let's clarify for readers that wicked is a term that originated in a biblical quotation to signal to those evil-doers who deserve punishment. In the threshold of time, the term was applied to denote evil or morally wrong acts. Having said this, the wicked gaze was originally coined in Korstanje's (2020b) book chapter entitled "Passage from the Tourist-Gaze to the

Wicked Gaze". In this text, he holds the thesis that the globalization process, at least as it has been imagined by Urry, has been abruptly terminated. This process has not started with COVID-19 but rather was reaffirmed. Per Korstanje, the turn of the century accelerated a process of decomposition or re-feudalization characterized by successive economic crises accompanied or not by stagnation and inflation, as well as the rise of global risks. The tourist gaze, which played a leading role during globalization, has set the pace for a wicked gaze, connoting certain hostility against foreign tourists. Tourist phobia, as well as chauvinist expression directed against foreign tourists, appears to be part of this phenomenon (and not part of the discontent for the negative effects of mass tourism as the literature emphasizes). The emerging limitations of Western nations to deal with strangers have been brilliantly discussed by George Ritzer and Tom Selwyn. It was explained by the emergence of a sentiment of intolerance re-directed against the strangers that ultimately draws the new geopolitical tensions and border negotiations. As an all-encompassing institution, hospitality enters a state of crisis in the West (Selwyn, 2019). Ritzer goes beyond holding that the capitalist system has been expanded through the mechanization of social relationships which engendered a climate of depersonalization and mistrust. As a result of this, hospitality mutated into hostility. The violation of privacy by government intrusion is another point of discussion that deserves our attention.

Privacy

One of the aspects vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic has been doubtless the citizens' privacy. But it is far from being a new phenomenon. Snowden's scandal revealed how the American government not only spied but also intruded on their citizens' private lives. In the name of homeland security, citizens were illegally scrutinized through the implementation of sophisticated digital technologies. Lyon and Bauman (2013) have exerted radical criticism of the application of technology to control citizens. In their book *Liquid Surveillance*, they explore the connection between the War on Terror and the fear of strangers, with the obsession for a risk-zero society. There is a much deeper logic of

surveillance rooted in the core of capitalism. The instrumentalization of the "Other" does start neither with terrorism nor with COVID-19 but accelerates the conditions of digital surveillance reproduction. To put this simply, in a liberal market where consumers are exchanged as products (probably this represents a point of convergence between Bauman and Urry), surveillance is orchestrated to monitor the deviant agents (that invariably are those relegated from the market). While tourists are preserved in their privacy, migrants do not have the same luck. Digital surveillance, which was aggravated after 9/11, says two important things. On one hand, it is imperative to regulate and control the "stranger" no matter where they come back. On another, the employed technology marks the citizens as "good persons" exorcized from the labels of criminals. COVID-19 has expanded the logic of surveillance to all citizens.

Biological Passports

Anthropologically speaking, passports have been documents issued by Kingdoms to authorize and individualize travelers in the Medieval Age. A passport has a double (if not significant) function for authorities. At a closer look, they certified the identities of travelers, but at the same time, its itinerary. Over the centuries, the technologies to produce passports have notably improved. In terms of Derrida, the passport should be understood as a document that probes the hospitality given. The origins of hospitality begin with two questions for the guest: who are you and what do you want? The term visa comes from Lat. *Visum* which is the past tense of *videre* (to see). Through the passport, the state reserves the right of hospitality inspecting the guests' intentions. Passports not only speak to us of our intentions and identity but also make overtly our itinerary once accepted in the country. This was the main reason why over the years, passports have been falsified (above all, for those minorities or forced migrants, their entrance was not granted). COVID-19 puts the problem of the biological passport in the tapestry. Unlike any document, the biological passport cannot be falsified. It is a natural certificate that shows the guests have the necessary antibodies or are correctly vaccinated not to be infected at the destination. The biological passport has aroused

a hot debate worldwide because those who originally refused to be inoculated are seen as potential dangers to health security. If the classic passport indicates segregation between first-world tourists and vagabonds, a problem based on status and capital, the biological passport inaugurates a new inter-class hierarchy based on biology (Korstanje & George, 2021, 2022).

Conclusion

At the end of 2019, a new virus known as SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) was originally reported in the city of Wuhan (China). Soon the virus spread in Europe and the US, starting one of the worst pandemics of the twentieth century. Governments desperately adopted restrictive protocols to stop the contagion. These restrictive measures included international and domestic flight cancellations, as well as the imposition of stricter lockdowns and travel bans worldwide. Over more than two years, countries faced the devastating consequences of COVID-19. It is safe to say that one of the most affected sectors was the tourism industry. Some scholars applauded COVID-19 as a new opportunity for a more sustainable form of consumption, while others understood the situation of the end of tourism (at least as we know it). Despite the numerous publications as well as the attention this theme captivated in scholarship, few empirical studies measured the real consequences of COVID-19 in the tourism industry. Having said this, the lack of qualitative research that ultimately describes the indelicacies of the pandemic in travel behavior is far from any discussion. This chapter contributes with a set of different considerations to understand how tourism changed in the new normal. At a closer look, British sociologist John Urry coined the term "tourist gaze" to symbolize the rise of a new stage of capitalism known as globalization. Tourists were ambassadors of culture and prosperity in quest of novel landscapes and cultures. But things have substantially changed. Tourists are today demonized as silent carriers of a lethal virus or enemies of society. There is an interesting phenomenon associated with tourist phobia, chauvinism, and separatism that needs further attention. The thesis held in this book chapter seems to be that in the new normal, tourists are undesired guests!

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3

What Made Maldives a Preferred Tourist Destination in Asia During COVID-19? Lessons for the Indian Tourism Sector

Pinaz Tiwari

Introduction

Crises are inevitable and lead to both negative and positive outcomes for society. One such crisis hit the world in the year 2020 named COVID-19. After being spread to different parts of the world within a short period, the World Health Organisation declared it a "pandemic" in March 2020 (World Health Organisation—Europe, 2020). The pandemic disrupted the global structures and brought significant transitions in the economic, socio-cultural, technological, and political systems across the world (Korstanje et al., 2022; Sigala, 2020). Considering the highly contagious nature of the novel coronavirus, the governments of various countries closed down their borders, causing an indefinite halt in the movement of people. Restrictions to travel, flight cancelations to and from affected countries, and issues of travel advisories were some of the immediate actions taken by the countries. At the micro level, lockdowns, mandatory

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quarantines, social distancing measures, and work-from-home measures impacted people's physical and mental well-being. While at the macro level, businesses, financial markets (Ozili & Arun, 2020), and governance got severely affected. As thousands of businesses shut down permanently (Sraders & Lambert, 2020), the halt on global travel posed a survival challenge to the tourism and hospitality industry (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020).

Before the pandemic, the tourism sector in the Asian region was growing at an unprecedented rate with several strong growth factors such as culture, hospitality, and cost-effective packages to count a few (WTTC & JLL, 2019). However, the sudden decline in tourist arrivals predominantly affected the economies which were dependent on tourism. One such country is the Maldives, where 79% of the export earnings come from tourism (United Nations, 2020). Moreover, as income from tourism constitutes about 66% of the Maldivian GDP (United Nations, 2020), the outbreak of COVID-19 had a devastating effect.

Despite the catastrophe of COVID-19 on the economy of the Maldives and especially the tourism and hospitality sector, the country has emerged as one of the preferred destinations. While studies have focused on the resilient nature of the tourism industry (e.g., Wieczorek-Kosmala, 2022; Prayag, 2020), none of the studies have documented and discourses the strategies adopted by Maldives that made it the preferred tourism destination amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The emerging literature on COVID-19 and tourism has broadly focused on measuring the socio-economic impacts (Nicola et al., 2020; Saha & Bhowmik, 2020), impact on higher educational institutes and tourism education (Tiwari et al., 2022; Crawford et al., 2020; Tiwari, Kainthola, & Chowdhary, 2020a), tourists' behavior and dynamics (Tiwari & Chowdhary, 2022; Ivanova et al., 2020), and extending the conceptual frameworks concerning crisis management in tourism and hospitality (Gössling et al., 2020; Jiricka-Pürrer et al., 2020). The study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the policy adoptions and steps undertaken by two South-Asian countries, namely Maldives and India, to help recover the tourism sector amidst COVID-19.

After the crisis outbreak, the sector is focusing on domestic tourism for its revival (Tiwari & Chowdhary, 2022). The existing literature on crisis management in tourism has highlighted the need to encourage domestic

travel initially (Backer & Ritchie, 2017; Manhas & Nair, 2020; Wen, Wang, & Kozak, 2020a). However, attracting foreign tourists is equally vital for the long-term growth of tourism in a country. Countries like Dubai, Maldives, and Singapore are leading examples of tourism revival amid the global health crisis (Tewari, 2021). The Republic of Maldives is reliant on the tourism sector, and thus, the government took various steps to minimize the impact of the crisis. Subsequently, the country opened its borders in July 2020 and offered a safe tourists' experience at the destinations.

The present study questions the reasons behind choosing Maldives as a tourist destination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the research examined the factors that led to the quick recovery of the Maldives' tourism sector and its emerging as a preferred destination by tourists. Based on the strategies implemented by the Maldives' tourism body, a comparative analysis is conducted. The descriptive comparative analysis between the Indian and Maldives tourism sectors would emphasize the suitable crisis management practices for the tourism industry. Managing an unprecedented crisis like COVID-19 requires cohesive efforts by different countries and business stakeholders for effective destination management (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021). Both India and Maldives are part of the SAARC nations and have joined hands in rendering financial assistance to fight the pandemic. Moreover, the management of the tourism sector in a crisis becomes pertinent when it contributes significantly to the country's GDP, earnings, and employment. Therefore, with the help of critical analysis, the study would present strategic implications for the Indian tourism sector.

Literature Review

The ripple effect of the COVID-19 virus is conspicuous in the global economy ever since it was first reported on 31 December 2019 by the Chinese government to the World Health Organization (WHO), which later declared COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (Williams & Kayaoglu, 2020) due to its rapid spread (Gretzel et al., 2020). The national authorities resorted to measures restricting the further spread of

the disease through stratagems affecting the world in ways unthinkable before. The ease of traveling was considered one of the significant ways of facilitating the highly contagious virus through territories (Niewiadomski, 2020). Thus, to curtail the spread of COVID-19, it became necessary for governments to close down borders, suspend international transportation, and employ measures for social distancing (Ebrahim et al., 2020). International tourism witnessed a low of 22% in the first quarter, and it is expected to fall further by 60–80% over the year. The UNWTO report mentioned the decline in the arrival of 67 million international tourists up to March transpired into an overall loss of US $80 billion. Also, the repercussions are visible in the loss of several jobs worldwide with millions of livelihoods at risk.

COVID-19 and Maldives

The tourism sector is said to be the worst affected by the crisis due to several factors. These include travel restrictions, flight cancelations, perceived risks of traveling, lack of preparedness, and lack of government financial assistance. This resulted in the loss of revenue; job loss; the shutdown of micro, small, and medium enterprises; and other socio-economic and psychological issues among different stakeholders involved (Korstanje et al., 2022). The impact of COVID-19 is worse in countries that are highly dependent on the sector. The Republic of Maldives earns its major income from the tourism and hospitality sector. Being one of the United Nations Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the country is visited by about a million visitors annually before the pandemic (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). However, the UNWTO forecasted that the pandemic would shrink the global tourism sector by 20–30% in 2020 (UNWTO, 2020). Talking about the impact of COVID-19 on SIDS, Hamilton (2020) emphasized that countries will be greatly affected and incur losses without having alternative sources of foreign exchange revenues.

The impact of COVID-19 was manifold in Maldives, ranging from demographic, financial, socio-economic, and psychological. Musthafa et al. (2020) stated that receiving more tourists would lead to high-risk or epidemic-prone infections being imported into the country. Furthermore,

the density of the island (i.e., 786 per hectare) makes it more conducive to diseases. This highlights the underlying relationship between the demographic impact of COVID-19 and tourism activities. Apart from the demographic impact, Maldivian tourism faced the aftermath of COVID-19 due to the loss of employment. The island has one of the largest numbers of jobs in the informal sector (National Bureau of Statistics, 2014), and tourism is the major employment sector (United Nations, 2020). In the same context, Saha and Bhowmik (2020) analyzed the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on SAARC countries. The study reported the severe impact of the pandemic on the Maldives owing to its greater dependence on the sector. The closure of the borders and travel restrictions within the country caused the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the country (Musthafa et al., 2020). Subsequently, the people working in the resorts lost their jobs (Saha & Bhowmik, 2020). With financial uncertainties, mental and psychological stress bothers the tourism stakeholders involved at the destination.

In March 2020, Maldives reported its first case and continued to rise in the later months. At the time of writing this chapter, the country has 14,513 cases and 50 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). The novel coronavirus spread to Male City in April 2020, threatening the health of almost 0.5 million people of the country's population (Worldometer, 2020). Similar to other countries, the Maldivian government took preventive measures ranging from restrictive travel within the islands, to closing down the country's borders, and other public spaces (Suazana et al., 2020). The lockdown lifted in July 2020, and the Maldivian government decided to open borders for foreign travelers. However, some of the less restrictive measures such as wearing masks mandate in public spaces, contact tracing, and testing continue.

Suazana et al. (2020) reported a range of measures undertaken by the government of Maldives. These include building trust in local medical and health experts, constant communication and awareness about the disease and risk involved, prioritization of public health over economic and other detrimental challenges faced by the economy, and coordinated intensification of interventions. Constant communication during a global crisis is a crucial step to eliminating misinformation. Musthafa et al. (2020) found that 1 out of 11 Maldivians believe that the pandemic

is a hoax, and the majority belong to the rural community. Therefore, creating awareness through traditional and social media platforms was adopted and implemented not only by the Maldives but also by several other countries worldwide. In the year 2020, Maldives received the award for World's Leading Destination owing to its quick recovery and offering safe travel experience to tourists (Ministry of Tourism, 2021).

COVID-19 and India

The tourism and hospitality industry has grown unprecedentedly in the last two decades in India. The country offers great diversity in tourism products such as spiritual, adventure, medical, leisure, and cultural that enhance the tourists' experience. This growth has contributed significantly to the country's GDP, revenue, and generation of employment opportunities for the skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workforce. The World Travel and Tourism Council reported that tourism's contribution to India's GDP was 9.2% in 2018, with more than 42.9 million direct and indirect jobs (WTTC, 2019). Also, by employing more than 42 million people in the year 2019, the tourism and hospitality sector accounted for approximately 8.2% share of the total employment in the country (IBEF, 2019). The tourism sector forms a significant part of the Indian service industry. The effect of the COVID-19 breakout in India became evident in March when the number of reported cases began increasing. The government declared the 21-day lockdown imposed from 25 March 2020 across the country. Even though the step was deemed mandatory to control the community spread of the virus, the lockdown aggravated the economic and social situation in the country (Mohan & Bhattacharjee, 2020).

Triple Helix Model

The triple helix model comprises three key actors, namely universities, industry, and government. The model assumes that the production and dissemination of socially organized knowledge is the driver of economic

development in the twenty-first century (Leydesdorff, 2012). Crises are inevitable and are part of the external environment of any organization. The impact of crises or other events occurring in the external environment is critical to trigger innovation to remain robust in times of uncertainty. Appropriate and well-designed innovative policies foster innovation performance among the three key actors of the triple helix model. Accordingly, the key role of universities or HEIs is creating a pool of skilled human resources and catalyzing new knowledge; while the industry stimulates the knowledge and innovative skills of human capital, and government acts as a mediator in knowledge creation and diffusion of innovation through several policies (Leydesdorff, 2012). Even though the core idea of creating and supporting the cooperative innovation model between university-industry-government aims to promote regional innovation, the model is also explained in terms of tourism education (Tiwari, Kainthola, & Chowdhary, 2020a). Therefore, this model could be adopted to accelerate innovation and collaboration in tourism education during the COVID-19 times.

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and uses secondary data to examine the factors that make Maldives a preferred tourist destination amid the pandemic. It includes information from sources like UNWTO, WTTC, Asian Development Bank, government sites (both Indian and Maldivian), published articles, and websites. The research adopted the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to study differences between the tourism revival strategies undertaken by Maldives and India. The method is implemented because of its cross-case comparison approach (Verweij & Trell, 2019). QCA provides a systematic and formalized approach to better understand the similarities and differences among cases. Accordingly, the systematic comparison identifies situations that are necessary for explaining the outcome (Verweij & Trell, 2019). The method is commonly adopted in tourism education studies to offer comprehensive strategies through country-wise comparison (Moira & Jacob, 2011;

Sarkar & George, 2019). Comparative analysis is also a common research methodology adopted in quantitative studies to gain better insights and critical evaluation (Gupta et al., 2015).

Findings and Discussion

The Republic of Maldives witnessed a rise in the number of tourists (mainly Indians) (Ministry of Tourism, 2021) in the later months of 2020. Even though the crisis was unprecedented and posed serious economic, social, and financial challenges for the world, the Maldives government adopted and implemented strategies to revive their tourism sector. It is also anticipated that since tourism is a major economic contributor for the island country, the timely implementation of steps was vital to ensure the overall well-being and financial stability of the country. The Maldivian government's decisive leadership played a crucial role in combating the effects of COVID-19 on the lives and livelihood of the country's population (Suazana et al., 2020). Figure 3.1 presents the range of strategies introduced and implemented by the Maldives' tourism sector to attract tourists to their country. It broadly includes issuing travel advisories, safe travel stamps granted by the World Tourism and Travel Council, one island one resort policy, split-stays, air bubble initiative in coordination with India and other countries, assistance related to travel insurance, Maldives border miles initiative, re-branding the country's tourism, and other regular steps like the convenience of providing RT-PCR tests at airports to travelers and introducing contact tracing named TraceEkee (Maldives Tourism, 2020a). The strategies are discussed below.

Travel Advisories

The Maldives government issued its first travel advisory in the month of January 2020 (Suazana et al., 2020). The government took a proactive role in taking decisions related to travel restrictions and subsequent advisories concerning traveling to affected countries. Also, timely updates on the government website are made for tourists to ensure a reliable information transfer (Maldives Tourism, 2020c).
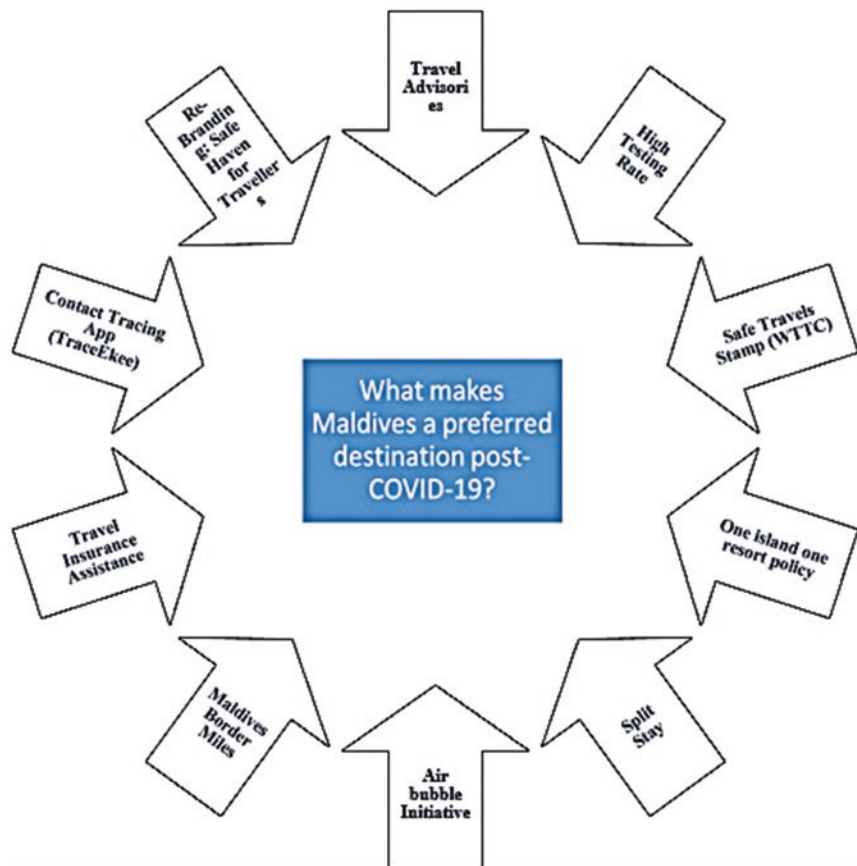
Fig. 3.1 Maldives as a preferred destination in the pandemic era. (Source: Author's)

Safe Travel Stamp

On 15 September 2020, Maldives received the "Safe Travels Stamp" granted by the World Travel and Tourism Council. The WTTC granted the stamp in appreciation of the measures undertaken by Maldives tourism in making the destination safe for visitors (Maldives Tourism, 2020a). The stamps are designed with the purpose to aid travelers to recognize destinations, companies, and governments which have adopted globally

standardized protocols for ensuring health and hygiene (WTTC, 2020). Furthermore, the Airport Council International awarded the country's Velana International Airport with "Airport Health Accreditation" in August 2020 (Malsa, 2020). This makes Velana Airport become the second airport in the Asia Pacific region to receive this recognition.

One Island One Resort

The Ministry of Tourism, Maldives, launched the "one island, one resort" policy in 2020 to offer convenience and safe traveling experiences to their tourists (Maldives Tourism, 2020b). It implies that tourists visiting Maldives are confined to their respective resorts and arrangements are made to ensure hassle-free vacations for them. This is adopted to ensure global health and hygiene protocols at the islands. It benefits the travelers as they can carry out numerous activities such as water sports and dinner on the beach without having to travel to other islands (Chakrabarti, 2021).

Split Stay

The Ministry of Tourism, Maldives, coordinated and consulted the Health Protection Agency to introduce the "Split Stay" policy for accelerating safe tourism. The concept of split-stays between resorts allows tourists to experience multiple resorts in the Maldives during their stay (Ministry of Tourism, Maldives, 2020). Accommodations must be approved for split-stays as per the guidelines laid by the Ministry. Further, tourism organizations (i.e., tour operators and travel agencies) must also submit a NOC (no-objection certificate) to the Ministry of Tourism two days before the visitors' traveling date (Business Traveller India, 2020).

Air Bubble Initiative

The Ministry of Tourism, Maldives, introduced the air bubble initiative in August 2020 (Maldives Tourism, 2020a). The notion of air bubble travel denotes the air travel corridor agreement between two or more two

countries/regions to open their borders for traveling. The regular path for weekly flights to India aims to revive the tourism and travel activities between the two countries. The notion of air bubbles is observed as one of the key aspects in supporting the tourism sector in the post-COVID-19 era. The air bubbles are reciprocal in general, and specifications on health protocols while leaving or entering the signatory countries are mentioned (Helble & Fink, 2020).

Maldives Border Miles Program

The Ministry of Tourism collaborated with Maldives Marketing, Public Relation Corporation, Maldives Immigration, and Maldives Airport Company to launch a loyalty program named as "Maldives Border Miles" (Maldives Tourism, 2020a). It is a three-tier loyalty program introduced on 27 September 2020 for tourists. Through this, the tourists will earn points on the basis of their frequency of visiting Maldives, duration of stay, and other aspects. Tourists can earn extra points if they visit Maldives on special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, or honeymoons (Maldives Border Miles, 2020a). The three-tier is Bronze (titled Aida), Silver (titled Antara), and Gold (titled Abaarana). Each tier contains different ranges of rewards and services on tourists' visit to Maldives and gradually increases in value as members of the program earn more points (Maldives Border Miles, 2020b).

Travel Insurance Assistance

The Ministry of Tourism, Maldives, in collaboration with Allied Insurance Company has launched a COVID-19 insurance policy that focuses on inbound tourists in the country. The policy is termed "Allied Inbound," which broadly covers emergency medical transport costs, medical charges, isolation facility costs, and interment charges (Maldives Tourism, 2020a). The policy offers a choice between Allied Inbound Plus and Allied Inbound based on different insurance coverage and amount. While Allied Inbound costs US $25 per person, Allied Inbound Plus costs US $35 per

person (Allied Inbound, 2020). Furthermore, to provide convenience to tourists, the resort can take the plan on behalf of the beneficiary (Maldives Tourism, 2020a).

Re-branding Maldives Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism, Maldives, launched the new campaign titled "*Rediscover Maldives … the Sunny Side of Life*" in August 2020. The Maldives Marketing and Public Corporation hosted a virtual meeting with 21 countries, some of which are key source markets for Maldives. This includes India, China, France, South Africa, and the UK to name a few (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). The new campaign aims to welcome back tourists and strengthen the market presence in key markets. The Ministry of Tourism of Maldives is also issuing e-brochures that title the Maldives as a safe haven for travelers (Maldives Tourism, 2020a).

High Testing Rate and Convenience

In the South-Asian region, Maldives observed the highest number of confirmed cases per million followed by India. And, Maldives is also holding the first position in the region to have the highest number of COVID-19 tests. Based on the discourse analysis, Saha and Bhowmik (2020) found differences among South-Asian countries concerning the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

Contact Tracing App

The Maldives government launched the contact tracing app named "TraceEkee." The app is similar to the Aarogya Setu app introduced by India during COVID-19 to ensure safety. It is recommended for visitors in the Maldives to download the app (Maldives Tourism, 2020b). One of the other steps includes setting up the quarantine facilities through the mobilization of resort islands (Suazana et al., 2020). For effective implementation, the Maldivian government collaborated with the sectors like

health, tourism, private organizations, and disaster management. India has undertaken similar steps to combat the impacts of COVID-19 and support the tourism and hospitality sector amid the pandemic. For example, by introducing the contact tracing app named "Aarogya Setu," mobilizing hotels into quarantine facilities, regularly issuing travel advisories, and providing updates on the website to keep travelers informed. The concept of air bubbles is adopted by India and is extended to almost 24 countries across the world (Ministry of Civil Aviation, 2020). The Reserve Bank of India aided the tourism and hospitality industry indirectly through a bailout package to sustain during the post-COVID-19 period and provided three months moratorium (Business Standard, 2020). Besides, the Indian government launched the DigiYatra Platform in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation. Based on facial recognition systems, the platform allows people to process entry and exits at various checkpoints, security check-ins, and boarding while traveling (Dogra, 2020). Thus, it would make travel hassle-free for air travelers. To ensure the implementation of global health protocols in the country, deep sanitization, hands-free amenities, and screening are done at Indian railways. There are certain differences between the Maldives and Indian tourism sectors in reviving the tourism sector. One of them is target markets. It is witnessed that India is more focused on promoting domestic tourism in the post-COVID-19 as compared to the Maldives, which is more inclined toward inbound tourism.

During the pandemic, the Ministry of Tourism, India, organized various webinars to create destination awareness among people. This is a soft approach to encourage people to visit the destinations after the lockdowns are lifted. Education about tourism products and destinations is crucial to help tourists gain unique insights before visiting the place. Tiwari, Séraphin, and Chowdhary (2020b) emphasized the role of informal tourism education (especially in the form of awareness to potential travelers and hosts) in managing a destination.

Certainly, both Maldives and India have carried out certain steps in favor of their respective tourism sectors. A comparative analysis of both countries is presented in Table 3.1. The table highlights the differences between the two countries, mainly in terms of strategies adopted by the governments to support the tourism and hospitality sector.

Table 3.1 A comparative analysis of Maldives and Indian tourism sector concerning strategies adopted to revive the sector

Strategies adopted to revive the tourism sector	The Republic of Maldives	India
Travel advisories issued	Yes	Yes
Split-stay program	Yes	No
Travel insurance for foreign tourists	Yes	No
Safe travel stamp by WTTC	Yes	Sub-regions
Travel loyalty program	Yes	No
Branding campaign exclusively offering tourists' safety	Yes	No
Travel/air bubble concept	Yes	Yes (24 countries)
Encouraging domestic tourism	No	Yes
Contact Tracing app	Yes	Yes
Policy adoption	Yes	No
Opening borders for tourists	July 2020	September 2020
Financial assistance to tourism sector	No	No

Source: Author's

Implications

Theoretical Implication

The tourism industry is fragmented as it involves various sub-sectors and thus stakeholders collectively become part of the tourism system. Each stakeholder should assume responsibility for the management of a destination, crisis, or no-crisis. This study adds to the theoretical framework of the "Helices" models developed by Carayannis and Campbell (2010) and Leydesdorff (2012). The Republic of Maldives undertook creative strategies to revive its tourism sector based on the collaborative efforts of different sectors during the pandemic. The triple helix model explored the relationship between higher educational institutes, private organizations, and government in a knowledge-based economy. The model aims to achieve economic wealth creation, reflexive control, and organized production of knowledge. In a crisis like COVID-19, countries were unprepared and unaware of the ways to deal with the situation. However, the collaborative efforts of the government of Maldives and private

organizations brought back the people to jobs through the quick implementation of policies. Wen, Wang, Kozak, Liu, and Hou (2020b) rightly emphasized that the impact of COVID-19 on tourism should be dealt with through a multidisciplinary approach.

Practical Implication

Pandemics in the past have shown that although the tourism industry gets impacted, it is resilient during the post-crisis stage (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021; Gössling et al., 2020). With the help of effective implementation, Maldives attracted half a million tourists within six months of opening its borders. The study frames the practical implication for India as follows:

1. A common platform for tourism stakeholders would help in unified efforts toward achieving growth. The platform could invite suggestions for policy frameworks, implementation strategies, and crisis management plans, and facilitate forums and discussions by major tourism bodies. This would be a crucial step toward a collaborative crisis management technique for the tourism sector.
2. The target of the Indian tourism sector is domestic tourism, mainly because of the significant revenue generation through domestic tourists (Kumar, 2016). The effective crisis management strategy to revive tourism initiates with a focus on domestic tourism.
3. More emphasis on spiritual and wellness tourism products should be made due to their growth potential in the post-COVID-19 era (Manhas & Nair, 2020). India is considered a hub of spiritual practices and wellness products, and thus, marketing campaigns would attract both domestic and international tourists.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 outbreak caused serious harm to the tourism and hospitality industry worldwide. Different countries took several measures to combat the impact of the pandemic on people and businesses in their

countries. However, countries that are greatly dependent on tourism for their economic survival had no choice. Maldives is one of these countries whose major portion of revenue and employment is engaged in the tourism sector. The government of Maldives collaborated with different organizations to come up with strategies and policies that could help boost tourism again. In July 2020, the country welcomed the tourists, and by January 2021, the foreign tourists' arrivals reached 0.1 million. Further, the destination received the award for World's Leading Destination 2020. There are many strategies such as the air bubble initiative, safe travel stamp from WTTC, loyalty programs for tourists, travel insurance convenience, ensuring safe traveling experience, and one resort one policy, to name a few. The collaboration among different sectors during the crisis and reflexive decision-making helped Maldives in becoming the preferred destination in the world amid COVID-19. The comparative analysis of Maldives with India's tourism sector highlighted that the strategies adopted by both countries are similar to a great extent. Except for the target market, and branding campaigns adapted, the countries are rendering support to their respective tourism sectors. Nevertheless, large-scale dependence on one sector could bring adversities when an economy is hit by a crisis. Therefore, alternative sectors should be developed to combat the impacts of crises.

Limitations and Future Studies

The current study is vulnerable to the limitation concerning the use of secondary data. As the data was collected from existing articles published and reports published by WTTC, the Asian Development Bank, and UNWTO, future studies are suggested to conduct analysis using the primary data. Secondly, the time frame considered for the study is short, and the situation may differ when the vaccine is available to the people. The available literature on COVID-19 impact on SIDS is limited, and thus, this study lacks complete information about the current scenario in the Maldives. Accordingly, future studies may opt for longitudinal studies to ensure inclusiveness while comparing the effect of COVID-19 on two countries. More research on the effectiveness of re-branding destinations

amid the crisis, travelers' behavior to choose the Maldives before and after the discovery of the vaccine, and the emerging notion of the travel bubble could be studied by scholars.

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4

Changes in Travel Behaviour Caused by COVID-19: The Case Study of Outbound Chinese Tourists

Evangelia Rapti and Georgia Zouni

Introduction

Effect of the Pandemic on Chinese Tourist Behaviour

The sudden advent of the COVID-19 pandemic severely impaired the Chinese tourism market (Huang et al., 2023), especially international trips, and caused a rapid drop in Chinese outbound tourism expenditures (Buchholz, 2023). Travellers' hesitant behaviours are mainly attributed to the intense fear of coronavirus infection (Zheng et al., 2023), which still seems to hamper the rise of long-haul trips (Statista Search Department, 2022). Uncertain situations, inflated prices, political upheaval, and the perception of unfriendliness are also playing a crucial role in keeping

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them away from travelling abroad (Ye et al., 2023; Smith, 2023; Dragon Trail Research, 2023a). Although safety is of paramount importance for Chinese travellers (Dragon Trail Research, 2023a), their eagerness to travel abroad is highlighted (EU SME Centre, 2021; Dragon Trail Research, 2022; Dragon Trail Research, 2023b), even during the pandemic (Ivy Alliance Tourism Consulting et al., 2020). The ease of China's measures and especially the end of the Zero-Case policy (European Travel Commission, n.d.), in conjunction with an expected rise in outbound Chinese tourists' expenditures, make international destinations anticipate market growth in the foreseeable future (Smith, 2023; Chen et al., 2023; Wenqian & Xueqing, 2023).

Based on several research results, it is obvious that travelling with family members after the pandemic is a prerequisite (China Tourism Research Institute, 2021; Dragon Trail Research, 2023b). Despite the fact that individualism is gradually gaining ground, family is still the foundation of Chinese society (Accenture, 2022). On the other hand, surveys have revealed that the Chinese are now highly receptive to travelling as independent travellers (Dragon Trail International, 2022). Chinese travel agencies predicted that among the most popular future travel types, self-driving and semi-guided tours, independent travel, personalised tours, and small groups are expected to prevail in the next few years (ITB China, 2020). Since the Chinese population is digitally immersed, asking for more technological experiences, not only while planning their trip, but also at the destination, is the new trend (Chen et al., 2023).

Additionally, the Chinese are looking for authentic experiences through which they feel fulfilled by combining leisure, entertainment, and self-improvement. The type of experiences, the quality, and the benefits these experiences offer are crucial factors in their decision-making process (Accenture, 2022). Outdoor trips, scenic and culturally significant destinations, rural and nature-based areas, local food, and novel experiences constitute the most dominant post-pandemic desires (Huang et al., 2023; Dragon Trail Research, 2023a; Chen et al., 2023). Research also reveals that the Chinese are seeking excitement, happiness, relaxation, comfort, and value-for-money services during their trips abroad (Dragon Trail Research, 2023a; Chen et al., 2023). Taking into account all that mentioned above, we deduce that the Chinese outbound market has become

extremely cautious as regards health protection, while simultaneously a demand for more specific products that serve that market segment is required.

Examining Chinese Tourists' Post-pandemic Behaviour

In the context of the recovery and strengthening of the tourism industry, it is considered particularly beneficial to focus on markets that can enhance the sector's profits, such as China's outbound tourism market (Johnson et al., 2020). Outbound Chinese tourism, until 2019, was a rapidly growing phenomenon with a steady growth rate that exceeded 20% (UNWTO, 2019). Regarding the increase in travel, the Chinese made 169.21 million outbound trips in 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020), compared to 4.5 million in 2000. Profoundly, China can be characterised as having the most intensively expanding market power worldwide (UNWTO, 2019; Johnson et al., 2020). Regarding the ever-increasing rates of Chinese tourism spending, in 2019, they reached $254.6 billion (STATISTA, 2021). New measures marked the restart of China's tourism industry. Now, it is not necessary to quarantine upon entering the country. The opening of borders and the issuance of travel documents also followed while the sale of the outbound groups and organised travel will be allowed from February 6 of the same year for travel to 20 countries (European Travel Commission, n.d.). All these actions are important steps that herald the restart of Chinese outbound tourism (Kuščer et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023).

The purpose of the primary study was to gain insight into the behaviour of Chinese outbound travellers before, during, and after the pandemic. Based on this general aim, the specific objectives of this study were: (a) to investigate the general travel habits of Chinese tourists, such as frequency, duration, travel companions, and the perception of travel as a group activity; (b) to examine the behaviour of Chinese travellers when searching for a suitable destination, including booking habits, destination selection criteria, and keywords frequently used in online searches;

(c) to identify the activities, attractions, transportation, travel costs, and other key factors when choosing an international destination by Chinese tourists; (d) to assess and investigate their next trip intention and the role played by COVID-19 in this decision; and (e) to detect the changes (behaviour before, during, and after the pandemic) in order to formulate suitable tourism services and products to attract Chinese tourists after the pandemic.

In order to conduct this research, the quota sampling method was chosen. The population of this research is composed of Chinese tourists who have made or are going to make trips abroad. The sample was stratified and selected based on previous studies of the Chinese population with two primary criteria: income-related purchasing power and a proclivity to travel overseas. According to statistical data, middle-aged individuals in the Chinese socioeconomic scale's affluent tier appear to have more purchasing power than other age groups (Bao et al., 2019). Furthermore, in terms of the second criterion, Chinese aged 26–35 account for the majority of the Chinese outbound tourism industry (Talking Data and Tencent Culture and Tourism, 2018).

An in-depth literature review on the behaviours and habits of Chinese tourists before, during, and after the pandemic was conducted in order to design the questionnaire and detect differences in Chinese tourists' behaviour by emphasising the examination of their habits and desires both before and after the pandemic outbreak. The questionnaire comprised a range of dichotomous, single- and multiple-choice questions, scales, and other elements. The SPSS statistical analysis program was used to evaluate and confirm the reliability of this measurement instrument. The Cronbach's alpha index was found to be 0.885, indicating that the questionnaire was a reliable instrument. The questionnaire was prepared in English, reviewed by research staff from the University of Piraeus, translated into Mandarin Chinese, and sent to the Chinese Embassy in Greece for review prior to distribution.

The quantitative survey was conducted from June to September 2022. The questionnaire was distributed by the Chamber of Greek-Chinese Economic Cooperation, the Hellenic Tourism Organization (Beijing Branch), the General Secretariat for International and Economic Relations of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Greek Embassy,

and the Greek Consulate in China. Several Chinese organisations and networks, such as the China – Central and Eastern European Countries' Tourism Coordination Centre (CEEC), the Cultural Trade Exhibition, the China Asia Networking Group, the China Outbound Tourism Marketing Network, the China Travel Executive, and the Online Travel and Tourism Group, also distributed the survey questionnaire through their member lists.

Conducting research outside of China presents technical challenges due to the presence of numerous online research tools and programs and China's Great Firewall, which could cause slow page loading speeds or difficulties in loading. Wenjuan was ultimately chosen as the best option for the online survey because it was extremely user-friendly and allowed the distribution of the online questionnaire via WeChat. Respondents were invited to answer the questionnaire by either scanning the QR code or using a special link.

Sample and Survey Results

The research sample consisted of 174 Chinese individuals, of whom 100 were women and 74 were men. Individuals aged 31–40 (34.48%), 41–50 (35.63%), and 51–60 (16.09%) provided the majority of answers. The majority of the sample were residents of Shanghai (31.82%) and Beijing (22.73%). Notably, a large percentage of the participants held managerial positions (20.93%).

Findings

General Travel Habits

Exactly 98.8% of respondents had travelled abroad, with the majority reporting travelling two to three times a year before the pandemic (93.7%), while 97.14% had not travelled after the pandemic. In addition, the proportion of respondents who have travelled abroad reported

having travelled 814 days before the pandemic (94.87%). However, when asked the same question about how long they travelled after COVID-19, 93.75% responded that they travelled one to three days. In particular, the female population appeared much more cautious, opting for significantly fewer or no travel days after COVID-19 compared to the male population in the sample. Respondents were then asked to describe how they typically choose to travel and the company they prefer to travel with. A high percentage of respondents (70.11%) stated that they usually travel with family members, 50.57% with friends, and 19.54% with their partners. Both the 31–40 and 41–50 age groups responded that they usually travel with their families (see Fig. 4.1).

Only 4.6% of participants answered that they usually travel in groups. Participants responded that both before and after COVID-19, they preferred to travel in groups of less than eight people. It is worth mentioning, however, that after the pandemic, the percentage of Chinese people who prefer to travel with fewer than eight members has increased dramatically, and few respondents seem willing to travel in larger groups. Regarding the reasons that led to the above answer, the majority believe that the feeling of familiarity in a small group is important (48.84%).
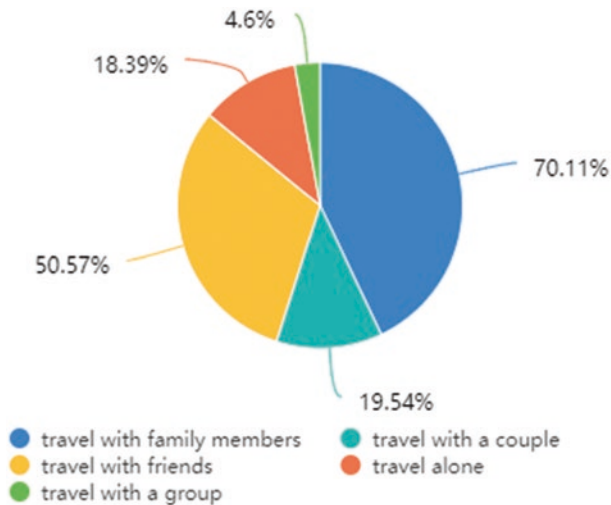
Fig. 4.1 Travel groups
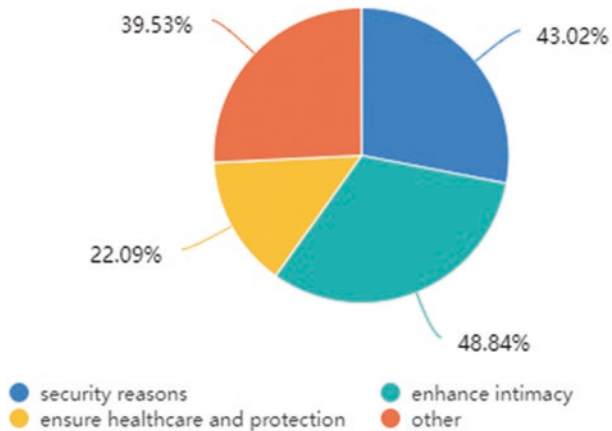
Fig. 4.2   Reasons for joining groups

Interestingly, women consider intimacy less important (40%), compared to men (61.11%). Also, many Chinese claimed that smaller groups make them feel safe (43.2%) and ensure healthcare and protection (22.09%) (see Fig. 4.2).

Destination Search

This section focused on the search process prior to the trip. In the question "How do you usually make your travel reservations?" more than half of the participants (68.97%) stated that online travel agencies are their first choice. Exactly 35.63% seem to book through hotel websites, 31.03% trust nearby travel agents, and 29.89% prefer booking through travel websites such as TripAdvisor (猫途鹰). Based on the sample responses, Ctrip (呤程网) was selected as the most popular online travel agency. The results also revealed that Chinese people want to travel more independently, with 48.68% stating that they would prefer to book a flight-hotel or customised activities-flight-hotel—in other words, choose the activities that best suit their preferences and personalities. This is followed by booking flight-hotel tours to main attractions (42.53%), and

only a small percentage of participants (12.64%) prefer booking flight-hotel-full-day and daily activities.

Participants were also asked to record the most frequent keywords they used when searching for their trip online. Interestingly, they gave many keywords (see Figs. 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5), with most of the answers related to the attractions in the destinations. For example, participants type in "attractions," "attraction name," or "local attraction." Food searches are extremely popular in "food," "local cuisine," "local food," and "food reviews." In addition, Chinese people seem to search more for destinations, hotels, and transportation by typing words like "location name," "destination name," "hotels," "transportation," and "local transport."

Fig. 4.3   First fill-in gap

Fig. 4.4 Second fill-in gap

Fig. 4.5 Third fill-in gap

Finally, in this particular section, the respondents were asked to answer based on the criteria by which they usually choose a place to visit. The majority of the sample stated that the popularity of the location (77.01%) was a determining factor in their choice of destination to visit. The uniqueness of the place (52.87%) and social media posts and photos (37.93%) follow, while social media advertising seems to have little effect on Chinese tourists (17.24%).

Destination Visit

Chinese participants seem to travel mainly for relaxation (87.36%), to gain new experiences (66.67%), and to achieve family happiness (41.38%). Of particular interest is the fact that family happiness is more important to men (54.05%) compared to women (32.65%). Other reasons are entertainment (34.48%), mental health (34.48%), communication with locals (28.74%), business reasons (24.14%), and adventure (17.24%). Afterwards, the respondents answered what their preferred activities are when travelling abroad. The sample responses highlight the importance of cultural tourism for travelling abroad (81.4%). Second, Chinese people are keen on shopping (53.49%) and exploring islands and beaches (53.49%). Further analysis reveals that female respondents prefer cultural activities (78%) and shopping (62%), while male respondents prefer cultural activities (86.11%) and island beaches (55.56%). The sample also highlights outdoor sports (32.56%), cruises (31.4%), and rural tourism activities (such as wine tasting) (26.74%). Among the most popular attractions in an international destination, Chinese participants chose historical attractions (82.76%), city landmarks (63.22%), and museums (58.62%). Theme parks (33.33%), islands (33.33%), and lakes (28.74%) also seem to be attractive to Chinese tourists (see Fig. 4.6). For those travelling with family or friends, there is a clear preference for historical sites and theme parks, while historical sites and museums seem to attract more free independent travellers (FITs).

According to the responses, Chinese people usually spend 13,901–20,900 RMB (33.72%) on overseas travel (see Fig. 4.7). They, in their majority, choose to book flights, hotels, and tours to main attractions (44.83%) and express their desire for cultural tourism activities (89.66%). Furthermore, it
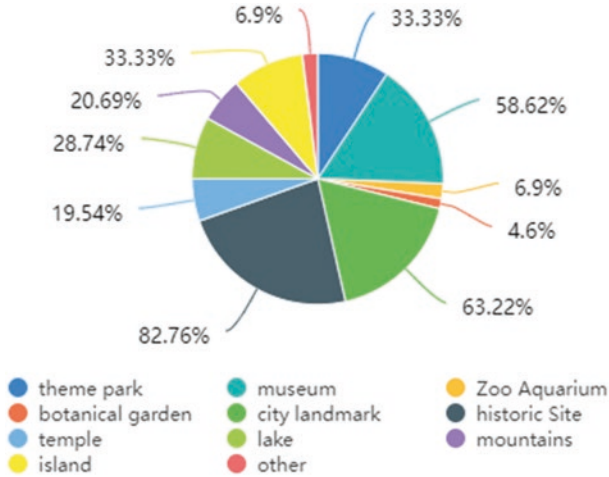
Fig. 4.6 Popular attractions
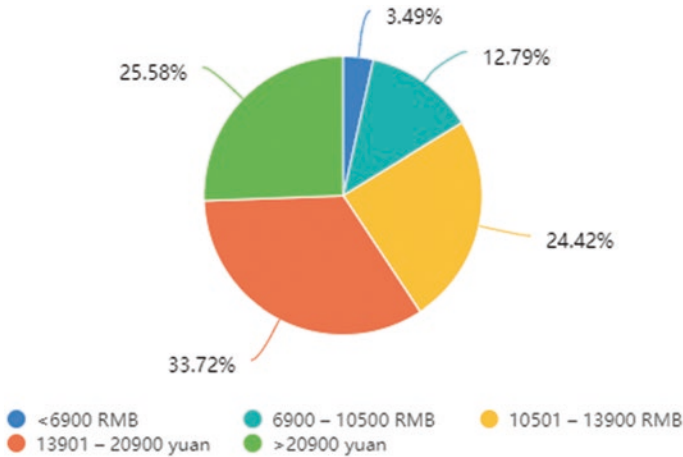
Fig. 4.7 International travel budget

appears that Chinese travellers are particularly willing to invest significant funds in European travel. For example, 68.97% will spend 13,901–20,900 RMB and 40.91% more than 20,900 RMB to travel to Europe.

Regarding the choice of accommodation, it is obvious that resorts are their first choice (74.71%), followed by ordinary hotels (31.03%), then eco-friendly hotels (29.89%), and Airbnb rooms (14%). Questions about

preferred means of transport to international destinations were also included. Before COVID-19, respondents mainly used the metro (97.14%), bus (95.24%), and taxi (90%) for their transportation, while after the pandemic these percentages decreased (metro 45.71%, bus 38.1%, and taxi 50%), and now walking (75%) and private buses (74.07%) are becoming more popular.

Finally, participants emphasised the significance of a variety of variables when selecting a travel destination. Excellent value for money (3.73 average importance score, based on a 5-point scale), convenient air connections between their region of origin and destination (3.93), the best date to visit the destination (3.93), the weather of the destination (3.85), activities they might be interested in (3.93), reviews of the destination (3.93), friends' recommendations (3.79), travel distance from the destination (3.57), and less crowded places (3.92) are important to them. As very important, respondents chose flight and hotel prices (4.01), suggested things to do in the destination (3.98), and made suggestions based on their interests (4.14). Further analysis reveals that whenever Chinese travel with family members or couples, it is very important for them to be offered many interesting activities (70.49%). In addition, suggestions based on their interests are very important to women (78.72%), as are suggestions from friends (68.75%).

Also, while travelling abroad, the sample stated that safety (4.7), health protection (4.59), cultural background (4.23), friendliness of locals (4.26), local culture (4.23), transport systems (4.14), mobile phone signal (4.25), and network coverage (4.22) are very important. Network coverage (Internet) is very important, especially for those who book a flight-hotel-personalised activity tour package (4.42) and a flight-hotel-tour to the main attractions (4.22). An eco-friendly atmosphere is also very important for the sample as a whole (4.4) and even more so for those travelling for family happiness (4.64).

Future Travel Trends

In the last section, we tried to detect the intentions, desires, and needs of their future trips. Chinese are extremely cautious since their next destinations should be safe (4.66 average importance score), they have strict and effective pandemic control measures (4.02), and there is a reduced

number of coronavirus cases (3.93). In addition, in locations (3.88), accommodations (3.82), and transportation (3.83), it is important that there be no overcrowding. More than half said they wanted to visit European countries (51.16%) after the pandemic (see Fig. 4.8). The findings show that Beijing residents (64.71%) are more willing to plan a trip to Europe after the pandemic. Figure 4.9 illustrates the best European

Fig. 4.8 Post-pandemic trips
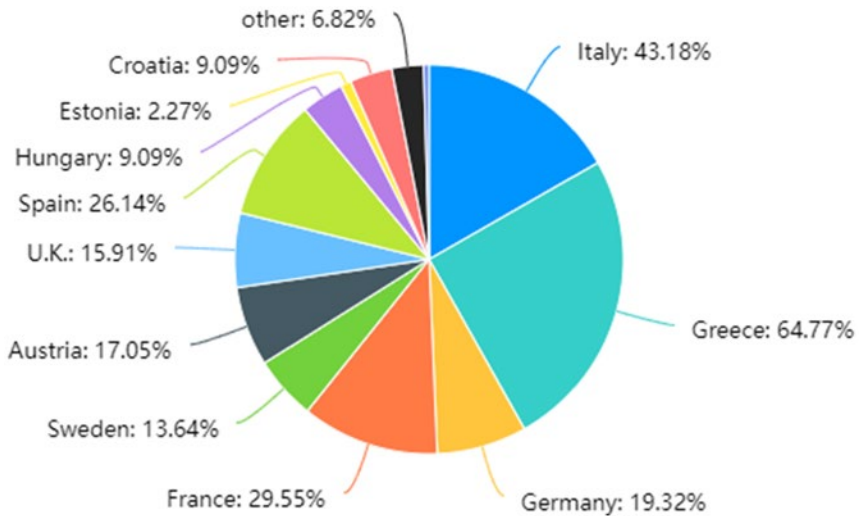
Fig. 4.9 The best European destinations

destinations for the Chinese. Greece (64.77%), Italy (43.18%), France (29.55%), Spain (26.14%), and Germany (19.32%) are among the top five. Interestingly, Chinese travellers who plan to visit Greece are more likely to prefer a flight-hotel-main sightseeing tour package (43.86%) than those planning to visit Italy, who tend to prefer a flight-hotel-customised tour package (50%).

Discussion and Implications

This study sheds light on several important insights regarding the behaviour of Chinese outbound tourism travellers before, during, and after the pandemic. Almost the entire sample consists of experienced travellers who take advantage of the numerous opportunities to profit from convenient flight connections or favourable ticket and hotel prices. These tourists expect personalised experiences and are ready to spend a significant amount of money to get them. They plan trips after conducting extensive research in order to receive the greatest number of benefits. The priorities of this market segment seem to be healthcare and safety. These tourists expect the elimination of the pandemic to make them travel more. Hesitation to travel and the crucial role of implementing safety measures prevail. Therefore, authorities and governments should effectively control the pandemic. On the other hand, the tourism industry should also comply with that by creating small groups, providing less crowded means of transport, and providing clean and safe lodgings. Packages to popular destinations during low seasons are highly suggested, as is the gradual promotion of new destinations with unique natural scenery, culture, history, and fascinating activities. They also want to feel cared for and welcomed by the host nation. As a result, services should consider this need and combine it by developing personalised packages tailored to Chinese culture.

Except for the implementation of hygiene protocols, the preferences that our sample showed for specific services, such as accommodation in resorts, private transport buses, convenient air connections, value for money, and a sophisticated need for relaxation, make it clear that comfort, safety, and profitable opportunities are also important issues for the

Chinese traveller. Thus, businesses operating in the sector are suggested to take into account a good price-quality ratio but also ensure comfort and relaxation in order to increase their market share in Chinese outbound tourism.

Although making domestic trips is more feasible, the great willingness of the Chinese to travel outbound after the pandemic, especially to Europe, heralds the future trend. Results suggest that Chinese outbound tourism may have significant potential and economic benefits for both the European and Chinese tourism industries. The tourism providers' services and products targeting Chinese tourists may consider the above data in order to price the offered services accordingly.

In addition, the tendency of Chinese people to follow the recommendations of friends and read reviews from other customers about destinations and activities, combined with the limited impact of media advertising on social networking, leads to the conclusion that common advertising practices have little impact on them. Instead, what seems to matter most is the authenticity that comes from quality service, which results in real and positive reviews. Thus, the strengthening of good reviews and the word of mouth (WOM) of a business is very important.

Also, the popularity of a destination and the importance of attractions for Chinese tourists become clear through the frequency of keywords that users search for. The importance of the popularity and distinctiveness of a destination or landmark symbolise their need to follow something they know in advance will meet their needs and will be a safe choice. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of the sample chooses cultural visits over historical sites and museums, making the preference for cultural tourism in this market segment clear. Acquiring new information and broadening their knowledge is fundamental. Chinese people are also willing to pay a lot for cultural tourism activities, showing high respect for the culture and a preference to invest in meaningful activities that will benefit them through learning and self-improvement. Moreover, online users seem to show particular interest in searching for information that is related to the local cuisine and gastronomy of a region. Thus, cultural and culinary tourism are among the fields we should focus our attention on, as they will be a pole of attraction for Chinese tourists.

After the pandemic, this market segment is asking for interesting experiences and travel packages with personalised activities and suggestions that align with their preferences. They are also looking for activities to do in the destination, and this is especially true for travellers accompanied by relatives and friends. This trend creates a need to promote new travel packages that meet their interests, many of which will consist of personalised suggestions. We realise that Chinese tourists are not satisfied by simply visiting a place and admiring the sights. Instead, they wish to actively participate in learning and leisure activities through which they have the opportunity to explore, have fun, and learn new things.

Furthermore, it seems that family trips are preferred, but a large percentage also wishes to travel with friends. Family happiness is the second most popular reason for a Chinese person to travel, again supporting the great importance of family bonds. Therefore, it is suggested to provide packages and offers that will benefit travelling families, such as reduced tickets and activities that will appeal to all age groups and bring their members closer to their families and friends while also enhancing their various developmental stages.

In terms of travel type, the free independent travellers (FITs) trend seems to be gradually dominating. Chinese tourists were found to prefer first flight-hotel bookings or flight-hotel-personalised activities and second booking flight-hotel tours to main attractions. Their preferences undoubtedly highlight the growing trend of independent trips. Additionally, we observe more individualistic behaviours, with the female population appearing to be more prone to individualistic attitudes. The fact that family happiness (during travel) is less important for women than for men, in combination with a lower need for intimacy during travel, is an indication. However, it is essential to thoroughly examine it in order to draw clearer conclusions.

Online bookings are thriving, mainly through bookings made via online travel agencies (especially Ctrip). For people who wish to have personalised activity packages and excursions to important attractions, Internet access is considered vital. We expect that in the near future, many Chinese outbound tourists will wish to be more independent and will use their phones to explore locations. Applications that use technological solutions to provide a unique location experience are expected to flourish as Chinese travellers seek more independence.

Finally, the research revealed that travelling to an environmentally friendly destination area is a very important feature when travelling abroad, and indeed, it is vital to ensuring the family happiness of Chinese travellers during vacations. Rural areas and natural landscapes such as islands, lakes, and mountains turned out to be among the top 10 attractions to visit in a foreign destination. Of course, interpretation and conclusions must be ascertained through more extensive study; however, we observe the interest of Chinese tourists in environmental issues.

Conclusions and Future Research

Summarising the findings of this study, we find that Chinese tourists, while still cautious, are ready to travel. Although inbound travel is favoured, outbound travel, especially to European destinations, is very popular and appears to be highly profitable for the tourism industry. Providing healthcare, local friendliness, comfort, and dependable services are critical conditions for the reception of Chinese visitors following the pandemic. Furthermore, the popularity of both the destination and the attractions and the variety of activities available are important considerations when choosing where to go next. Authentic experiences, quality services, cultural tourism, and meaningful activities with family and friends are also identified as future requirements in the research. In addition, FITs are also a significant part of the Chinese market, mainly due to the growing trend of independence and individualism. Technology also seems to play a significant role for Chinese travellers, as the majority prefer to make online reservations and use smartphones during their trip, even as a guide. Last but not least, the study shows that, at least, the environmentally conscious profile of Chinese travellers is steadily evolving.

The findings of this study have important implications for tourism management in the post-pandemic era. First and foremost, it is essential to prioritise the health and safety of visitors, especially in the context of inbound travel. This requires providing high-quality healthcare, friendly services, and reliable amenities to ensure that Chinese visitors feel comfortable and secure during their trip. As outbound travel becomes more popular, tourism operators should also consider these factors to attract Chinese tourists to their destinations.

Another important factor to consider is the popularity of the destination, the attractions' variety, and authentic experiences. Chinese tourists are drawn to places that offer a diverse choice of attractions and activities, providing cultural experiences as well as meaningful activities. Tourism operators should try to deliver high-quality services and cultural tourism experiences that represent the distinctive qualities of their destinations in order to meet these needs.

The growing popularity of FITs among Chinese travellers has major implications for destination marketing. As Chinese travellers want greater independence and individualism in their travel experiences, independent travel is becoming increasingly popular. This trend emphasises the necessity for tourism operators to provide personalised packages and activities that appeal to individual travellers' specific interests and preferences. Additionally, to meet the expectations of tech-savvy Chinese travellers, the usage of technology, such as online reservations and smartphone apps, should be prioritised.

Finally, the study emphasises the growing significance of environmental sustainability among Chinese tourists. This tendency can be seen in the desire for ecologically friendly destinations as well as in the interest in natural landscapes and rural areas. To fulfil the changing expectations of Chinese tourists in this area, tourism operators should consider implementing sustainable practices into their operations.

Overall, to attract Chinese tourists in the post-pandemic era, the study's findings recommend that destination marketing should focus on delivering high-quality services and authentic cultural experiences, catering to independent travellers, and prioritising environmental sustainability.

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5

Transitioning from Anthropocene to Anthropause? A Study of the Consumer Behavioural Shifts in the Hospitality Sector

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Introduction

Change is the only constant. Disruptive events studied in the recent past have been found to have profound impacts on societies, organizations, industries, and even individual customers (Dahlhamer & Tierney, 1998). These "disruptive events" could range from a pandemic, war, natural

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disaster, or personal calamity (Aldao et al., 2021). However, the recent disruptive event, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant shift in consumer behaviour and has pushed the need for businesses to be agile, versatile, and responsive in the face of changed consumer behaviour (Ajmal et al., 2021). Like no disruptive event in the past, the current pandemic has significantly impacted global economies and accelerated tectonic shifts in consumer behaviour (Mason et al., 2020). Even though pandemics are bound to occur naturally, the current pandemic has enacted itself at the zenith of Anthropocene ideology, wherein human activity has reached a point of unprecedented influence on the environment, with potentially long-lasting and far-reaching consequences (Chowdhury et al., 2021). The pandemic temporarily ceased anthropogenic activities, creating a new term, "Anthropause" which led to a "global human confinement experiment" (Rutz et al., 2020). The significant decrease in human activities and movements resulting from the quarantines and lockdowns implemented worldwide aimed at containing the spread of SARS-COV-2 was recently termed as anthropause by (Rutz et al., 2020). With the world devoid of anthropogenic turbulences, many field scientists believe this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to observe the world by collecting data from service industries like hospitality and tourism as the industry is driven by human activities and mobilities (Searle et al., 2021).

The primary topic under consideration here is how a health threat like COVID-19 shifts consumer behaviour in the hospitality industry. Other questions close to the discussion on consumer behaviour in the pandemic and post-pandemic times to consume hospitality services and visiting hotels are: What significant changes were adopted by the hospitality industry to regain consumer trust? How does a consumer react and adjust to an unexpected widespread crisis? Are customer responses and adaptations temporary and reversible, or do these events create long-term changes? How have consumer responses towards hospitality services and hotels impacted the industry (Campbell et al., 2020)?

Although the pandemic has caused significant personal and socio-economic upheaval in modern-day societies, at the same time, this period served as a reminder that our economic, socio-cultural, and ecological systems can be reshaped much faster than we thought (Searle & Turnbull,

2020). The pandemic has forced governments, businesses, and individuals to embrace novel ways of living and working and has pushed societies to rethink resilience and sustainability in our systems. Progressing on these lines of discussion, this chapter attempts to visualize the chronology of events about COVID-19 and the significant cataclysm it caused in consumer behavioural patterns in the hospitality sector. The pandemic significantly impacted other connected industries, such as the restaurant sector and cloud kitchens, going from zero customers overnight to significant technological adaptations to survive the turbulent times. As the travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors work in close conjunction with each other and their business environments are fuelled by consumer motilities, it is essential to touch upon the various aspects overlapping the industries under discussion. It is also suggested in the existing literature that although the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries are distinct, they are interrelated in a significant way (Baum et al., 2020). Even the World Bank, emphasizing the implications of the devastating impact on the tourism industry, enclosed all the affected sectors, such as airlines, trains, cruises, hotels, restaurants, attractions, travel agencies, tour operators, and online travel companies. It is clear that COVID-19 has translated consumer behaviour in a new direction; hence, it is necessary to theoretically gauge the impact of the recent pandemic by analysing the existing literature on consumer behaviour (World Bank, 2020).

Methodology

This chapter's objective is to examine how consumer behaviour in the hospitality industry is affected by the change from the Anthropocene to the Anthropause. Anthropocene is a geological epoch that has been proposed to describe the tremendous effects that human activity has had on the planet's ecosystems. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic-related slowdown in human activity is referred to as the "Anthropause." In this chapter, we investigate how consumer behaviour in the hospitality industry has changed as a result of the transition from the Anthropocene to the Anthropause.

This review chapter is based on a thorough analysis of academic literature on the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on the hospitality industry and customer behaviour. Electronic databases like Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were used for the literature search. Keywords like "COVID-19," "consumer behaviour," "hospitality industry," "tourism," and "Anthropause" and "Anthropocene" were used to trace out the relevant studies. The following criteria were used to determine which papers should be included in this review: Peer-reviewed studies that (1) were published in English, (2) examined customer behaviour in the hospitality industry, (3) concentrated on the COVID-19 pandemic's effects, and (4) offered pertinent information and findings. Articles not relevant to the research questions and not written in English were excluded followed by the elimination of the duplicate entries.

Finally, 65 relevant papers were found using the search method and were subjected to content analysis. The data were coded into categories using the content analysis methodology, and the relationships between the categories were then examined. The process of data analysis includes qualitatively synthesizing the themes and patterns found. The qualitative synthesis involves detecting similarities and contrasts among the data, which were then utilized to make inferences about how the COVID-19 pandemic affected patron behaviour in the hotel industry.

Dynamics of Consumer Behaviour in the Time of Crisis

Almost every aspect of societal economics was shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. The enforcement of government-mandated lockdowns, and restricted mobility later in the pandemic to combat the spread of the virus, manifested in impulse buying and hoarding behaviour as a response to the growing uncertainty in societies (Prentice et al., 2022). This usually is the case during a crisis where supposedly there is an anticipation of supply chain disturbance; a similar trend was observed during this pandemic as well, wherein it was revealed that one-third of the customers had a strong desire to purchase and hoard essentials for their households (Roy

et al., 2020). COVID-19 has impacted every field and sphere of life, bringing long-lasting changes in business models (Zeb et al., 2021). Businesses across the world have incurred financial losses amounting to billions of dollars (Nicola et al., 2020). Although all industries were affected by the pandemic, the hospitality sector, including restaurant businesses, emerged as a significant sufferer in the pandemic. This is one of the vital socio-economic sectors contributing to the economy worldwide. With lockdowns imposed, dine-in customer numbers hit zero, leading to an unprecedented decline in employment rates and revenue loss (Mohanty et al., 2022). Thus, it can be deduced that these sectors are highly susceptible to natural hazards and crises, including the pandemic, COVID-19 (Dube et al., 2021).

It can be inferred from the extant literature that the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the hospitality and tourism industry, with major performance measures demonstrating a decrease or sluggish progress (Jiang & Wen, 2020; Sigala, 2020). Dramatic disruptions took place in the hospitality sector at the outset of the pandemic, needing technological transformations and adaptations overnight (Serrano-Baena et al., 2023). This sector, like no other, was hit hard with the introduction of social distancing and prohibitions on movements mandated by governments worldwide. The hotels and restaurants, once bustling with people, were forced to shut down to contain the propagation and transmission of the virus. The immediate psychological impact of lockdowns on behaviours on an individual level was that consumers/tourists immediately retorted to "cocooning behaviour," which refers to "*an act of self-preservation of individuals who stay home to insulate from perceived outside danger*" (Snider, 2013). Consumers exhibit these *cocooning behaviours* during pandemics to gain social distance from one another and avert the risk of person-to-person infection. In the case of the current pandemic, COVID-19, consumers of hospitality services exhibited a higher need for service attributes related to safety and hygiene (Hu et al., 2021).

Social distancing, community lockdowns, and travel prohibitions resulted in the temporary shutdown of many hospitality businesses, exerting a profound impact on hospitality business operations, resulting in a severe decline in hotel occupancies and the income generated by the

hotels (Bartik et al., 2020). To survive in the COVID-19 business environment, hospitality businesses were anticipated to make radical adaptations in their operational environment to guarantee the safety and well-being of both their employees and customers and additionally to boost customer confidence to visit the establishment physically (Gössling et al., 2020). Although the number of infections started growing with time, restrictions were eased worldwide. Still, apprehensions of contracting viruses largely deterred customers from visiting food service establishments and hotels even after the restrictions were eased worldwide (Srivastava et al., 2022). The footfall of customers in a situation like COVID-19 can only be increased by enhancing assurance in terms of health safety (Hao et al., 2020) and by offering services adapting to the new rules of social distancing, sanitization, and usage of masks (Das & Tiwari, 2021), in service environments in addition to the traditional service. It is also found that assurance of enjoyable, wellness-oriented, and psychologically safe consumer experiences can enhance customer trust and arouse positive sentiments to visit the hotels physically (Mehta et al., 2021). Placing trust in service providers regarding health and cleanliness was risky, directly impacting the demand for hotel and hospitality services (Polyzos et al., 2021). This shift in consumer expectations and behaviour has impacted hotel performance (Oliver, 1980). The hotels are expected to adjust hotel attributes and service offerings to adjust to unpredictable consumer expectations and altered consumer behaviour (Hu et al., 2021). These changes were deemed necessary and were quickly adopted by the hotels and related businesses to stay afloat in the turbulent times of the pandemic.

Surviving the Storm: Crisis-Driven Evolution

The tourism and hospitality industry serves both as an igniting force and as a hapless victim of viral propagation (Hu et al., 2021). Humans are driven by the desire for novelty, exploration, and social interactions that drives the travel and leisure industry. With travel coming to a halt, these sectors suffered immensely and were among those most seriously impacted by pandemics and disasters. Even in the past, several pandemics have

impacted the tourism and hospitality industry (Mehta et al., 2022). The researchers made several attempts to understand travel flows (Cooper, 2005), intention to travel (Lee et al., 2012), and economic impacts on the tourism industry (Chen, 2011), but only a few studies have probed to understand the shift of individual customer preferences during the time of pandemic situations (Hu et al., 2021), and post-pandemic altered behaviours. Health risk perceptions largely influenced consumer behaviour in tourism and hospitality in the post-pandemic world (Ram et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021; Godovykh et al., 2021). Even after the pandemic restrictions were eased out, delayed consumer confidence to visit hotels and restaurants was influenced by limited information, false information, and unclear information, which has impacted the consumer's ability to comprehend, strategize, and adapt to the new challenges posed to one's health, financial stability, and social well-being (Campbell et al., 2020). As Sands et al. (2016, p. 2443) state, "*In a media-saturated world, fear spreads faster than any disease, and it is fear that drives behavioural change and, in turn, economic impact.*"

The governments of various countries ran several incentives and marketing campaigns to lure more and more tourists (Zaman et al., 2021). The primary goal of introducing travel incentives on either the national or the business level is to entice as many tourists as possible and to jumpstart tourism and hospitality in the post-COVID-19 world (Azevedo et al., 2018). The various incentives offered by different countries were listed in a research conducted by Zaman et al. (2021), wherein it was reported that in a town called Sicily in Italy, the local authorities took the initiative by reducing air ticket prices to half and in addition to this have also offered one-night complimentary stay on every three nights booked. Even the government authorities of Mexico devised a stimulus plan named "Cancun 2x1," where tourists were offered a complementary one-night stay on making a booking for two consecutive nights. Similarly, the Canadian tourism authorities offered a refund of 20% (capped at USD 1000) for choosing Canada as a vacation spot. Similar incentives were offered by the Maldives and Japan, where the government of the Maldives announced exclusive discounts and special offers through their flagship programme called "Maldives Border Miles," and the Japanese government offered discounts of up to 35% covering travel costs, under a

project named, "Go-to Travel." Another prominent marketing campaign to mitigate the damage caused by the pandemic to the restaurant industry was run by the Japanese government, offering a discount on "dining out," named the *Go to Eat Campaign* (Kanamori et al., 2022). Along the aforementioned, Greece, Portugal, Iceland, the United States, and Cyprus followed the trend, with the government of Cyprus inviting tourists to the island and promising to cover the costs of accommodation, food, and drinks, and even hospitalizations or connected pharmaceutical costs of tourists and their respective families if in case they get infected with COVID-19 while vacationing in the country. A very crisp overview was provided by Zaman et al. (2021) on the various economic incentives and schemes offered by various countries to stimulate growth in the tourism and hospitality industry by attracting tourists in the post-pandemic times.

The pandemic sent a wave of anxiety and instability among consumers, leading to negative emotions and cognitions; however, if we look at the bright side, the pandemic has also led to innovative and creative responses (Campbell et al., 2020). During this pandemic, technologies have assumed a revolutionary role and most likely have had an unanticipated impact on the behaviour of consumers (Mick & Fournier, 1998; Kozinets, 2019). Consumer responses to technologies were mixed, with consumers feeling compelled to take work, domestic home life, and even leisure time online (Campbell et al., 2020), while technology enabled consumers to continue and pursue everyday practices. However, it could only partially replace the idea of face-to-face encounters (Epp et al., 2014). Post-pandemic customers will explore alternative choices because of their altered risk perceptions. This is in line with Tversky and Kahneman's (1992) research on prospect theory, wherein they describe that desperate consumers are enthusiastic and inclined towards taking risks to improve a situation. With the consumers restrained at home during the pandemic, engaging in repetitive routines and activities has aroused feelings of boredom (Chao et al., 2020). These feelings of boredom have translated into the motivation to engage in novel experiences (Reisenzein, 2017) and the need to socialize (Mauri & Nava, 2021). A significant degree of monotony aroused the willingness for sensation seeking, which, in turn, increased the willingness to take the risk,

triggering travel intentions (Park & Stangl, 2020; Bench & Lench, 2019; Yao et al., 2023).

Discussion

After the world's ordeal with the pandemic for three long years, there are studies suggesting that the world coming to a standstill and that people being unable to partake in travel and tourism activities has led to adverse mental states and emotional challenges. Lockdowns and government-mandated restricted mobilities have heightened people's boredom, transforming into people's need for excitement-seeking and compensatory travel (Yao et al., 2023). Eventually, the travel restrictions eased globally, increasing tourist inflow in various cities. This has led to a discussion on the sudden surge of visitors seeking outdoor activities in places located near major urban areas. The literature describes this phenomenon with a new term called "Anthrocrush" (Geng et al., 2021; Kadykalo et al., 2022). Researchers are advocating to relook and ponder upon the connections between Anthropause and the institutions created by humans, such as industrialism, capitalism, and materialist consumption (Young et al., 2021), and the level of environmental degradation happening due to human activities (Malm & Hornborg, 2014). Researchers inclined towards environmental sustainability also believe that tourists at their individual level must engage in voluntary simplicity and recreational activities close to their homes (Young et al., 2021).

Consumer behaviour is scrutinized from another angle, focusing on the phenomenon of "pandemic fatigue"—a term introduced by the World Health Organization to shed light on the more general concept of lockdown fatigue (WHO, 2020). Pandemic fatigue corresponds to the sensation of alienation, stress, and low morale (WHO, 2020), which eventually evolves into behavioural changes and adaptation to the so-called new normal. Alternative consumption patterns were embraced by people wanting to escape the psychological distress caused by the pandemic (Ranasinghe et al., 2021) and changing their travel choices by opting for distant nature-based rural locations (Seraphin & Dosquet, 2020).

After being stuck at home for several months, another form of travel and tourism emerged—"revenge tourism" or "revenge travel" (Zaman et al., 2021; Abdullah, 2021; Sudjana et al., 2021). Revenge refers to the idea that travellers view their trips as a way of seeking vengeance against the pandemic, as a response to being subjected to mandatory lockdowns, quarantines, and social distancing measures, and also pursued as a means of making up for the travel opportunities that were missed or lost during the pandemic (Shadel, 2020).

Aftereffects of the pandemic and the resulting consumer behaviour support that humans are driven by their desire to connect socially (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Loneliness resulting from lockdowns (Tull et al., 2020) has resulted in heightened desires to engage in activities to promote social connections and ward off social alienation (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Although the world has transformed during the pandemic and humans have engaged in virtual parties and meetings (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020), nothing could replace person-to-person meetings and social engagements. As soon as the pandemic came under control, people's desire for social engagement became intense, leading to compensatory and revenge travel. Unpredictable events such as COVID-19 make us ponder whether the hospitality sector is now prepared to meet customer expectations in case of events of a similar nature in future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the tourism and hospitality sectors have consistently suffered the most damage from pandemics and natural disasters. These occurrences significantly altered consumer behaviour, which had an impact on the world economy. In the post-pandemic environment, consumer behaviour has been significantly influenced by perceptions of health risks, which has led to a decline in consumer confidence in visiting hotels and restaurants. Incentives and marketing efforts have been implemented by governments all over the world to boost travel and hospitality in the post-pandemic era. These marketing initiatives were successful in drawing tourists because they offered various incentives, such as discounts and free services.

The relevance of technology in the tourism and hospitality industries has also been brought to light by the pandemic. Due to technology usage, businesses have been able to adapt and continue operating throughout the pandemic. In order to ensure the safety of tourists and employees, contactless payments, online booking services, and virtual tours have become crucial. The use of technology has improved the overall guest experience by enabling quick and easy access to information and services. It is crucial to keep spending money on technology as the economy improves to enhance customer satisfaction and boost operational effectiveness.

The pandemic's aftereffects and consumer behavioural shifts provide evidence that people are motivated by a desire for social connection. Lockdown-induced loneliness has increased people's desire to take part in activities that foster social relationships and prevent social alienation. Even though the world has changed since the pandemic and people have attended virtual gatherings and parties, nothing can replace face-to-face interactions and social interactions. People's need for social interaction spiked as soon as the virus was under control, which encouraged compensatory and retaliatory travel.

The pandemic has also brought attention to how crucial resilience and adaptability are in the hospitality and tourism sectors. The epidemic has compelled businesses to adjust to new norms and develop innovative strategies to continue operating. During the epidemic, businesses that could adjust and put new plans into place quickly fared better regarding survival and growth. Resilience and flexibility must remain a top priority while the economy improves to prepare for new challenges and guarantee the survival of companies.

Future studies should concentrate on comprehending the pandemic's long-term consequences on consumer behaviour, the implications of incentives and marketing activities, and the part technology plays in influencing consumer behaviour. The effects of pandemics on various stakeholders in the tourist and hospitality industries should also be studied in depth. Research should also look into how pandemics affect consumers psychologically and emotionally, how boredom and monotony influence travel intentions, and how risk perceptions influence travel behaviour.

In conclusion, to respond to shifting customer preferences and expectations, the tourism and hospitality sectors must see the epidemic as an opportunity to innovate, adapt, and change. The crisis-driven evolution offers a chance to build a more robust and sustainable industry that can weather future storms. The hospitality and tourist sectors have benefited from the anthropause in a number of ways, including decreased environmental impact and increasing technological use. The epidemic has also highlighted the necessity of interpersonal relationships, community development, and resilience in the sector. It is crucial to think back on these lessons as the globe begins to recover from the epidemic and to consider the possibility of a shift towards the anthropause in the hospitality and tourism sectors. The sector may contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future by implementing sustainable practices, investing in technology, prioritizing human connection, and fostering resilience.

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6

How Do Young Tourists Behave in the New Normal? Case of Sapanca/ Türkiye

Burak Atasoy and Oğuz Türkay

Introduction

COVID-19 has created pressure on tourist behavior as well as international tourist numbers. Although the negative impacts of the pandemic process were overcome with factors such as the development of health measures and the increase in vaccination rates, the transformation it has produced on human behavior has not reached a stable state. In the face of the deep economic and social impacts of the pandemic (Türkay & Atasoy, 2021), different efforts have been made to return to normalcy. However, in the following period, tourism showed a different

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development trend compared to the pre-pandemic period. Avoiding crowds, traveling individually, caring for hygiene conditions, and contactless transactions are among the examples of changing tourism behaviors (Atasoy et al., 2022). Tourists encounter destinations that take hygiene measures, have low density of people, have adequate health facilities, and have natural tourism experiences (Ivanova et al., 2021). Therefore, it is understood that the tourism experience, which is considered as the interpretation of the perceptions and expectations reached by the individual after interaction with tourism stakeholders (Graefe & Vaske, 1987), has been transformed into the new normal. For example, it is emphasized that there is a greater tendency toward mental health and physical well-being (Aebli et al., 2022).

Despite outlining the transformation of tourist experiences, the current literature offers very limited insights into the differentiation in the behavioral characteristics of niche markets. Addressing the youth tourism market, which stands out with its unique characteristics, in this respect will fill an important information gap. The fact that young tourists constitute approximately 23% of the number of international tourists reveals the importance of current studies on this market. Travels of individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 to get to know different cultures, participate in various activities, and take advantage of learning opportunities are referred to as youth tourism (UNWTO, 2016). This market attracts attention because it offers some advantages for destinations and businesses. For example, young travelers spend more on accommodation and spending than other tourist groups. In 2017, young tourists visited tourist destinations for an average of 52 days, and the average expenditure per person was determined as €2867. International tourism expenditures in 2018 are around €1035 on average. In addition, young people spend 60% of their travel budgets on tourism destinations. It is more dynamic and bold than other tourism markets. After the 2009 financial crisis, the fastest recovery group of the international tourism market was observed as youthful (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018).

Youth tourism prefers small home-like structures and self-service businesses, where young people seek ways to get to know the local culture and establish social relations with the host and other tourists. They provide the information they need and their interactions with other tourists

through digital media (Staffieri & Cavagnaro, 2018; Olszewski-Strzyżowski et al., 2022). Young travelers are in closer contact and participate in more crowded events than other tourists. Although it is far from revealing the new normal of youth tourism, it is revealed that in the early stages of COVID-19, young tourists' preferences and destination choices are affected by health risks (Dragin et al., 2022). Young people's perceptions of security during the pandemic (Caldeira et al., 2022), virtual tourism preferences (Bilińska et al., 2023), the role of the pandemic on touristic experiences (Olszewski-Strzyżowski et al., 2022), and post-pandemic travel behaviors (Oláh & Gică, 2021) were examined. Since the focus of the existing literature is on the cross-sectional effects of COVID-19, studies addressing the new normal of youth tourism are limited. For this reason, this study exemplifies the new form that young tourists' experiences have taken in the post-pandemic environment.

Literature Review

Tourist Experience: Concepts and Approaches

Experience is the emotional and mental stimulation that results from the relationship and interaction of individuals toward an event or object (Schmitt, 1999). This stimulation is the main determinant in tourism, as in all other areas of consumption, and it shapes the consumer's preferences by reflecting on all expectations and choices related to the product (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). It is the essence of touristic travel and is different from the communication and interactions one establishes at a routine age (Cohen, 1979). Therefore, tourists prefer interesting and unique experiences while consuming products or services (Barnes et al., 2020). In this respect, tourism destinations and businesses seek ways to design and develop rich tourist experiences (Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2020). Because one of the key elements of success in the fiercely competitive environment of tourism is the satisfaction that develops due to tourist experiences (Ribeiro et al., 2018). The way to achieve this satisfaction is through product or service design for touristic expectations.

Since the tourist experience is a complex phenomenon (Ryan, 2010), it is emphasized that studies on the subject are relatively new (Kastenholz et al., 2018). Tung and Ritchie (2011) refer to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral evaluations associated with the activities that tourists participate in during their travels as a touristic experience. Tourist experiences satisfy people's cognitive and behavioral needs such as novelty, excitement, pleasure, prestige, sociability, and learning, and support their well-being (Prebensen et al., 2018). Larsen (2007) defines the touristic experience as the personal perceptions of the touristic travels that take place in the long-term memory of the individuals in terms of psychology. According to Otto and Ritchie (1996), the touristic experience is the mental representation of all kinds of physical, emotional, sensory, and intellectual relationships that tourists establish in tourism regions.

When the literature is examined, it is seen that the phenomenon of the tourist experience is examined in terms of different disciplines such as phenomenology (Cohen, 1979), management (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), marketing (Schmitt, 1999), cognitive psychology (Larsen, 2007), sociology (Urry, 1990) and philosophy (Comic, 1989). However, scientific researchers have made various classifications of touristic experiences such as peak (Thorne, 1963), baseline (Ryan, 2010), flow (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2018), quality (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006), supportive (Quan & Wang, 2004), positive-negative (Jackson et al., 1996), non-existent (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014), and unforgettable (Kim et al., 2012).

According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) symbolic, hedonistic, and aesthetic expectations play a role in people's perceptions of experience. Cohen (1979) mentions five different dimensions of the tourism experience which are handled apart from the consumer experience, namely entertainment, existential, experiential, experimental, and recreational. Drawing attention to the active and passive aspects of the experience, Pine and Gilmore (1998) classified touristic experiences as education, aesthetics, entertainment, and escape. Schmitt (2000) states that people's rational and emotional experiences such as sensory, feeling, thinking, movement, and relationship gain importance. Larsen (2007) calls for the impression of tourist experiences in memory, and Pine and Gilmore (2011) call for tourism managers to design memorable experiences that brought the tourist experience literature to a different stage.

For example, Kim et al. (2012) defined seven different dimensions of the unforgettable tourism experience: hedonism, innovation, knowledge, meaningfulness, participation, local culture, and refreshment, different from the general perception of the tourism experience. Godovykh and Tasci (2020) classified the components of the experience element into four main categories (cognitive, emotional, conative, and behavioral) to obtain a holistic view of the tourism experience.

Transforming the Tourist Experience

Changing environmental factors also transform individuals' tourism experiences. The most critical factor in this transformation is the development of information technologies. This development differentiates tourist behaviors and experiences (Wang et al., 2016). Facilitating tourists' access to services (Buhalis & Law, 2008); increasing information flow due to developing technology channels and digitalization of consumption (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017); marketing opportunities through websites, mobile applications, etc. (Neuhofer et al., 2015); and increasing opportunities for tourism marketers to access the target audience (Wang et al., 2012) have brought about a rapid and radical change in the construction of tourism experiences. On the other hand, the expansion of social media shapes perceptions by allowing instant sharing of positive or negative evaluations of destinations and businesses (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2017; Duong et al., 2022).

Another element in designing modern touristic experiences is the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategies applied to prevent the epidemic (social distance, isolation, travel barriers, etc.) have revealed a series of changes in people's psychological and sociological behaviors (Nicola et al., 2020). To get rid of the negative effects of the pandemic and be purified, the orientation of tourists to calm, peaceful, and natural destinations should be evaluated in terms of these behaviors (Benjamin et al., 2020). After the pandemic, people's interest in domestic travel and green fields has increased greatly (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). Small groups of tourists (family, friends, etc.) who travel for less time but frequently have become common (Stankov et al., 2020).

Yang et al. (2021) state that it would not be wrong to accept the pandemic as the main reason for differing tourist behaviors. With the weakening of the epidemic, the barriers to global tourism have decreased. However, the negative impact of the epidemic on the real emotional experiences of tourists continues. It is clear here that mass tourism and tourist experiences do not improve at the same time. Tourism regions and service providers, on the other hand, seek ways to improve tourist experiences and provide higher-quality services to attract declining mass tourists. Tour operators and travel agencies are pursuing sustainable tourism products and experiences after the health, social, and economic crisis produced by the pandemic. Because people are reconsidering their tourism planning and experiences (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). For example, social distance and isolation have caused tourists to stay away from destinations and tourism businesses with heavy traffic (Dobrescu & Mazilu, 2020). Therefore, the new normal is an opportunity for tourists to understand and approach sustainable tourism. It can be said that tourism regions, where less popular, dense, and complex structures are not located and their environmental and social carrying capacities are not challenged, will be more advantageous than their competitors in the new order.

It is also noted that the pandemic has produced different effects for young tourists. It is stated that young people have a tendency toward safer tourism products during the pandemic, prefer tourism regions and businesses that take certain health measures, and tend to participate in various outdoor activities and nature tourism experiences due to health concerns (Caldeira et al., 2022). Although it is exemplified that in some cases fear can be an attraction for young tourists that positively enhances their tourism experiences (Mura, 2010), it is seen that beyond terrorism, war, and conflicts, the concern for protecting personal health leads young people to prefer choices outside of traditional tourism behavior.

Sapanca and Its Tourism Dynamics

Sapanca is a district of Sakarya (Türkiye) rich in natural beauty. The region consists of Samanlı Mountain and the hills and valleys on its foothills. Istanbul, Kurtköy, Mahmudiye, and Akçay streams flow through

the mountain and it consists largely of forested areas. There is a tectonic freshwater lake (Lake Sapanca) in the north of the district (Sapanca Belediyesi, n.d.). Sapanca consists of a triangle of lake, mountain, and forest. Therefore, it is a very rich destination in terms of tourist products. Thanks to its proximity to Istanbul and its natural attractions, it welcomes many local and foreign visitors throughout the year (Üzümcü & Özmen, 2018).

Sapanca's destination stands out with its winter, sports, nature, and highland tourism. Kartepe (skiing, paragliding, trekking) located next to it contributes to the liveliness of Sapanca tourism in the winter season. Water sports such as sailing, rowing, canoeing, and windsurfing are carried out in and around Sapanca Lake. There are ATV, bicycle, and trekking routes for tourists in the lakeside and forest areas. Soğucak Plateau—where activities such as cycling, horse racing, wrestling, and folklore are offered—is one of the places that are frequently visited by nature tourists. The destination appeals to all age groups with its tourist products, and especially nature and water sports attract the attention of young people. There are many hotels, motels, pensions, and businesses providing caravan services in Sapanca. Bungalows, villas, and country house facilities have different importance in terms of tourism. The bungalows built on the edges of mountains, forests, lakes, and streams as the physical attraction of the region have become an attractive element alone during and after the pandemic. As it is known, the prohibitions and restrictions of the epidemic period increased the desire of people to escape and relax. This situation has left the secondary houses with different features such as gardens, terraces, and landscapes face to face with a demand that has not been witnessed before. Many tourism regions and businesses have barely survived the pandemic process. However, during and after the epidemic, Sapanca turned the excessive demand for small-sized accommodation enterprises such as bungalows, tiny houses, and villas into an opportunity. Moreover, it was observed that young tourists showed more interest in the region after the pandemic. In this context, it seems reasonable to examine the changing tourist behaviors in the new normal through the Sapanca destination. Because, considering the participation in nature tourism and the interest of young people in the region after the pandemic, adopting this approach can make a meaningful effort.

Method

Scope

The purpose of this research is to examine how the perceptions and experiences of young tourists are designed in the new normal process. There are major reasons why the scope of research focuses on young people. First, young tourists are important and large markets for global tourism (UNWTO, 2016). Every tourism region and business needs to know how the tourist experiences of this market are shaped in the new normal. Young tourists are important segments in the tourism market and the tourism trends of today's youth can be perceived to continue in the future. On the other hand, although there are studies on the post-pandemic tourism experience (Stankov et al., 2020; Miao et al., 2022), studies that deal with the subject of young tourists seem to be limited. In this direction, another desire of the research is to fill this gap in the scientific literature by examining the tourist behavior of young people in the new normal process.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two groups of participants. The first group is the young tourists who have stayed in a bungalow-style facility in Sapanca. Qualitative data were obtained through both face-to-face and audio interviews. Twelve participants were interviewed between 19 and 27 March 2023. The second group consists of business owners and responsible persons operating bungalows in the region. Interviews with them were conducted face to face. The data were collected from eleven participants who are bungalow operators or managers in Sapanca between 1 and 3 March 2023.

The interview form of the research consists of two parts. In the first part, there are questions about the demographic information of the participants. Ten open-ended questions developed for the research were asked of the participants in the second part. The collected data were transferred to MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis program, in audio

recording format and analyzed by listening repeatedly. Content analysis was carried out on scientific data with the principle of induction. In this context, by making a detailed analysis of the answers of the participants, it was desired to reveal the new form of the young tourist experience after the pandemic.

Findings

Interviews with Young Tourists

The participant list of the conducted interviews is as in Table 6.1.

First of all, questions were asked about the purchasing decision of young tourists. In this context, the first finding is that young tourists consider their friends' recommendations and Instagram pages while planning their vacations. This finding is a determining factor for young people's bungalow preferences. It has been seen that a large number of bungalow establishments pose a security problem, so the opinions of their friends are important for young people. In addition, it has been determined that the content of Instagram stories plays a role in the process of young people's preferences for bungalows. It is understood that young people conduct research and inquiries about bungalow businesses with their social media content. In terms of travel times, it has been

Table 6.1 Demographic characteristics of young tourists[a]

Participant	Gender	Age
Sude	Female	25
Bentürk	Male	26
Cihan	Male	29
Merve	Female	24
Yusuf	Male	24
Erkin	Male	21
Hayri	Male	27
Atakan	Male	28
Baran	Male	24
Cansu	Female	23
Dilek	Female	21
Elif	Female	19

[a]Names used for participants are pseudonyms

found that young tourists go on vacation 3–4 times a year and spend an average of 4–5 days. However, it has been determined that this period is 2–3 nights for bungalows. A young participant's response to this issue is as follows:

> I take a vacation according to the season. Like winter sports, when summer comes, I am interested in the sea and natural environments. I was inspired by my friends when I came to the bungalows.
>
> I came to Sapanca for 3 days. I saw it on Instagram, it was a beautiful bungalow, a quiet and peaceful vacation.

The main motivations of young tourists for bungalow-style facilities are their desire for freedom and rest. Bungalows, chalets, or villas make young tourists feel at home with their small, original, and nostalgic structures. Especially the structures with gardens and balconies, as well as minimizing contact with other people increase the popularity of bungalows for young people. It is understood that young people prefer Sapanca bungalows to get away from the city to relax and escape. Although there are alternative destinations, there are some reasons why young travelers prefer Sapanca. First of all, the natural scenery of the Sapanca region (lake, forest, stream) draws attention. The fact that bungalows are located in natural and isolated environments attracts the attention of young people. On the other hand, the proximity to megacities such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa allows many people to easily access the region. The views of some participants regarding these comments are as follows:

> I came to the bungalow because it felt more intimate and like home to escape the busyness of Istanbul. I can act as I want. I feel safe when I enter the hot pool.
>
> The wonderful scenery of Sapanca, the forested areas, and the sounds of birds feel like I'm in a different geography, I've had an escape.
>
> With the pandemic, I was stuck at home and overwhelmed by the concrete piles. I came to distract the bungalows because they are boutique and authentic.

The research advocates the view that there has been a change in the behavior of young tourists after the pandemic. People have spent a long

time in their homes due to the restrictions experienced during the pandemic process. This situation has caused people to have a longing for nature and to observe some of their basic feelings during their holiday experiences. For example, it has been determined that the increased intimacy and friendly behavior among people who stay at home for long periods support the tendency to bungalows that feel like home while planning their vacation after the pandemic. However, it is understood that these approaches of young tourists have changed and turned into businesses that offer their own living space while they prefer hotels and large facilities.

> Although the pandemic seems to be over, hotels and beaches do not feel safe to me. During this period, I wanted to turn to free and calm bungalows.

It has been determined that young tourists also participate in activities outside the bungalows during their stay. For example, it is seen that some young tourists go on tours such as ATVs and bicycles to enjoy the natural scenery and experience excitement in the calm. However, it is understood that the bungalows want to reach young tourists by organizing some activities. Young people expressed their interest in private and personalized organizations. The fact that some special services such as birthday celebrations, marriage proposals, or honeymoon organizations are offered by bungalows explains this approach to young people. Therefore, the bungalow experiences of the youth include the consumption of secondary services beyond mere accommodation. In addition to the fireplace and hot pool services offered in the bungalows, it has been determined that some technological or physical games (PlayStation, Taboo, Risk, Monopoly, Twister) attract the attention of young people.

> My friend got a marriage proposal and came here on honeymoon.
> I did an ATV and zipline here. It was a nice experience in the water and marshes. Calmness is beautiful, but the fact that it has activities that offer excitement makes Sapanca attractive.
> I think about the marriage proposal there. There can be nice celebrations and organizations around the pool.

Interviews with Bungalow Owners

Within the scope of the research, interviews were conducted with the owners or managers of eleven bungalow businesses. It is thought that owners and managers are an important resource to reveal the changing tourist behavior after the pandemic. At this point, the demographic information of the interviewed participants is presented in Table 6.2.

Participators' insights also reveal a transformation in the traditional trends of young tourists. The predominant demand of young tourists for entertainment, big cities with advantages in terms of social interaction, and sea tourism are shifting toward nature tourism regions after the pandemic. Being directly in nature is not a familiar behavior for young tourists. However, after the pandemic, the desire to be isolated, visit rural areas, and have natural experiences are the main reasons for these changing attitudes of young people. A manager explained the behavior of young tourists after the pandemic as follows:

> More families were coming to the bungalow businesses. The proximity to Istanbul and the green and blue nature of Sapanca was an option to get away from the stress of the city. However, after the pandemic, young people's need for nature and free spaces has increased. Young people who want to be individual and free have had a great interest in Bungalows after COVID-19.

Table 6.2 Demographic characteristics of bungalow owners[a]

Participant	Gender	Business	Position
Hilal	Female	Sapanca **** **** H****	Owner
Mustafa	Male	K*** B*******	Owner
Melih	Male	Sapanca ******* B*******	Manager
Tolga	Male	S***** B*******	Owner
Necati	Male	K**** *** H****	Owner
Sezer	Male	T******* S***	Owner
Büşra	Female	Sapanca V**** B******* İ****** D******	Manager
Aydın	Male	M******** S***	Owner
İlayda	Female	W******** C****** S******	Owner
Yakup	Male	A****** D*****	Owner
Ahmet	Male	A*** G*****	Owner

[a]Names used for participants are pseudonyms

Despite the change in young tourist preferences, the need for social activity is being integrated into the new preferred tourism product. The desire to be with friends (Gahramanov & Türkay, 2019), which is noted as one of the most prominent tendencies of young people in pension and hotel accommodation, also comes to the fore in holidays in nature. It has been determined that young people stay in bungalows as a couple or with small groups of friends. It has been concluded that bungalows and villas are in high demand after the pandemic because they are both in nature and offer the individual spaces that young people want. Some of the participants' views on this issue are as follows:

> The majority of the customers of the bungalow business are young people between the ages of 20–30. They come here because the hotels are crowded and busy. The push of the pandemic to natural areas, and the desire for isolation and calm are the main motivations of young people. They stay for at least 2 days.
>
> Girl or boy groups come along with couples. The natural environment encourages the desire to relax and be free. They prefer bungalows as an escape from noise and people.

Another issue that draws attention when examining the new normal holiday experiences of young tourists is their special requests. Young people are interested in tailor-made organizations and personalized services. For example, young travelers coming to bungalows request certain activities for their marriage proposal, birthday, honeymoon, or other special occasion. Therefore, the need for surprise celebrations and events for people traveling together increases. This coincides with the ability of small businesses to provide personalized service. From this point of view, it can be interpreted that the demand of young tourists for businesses that produce flexible services and make personalized presentations after the pandemic is combined with the urge to be alone with nature and to be isolated from the crowds. Statements of one participant support this view:

> Birthdays and marriage proposals are pretty mundane requests. The fact that we have greenery in the forest and the sounds of birds and water allow

young people to engage in activities such as yoga and walking. That's why we personalize our services according to the natural environment and young people. Their energetic and vigorous nature reveals this.

Conclusions and Recommendation

This research explains the redesigned tourist behavior after the pandemic in terms of young people. The results show that young tourists' interest in natural tourism products and personalized services has increased after the pandemic. It can be thought that the traumatic traces of the pandemic, personal health concerns, and the youth's passion for freedom lead them to nature-based tourism facilities. However, it can be argued that young people's urge to develop their behavior plans instead of stereotypical social norms also plays a role in this process. The adaptation of the tourism industry and organizations to the competitive environment of the new normal is closely related to their understanding of tourist behavior. For this reason, it is a meaningful effort to closely monitor the expectations and motivations of young people while performing their touristic experiences in bungalows and other small-sized accommodation businesses (tiny houses, chalets, villas, etc.).

The results show that young tourists reach bungalow businesses through social media. This relationship between young people and social media continues in the process of bungalow experiences. While sharing natural beauty, special events, or thoughts with other people during their holidays, they benefit from social media applications. Due to the rapid presentation and consumption of information during the pandemic process, digital media has come to the forefront much more. In this context, tourism businesses need to take social media into account while performing their promotion and marketing processes. Especially on visual-based social media networks such as Instagram, where photos, videos, etc. can be displayed. The contents must provide information about bungalow businesses and additional services. Thus, businesses can present their offers to tourists and enhance the on-site tourism experience. The results of this study support the findings of some existing studies in the literature

(Stankov et al., 2020; Augustine & Balachandran, 2021; Toubes et al., 2021; Miao et al., 2022).

Finally, the youth tourism is a market that needs to be re-understood in terms of changing tourist behaviors and experiences in the aftermath of the pandemic. Small rural structures and the increasing interest of young people in nature-based tourism types may create an opportunity for the revival or start of tourism in some destinations. Therefore, after the pandemic, the attractive aspects of tourism products offered in nature should be emphasized more. The design of activities and services for the preferences of young tourists can also create success for tourism regions and businesses. Working together with public and private tourism companies and local communities to reach out to young tourist markets to revitalize tourism in rural areas can be the right strategy and develop strong synergies. Although tourist behavior seems uncertain after the pandemic, the impact of natural and rural areas on tourist decisions should not be ignored. Although issues such as contagious diseases scare people, tourism is on its way to becoming a stronger industry than before. Therefore, future research can test the relationship between post-pandemic growth figures and young tourist behaviors and compare these research results. In addition, it can also be examined how nature-oriented travel planning affects the emotions of tourists and whether it reduces the fear of COVID-19.

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7

COVID-19 and the Travel and Visitor Experience Economy: Challenges and Opportunities for the Post-pandemic World

Isaac Kimunio, Martin W. Nandelenga, and Steve Makambi

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the travel and visitor experience economy, causing widespread disruption, economic hardship, and the need for adaptation strategies in the post-pandemic world. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, leading to panic worldwide. By that time, COVID-19 had spread to 114 countries, resulting in rising infection rates and a lack of capacity to mitigate the situation (WHO, 2020). In response, swift

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and targeted containment measures were deployed, including travel restrictions and the closure of social gatherings. These measures slowed down movement and other economic activities, including tourism, which heavily relies on travel and social interactions both within and across countries. The tourism sector plays a crucial role in the global economy, accounting for 7% of world trade (UNWTO, 2021), employing over 120 million people globally, and generating over USD 1.4 trillion in government revenue and individual incomes (UNWTO, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption, particularly in the tourism industry, due to the sudden closure of borders, implementation of travel restrictions, and fear of virus transmission. This resulted in a sharp decline in global economic activities, making it one of the most devastating calamities in history. Humanity faced one of its most challenging trials, which completely transformed its operations. The closure of borders, implementation of travel restrictions, and fear of transmission led to a significant decline in production and service industries, with the tourism sector being one of the hardest hit in the global economy.

This chapter aims to explore the challenges and opportunities in the travel and visitor experience economy in the post-pandemic world. Specifically, it examines how travel and tourism businesses have adapted and implemented strategies to mitigate the pandemic's impact on their operations. Furthermore, the chapter considers the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the future of the travel and visitor experience economy, as well as how the industry can recover and rebuild in the post-pandemic world.

Visitor Behavior and the Experience Economy

The global implementation of travel restrictions, social distancing measures, and lockdown policies had a significant impact on various subsectors of the tourism industry. Airlines, hotels, tour operators, natural and exotic attractions, and local communities and micro, small, and medium-scale operators that depended on tourism, all felt the effects. Figure 7.1 illustrates this impact by presenting data on the percentage
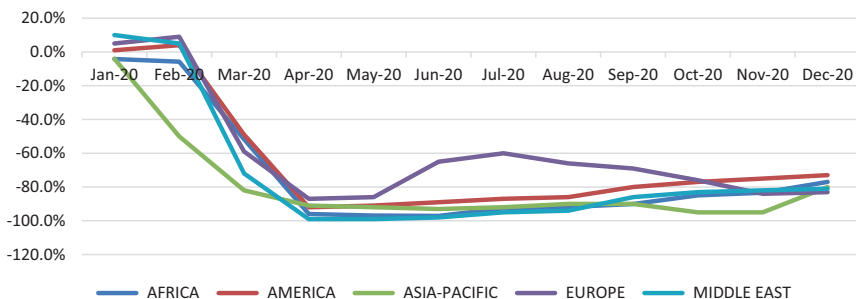
Fig. 7.1 Month-to-month change in number of tourist arrivals across regions (2020 vs. 2019). (*Source*: UNWTO 2021)

change in tourist arrivals monthly in 2020 compared to 2019, categorized by different regions.

The comparison of tourist arrivals from 2020 to 2019 revealed a significant decline of 90% or more in all regions. This decline can be attributed to the impact of COVID-19, which led to a reduction in global tourism revenue from USD 1.4 trillion in 2019 to USD 0.6 trillion in 2020. The main factors contributing to this reduction were the implementation of travel restrictions and the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, particularly in Asia, Europe, and North America, which serve as major tourism source markets. The tourism sector's interconnectedness with other value chains further worsened the economic shock caused by the pandemic. Figures 7.2a, b visually represent the structural economic shock resulting from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on both the economic aspects and the visitor experience in the tourism sector. Popular tourist destinations were compelled to implement health and safety measures, such as face mask requirements, social distancing, and reduced capacity. These measures significantly altered various aspects of the visitor experience, including travel arrangements, available activities, and attractions. They also affected interactions between tourists and local communities, as well as cultural experiences.

The visitor experience economy, which includes tourism, tour and travel, hospitality, and leisure industries, was particularly affected by the
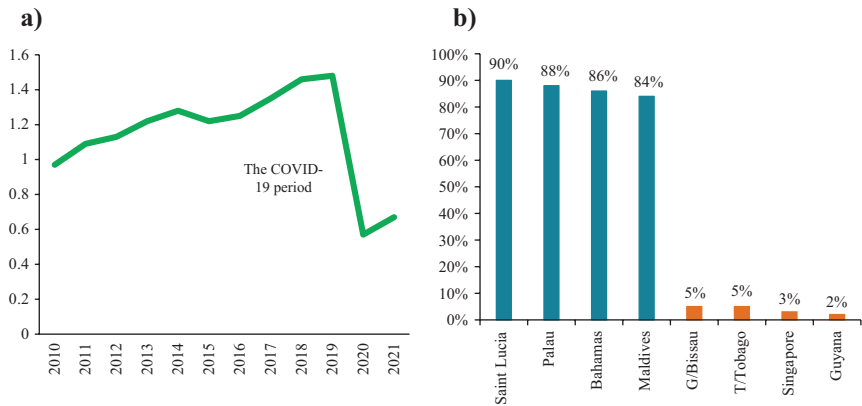
a)

b)

Fig. 7.2   (a) International tourism receipts, (b) Tourism receipts as a percentage of exports. (*Source*: UNWTO 2021)

pandemic. This sector plays a vital role in economies worldwide, providing employment opportunities and generating crucial revenue for local communities in popular tourist areas. The disruptions caused by the pandemic had far-reaching effects, impacting not only the businesses directly involved in the visitor experience but also the wider community that relies on tourism-related activities for their livelihoods.

Adapting to the New Normal

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted visitor behavior and experiences worldwide. Travelers' attitudes and behaviors underwent significant changes, particularly regarding health and safety concerns. In response, travel and tourism businesses implemented various measures to prioritize customer and employee safety. Increased cleaning and sanitation practices became common in the industry, with businesses adopting rigorous protocols. Social distancing measures, including spaced-out seating arrangements and limited capacity, were also implemented to prevent virus spread. Face mask mandates were prevalent in many establishments to minimize transmission risk and protect visitors and employees.

These health and safety measures aimed to reassure customers and demonstrate the industry's commitment to public health. They not only safeguard individuals but also contribute to overall trust and confidence. It is important to note that specific measures may vary based on local regulations. Travelers should stay informed about destination protocols for their well-being and that of others.

The pandemic significantly reduced tourism arrivals, with a decline of over 65% in the first half of 2020, especially during periods of high infection rates. Domestic travel preference increased due to uncertainties and risks associated with international travel, such as restrictions and sudden regulation changes. This shift led to a renewed interest in exploring local destinations and supporting local economies. The trend toward domestic travel has impacted the tourism industry in various ways. Attractions relying heavily on international tourists, particularly those known for luxury experiences, suffered significantly. Cultural and recreational attractions had to close or limit capacity, affecting their revenue and programming. Adapting to these changes, businesses need to be flexible and innovative. They may adjust marketing strategies, develop tailored experiences for domestic tourists, and seek partnerships. Embracing digital technologies, like virtual tours, can engage audiences unable to visit in person.

Hotels have developed packages with outdoor activities and wellness experiences to cater to changing preferences. Adventure activities, wellness retreats, and spa treatments in natural settings are offered. These packages add value to guests' stays, promote well-being, and have positive environmental and community impacts. In response, businesses have innovated to generate revenue. Museums offer virtual tours and online exhibits, reaching a global audience. Theme parks introduced compliant attractions and outdoor shows. Tour operators developed itineraries focused on local regions' natural and cultural beauty.

In the absence of traditional attractions, businesses have innovated to engage with customers. Virtual tours and online exhibits have become famous for museums, while theme parks introduced new compliant experiences. These adaptations demonstrate resilience and provide alternative revenue streams in challenging times, remaining relevant even post-pandemic.

Future Implications

The post-pandemic world will likely continue the trend toward domestic travel as safety becomes a priority and travelers seek familiar and accessible destinations. Uncertainty, risk, and travel restrictions associated with international travel will influence decisions for the foreseeable future. This shift presents challenges and opportunities for businesses in the travel and visitor experience industry. They can focus on catering to domestic travelers by offering tailored experiences, promoting local attractions, and collaborating with other businesses to create attractive packages. Businesses reliant on international tourism must adapt to the domestic market by reimagining marketing campaigns, diversifying product offerings, and enhancing engagement with local communities for authentic experiences. The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of technology in the travel industry. Virtual platforms, contactless services, and online booking systems streamline operations and meet safety-conscious travelers' expectations. Despite challenges, the pandemic has fostered innovation and adaptation. Businesses anticipating changing traveler preferences, prioritizing health and safety, and leveraging technology will thrive in the post-pandemic landscape. Local and regional tourism opportunities arise as businesses promote local attractions. Highlighting cultural, natural, and historical features encourages travelers to explore and appreciate their own country or region, reducing the carbon footprint. Businesses can incorporate sustainability initiatives, implement eco-friendly practices, support local communities and conservation, and educate travelers about environmental stewardship to attract eco-conscious tourists.

Impact on the Travel and Tourism Industry

The travel and tourism industry has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, with global travel restrictions and widespread fears of transmission leading to a sharp decline in demand for travel and tourism services. This has had a ripple effect on businesses in the sector, including

hotels, airlines, tour operators, and attractions, leading to layoffs, reduced hours, and financial hardship. The pandemic has disrupted the visitor experience, as many popular tourist destinations implemented health and safety measures such as mandatory face masks, social distancing, and reduced capacity. This has altered the way tourists interact with local communities and participate in cultural experiences and has also led to changes in the types of activities and attractions that are available. Furthermore, the availability and accessibility of activities and attractions have been greatly affected. Many cultural and recreational attractions such as museums, theme parks, and live events have had to close or operate at reduced capacity. This has forced businesses in the industry to innovate and find alternative ways to engage with customers, such as offering virtual tours, online exhibits, and outdoor experiences that comply with health and safety guidelines.

The financial impact on businesses in the travel and tourism sector has been significant. Reduced demand and travel cancellations have resulted in revenue loss, leading to layoffs, reduced working hours, and financial hardships for many employees and businesses. The recovery and rebuilding of the industry will require collaborative efforts, government support, and innovative strategies to regain consumer confidence and adapt to the new normal.

While the challenges are undeniable, the industry has also shown resilience and adaptability. Businesses have implemented various measures to ensure the safety of their customers and employees, such as increased sanitation practices, contactless services, and flexible booking policies. They have also embraced digital solutions and virtual experiences to engage with customers and generate revenue in the absence of traditional attractions. As vaccination efforts progress and travel restrictions ease, the industry is cautiously optimistic about recovery. However, businesses and destinations need to continue prioritizing health and safety measures while also adapting to changing customer preferences and expectations. The pandemic has emphasized the need for sustainable and responsible tourism practices, as travelers become more conscious of the environmental and social impact of their travel choices.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the travel and tourism industry. With travel restrictions, border closures, and

quarantine requirements, the demand for travel and tourism services has declined sharply. This has resulted in significant revenue losses for businesses in the sector, as well as job losses and reduced hours for employees. The impact has been felt across the entire travel and tourism value chain, including airlines, hotels, tour operators, and attractions. Airline passenger volumes have plummeted, leading to a decrease in revenue and widespread layoffs. Hotels have experienced a decline in occupancy rates, resulting in reduced revenue and staff layoffs. Tour operators and attractions have also been severely impacted, with many experiencing a significant decline in bookings and revenue.

The impact of the pandemic has been felt throughout the travel and tourism value chain, including the local communities and businesses that rely on tourism for their livelihoods. Small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular, have faced immense challenges, with some even facing the risk of permanent closure.

The recovery of the travel and tourism industry will depend on various factors, including the successful containment of the virus, widespread vaccination efforts, and the gradual easing of travel restrictions. Additionally, the industry will need to rebuild consumer confidence by implementing robust health and safety protocols to ensure the well-being of travelers. Government support and stimulus packages have been crucial in providing financial assistance to businesses in the industry and protecting jobs. Collaboration between stakeholders, including businesses, governments, and industry associations, is essential to develop strategies for recovery and to foster innovation and resilience within the sector.

While the challenges are significant, the travel and tourism industry has shown resilience in the face of adversity in the past. It has the potential to recover and rebuild, albeit with necessary adaptations to the new normal. The industry will need to embrace technological advancements, prioritize sustainability and responsible practices, and adapt to changing consumer preferences to thrive in the post-pandemic world. The pandemic has also led to changes in the visitor experience, with many popular tourist destinations implementing health and safety measures such as mandatory face masks, social distancing, and reduced capacity. This has altered the way tourists interact with local communities and participate

in cultural experiences and has also led to changes in the types of activities and attractions that are available. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the travel and visitor experience economy, affecting businesses across the entire value chain. The pandemic has led to a sharp decline in demand for travel and tourism services, with travel restrictions, border closures, and quarantine requirements, making it difficult or impossible for many people to travel. This has resulted in significant revenue losses for businesses in the industry, with many airlines, hotels, and attractions experiencing a sharp decline in bookings and revenue.

The recovery of the travel and visitor experience economy will require a phased approach, with a gradual easing of travel restrictions and a focus on restoring consumer confidence. Collaboration between industry stakeholders, governments, and health authorities will be crucial in developing and implementing effective health protocols and strategies for recovery. Additionally, businesses have an opportunity to innovate and adapt to the changing landscape. Embracing digital technologies, offering virtual experiences, and creating personalized and sustainable offerings can help businesses navigate the challenges and cater to the evolving needs and preferences of travelers.

The impact of COVID-19 on the visitor experience economy has been particularly severe. Many popular tourist destinations have been forced to implement health and safety measures such as mandatory face masks, social distancing, and reduced capacity, which have altered the way tourists interact with local communities and participate in cultural experiences. Attractions such as museums, theme parks, and cultural sites have also been forced to close or reduce capacity, resulting in significant losses for these businesses. The pandemic has also had a significant impact on the hospitality industry. Many hotels and resorts have experienced a sharp decline in bookings and revenue, as travelers have canceled or postponed their trips. Restaurants and cafes in tourist areas have also been significantly affected, with many forced to close or operate at reduced capacity. In addition to the immediate impact on the travel and visitor experience economy, the pandemic has also had longer-term implications. The economic impact of the pandemic is expected to be significant, with many businesses in the industry facing financial hardship and potential

bankruptcy. This can ripple effect on the local economy, especially in countries heavily reliant on tourism.

The road to recovery for the visitor experience economy will require a multifaceted approach. Governments and industry stakeholders will need to work together to develop and implement effective strategies for the safe resumption of travel and tourism activities. This includes ongoing monitoring of the pandemic, implementing robust health and safety protocols, and providing support and assistance to businesses in need. In the longer term, diversification and adaptation will be key. Businesses will need to explore new revenue streams and adapt their offerings to meet changing consumer preferences. This may involve a greater emphasis on sustainability, digital innovation, and local experiences. Collaboration between businesses, governments, and local communities will be essential to rebuild and strengthen the visitor experience economy in the post-pandemic world. While the challenges are significant, the resilience and adaptability of the travel and tourism industry should not be underestimated. By learning from the experiences of the pandemic and embracing innovation, the industry has the potential to recover and thrive once again, providing enriching and memorable experiences for travelers while contributing to local economies.

Adaptation Strategies for the Travel and Tourism Industry

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, many travel and tourism businesses have adapted to the new reality and implemented strategies to mitigate the impact on their operations. These strategies include:

Implementing health and safety measures: Many businesses have implemented health and safety measures such as mandatory face masks, social distancing, and increased cleaning and sanitization protocols to reassure travelers and ensure their safety. Diversifying revenue streams: Businesses have looked to diversify their revenue streams by offering new products and services such as virtual tours and online experiences. Embracing technology: The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of

technology in the travel and tourism industry, with businesses using virtual and augmented reality to offer new experiences and improve the visitor experience.

Focusing on local tourism: With international travel restrictions in place, many businesses have shifted their focus to domestic tourism, promoting local attractions and experiences to domestic travelers. Focusing on local tourism has become a key strategy for businesses in the travel and tourism industry. With international travel restrictions and reduced demand for long-distance travel, businesses have redirected their efforts toward promoting local attractions and experiences to domestic travelers. This shift not only helps to stimulate local economies but also allows businesses to tap into the existing market of domestic tourists who are more likely to travel within their own country.

Flexible cancellation policies: Many businesses have implemented flexible cancellation policies to ease concerns and provide customers with greater flexibility in their travel plans. By offering flexible booking and cancellation options, businesses provide customers with peace of mind and the ability to adjust their travel plans if needed. This helps to alleviate some of the barriers and hesitations that travelers may have when making travel arrangements, thus increasing confidence and encouraging bookings.

Digital transformation: With the increase in remote work and virtual experiences, travel and tourism businesses have shifted to digital platforms for virtual tours, online booking, and contactless check-in processes. Digital transformation has significantly impacted the adaptation of these businesses during the pandemic. They have embraced digital platforms to enhance offerings and improve customer experiences.

One key aspect of this transformation is the provision of virtual tours and online experiences. Businesses, including museums, historical sites, and travel agencies, have leveraged technology to create virtual tours that allow visitors to explore destinations and attractions from home. This alternative not only caters to those unable to travel but also offers a unique and immersive experience for travelers.

Moreover, digital platforms have become essential for online booking and reservations. Businesses have enhanced their websites and mobile

applications to provide seamless and user-friendly booking systems. Customers can browse options, make reservations, and customize travel itineraries. This shift streamlines the booking process, minimizes physical interactions, and enhances convenience and safety for travelers.

Additionally, contactless check-in processes have gained popularity, reducing the need for face-to-face interactions and promoting social distancing. Many hotels and accommodations now offer mobile check-in options, enabling guests to complete the process remotely and receive digital keys. This reduces physical touchpoints and enhances safety measures.

Collaborating with other businesses: Many businesses collaborate with others in the travel and tourism industry, offering joint promotions and packages to increase their reach and appeal to travelers. Collaboration has become increasingly important during the COVID-19 pandemic as businesses recognize the need to adapt and attract customers. These collaborations aim to enhance the appeal and reach of their offerings.

By joining forces, businesses leverage their collective resources, expertise, and customer bases to create unique travel experiences. Collaborative promotions and packages may include bundled services, discounted rates, or special offers that combine the offerings of multiple businesses, such as hotels, airlines, tour operators, attractions, and restaurants. Collaborations allow businesses to tap into each other's customer networks and marketing channels, expanding their reach. By pooling resources and sharing marketing efforts, they can attract travelers interested in multiple aspects of the travel experience. This leads to increased visibility, bookings, and revenue for each participating business.

Furthermore, collaborations enhance the overall experience for travelers. By working together, businesses create seamless itineraries, coordinated services, and integrated experiences that offer convenience and added value. This includes transportation options, guided tours, exclusive access to attractions, and specialized services tailored to specific traveler interests. Collaborations also foster innovation and creativity by bringing together different perspectives and expertise. Businesses generate new

ideas and develop innovative products and services that cater to evolving traveler demands. This results in the creation of unique and memorable experiences that differentiate them from individual competitors.

Future of the Travel and Tourism Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of the travel and visitor experience economy to external shocks like pandemics, natural disasters, and geopolitical instability. To ensure the sector's resilience, the industry must develop strategies to mitigate future disruptions. One potential pathway for recovery and growth is adopting sustainable tourism practices that prioritize environmental and social responsibility. This involves reducing carbon emissions, promoting local economic development, and preserving cultural heritage and natural resources. The pandemic has created an opportunity for the industry to prioritize sustainability and responsibility in tourism.

Additionally, the industry must adapt to changing traveler behaviors and expectations. This includes maintaining a focus on health and safety measures and offering new, innovative experiences that cater to traveler needs and preferences. Personalized and customized travel experiences, immersive cultural experiences, and digital technologies that enhance the visitor experience are all potential areas of development. While the pandemic has significantly impacted the travel and visitor experience economy, it has also opened doors for businesses to adapt and innovate.

One continuing trend is the emphasis on health and safety measures, as travelers will prioritize destinations and businesses that prioritize their well-being. Technology, including virtual and augmented reality, is expected to play an ongoing role in enhancing the visitor experience. Sustainability is also set to become increasingly important to travelers, as environmental awareness grows. Businesses that prioritize sustainable practices and offer eco-friendly options will likely be more appealing to travelers in the future. The pandemic has underscored the significance of resilience and adaptability in the travel and tourism industry. Businesses that can pivot and innovate in response to changing circumstances are more likely to thrive in the post-pandemic economy.

Challenges

Health and Safety Concerns

One of the most significant challenges for the travel and visitor experience economy in the post-pandemic world is addressing health and safety concerns. Travelers have become more cautious and concerned with their health while traveling, showing that businesses linked to the tourism industry are required to implement measures that reassure travelers of their health and ensure their safety. This can be challenging for many businesses, particularly those that rely on close interaction between visitors and staff like in the hospitality industry. Implementing health and safety measures such as mandatory face masks, social distancing, and increased cleaning and sanitization protocols increases operational costs, and businesses may need to invest in new technology and equipment to meet these requirements.

Reduced Capacity and Demand

Another significant challenge for the travel and visitor experience economy is reduced capacity and demand. With restrictions on the number of visitors allowed at attraction centers, reduced capacity at hotels and restaurants, and decreased demand for travel and tourism, businesses in the industry are facing significant financial challenges. Reduced capacity means reduced revenue for businesses and the health-related restrictions have led to decreased demand, as many businesses are struggling to attract customers. The spillover effect is a layoff of staff, leading to long-term negative implications for the industry.

Economic Impact

The economic impact of the pandemic is likely to be significant, with many businesses in the travel and visitor experience economy facing financial hardship and potential bankruptcy. This could have long-lasting effects on the economy, particularly in countries where tourism is a

significant contributor to GDP. The pandemic has also resulted in job losses and reduced incomes for many workers in the industry. This can have a ripple effect, as fewer people have money to spend on travel and tourism, further reducing demand for these services.

Changing Travel Patterns

The pandemic has led to significant changes in travel patterns, with many people avoiding international travel and focusing on local and regional travel instead. This has created challenges for businesses that rely on international visitors, particularly those in countries that are heavily dependent on tourism. Changing travel patterns can also lead to a shift in demand for different types of experiences. For example, there may be more demand for outdoor activities and attractions that allow for social distancing, while indoor attractions may struggle to attract visitors.

Political and Regulatory Uncertainty

Political and regulatory uncertainty is another challenge for the travel and visitor experience economy in the post-pandemic world. Governments may continue to impose travel restrictions and quarantine requirements, which can impact demand for travel and tourism. Additionally, regulations and guidelines for health and safety measures may vary between countries, creating uncertainty for businesses operating across borders. This can make it challenging for businesses to plan and adapt to changing circumstances.

Opportunities

Innovation and Adaptation

Despite the challenges, there are also opportunities for innovation and adaptation in the travel and visitor experience economy. Businesses can develop new products and services that cater to changing travel patterns

and address health and safety concerns. For example, some businesses are offering virtual experiences that allow people to explore destinations from the comfort of their own homes. Others are developing new outdoor experiences that allow for social distancing, such as guided hikes and nature walks.

Sustainability and Responsibility

The pandemic has also highlighted the importance of sustainability and responsibility in the travel and visitor experience economy. Businesses that prioritize sustainability and responsible tourism practices are likely to be more attractive to consumers who are increasingly conscious of their impact on the environment and local communities. This can include measures such as reducing waste, supporting local businesses, and preserving cultural and natural heritage sites. By adopting sustainable and responsible practices, businesses can differentiate themselves from competitors and appeal to a growing market of conscious consumers.

Domestic and Regional Travel

As mentioned earlier, the pandemic has led to a shift in travel patterns, with many people focusing on local and regional travel instead of international travel. This presents an opportunity for businesses that cater to domestic and regional travelers, such as hotels, restaurants, and attractions. By formulating new and more exciting products and services that meet the needs of local and regional travelers, businesses can tap into a potentially lucrative market. They can also benefit from reduced dependence on international travel, which can be subject to more significant fluctuations and uncertainties.

Technology and Digital Transformation

The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of technology and digital transformation in many industries, including the travel and visitor

experience economy. Businesses can utilize technology to enhance the visitor experience, such as by offering mobile ticketing, contactless payments, and personalized recommendations. Digital transformation can also improve operational efficiency, such as by automating processes and using data analytics to inform decision-making. This can assist businesses to become more effective by reducing costs and improving their competitiveness in an uncertain and rapidly changing environment.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the travel and visitor experience economy, causing widespread disruption and economic hardship for businesses in the sector. However, it has also created opportunities for companies to innovate and adapt to the new normal, with a greater emphasis on health and safety measures, local and regional tourism, and digital and virtual experiences. In the post-pandemic world, businesses will need to continue to adapt and evolve to meet the changing needs and expectations of travelers. This will require a focus on sustainability, responsible tourism practices, and the development of new revenue streams and customer engagement strategies. While the road ahead may be challenging, the travel and visitor experience economy has the potential to emerge stronger and more resilient in the post-pandemic world.

In an attempt to comply with both regulatory and economic shocks caused by the pandemic, the industry has also demonstrated a remarkable level of resilience and adaptability in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic, with many businesses introducing new and to a large extent effective strategies and measures to mitigate the impact on their operations. As the world begins to emerge from the adverse shocks caused by the pandemic, the travel and tourism industry will evolve, reinvent itself, and adopt new strategies and approaches that not only promote their economic survival but are geared toward the sustainability of the sector.

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Part II

Digital Cultures, Information Resilience, and Visitor Behavior in the New Normal (SDG 9 and 11)

8

Digital Marketing Role in the Tourism Sector in Post-COVID-19

Eliyas Ebrahim Aman, Deborah Kangai, and Árpád Ferenc Papp-Váry (iD)

Introduction

Since the internet's beginning and technology's growth 20 years ago, the tourism industry has been through many tremendous economic, social, and environmental tragedies (Kim & Kim, 2017). Moreover, the sudden occurrence of the COVID-19 global pandemic without any prior warning (Ben-Zvi & Luftman, 2022) altered the structure and procedures of the tourism sector and continues to influence people's thoughts and decisions significantly, both public and private (Saseanu et al., 2020). As a

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result, the industry would suffer an inexorable, inescapable economic impact, and a global recession would be unavoidable (Erten & Antonio Ocampo, 2021). With the need for social distancing and lockdowns, numerous companies and organizations have implemented remote work policies, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of people working from home (Ben-Zvi & Luftman, 2022). This resurgence in work culture continued to have a significant impact on how people work and live in the new normal.

Furthermore, the pandemic brought global panic and stressful situations for people all over the world, which led to the birth of unusual ways of life and a general social change in people's attitudes and behaviors (De Melo Silva Júnior et al., 2023). The pandemic has transformed the way people act in every aspect of their lives: learning and education, working, travel and mobility, entertainment, shopping and consumption, communication and information, and health and well-being (Kohli et al., 2020). Thus, the outbreak has expedited the widespread use of digital tools such as e-commerce, online entertainment, e-doctor, e-pharmacy, telemedicine, and e-tourism, leading to a greater reliance on digital platforms for daily activities (Puttaiah et al., 2020). For instance, before the pandemic, tourists often sought out crowded destinations and activities, such as attending concerts, visiting theme parks, and going on cruises (Jeb & Choura, 2021).

However, with the onset of the pandemic, many people have become more health-conscious and safety-focused (Tancredi et al., 2023), leading to a shift in their way of life from offline entertainment to digital entertainment. Digital marketing tools, such as virtual and augmented reality, enable users to take advantage of virtual tours, interact with virtual environments, and explore attractions (An et al., 2021; Huang & Liu, 2021).

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Consequently, people are being moved into digital realms at an extraordinary rate and exposed to new ways of life. Digital marketing has become a global way of life and an essential component for every individual who wishes to survive the outbreak crisis (Damnjanović et al. 2020; Dabas et al., 2021). The rise in the use of technological tools is reducing distinctions between lifestyle, work, and social networks, as well as between domains such as transportation, health, and finance (Kohli et al., 2020). This is persisting in the new normal. In this regard, understanding the concept of "digital marketing as one of the drivers of sustainable tourism development" and building an appropriate theoretical framework are crucial (Aman & Papp-Váry, 2022).

There are numerous notions of digital marketing. Commonly, digital marketing is defined as "the application of the internet and related digital technologies, such as mobile phones, display advertising, and any other digital medium, in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives or achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies and media" (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016, p. 11). In the opinion of the authors, it is still necessary to combine new tactics with traditional media like television, direct mail, and print as elements of marketing communications for successful digital marketing. Digital marketing is "not solely emphasized on a channel or a technique; it is an upgrading of the strategic marketing mind while at the same time embracing technology and tremendous data by using content and digital platforms to integrate new tools and applications to convey together the analytical and artistic mind into one" (Kotler et al., 2020, p. 45).

Nowadays, it has notably impacted the tourism industry and tourist behavior in the new normal. For example, using digital channels and technologies, tourism organizations can reach a larger and more targeted audience than they would through traditional marketing channels (Kapoor & Kapoor, 2021). One of the primary advantages of digital marketing is the ability to monitor and measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns in real time (Shiqun et al., 2021). This allows organizations to make data-driven decisions and boost their strategies to satisfy the requirements and desires of their target audience (Riyadi et al., 2019). It is also a suitable way for tourism organizations to reach customers, as it

allows them to target specific population segments and track the return on investment of their marketing campaigns (Riyadi et al., 2019). This enables the organization to reach and engage with customers online, which ultimately drives sales and revenue (Muhammedrisaevna et al., 2021). Furthermore, it provides travelers with greater access to information, increasing efficiency in bookings and fostering a more personalized and interactive travel experience (An et al., 2021).

Due to such influence and importance, travel and tourism organizations have moved their focus to the digital working environment, particularly during and after COVID-19. Consequently, new tourist behavior and social change are happening on both the demand and supply sides of the tourism sector (Shiqun et al., 2021), which is crucial for the future of sustainable tourism (Natocheeva et al., 2020). In general, the pandemic has shifted consumer behavior in all areas of their daily routine (Kohli et al., 2020). Considering this, the chapter sought to examine the "role of digital marketing in the tourism sector" in the new normal. As an attempt to address this objective, the researchers developed the following questions:

- How does digital marketing contribute to and support tourists' choices and their travel experiences in the new normal?
- How does digital marketing influence the behavior of tourists in travel decision-making in the new normal?
- What is the role of virtual tourism and artificial intelligence (AI) in sustainable tourism development in the new normal?

Methods

To answer the established questions and accomplish the book chapter objectives, we utilized secondary data sources. Scopus and Web of Science were used as sources of information to collect trustworthy and appropriate sources on the topic. This was done due to the fact that Scopus and Web of Science have extensive coverage of high-quality scientific information and user-friendly search capabilities with university connections or subscriptions.

Findings and Discussion

Digital Marketing Role in Traveler's Choices and Experiences in the New Normal

The COVID-19 crisis caused socioeconomic troubles all over the world, and it only took a few weeks to entirely change the characteristics of travel and tourism organizations (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). In response to this catastrophe, many restrictions and extra precautions have been put in place around the world to prevent and fight the pandemic (Lapointe, 2020). This immediately led to a decrease in domestic and international tourism, i.e., domestic tourism, international travel, day visits, and segments as diverse as public transport, air transport, accommodation, cruises, cafés, bars, hotels, pubs, and restaurants; conventions, festivals, meetings; or sports events, which had been halting the development of the tourism business (Gössling et al., 2021).

International and domestic tourism drastically decreased within a couple of weeks due to numerous nations enacting travel restrictions, closing their borders, or establishing quarantine periods (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). These initiatives have completely altered the structure and processes of tourism organizations, including visitor behavior (Irwin, 2020). The tourism sector's revenue is permanently lost because of unsold capacity (UNWTO, 2020). The fear of contagion has traumatized social mobility (Verma & Saini, 2020). This is due to the fact that travel prohibitions and pervasive restrictions on physical gatherings have made it more difficult for people to reach their destinations (Gössling et al., 2021). Hence, it brought behavioral changes in health awareness among people, such as healthy eating, increased hygiene, and wearing masks. Tourists are conscious of hygiene practices and may prioritize attractions and accommodations that adhere to strict health and safety standards (Kohli et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the fatalities triggered by COVID-19 have not dampened the desire to get out and tour (Lapointe, 2020). Thus, tourists will continue to engage in tourism but in different ways than before in terms of time to spend, destinations to visit, accommodations, crewmates, use

of technology, and the like (Bai et al., 2021). Due to travel restrictions and public health concerns leading to a decrease in traditional tourism, many businesses in the industry have had to shift their focus to online channels to reach potential customers and promote their products or services (Almeida-Santana et al., 2020). Tourism organizations are more likely to exploit digital technologies to support tourists' choices and travel experiences (Jovicic, 2019). Digitally resilient firms performed significantly better, and the capacity to utilize digital marketing tools to work from home was essential (Bai et al., 2021). Similar to this, only a small number of people used digital tourism prior to COVID-19, which has changed the preferences and needs of tourists from physical trips to digital tourism (Kohli et al., 2020).

In other words, the global epidemic has forced and prompted people to use digital tools for alternative forms of tourism (An et al., 2021). In this environment, the role of digital marketing in the tourism and travel industries will likely become even more critical in the post-COVID-19 world as travelers turn to the internet to research and book their trips (Dabas et al., 2021). For instance, using social media and other online channels, businesses can interact with their audience, share content, and create a sense of community around their brand (Farhangi & Alipour, 2021). Moreover, by leveraging the power of digital marketing tools (see Table 8.1), tourism organizations may reach a larger audience, increase brand awareness, and increase sales despite adverse and challenging market conditions (Kapoor & Kapoor, 2021). Likewise, tourists prefer contactless services such as mobile check-ins, digital payments, and virtual excursions (Jeb & Choura, 2021). The prevalence of using technology for destination planning, booking, and information access has increased (Puttaiah et al., 2020).

Impact of Digital Marketing on Tourist Behavior

Digital marketing has had a significant impact on tourist behaviors post-COVID-19, including how travelers make decisions and plan their trips (Irwin, 2020). The pandemic has led to a shift in the way people travel,

Table 8.1 The roles of digital marketing in the tourism industry

Digital marketing tools	Role and contribution
Social media marketing	It serves as a crucial and frequently used tool by tourism businesses and travelers as a source of information and builds an online community (Hu & Olivieri, 2021; Kushwaha et al., 2020). It also immensely influences decisions when visitors share their travel experiences in public (Farhangi & Alipour, 2021; Sotiriadis, 2016; Tenkanen et al., 2017)
Digital content marketing	A strategy of developing and sharing online material that is valuable and credible and of high quality for visitors regarding tourism destinations to continually entice, retain, and inspire travelers (Gregoriades, 2021; Bu et al., 2021)
Mobile marketing	It allows tourism businesses to do relevant research on their target group using any smartphone or tablet and serve clients in determining where, when, and what to see by using trip applications on their cell phones (Atadil et al., 2021; Supiyevna et al., 2020; Xiao, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2017)
Interactive marketing	Using widgets and opt-in features assists tourism marketers in making their websites interactive, tracking users, and personalizing offers depending on the preferences of visitors and their browsing activity (Enz & Škodová Parmová, 2020)
Search engine marketing	Digital marketing tools assist in targeting many types of searches, including images, videos, news, and sector search engines (Vyas, 2019; Pan, 2015)
Search engine optimization	Using keywords to increase the quality and quantity of pertinent search engine traffic from search engines to a website boosts visibility and sales (Purbasari et al., 2020; Valentinetti & Muñoz, 2021)
Geo-location marketing	Tools to locate individuals or locations so that they could convey their ideas to the most targeted audiences at the most appropriate time (Palos Sánchez et al., 2018)
Augmented reality	It augments the actual situation via virtual technologies, data, smartphones, and computers, which significantly boosts tourism in an unfamiliar environment (Huang & Liu, 2021; Paliokas et al., 2020)
Virtual reality	The digital tool replaces real tourism with simulated sightseeing and enables everybody from anywhere globally to digitally engage and interact with destinations and attractions (An et al., 2021; Voronkova, 2018)

(*continued*)

Table 8.1 (continued)

Digital marketing tools	Role and contribution
Digital storytelling	Using digital media such as audio snippets, photographs, and videos to tell personal experiences improves a visitor's need for a tour and attracts the interest of future tourists (Bassano et al., 2019; Casillo et al., 2021)
Online public relations	A campaign includes posting newspapers, forums, public relations and directories and sharing videos online with promotional messages concerning travel-related products and services (Santoso & Negoro, 2019)
Viral marketing	The technique utilizes memes, comments, shares, likes, and forwards to convey essential information about the tourist destination (Daif & Elsayed, 2019; Fjelldal et al., 2022; Zhang & Huang, 2022)
Email marketing	Sending customized emails to the target audience effectively identifies good leads and turns them into customers (Hartemo, 2016; Reimers et al., 2016)
Affiliate marketing	It compensates publishers who bring visitors in exchange for advertising space on their websites for a tourism destination, product, or service (Abdelhady et al., 2020; Negi & Chaurasia, 2021)
Chatbots	Tools make clients more content by providing accurate data and allowing them to communicate in real time (Leung & Wen, 2020)
Influencers and micro-influencers	It brings celebrities to tourist attractions and showcases the capacity of the destinations to millions of people (Palazzo et al., 2021; Pop et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2021)
Web analytics	It assists you in collecting, comprehending, measuring, analyzing, planning, reporting, and forecasting web activities for your company (Bigne et al., 2019; Filimonau & Naumova, 2020; Munjal & Singh, 2021)
Websites	The institution and location where the organization disseminates credible and trustworthy digital information on tourism-related products and services to visitors directly (Almeida-Santana et al., 2020; Fortezza & Pencarelli, 2015)
End-to-end analytics	The most efficient method for optimizing advertising budgets and calculating trip frequency and travel intensity (Mountasser et al., 2020)

with many opting for safer, more flexible, and more personalized options (Corbisiero & Monaco, 2021). Digital marketing has played a crucial role in this shift, as it has allowed travel companies and destinations to reach out to potential travelers, showcase their offerings, and make it simpler for people to schedule and book their trips (Munjal & Singh, 2021). One of the key ways that digital marketing has impacted tourist behavior is by providing more information and transparency regarding travel options (Almeida-Santana et al., 2020). For instance, many travel companies and destinations have used social media, email marketing, and other digital channels to share updates about their COVID-19 safety measures, flexible booking policies, and other essential details (Farhangi & Alipour, 2021). This has helped travelers make more informed decisions about where to go and how to get there (Gregoriades, 2021). Here are some ways in which digital marketing has impacted tourist behavior post-COVID-19:

1. **Shift to online booking**: With the increasing use of digital channels for research and booking, many travelers are now booking their trips online rather than through traditional channels like travel agents (Happ & Ivancsóné Horváth, 2020). This has made it easier for travelers to compare prices and options, and it has also made it easier for businesses to reach and engage with potential customers (Xiao, 2019).

2. **Use of social media**: Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and many others have become crucial channels for tourism companies to promote their products and services and engage with potential customers (Tenkanen et al., 2017). Travelers are also using social media to share their experiences and recommendations with friends and followers, which can influence the travel decisions of others (Hu & Olivieri, 2021; Kushwaha et al., 2020).

3. **Influence of reviews and ratings**: Online reviews and ratings have always been important for travelers (Gavilan et al., 2018). However, they have become even more so in the post-COVID-19 world (Ben-Zvi & Luftman, 2022). Many people are hesitant to travel and are more likely to depend on the experiences and thoughts of others to make their decisions (Bigne et al., 2019). This has made it more important for tourism businesses to keep their online reputations in good shape.

4. I**ncreased use of virtual tours and experiences**: With travel restrictions in place and concerns about public health (Gössling et al., 2021), many travelers are opting for virtual tours and experiences rather than in-person ones (An et al., 2021). This has led to a rise in the use of technologies like virtual reality and 360-degree video by tourism businesses to give travelers a sense of what it is like to visit a destination.

Role of Virtual Tourism in Sustainable Tourism Development in Post-COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 has fundamentally altered how the travel and tourism industries provide services to their customers (Akhtar et al., 2021). This has induced the tourism sector to find alternative possibilities using technology and information technology for the survival of the industry (Jones & Comfort, 2020). Virtual tourism is a superior and safer alternative for the tourism industry because it enables travelers to experience new places and destinations without leaving their homes by utilizing cutting-edge technologies such as 360-degree videos, augmented reality, virtual reality, online tours, and experiences (El-Said & Aziz, 2022). As a result of the pandemic, it has become more and more popular, as it allows people to continue to explore and learn about new places while still adhering to social distancing and travel restrictions (An et al., 2021). Many tourism boards and individual businesses have embraced virtual tourism as a way to keep their destinations top of mind with potential travelers and to continue to engage with their audience (Voronkova, 2018).

Moreover, virtual tourism can play an essential role in promoting sustainable tourism development post-COVID-19 in four ways. Firstly, it allows people to experience and learn about destinations without needing to physically travel (Akhtar et al., 2021). This can help reduce tourism's environmental impact, such as transportation's greenhouse gas emissions. Secondly, it can help to promote sustainable tourism practices by encouraging people to visit destinations during off-peak seasons or to engage in low-impact activities (Kuzior et al., 2021). For instance, virtual reality experiences can allow people to go on virtual nature hikes or visit cultural sites without having to be physically there (Voronkova, 2018).

Thirdly, it provides a chance for people to participate and learn about local communities and cultures in a more authentic and immersive way (Navarrete, 2019). For example, virtual reality experiences allow people to attend local events or participate in cultural activities remotely (Negi & Chaurasia, 2021). Finally, it supports small businesses and local economies by providing an alternative source of income for people in destinations (Ben-Zvi & Luftman, 2022). For instance, local guides and tour operators can offer virtual tours or virtual reality experiences, providing a new stream of revenue for their businesses. This can help connect with customers and generate revenue, even when in-person travel is impossible to encourage to destinations impacted by the pandemic (Kotler et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Digital marketing has a considerable influence on travelers' tour choices and experiences during and after COVID-19. This is because the pandemic has necessitated and prompted digital marketing to encourage different types of tourism. The pandemic has also transformed the way people act in every aspect of their lives: learning and education, working, travel and mobility, entertainment, shopping and consumption, communication and information, and health and well-being. Due to this reason, the importance of digital marketing in tourism organizations will undoubtedly increase in the post-COVID-19 era as more travelers use the internet to research and book vacations. In addition, by harnessing the power of digital marketing, tourism enterprises may reach a broader audience, increase brand awareness, and drive sales despite a challenging market.

Furthermore, digital marketing is becoming an essential component of the tourism organization, necessitating the concept of digital marketing as a catalyst for long-term tourism development. Further advances in cloud computing and artificial intelligence will lead to new backstage and frontstage applications for the tourism industry. Hence, applying artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing to the tourism business will promote green tourism, smart tourism, and the modernization of the tourism industry.

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9

Cloud Tour Services in Paradise: A Newly Marketing Paradigm in Bali Tourism History

I. Nengah Subadra

Introduction

The coronavirus commonly known as COVID-19 has had an extraordinary effect on tourism, events, and hospitality industries worldwide. COVID-19 is the most powerful force majeure destroying Bali tourism which has been developed around the 1920s when the first tourist was recognized on the island (Picard, 1996; Subadra, 2021a). Bali tourism was also affected by other force majeure, including earthquakes, tsunamis, bomb blasts, and volcano eruptions, but it recovered faster as they were not as dramatic as the COVID-19 pandemic which forced to shut tourism businesses in Bali for almost two years between 2020 and 2022 (Subadra & Hughes, 2022). COVID-19 remains a persistent challenge for nations due to the emergence of new highly contagious virus variants, the lack of vaccine access in low-income economies, and opposition from

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anti-vaccine individuals in developed nations. The global response to the pandemic has been inconsistent, with some countries implementing strict measures while others having relaxed restrictions. The World Health Organization continues to urge nations to work together to control the spread of the virus and ensure equitable access to vaccines, especially for tourists intending to travel abroad.

The effects of COVID-19 on tourism are always shifting because different countries have different travel restrictions. Bali's tourism capital in particular has been strongly affected by the pandemic, especially the period when most of the globe was under lockdown which collapsed Bali's economic sustainability due to closure of tourism businesses such as hotels, villas, restaurants, pubs, travel agencies, art shops, tourism sites, staged cultural attractions, etc. (Subadra & Hughes, 2022). Consequently, the terminations of those hospitality businesses caused massive unemployment, wherein some were immediately sacked by the companies while others were gradually dismissed depending on the companies' financial capitals, and they have their strategies for mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Chen et al., 2021; Lai & Wong, 2020; Subadra, 2021b). As the national and regional government accelerated the economic recovery, Bali resumed accepting local tourists at the end of 2020 and welcoming foreign tourists in early 2021 with tight health protocol applications as regulated by the law to restart tourism as the major economic engine of Bali and to open employment opportunities for local Balinese to survive amid pandemic (Subadra, 2021a). Thus, it is now highly important for destinations to analyze the shifts in travel patterns before, during, and post-pandemic to combat the transmission of COVID-19 in the tourism sector and cover the way for a thriving future (Park et al., 2022). These phenomena shaped the formulation of targeted objectives and strategies that prioritize the advancement of the tourism business while ensuring the health and safety of tourists.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all tourism stakeholders in Bali to initiate innovations in order to be able to reopen tourism. The innovations include tourism productions and services made by the host destination, tourism consumptions experienced by the tourists, and also tourism marketing especially its marketing distribution channels which shifted from a mixed (offline and online) system before the pandemic to solely

online marketing amid the pandemic as the national borders closed due to lockdown and became the only way to market tourism products and services worldwide. This new marketing trend has been supported by the development of technology and the use of the internet in business sectors including tourism. Buhalis and Law (2008) argue that advances in search engines, broadband networks, and travel planning technologies have significantly increased the number of people who use the technology to plan and enjoy their travel as well as experience the destination (Neuhofer et al., 2012). The new internet is making it easier for people to connect and share information, which is leading to new tourism business opportunities for the current and next generation, and contribute to tourist satisfaction with the service quality improved wherein tourists are well-informed and offered quality and value for their money and time, which Subadra (2022) claims as cultural ecosystem services since the tourists not only gain economic benefit but also obtain non-economic benefits upon the purchased tourism products in the form of satisfaction. With the expansion of online platforms and social media, individuals can easily promote their tourism services and attract a larger audience (Man and Cai, 2023). This results in the creation of more diverse and unique travel experiences for tourists, ultimately increasing their satisfaction and enjoyment of their trips (Zhu et al., 2023).

The economic uncertainty of the ex-tourism employees who were unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced them to turn their earning sources to survive amid the pandemic by establishing any enterprise which potentially produces cash for life (Subadra, 2021b). In other words, being unemployed in an economic crisis does not merely turn their lives down, but it encourages the former tourism workers to battle the severe condition by developing their hidden talents and tourism work experiences to create small enterprises which produce instant revenue as a replacement for the regular monthly incomes they earned before the pandemic. This employment shift is further termed "entrepreneurship acquisition," wherein the unemployed reacts to the existing force majeure and escapes such difficulties by creating certain enterprises including tour service which possibly generates profits to survive. This includes creativity in digitalizing tourism products in services which are packaged and advertised online through social media platforms such as Facebook and

Instagram to reach more tourists. Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause widespread isolation and regional lockdown in some countries, tourists are looking for new ways to stay connected with their dream tourism destinations and be productive by gaining information from their desks before their visits. This opportunity to provide useful social media services is a perfect way to help tourists stay connected with tourism information updates and be productive at work.

This new creative generation of tourism governance provides unique chances for destination management and tourists. On the one hand, the host destination challenges to innovate the tourism products and services staged for tourism as unique as possible to be a competitive destination and to be visited by tourists (Richards, 2020). On the other hand, creativity and innovation provide authentic experiences to the tourists to engage and learn about the nature, culture, or any other distinctive feature of the destination (Al-Ababneh & Masadeh, 2019; OECD, 2014). More importantly, it creates a connection between locals and tourists who are eager to preserve their living culture and environment for future sustainability. This means that the creativity and learning opportunities made by the destination management shall prioritize participation, experience, and education for the tourists to encourage them to visit the destination. These are demanded by tourists while visiting tourist destinations.

Tourists are constantly looking for new destinations to visit and new activities to experience to enrich their travel experiences (Shoukat & Ramkissoon, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). Additionally, today tourists also search for new ways to share their experiences with their family, colleagues, and friends both offline media like printed photos and online media using social media like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. Moreover, these tourist places are searching for innovative and inventive ideas which will actively create experiences for the tourists (Man and Cai, 2023). The ability of the locals to work together with visitors to create interesting and unique experiences leads to tourism being more sustainable (Richards, 2020; Shoukat & Ramkissoon, 2022). This aids to create a strong connection between the locals and the tourists, making both groups more likely to gain mutual benefits (Subadra, 2022). The tourism industry is almost fully recovering this year and is ready to contribute to peace and sustainability in the world.

Literature Review

The tourism industry is growing increasingly popular because of globalization and advances in technology. Tourism is very exciting to be researched by academics because it is constantly changing and adapting to new trends as a so-called dynamic (Subadra, 2015). It is not only how tourism products and services are created and staged for tourists, but also it includes the way the destination management market them to attract tourists visiting the destination, which is specifically discussed in this chapter, wherein tour program is now easily packaged and marketed online personally as well as organized privately to offer deeper engagements and more memorable experiences.

Defining Cloud Tour Services

Cloud tour services (CTS) is a new way to market tourism globally. It was adopted from the concept of cloud kitchens, which is one of the business concepts in the restaurant market that refers to virtual kitchens or virtual restaurants, wherein customers are less reliant on ordering and enjoying their food directly or dining in, but prefer to enjoy the food at home or the away mode (Beniwal & Mathur, 2021; Choudhary, 2019; Sarangdhar et al., 2021). This new concept has been applied since the restaurant industry was experiencing a financial crisis at the moment of COVID-19 to reduce their expenses (Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2022). This model allows restaurants to focus on their core competencies and reduce overhead costs such as rent, utilities, and staffing, resulting in increased profitability. Additionally, cloud kitchens have the potential to offer a wider variety of cuisine options and expand their customer base beyond the local area.

CTS relies on the creation and execution of special tour services that feature unique products and applies service excellence to compete with the conventional tour services organized by office-based travel agencies with fixed tour itineraries. CTS is simply defined as a tour service which markets and specializes exclusively in online services, wherein all tour services like pre-departure information, reservations, confirmations, and

payments are organized online without visiting the physical office. This corresponds to the concept of marketing argued by Kotler and Armstrong (2016), wherein marketing is an entire process of maintaining beneficial relationships between producer (CTS organizer) and customer (tourists) from pre-purchasing, to purchasing and post-purchasing products and services. The principal concept of tourism marketing is to establish and maintain long-term relationships with tourists to increase a destination's competitive advantage. The connectedness between tourists and tourist destinations is related to products or services' uniqueness, distinguished and hospitality personnel performances, destination brand, and positioning in the tourists' minds upon the entire destination's attributes. In other words, tourism marketing is not just about promoting and selling the tour products and services, but more importantly, maintaining beneficial relationships with current tourists and broadening the new target markets to reap more rewards from valued tourists who purchase and experience the distinctive offers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Digitalization in tourism marketing is an important tool for sustainable tourism development and management and is compatible with pandemic conditions, wherein no immediate contacts are allowed (Kraus et al., 2021). This means that more attention is being paid to digital tourism since the information on tourism products and services available in certain destinations can be accessed online before their visits as proposed in CTS. This digital tourism service eases the tourists to find and elicit the preferred holiday demands, adjust their traveling budgets, and decide to purchase tour packages through CTS. Therefore, the greatest strategy to keep a safe distance and adjust the business to the current conditions is to incorporate digital tourism into the tourism management cycle. As Zhou et al. (2018) claim, the digitalization or virtual worlds are now serving as platforms for user-generated innovations and also enable the new generations of entrepreneurs to extract values from virtual tourism properties.

The development of information technology and the widespread smartphone use around the world support tourism destination marketing as tourists can now access tourism information from their hands instantly. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the time when all country

borders and tourism destinations closed to anticipate the virus infections (Subadra & Hughes, 2022), smartphones were a powerful tool for sustainable tourism management since they provided an easy way to keep visitors informed and connected, allowing them to make more informed decisions about where to stay and what to do when tourism reopened again. This corresponds to Gossling's notion, wherein information technologies are an essential component of today's tourism industries and they are intimately linked with tourist cultures (Gossling, 2021). Such trends have raised the renewal marketing strategy for the destinations to take upon reacting to the situation. The tourism destination's renewal marketing strategy is an attempt to adapt to changing environmental realities while strengthening existing strengths and developing new capabilities (Nguyen et al., 2021; Schmitt et al., 2016). This strategy is guided by assessments of the destination's current capabilities and how to best capitalize on them while preparing for current and future tourism changes. As a result, tourism destination management is constantly seeking new ways to innovate and improve the current technology to spoil the tourists gaining easier access to tourism services immediately from their hands as so-called "Smart Tourism" to reap more benefits (Choe & Fesenmaier, 2017; Gelter et al., 2021). In other words, smart tourism is not only focused on the use of advanced technology to make tourism more sustainable but also proposed to aid the local communities in innovating their tourism products and service and accelerating their marketing strategies using the most current marketing trends like CTS.

CTS allows tourists to reserve tour services online before they arrive at the destination and interact with the organizers personally while experiencing the creative tour packages offered and privately organized for a better travel experience. As an interactive marketing, CTS interacts directly with the tourists since they are still in their home countries until landing at the destination and joining the tour programs packaged. Additionally, social media platforms play great roles in supporting the raise and establishment of CTS. They provide new opportunities for tourism growth as well as an increase in tourist numbers using the service. CTS is popular for its innovative products which attract tourists based on their uniqueness which is distinct from the ones offered by conventional tour service providers. In other words, CTS challenges the organizers to

create distinctive and innovative tourism products and services which is competitive within the tourism market allowing them to capture value from the tourists purchasing the offers (Kotler et al., 2018). Tourists can have a positive or negative experience depending on how well they get to know the tour organizer arranging their tours in the destination before and after their trip. This relationship has a big impact on how tourists behave and how sustainable their travel is. Tourists who have a positive experience with their tour organizer are more likely to engage in sustainable tourism practices, such as respecting local customs and minimizing their environmental impact. On the other hand, those who have a negative experience may be less respectful and less likely to prioritize sustainability. Although experiences are important for a destination's success, there hasn't been a lot of research done on how to design memorable experiences for tourists. This has led to the development of new fields like experience design and the experience economy which aimed at understanding how to create experiences that are worth remembering for tourists as the CTS organizers do.

Furthermore, as a new concept in tourism marketing, the success of CTS depends on tourists' acceptance and approval of the tour products and services which are interactively served online rather than in person. This clearly shows that digitalization of marketing is essential to meet the current tourists' demands on tourism services and grab more worldwide markets (Kotler et al., 2018). Certainly, the concept of CTS is important nowadays since COVID-19 has altered tourists' behaviors; at the same time, travel agencies also face increasing operational expenses amid the pandemic which can be anticipated by the implementation of CTS which may provide a solution by the time tourism is restarted amid pandemic to accelerate the economic developments (Subadra & Hughes, 2022). McKercher and Du Cros (2003) argue that the tourist background and cultural elements designated and staged for tourist attractions have shaped visitor behavior in the destination. This is especially important when tourism is viewed as a means of promoting national identities and highlighting cultural differences in foreign destinations (Subadra, 2015). This suggests that the study of tourist behavior presents a better knowledge of how and why visitors behave the way they do by investigating the antecedents of tourism, as well as how tourism can be utilized to change

cultural beliefs and identities. This provides useful insights to governments, entrepreneurs, and other tourism stakeholders to develop tourism services and products which serve as destination competitiveness and distinctiveness to apply the most appropriate marketing strategy and reach the most targeted tourists (Buhalis, 2000; Kraus et al., 2021). In other words, understanding tourist behavior supports tourism businesses to tailor their offerings to meet the needs and preferences of different types of tourists and lead to more effective tourism marketing strategies like CTS that benefit both tourists and local communities alike.

This background clearly shows that it is important to understand how CTS is organized and how tourists' expectations and experiences lead to satisfaction and delight in using such services and their behaviors dynamically change. In other words, tourists gain memorable and unique tour experiences when they engage with experiential tours which are about creating connections between tour experiences and memorability which formulates the cultural ecosystem value (Subadra, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). Tourism enterprises, in particular, are important to elicit that tourists' delight is strongly related to the recommendation, repurchase intention, and loyalty possibly generated from the CTS (Kotler et al., 2018; Subadra, 2022). Therefore, tourism businesses should focus on providing experiential tours that create lasting connections with tourists to enhance their satisfaction and gain their loyalty. This can be achieved by understanding the cultural ecosystem value and its role in shaping memorable tour experiences.

Cloud Tour Service and Entrepreneurship Acquisition

Tourism destinations are trying to meet the growing expectations of tourists by introducing a collaborative model that involves different stakeholders. This could lead to greater economic benefits for the local community, preserve natural and cultural values, and rise tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. Such collaboration is a powerful tool for encouraging cooperation between tourism destination stakeholders and tourists to create unique experiences for the tourists. Tourism destination stakeholders should consider collaborating with tourists to develop new

experiences that showcase the destination's natural and cultural values. In such a way, the local community benefits economically from any potential tourism-related entrepreneurship established within the tourism sites while tourists enjoy a more satisfying experience.

Entrepreneurship is the process of starting a new business and taking all the risks involved in order to make a profit for the people who organize the enterprise to achieve prosperities and sustainability termed as the triple bottom line namely people, profit, and planet (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2011; Elkington, 2004; Hisrich et al., 2017). This definition illustrates clearly that entrepreneurship involves people who see the business opportunities, process which is the long set of efforts from the initial to the top stage, and profit which is the expected value gained from the business establishment. In other words, entrepreneurship has evolved from the said triple-P to quartet-P including people, process, profit, and planet. However, the "process" element has not been discussed in academic debates as the scholars failed to discover the role of process in any entrepreneurial stages which begin with observations of current opportunities and follow by the execution of business developments and finish with reaping the profits as will be specifically discussed in this chapter using the case of tourism entrepreneurship which established amid the COVID-19 pandemic. As Bygrave and Zacharakis (2011) argue, there are six processes of a successful entrepreneur including opportunity identification, concept development, resources determination, resource acquittance, execution and management, and profit harvesting. However, the role of the process element in entrepreneurship has yet to be fully explored and understood by scholars. In this current chapter, the researcher analyzes the case of tourism entrepreneurship amid the COVID-19 pandemic to understand the significance of the process element in entrepreneurial ventures.

Three important things must be in place for a new business to be successful: an opportunity, an entrepreneur, and the resources needed to start and grow the business to gain profits. For Bygrave and Zacharakis (2011), an entrepreneur is defined as "someone who perceives an opportunity and creates an organization to pursue it." This notion confirms that an entrepreneur possesses the capacity to observe and react to unforeseen opportunities and the ability to create an extraordinary and unique

business that is developed immediately from the existing chances (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2011; Frederick et al., 2016). Entrepreneurs can create and launch new ventures, produce products and services, drive economic growth, and generate jobs. These entrepreneurial actions are aimed at developing new products, and processes, or entering new markets which are considered a novel way to reach out to new customers and expand the enterprise (Hisrich et al., 2017). Furthermore, the process of being an entrepreneur can be creating a new business from the observed opportunities, purchasing an existing enterprise, franchising with a well-recognized brand, carrying on a family business, or copying an employer's business for a newly owned business (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2011). Therefore, entrepreneurs are individuals who take risks and innovate to drive growth, create employment, and contribute to the economic development of a country. It requires resilience, determination, and creativity to identify and capitalize on opportunities in an ever-changing market environment.

Currently, entrepreneurship has developed to encompass the act of changing the world by solving extensive problems. With the emergence of the internet, entrepreneurship now has the potential to effect social change by developing a service or product that benefits individuals and addresses social challenges through innovations and creativities. This form of entrepreneurship, which is often referred to as "social entrepreneurship," has developed alongside the mainstream definition of entrepreneurship and is beginning to gain adhesion in society. As a result, more and more people are recognizing the power of social entrepreneurship as a means to drive social change. To sum up, social entrepreneurship focuses on identifying and solving social problems through innovative solutions. It not only benefits society but also creates sustainable and profitable businesses.

Methodology

The study used qualitative methods and adopted a phenomenology design to explore the phenomena behind the rise of cloud tour services in Bali, which rose amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Denzin & Lincoln,

2018; Taylor et al., 2016). Data were collected through face-to-face and semi-structured interviews with five cloud tour service organizers to understand their views on cloud tour services (Subadra, 2019; Flick, 2018; Yin, 2018), and informal conversations with five tourists purchasing cloud tour services to investigate their intentions and experiences purchasing cloud tour service offers (Swain & King, 2022).

Additionally, observations of online wall posts displayed by cloud tour service providers on social media show tourists using the service during their holidays in Bali (Taylor et al., 2016; Walsh et al., 2022). Social media has been widely used as a marketing and research tool for a decade. Today it has been extended to be a data collection tool in qualitative research. It assists in establishing rapport with informants, collecting various types of data, gaining a holistic understanding of the travel experience, making good use of participants' fragmented time, and improving the researcher's well-being and effectiveness during fieldwork (Tracy, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Moreover, it allows researchers to capture real-time data and provide an opportunity for participants to share their experiences which can enhance the credibility and authenticity of the research findings. In other words, technology streamlines the data collection process and enables researchers to manage and analyze large amounts of data.

The data collected from the organizers were then analyzed thematically and triangulated, and compared and contrasted with existing theories of tourism marketing and entrepreneurship, to draw out insights into the phenomenon of CTS that existed during the COVID-19 pandemic as the key purpose investigated in this research (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Neergaard & Ulhøi, 2007; Miles et al., 2014; Nowell et al., 2017; Schreier, 2018; Yin, 2018). This method allowed researchers to understand the tourists' thoughts, experiences, and behaviors in reaction to the offered cloud tour services, interpreting the data to gain a more in-depth understanding of the investigated phenomenon of CTS established in Bali to support the pause of tourism amid pandemic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Subadra, 2019; Subadra & Hughes, 2022).

Finding and Discussion

The concept of cloud is now adopted in tourism, especially tour services, wherein the providers create their itineraries uniquely to differentiate their tourism products and market their tour services online personally from their homes through websites and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. These shifted the conventional tour services which are organized by licensed and well-established travel agencies which have well-organized pricing, budgeting, and marketing system. The COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as the agent of change both for tourism enterprise services and for tourist behavior which initiated the rise of cloud tour services.

CTS Establishments and Their Roles in Bali Tourism Recovery

The uncertainty of tourism enterprises' prospects due to the COVID-19 pandemic has reacted differently by local people of Bali, especially the ones whose work relates to tourism to survive the pause of tourism in Bali amid the pandemic. The travel restrictions, lockdowns, quarantines, and mandatory testing measures have had a considerable impact on national tourism systems. As a result, tourism businesses have faced numerous challenges that have hindered their operations. These challenges have necessitated product diversification, workforce reduction, and the adoption of new marketing tactics. Besides, the COVID-19 restrictions have impacted employment in tourism, leading to intermittent employment patterns due to the repeated openings and closures of businesses. In response to these challenges, many tourism businesses have also shifted their focus to domestic markets and local tourism.

Additionally, some have invested in technology and digital platforms to offer virtual experiences and reach a wider audience. Recent advances in technology have had a profound impact on society and daily lives, as well as the way various sectors including the tourism industry, education, manufactures and other types of businesses. The travel and tourism industry has always been at the forefront of technological innovation

today. How tourism is operated, structured, and strategized all stems from technological advances. From online booking platforms to virtual reality tours, technology has transformed the way people plan and experience their travels. As technology continues to evolve, the travel and tourism industry will undoubtedly continue to adapt and improve. The informants argued:

> Everything online during the pandemic … As unemployed … saw a great opportunity to sell tour packages online. … We sold virtual tours during the lockdown … produced money to survive. … We elevate our tour services online until today. (Informant-2, 24/02/2023)

> [B]egan amid the pandemic … much simpler and less expensive to reach a larger audience as more tourists buy tour services online before they arrive in Bali. These modern trends embrace digital content, wherein tourists find differentiated tour offers more attractive. (Informant-5, 08/03/2023)

> We don't have a permanent office because we can work from anywhere using our online services. I mostly work online, but I also occasionally work in person, especially for VIP guests. We don't have an office because we can work from any place and use our online services to communicate with tourists. (Informant-1, 05/02/2023)

It suggests that the tourism industry is now becoming increasingly digitalized as the CTS organizers do, which emphasizes how critical it is for tourism businesses to capitalize on this development to stay on top of trends and maintain the competitiveness of their products and services in the tourism marketplace (Kraus et al., 2021). This is the notion behind why CTS organizers embrace digital technologies in marketing their service online: to compete and realize their full potential in a world where so many similar businesses operate on a global scale; to reach a larger audience; to improve customer experiences; and to streamline operations. In such a way, CTS organizers have the potential to gain competitive advantages and remain relevant in an increasingly digital world by embracing digitalization in their businesses.

The CTS organizers focus on creating unique and personalized experiences for their customers, as well as investing in online marketing strategies to attract more potential tourists. Additionally, providing excellent customer service with instant responses and obtaining positive reviews on digital marketing platforms like Google and TripAdvisor reviews have helped the CTS organizers in Bali stand out in the competitive online market.

> I was just blown away by the incredible service that we received literally from the moment we landed in Bali. The minute we stepped off the plane we were greeted by a friendly man who took us through the airport & helped us with each process before then taking us to our driver. When we got in the car, we met the lovely Made who provided us with bottled water, peanuts & a cold towel. This was awesome because we were hot & hungry! (TripAdvisor, 2023)

This is important for the CTS management to create value consistently as it sells tour experiences. By recognizing the importance of memorable experiences, CTS starts to market itself as providing compelling and memorable experiences to the tourists, which allow them to develop their identities, expand their personal competencies, especially their knowledge, and fulfill longings and dreams. CTS's shift toward experiential marketing is driven by the desire to create emotional connections with tourists, which can lead to increased loyalty and a positive word-of-mouth recommendation. As a result, CTS and destinations invest more in creating unique and immersive experiences that leave a lasting impression on their tourists.

Furthermore, the development of technology, especially mobile phones, and internet access have also contributed to the rise of CTS in Bali since the organizers can work from anywhere with internet connections. Informant 3 asserted:

> The existence of the Internet and technology is very important nowadays because it is very helpful and makes it easier to carry out promotions directly and it is easier to reach potential tourists. Easy access to markets and consumers. Very practical and efficient. (Informant-3, 27/02/2023)

The widespread use of the internet and technology is an essential factor in today's tourism marketing environment because it makes it much easier to reach out to potential tourists and track their responses instantly. It's also extremely useful and efficient for tourism businesses, particularly CTS organizers. In addition, the internet and technology have enabled CTS businesses to gather valuable data on consumer behavior and preferences, which allow them to tailor their marketing strategies accordingly and improve their overall performance. This has led to a more customer-centric approach to marketing, which has become increasingly important in today's competitive tourism market. Informant 1 argued:

> Our tour services are easily accessible to potential tourists from wherever they are. We can respond quickly and provide detailed information. All tourism products and services are displayed transparently and in real-time. And more importantly, Personal touch is essential in our business so that we can compete with competitors. (Informant-1, 05/02/2023)

CTS allows tourists from all over the world to simply access the trips offered by the organizers and reserve the preferred tour packages online. The CTS organizers can answer immediately and give thorough details about the tourism products and services they prepared and confirmation upon the availability of the tour services. The availability of all tourism-related products and services is shown to tourists in real time on the website and interactive social media including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Google Chat. Additionally, social media has become an extremely effective means of disseminating information about tourism and hospitality marketing practiced by CTS. It is a powerful tool for quickly and easily connecting with a large audience. This enables businesses to share important product and service updates and news, as well as connect with potential customers. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Google Chat provide businesses with the opportunity to engage with their audience in real time and receive immediate feedback. Informant 3 stated:

> We market our tour services online through social media … Website, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok … we also use Google ads, Bing site, google

profile … to get more tourists … the more platforms we use, the more potential tourists we get … we reply instantly … we often stay up for this service due to time difference. (Informant-3, 27/02/2023)

When they have decided on the tour programs to purchase, reservations are made online via email. Deposits are paid via bank transfer. The full payment is made on the day before the tour start. For travel overseas, travel agents who work with us, use the payment link to settle the payment. (Informant-4, 01/03/2023)

This payment process ensures that all financial transactions are completed before the start of the tour, allowing for a seamless and stress-free travel experience for the tourists. Additionally, the collaborations with international travel agencies help to provide superior services to tourists from all over the world to ensure they reserve and proceed with their tour itineraries simply without being stressed due to long bureaucratic processes. Moreover, the online tour service offers various payment options to accommodate the needs of different customers, including credit cards, PayPal, and bank transfers. This flexibility in payment methods further enhances the convenience and accessibility of the CTS.

Additionally, the human touch in the CTS business is set as the viable value offered to the tourists which is specifically crafted to satisfy tourists' requirements. This personalized approach to tourism ensures that tourists have a unique and memorable experience, which in turn leads to positive reviews and recommendations for the CTS business. As a result, the CTS business can build a loyal tourist base and maintain a competitive superiority that potentially attracts repeated tourists.

Cloud Tour Service Values

Value is the core of tourism products and service marketing. Both tour organizers and tourists expect to gain value from the business run and money spent on tourism (Kotler & Keller, 2016). On the one hand, the tour organizers create value by offering competitive and distinguished tour products and services to attract tourists to purchase the tours. While, on the other hand, tourists who purchased the tours experience such

unique tour packages which allow them to engage with the sites and attractions listed in the itinerary. This mutually beneficial relationship between tour organizers and tourists contributes to the growth of the tourism industry by providing employment opportunities, promoting cultural exchange, and generating revenue for local economies which aids in the preservation and protection of natural and cultural tourism sites by promoting responsible tourism practices.

The depth of experiences obtained by tourists in the destinations depends on the authenticity and exotics of the attractions gazed and engaged in the tourism sites and also their understanding of the seen attractions which is highly meaningful for widening the tourists' visions. The overall tour experience is the result of integrated clues and activities obtained from a destination. Tourists create their own experiences by combining cultural and natural elements of the destination. Since the experience is created by both tourists and the destination, tourists, therefore, are also a part of the products. This means that tourists have the power to shape their own experiences by selecting activities and attractions that interest them due to the uniqueness of the attractions and their cultural attachment, while also being influenced by the unique characteristics of the destination.

Cultural attachment is valuable for the tourists' well-being and increases the sense of their national identities. CTS which prominently provides service that fosters an emotional bond between tourists and the destination through cultural tourism encourages tourists' ethical cultural conduct. The secret to retaining tourists' interest in tourism and maintaining a competitive advantage is to provide unforgettable experiences as the core value obtained by the tourists upon their traveling expenses. In other words, offering unique and authentic cultural experiences to tourists encourages them to appreciate and respect the local cultures which lead to more responsible and sustainable tourism practices as this not only benefits the destination but also enhances the overall tourists' experiences.

> We differentiate the tour programs and avoid selling the common ones … maximize the value for tourists … allow more time to engage with Balinese

cultures … surely be impressive and memorable … this is why we remain existed within the established ones. (Informant-3, 27/02/2023)

We are concerned about the tourist's language. They feel more convenient to speak their language during the tour. The experienced Spanish-speaking tour guides bridge the tourists with the preferable destinations. (Informant 6, 12/03/2023)

In the case of Bali tourism, cultural activities are strongly bonded with tourism experiences. These experiences involve active participation from tourists in different forms including physical, emotional, or mental. The engagements made by the tourists strengthen their collective identity that aligns with the tourist's values and beliefs and provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment, leading to increase in self-esteem and confidence.

Furthermore, tourism businesses are starting to realize that their competitive advantages are moving away from their products and services and toward their experiences. This is used to set themselves apart and keep tourists' attention as they wander in search of something new and special. Experiences are characterized as delightful activities, occasions, and impressions that are valued by tourists and have a positive impact on their purchasing decisions. Providing unique and memorable experiences can also lead to positive reviews and word-of-mouth recommendations, ultimately attracting more visitors to the destination. It helps to create a loyal customer base who will return for future visits to Bali. The first informant affirmed:

We employ competent human resources, supported by a clean and comfortable vehicle … realizing the promise as written in the tour package which is advertised online to ensure they are satisfied with the selected tour program … itinerary changes must be explained to the guests with acceptable reasons … provide good service, honesty and always on time. (Informant-1, 05/02/2023)

CTS develops knowledgeable human resources to offer excellent services which are supported by a luxurious armada used to fetch the tourists around to compete with common travel agencies. In addition, to

keeping up with the guarantee stated in the tour package, the tourists are informed if there are any changes to the itinerary and given justifications. The CTS values transparency and strives to provide tourists with the best experience possible by maintaining interactive communication which is considered as the key to ensuring tourists' satisfaction.

Furthermore, innovation plays a great role in boarding CTS into the world-level market. The CTS management maintains its competitiveness by constantly improving its products and services and distinguishing itself from its competitors which is accomplished through new and improved tour products and services, as well as ongoing innovation and improvement in the enterprise's processes and practices. Additionally, CTS management focuses on building strong customer relationships and investing in marketing efforts to increase brand awareness (Kotler & Keller, 2016). A CTS organizer argued:

> We learned from the weakness of common tour services. … We innovated and customized the tour services. … Tourists chose the most desired destinations to visit from the detailed tour itinerary offered … allowing them to explore and engage more deeply with the visited sites for more memorable experiences. (Informant-1, 05/02/2023)

> We change the way we market … also change the way serving the guests before, on, and after arrivals … all to make tourists satisfied and trust us. (Informant-6, 12/03/2023)

By implementing the latest technologies in tourism and hospitality marketing, CTS keeps pace with the competition, enhancing customer experiences and operational efficiency. This leads to increased revenue and customer loyalty, making them a powerful force in marketing since they benefit the CTS organizers and their customers overall. In addition, CTS's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility also sets them apart from its competitors, attracting environmentally conscious tourists and enhancing its brand reputation. This further strengthens their position as a future leading online tour service to support the development of tourism and hospitality industries in Bali.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced all tourism stakeholders in Bali to come up with new ways to reopen tourism. Some of these ways include innovations in tourism products, services, and consumption experiences by tourists. Additionally, marketing efforts have shifted to online marketing only to better reach tourists. Due to their unstable financial situation, former tourism employees who became unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak were obliged to look for any type of business that might give them a reliable source of income. This was the initial phase when CTS began to rise in Bali. It reduces operational costs while reaching a global market.

The research indicated that CTS instantly elevated the reactions of locals in the struggling recovery phase of Bali tourism, where the entrepreneurial tourism acquisition began. This is the response of former employees of tourism-related businesses who were let go as a result of financial difficulties the businesses had during the pandemic. The CTS provided a new source of income for the locals and also helped promote Bali tourism. It allowed the former employees to earn a living and contributed to the economic recovery of Bali. CTS attempted to establish its own tour-operating companies online without the need for actual offices by using cell phones to create itineraries and excursions, promote the tours online, and get in touch with potential customers. As a result, it is now simpler for tourists to speak with the organizer before, during, and after purchasing the tours, book their tours, and pay with a variety of options to facilitate the payment matters. CTS has revolutionized the travel industry by providing a seamless booking experience for tourists, since tourists could access information and make reservations from anywhere.

This research does not generalize the tour service organizers in Bali. It only discussed the ones that market their tour programs online amid the COVID-19 pandemic to support Bali's tourism recovery and focused on their establishments and measures competing with well-respected travel agencies based in Bali to attract tourists using their services by offering distinguished products and services and competitive prices. Therefore,

further research on CTS's contributions and challenges to the economic revival of the island is demanded to understand their significance to tourism development in Bali. This research could also provide insights into the potential long-term impacts of COVID-19 on Bali's tourism industry and how CTS can adapt to changing market conditions.

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10

An Insight into the Behavior of Tech-Savvy Millennial Travelers: A Global Perspective

Prithvi Roy and Aruditya Jasrotia

Introduction

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, are considered "digital natives" who grew up during a period of rapid expansion and widespread adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) in various aspects of daily life. According to Barnes and Noble (2016), millennials were born between 1982 and 2004. This demographic cohort, particularly young adults, is more inclined toward the latest technologies and is replacing low-tech solutions with technological alternatives (Yongsung & Circella, 2019). Millennials are at the forefront of technology adoption,

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with devices such as smartphones, smart tablets, and online social network services, and they view the internet and personal mobile devices as positive innovations for travel, more so than the members of earlier generations (William & Scherer, 2019. Millennials are known for their adaptability, which allows them to thrive in various fields, such as the workplace and travel. They are quick to pick up new and innovative technologies and are proficient in using tools to learn, apply skills, or improve existing ones. Technology has had a significant impact on the way that millennials interact with the world around them. It has changed the way that they communicate, consume media, and engage with society. Social media has allowed millennials to connect with others in ways that were previously impossible, while smartphones have enabled them to access information and services at any time and from any location. Recent research has found that 81% of millennials consider the internet and technology to be a human right, and 86% consider them a source of comfort, enabling them to work remotely and live flexible lives. As the largest group in society, even small technological innovations in their daily lives can have a huge impact on the public. Scholars, organizers, and decision-makers are trying to understand the relationships between millennials and technology use. This demographic group offers an interesting opportunity for the tourism industry due to their growing financial influence and appeal in travel. Literature that acknowledges millennials as the future of the tourism and leisure industry, and the age group with the most purchasing power (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017; Alčaković et al., 2017; Cavagnaro et al., 2018), understanding their technology use is crucial. The majority of millennials globally live in Asia, with 400 million millennials residing in China, which is more than the entire population of the US and Canada combined. As tech-savvy individuals who grew up surrounded by technology, millennials are accustomed to the transformative power and impact it has on their lives. Due to their exposure to technology from an early age, millennials possess strong skills in its usage and demonstrate a heightened desire for constant connectivity (Santos et al., 2016). The growth of the millennial travel market in a globalized world has led to the emergence of various sub-segments, including backpackers, tourists, volunteers, exchange students, and interns (Yousaf et al., 2018). The impact of technology on the tourism industry has been

significant, especially for Generation Y Travelers. Millennials heavily rely on technology for travel planning, such as researching and booking trips using various online platforms. They also expect personalized travel experiences that cater to their individual preferences, which can be facilitated through technology-based recommendations and customized itineraries. Social media is a vital tool for them to share their travel experiences, seek out advice, and connect with other travelers. Additionally, mobile technology is critical for staying connected and navigating unfamiliar destinations. Virtual reality is also becoming more popular among millennials, as it allows them to experience a destination before booking a trip. Finally, as environmentally conscious travelers, millennials are increasingly seeking out sustainable travel options, which are promoted and offered through technology. Overall, the tourism industry must continue to adapt and provide innovative technology solutions that meet the changing needs and preferences of millennials. Despite the extensive research on technology adoption and acceptance among travelers using conventional models such as the Technology Acceptance Model and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003), and recent studies that explore the impact of technology on travel experiences (Wang et al., 2018), there is limited knowledge about the perspectives and behavior of millennials while traveling, even though they have the potential to influence the future of the tourism industry (Vukić et al., 2015). This research aims to investigate how technology affects tourism.

Literature Review

Travelers and Technology

According to Zheng, Magnini, and Fesenmaier (2015), the process of planning travel is essential and should be adaptable to changes in technology. With the increasing use of the internet, it has become a common practice to use online resources for travel planning. This shift toward technology has allowed travelers to take advantage of new channels,

which, in turn, has led to the development of technological innovations in the travel industry. Searching for information and reviews uploaded by other travelers has become a major online interest. Generation Y is particularly engaged in travel planning, using various sources such as TV, videos, and social media to gather information. They also tend to book their accommodations through online travel agencies and place a higher value on the destinations they stay at. They are also diligent in researching activities, shopping, and dining options in their chosen destinations. From a marketing and management perspective, it is crucial to identify the most effective channels and language to engage and capture the attention of these young travelers. Therefore, this study found that Gen Y travelers are actively seeking useful and relevant information for their holidays, offering organizations an opportunity to develop strategies specifically targeted to this group.

Millennials are naturally adept at using technology in various ways, particularly when it comes to connecting with others and sharing travel experiences (Schiopu et al., 2016). They often rely on travel blogs and social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to plan their trips and gather information. A study by Dobre et al. (2021) found that 63% of millennials browse products online before making a purchase, and 59% of those looking to buy or book a product visit the brand's social media profile, with 85% consulting customer reviews before making a decision. When it comes to planning travel, millennials typically consult an average of nine sources of information, with the Internet being the primary source. As such, the Internet is a crucial promotional channel for the travel industry, providing valuable insights that can inform policies and strategies based on the evolving dynamics of this market.

According to Sánchez-Cubo et al. (2021), the emergence of smartphones has had a significant impact on the travel industry, particularly on how tourists communicate and share their experiences through review websites. In addition, the rise of smart devices such as smartwatches, smart glasses, and wearables has led to the development of Smart Destinations (SDs), which utilize these technologies to enhance the tourism experience. As "Gen Y" is often considered early adopters of technology, they are likely to play a key role in the success of these smart tourism initiatives. Reisenwitz and Fowler (2019) argued that Gen Y, being adept

at using information and communication technology (ICT), can easily resolve issues and expedite the learning process through collaborative gadgets such as mobile phones, Bluetooth, Windows CE handhelds, laptops, email, and text messaging. This generation is the first to utilize the internet more than television. They are also more likely to both consume and generate content compared to other age groups. Gen Y finds online community-based interaction pleasurable, customizable, and fulfilling.

Millennials and Technology

Millennials are more likely to use technology for travel planning and booking than other age groups (Ye et al., 2011) found. The study found that millennials prefer to use online travel agencies and search engines to book their trips, and they are more likely to use mobile devices to access travel-related information and book their trips. Another study by Ye et al. (2011) found that millennials are more likely to seek out unique travel experiences than other age groups. The study found that millennials are interested in cultural immersion, adventure travel, and sustainable tourism. They also found that millennials are more likely to use social media to research and share travel experiences, and they value the opinions of their peers and other travelers when making travel decisions. Han and Hyun (2017) explored the impact of mobile technology on the behavior of millennial travelers. The study found that mobile technology has enabled millennials to be more spontaneous and flexible in their travel planning, and they are more likely to make last-minute travel decisions based on real-time information. The study also found that millennials are more likely to use mobile devices to access travel-related information, and they value the convenience and speed of mobile technology.

   According to E-Marketer (2007), 25% of infrequent leisure travelers and 33% of frequent travelers who use peer reviews for their accommodation bookings reported that they switched hotels based on feedback from other customers. While Gen Y's use of social media platforms may increase their risk propensity, further research is needed to fully understand the implications of their risk-taking behaviors, which are significant to firms and policymakers. Finally, a study by Yoo and Gretzel (2012)

explored the impact of social media on the behavior of millennial travelers. The study found that social media has enabled millennials to connect with other travelers, share travel experiences, and seek out travel advice and recommendations from their peers. The study also found that millennials are more likely to use social media to research travel destinations, and they value the authenticity of user-generated content over traditional travel marketing.

Hence, the behavior of tech-savvy millennial travelers is characterized by a strong preference for technology-driven travel planning and booking, a desire for unique travel experiences, a reliance on mobile technology, and a preference for social media as a source of travel information and recommendations. These findings have significant implications for the tourism industry, as they highlight the need for travel businesses to adapt to the preferences of this influential generation.

Millennials, Technology, and Sustainability

The role of technology in sustainable development is helping businesses with net-zero and other environmental, social, and governance goals. Leading companies are already benefiting from technology accelerators to realize sustainability goals. For example, IoT, data analytics, and sensors are facilitating to decarbonize tourism industry operations and solving issues by networking and communicating, monitoring and tracking tourist activities, analyzing, improving the tourism services, and forecasting and augmenting and automating the services (Ali & Frew, 2017; Negrusa et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2017).

In 2030, Agenda for Sustainable Development SDG target 8.9, Theby 2030, aims to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (Hall, 2019). By embracing cutting-edge technologies such as cloud-native architectures to optimize data-driven processes, businesses can fulfill their emission reduction objectives while also establishing new benchmarks within their industry. These measures have the potential to generate substantial reductions in CO_2 emissions. The importance of the adoption of ICT to facilitate the path toward sustainable tourism has been identified

by several studies (Ali & Frew, 2013, 2014), and in particular, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this importance has tremendously been highlighted. The adoption of technology in tourism and hospitality can contribute to the achievement of all the 18 SDGs from economic, sociocultural, and environmental perspectives.

Methodology

This study is conceptual. Conceptual research is defined as a methodology wherein research is conducted by observing and analyzing already present information on a given topic. Conceptual research does not involve conducting any practical experiments (Mora et al., 2008). It is related to abstract concepts or ideas (Beaney, 2003). The process of conceptual analysis may also encompass the dissection of concepts into their components to enhance comprehension. When conducting research, a conceptual framework serves as a theoretical framework that outlines a structure for comprehending a specific phenomenon or issue. It is a critical element of any research endeavor and assists in directing the research process from beginning to end. A conceptual framework offers a well-defined comprehension of the variables, relationships, and assumptions that form the foundation of a research study. It establishes the fundamental concepts that the study is exploring and their interconnections. Additionally, it determines the research's extent and specifies the research questions or hypotheses.

Findings and Discussion

Compared to the individualistic and self-sustaining Gen X, millennials tend to do things in groups and make decisions collaboratively, even with unfamiliar individuals. They belong to the Generation Y cohort and are well-versed in the use of the Internet of Things (IoT), allowing them to explore new areas, collaborate on ideas, and obtain information. Millennials are highly receptive to interactive forms of learning, which engage them through visual interactions and game technology. They tend

to use technology in a fun way to learn things and prefer challenges and flexible schedules in life. Millennials also tend to prioritize experiences over material possessions, and technology has helped them to discover and share unique travel experiences through social media and online reviews. This has led to a greater emphasis on authentic, local experiences and a shift away from traditional tourist destinations and activities. They value information technology as an essential part of their active lives and can process information online more quickly than previous generations. In addition, technology has also enabled millennials to travel more sustainably by reducing paper waste and increasing efficiency in travel planning and operations. This includes the use of digital maps and guides, electronic tickets, and ride-sharing services. Millennials also tend to share their experiences and activities through social media, often using images to convey their message. They tend to use social media extensively while traveling, with 97% of millennials using it for this purpose. The younger generation, aged 18–24, belonging to the millennial generation, are more likely to try out virtual reality (VR) technology than any other generation. Overall, the combination of millennials' desire for unique experiences and their proficiency with technology has had a significant impact on the tourism industry, leading to the development of new travel trends and a growing emphasis on sustainability and responsible tourism. A survey by YOUVISIT (YOU VISIT, 2016) revealed that 64% of those who had not yet tried VR technology were willing to do so. To ensure a more realistic and enjoyable experience for millennials in virtual environments, managers should consider implementing mixed-reality technology.

The discussion highlights the increasing role of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in transforming destination management and leading to the emergence of the smart destination concept. The focus of the study is on the behavior and trends of tech-savvy millennial travelers in the global tourism industry, an area that requires further exploration. Millennials are expected to become the primary consumers in the tourism industry due to their high interest in travel, unique preferences, disposable income, and freedom of choice. Technology has played a significant role in changing the way millennials view tourism, with easy access to information about destinations, accommodations, and activities through online platforms. This has led to a greater emphasis on unique

and authentic travel experiences, including sustainable and responsible tourism, adventure travel, and cultural and culinary tourism. By 2024, it is estimated that millennial tourists' travel expenditure will exceed 50% of the global travel expenditure, indicating not only an increase in the number of people traveling but also the diversity of journeys, including more millennials from developing and underdeveloped countries traveling, and the average number of nights spent on trips is rising globally.

Conclusion

The availability of technology has revolutionized the way millennials approach travel. With the ability to access vast amounts of information quickly, they prioritize their experiences, preferences, and emotions. While older generations value comfort and convenience, millennials seek excitement, flexibility, freedom, and fulfillment. They are not afraid to make impromptu decisions to visit new destinations, often inspired by social media. Contrary to popular belief, independent travel agencies are not opposed to online travel agencies and platforms for travelers. Millennials can benefit from using these platforms to find personalized tour itineraries, efficient customer service, and the best available rates. With more millennials using their smartphones to plan and book their trips, independent travel agencies must focus on enhancing their digital presence and advertising efforts to appeal to this demographic. Ultimately, millennials view technology as an integral part of their travel experience, allowing them to connect with locals and experience new cultures.

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Part III

Health Measures and Visitor Behavior in the New Normal (SDG 3, 6, and 12)

11

Sports Tourism in the New Normal

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Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way individuals think, giving way to a new reality and a new form of behavior (Maditinos et al., 2021). This affects all areas of life and especially the way leisure time is used (Waite, 2022). Thus, the pandemic has also provided an opportunity to adapt to change, using resilience as a tool at the individual, community, and organizational levels (Prayag, 2023). This new normality has brought new trends in sports and leisure activities and therefore in the tourism industry. Sports tourism is emerging as one of these trends. Uniting tourism and sports is becoming a way of boosting the tourism sector in many countries (Lee et al., 2022). Sports tourism is a combination of tourism and sport, traveling to attend or participate in a sporting activity or a sporting holiday (Ritchie & Adair, 2004). The sports tourism industry, for the most part, has been able to leverage resilience management from

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a social and financial perspective. The return to the new normal has occurred with a breakthrough in technology and with the collaboration of most stakeholders in the sector (Mirehie & Cho, 2022).

Golf, as a sport and tourism activity, may be one of the new trends in tourism, driven by the change in the behavioral choice of leisure activities in the post-pandemic era. In 2020 and 2021, participation in golf, an outdoor sport that can be practiced individually, has increased considerably, after years of continued decline of players in Europe and the United States (National Golf Foundation [NGF], 2023). The sport of golf has been able to use the circumstances of the new reality to enhance other aspects of the sport. Its resilience is evident in the revitalization of golf tourism destinations. The pandemic has boosted the value of golf as an outdoor sport, of minimal risk to Covid-19, and capable of boosting the local economy. This may be the main reason for the resurgence of the sector in major markets in 2020. From 2019 to 2021, almost 75% of European markets showed growth (Royal & Ancient [R&A], 2022). In the United States, the 500,000 new golfers in 2020 represent an increase over the previous year of 5.37%, the largest increase in 17 years (NGF, 2022).

The tourism activity linked to the sport of golf is reflected in the fact that almost 65% of new golf facility projects in the world in 2021 are part of the tourism industry (R&A, 2022). Golf tourism is not only made up of players who travel to play golf. It is also made up of those attending sporting events such as professional golf tournaments or recreational golfers around the world. The contribution of an international golf tournament to the image of the destination is an enduring benefit over time beyond the event (Yao & Schwarz, 2018). Traditional golf destinations in Europe, such as Spain and Portugal (Madrigal & Lara, 2019) or South Carolina and Florida in the United States (Butler, 2019), are joined by the development of new areas such as Russia (Mayya et al., 2019), South Korea (Lyu & Lee, 2018), Continental Croatia (Bartoluci et al., 2019), Malaysia (Cham et al., 2022), or some South Asian countries such as Thailand, China, or Japan (Lee et al., 2022). Thus, promoting this sport and increasing the number of players worldwide would increase opportunities for both traditional and emerging golf tourism destinations.

Therefore, in the context of the pandemic becoming the norm, this study explores dimensions influencing future golf intentions. Knowledge

of these dimensions helps to understand leisure choice behavior and allows us to draw effective marketing lines to increase golf participation and thus golf tourism. This research analyzes three elements influencing participation: the hedonic dimension, the health dimension, and the negative beliefs dimension. The rest of the chapter reviews the literature on the dimensions analyzed in this study. Next, the quantitative research conducted is presented, followed by the discussion and conclusions of the research.

Literature Review

Hedonic Dimension

Emotions experienced by an individual are often the driving force that triggers behavior (Andreatta et al., 2023). In the context of sports tourism, emotional perceptions seem to be of greater importance than in other products or services (Hallmann et al., 2015). Thus, numerous investigations relate the behavior of participants in a sport or leisure activity to the hedonic dimension, positive emotions constitutive of pleasure and happiness. Recent research highlights that the emotions generated through outdoor physical activity are not simply positive or negative but are mixed and changeable over time (Harikkala-Laihinen et al., 2022).

In golf, several papers also relate participation intention to its ability to generate pleasurable emotions. Mirehie et al. (2021) found that the relationship between participation and positive feelings is of greater magnitude in golf than in other sports. Positive feelings had a greater ability to produce intentions to play golf than other variables in research by Han and Hwang (2014). Stenner et al. (2020) also find among the reasons for playing golf, in the older population group, are enjoyment and pleasant emotions generated by the playing environment. Therefore, one of the elements influencing future intentions to play golf is the hedonic dimension. In this chapter, we explore the perception of golf as a sport capable of generating positive emotions and how it influences intentions to take up golf.

Health Dimension

The World Health Organization draws attention to the health risk of insufficient physical activity and the urgency of positioning physical exercise as a priority (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023). Thus, there is growing awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and sport is an effective tool for maintaining and improving both physical and mental health. Recent research links playing golf regularly with increased balance and grip strength (Wilson et al., 2022), physical and mental health, life expectancy and cardiovascular (Murray et al., 2018) and musculoskeletal health (Sorbie et al., 2022), and reduced mortality rate (Farahmand et al., 2009). Thus, the health element is one of the reasons to participate in a sport. Several studies have found this reason to be one of the dimensions related to the intention to participate (e.g. Alexandris et al., 2002; Hull et al., 2021). In the older population group, Stratas et al., 2022, found that fear of health deterioration was a strong motive for participating in sports activity. Thus, motivation to stay healthy and improve mobility in older people is one of the most important determinants of sporting activity (Kolt et al., 2004) and more specifically golf participation (Berlin & Klenosky, 2014; Stenner et al., 2016).

Breitbarth and Huth (2019) advocate that enhancing golf's capacity to improve health is one way to increase the intentions to participate in this activity. Based on the influence found in the literature of the health dimension on intentions to play golf, in this chapter, we explore the relationship of this dimension with intentions to participate in golf.

Negative Beliefs Dimension

Golf continues to be identified as a leisure activity for the more affluent social classes. Perhaps the reason is to be found in the origin and expansion of this sport, to which only members of golf clubs had access. Nowadays, the vast majority of golf courses in the world are open to the public on a "pay per play" basis (R&A, 2023). However, negative beliefs about golf remain in place today. For example, according to recent research with data collected from 73 interviews in Finland, golf is

described as an expensive and elite-focused leisure activity (Harikkala-Laihinen et al., 2022). Membership of a particular social class is also found to be a constraint to participation in England (Whigham et al., 2020). McGinnis et al. (2021) point out that the low participation of millennials in golf in US society is related to the social structure that exists today. Portugal et al. (2020) identify the negative image of golf among young people in Portugal as a limiter to participation, finding that it is perceived as an expensive sport, for elitist and older people. Therefore, this research explores the negative beliefs about the sport and how it influences future intentions to play golf.

Method

A sample was chosen from the non-golfing population over 18 years of age in Andalusia, Spain. This region was chosen because it is a golf tourism destination, one of the best positioned in the southern European market. The questionnaires were sent by WhatsApp and email. A total of 343 responses were collected, between November 2021 and March 2022. Table 11.1 shows the demographic profile of the participants.

The items were developed based on a literature review and research with professionals of the sector. This instrument has been validated by a panel of experts in the golf industry. The items have been created by the authors, based on previous work (Breitbarth & Huth, 2019; Portugal

Table 11.1 Demographic profile of the sample

Gender		n	%
	Man	153	44.61
	Woman	190	55.39
Age		n	%
	Under 25	10	2.92
	25–34	48	13.99
	35–44	60	17.49
	45–54	171	49.85
	55–64	42	12.25
	65–74	11	3.21
	Over 75	1	0.29

et al., 2020). Finally, we conducted a pilot study involving 20 respondents. Based on the comments from the pilot study, a final version of the questionnaire was prepared.

The health dimension, hedonic dimension, and negative beliefs were analyzed as independent variables. Regression analysis of these three variables was performed with the dependent variable Future Intentions to Play Golf. The Health Dimension variable was measured by asking the level of agreement with the importance of playing sports for health. It consists of three items: "Taking care of my physical and mental health is a priority for me", "Playing sports is essential to take care of my health", and "Golf is a sport practiced in a safe environment for my health".

The Negative Beliefs Dimension variable was measured by asking the level of agreement with negative aspects of golf. It is composed of three items: "everything surrounding the world of golf is expensive", "golf is an elitist sport practiced only by the upper class", and "golf is a sport for older people". The Hedonic Dimension was measured with two variables, each composed of one item. Variable a1 was analyzed by asking the level of agreement with the statement "Golf is a fun and exciting sport". Variable a2 was measured by asking the level of agreement with the question, "Would you participate more in golf if the positive emotions it generates were more noticeable and visible?" To measure the variable Future Intentions to Play Golf Dimension, the level of agreement with future intentions to play golf was asked. It consists of four items adapted from the research questionnaire of Nuviala et al. (2014). In the three dimensions, scoring was performed with the average of the items. Reliability was performed using Cronbach's Alpha, which was in all three dimensions at values above 0.80. The responses were measured on a Likert-type scale where (1) is totally disagree and (5) is totally agree.

Results

Data analysis was performed with the JASP software (JASP Team, 2022). Missing data were handled by the available cases procedure. Next, multiple linear regression was performed with the variable Future Intentions to Play Golf as the dependent variable and the rest as independent

Table 11.2 Regression models

Model							Contrasts	Coefficients			
R	R²	R² Adj	ΔR²	F	ΔF	gl1/gl2		b	S. Error	β	t
.61	.37	.36	.01	29.57**	4.26*	1/196	Intercept	1.43	0.34		4.21*
							Health	0.29	0.06	.33	4.99**
							Negative Beliefs	-0.28	0.06	-.27	-4.30**
							a1	0.20	0.04	.24	4.22**
							a2	0.12	0.06	.12	2.06*

Note: R² Adj = R² Adjusted; ΔR2 = change in R2; ΔF = change in F; gl = degrees of freedom; b = regression coefficient; β = standardized regression coefficient. *p < .05 **p < .01

variables. Exploration of each model confirmed that the variance values were appropriate and graphical analysis of the residuals confirmed the assumptions of homoscedasticity and normality. Table 11.2 shows the final model after stepwise approximation. The Health Dimension, Negative Beliefs, and the Hedonic Dimension are predictor variables of Future Intentions to Play Golf, in this order of magnitude.

The most significant relationship with Future Intentions to Play Golf is established with the health dimension, such that the increase of one unit of this variable means an increase in the variable Intentions of 0.33, while in the case of Variable a1 ("golf is a fun and exciting sport"), it would be 0.24. As for the economic beliefs dimension, the relationship with intentions is inverse, such that each increase in this variable translates into a decrease of 0.27 in Future Intentions to Play Golf. Although Variable a2 ("Would you participate more in golf if the positive emotions it generates were more noticeable and visible?") shows a relationship with intentions to play golf, it is small. A one unit increase in this variable means an increase in Intentions of 0.12 units.

Discussion

The Health Dimension is the variable that shows the strongest relationship with Future Intention to Play Golf. This variable measured the importance of taking care of one's health and exercising to achieve it. In addition, the perception of golf as a sport played in a health-safe

environment was measured. The results suggest that today's increased importance of physical and mental health and playing sport in a safe environment may be the main reason for increased participation in golf in this post-pandemic era. These findings are consistent with some recent research on the change Covid-19 has brought about in the activities we do in our leisure time. Waite (2022) points to increased participation in golf due to the safe environment in which it is played. In the same vein, Hahm et al. (2023) identifies favorable perceptions of golf as a safe leisure activity in the new normal. Thus, golf as a sport and tourist activity in a safe environment is one of the sport tourism trends in the new normal.

Moreover, golf can be played at any age (Stenner et al., 2020) and is therefore a suitable sport for promoting health throughout the population. Lack of physical exercise has become one of the main health risk factors. The World Health Organisation warns of the need to seek solutions to the low participation in sporting activity that has become a global health problem (WHO, 2023). Golf is a source of moderate-intensity exercise and physical and mental well-being. This sport tourism would support the achievement of United Nations (UN) sustainable development goal three through the fight against aging and the maintenance of adequate physical and mental fitness at any age. The study also found that perception of golf as a fun and exciting sport has a significant positive relationship with future intentions to play golf. This confirms previous research on golf participation based on the emotional dimension (Mirehie et al., 2021; Stenner et al., 2020). The findings thus add to the knowledge on the influence of positive emotions on leisure and tourism consumer behavior. Therefore, highlighting the health benefits of golf and promoting it as a sport capable of generating positive emotions and well-being can help to achieve the third sustainable development goal in terms of health and well-being.

The results show that the Economic Beliefs variable is inversely related to Future Intentions to Play Golf. This finding confirms that golf still has an image as an expensive, elitist (Reis & Correia, 2013; Harikkala-Laihinen et al., 2022), and senior sport (Portugal et al., 2020). Previous research finds this perception of the sport to be one of the main

constraints to participation. Golf tourism destination managers should pay attention to this image of the sport, using different strategies to bring golf closer to the majority of the population. Promotion efforts in non-traditional segments such as the younger population and supporting the complementary offer of the destination, integrating the culture and heritage of the place, can help to attract more population groups.

The promotion of golf tourism should be based on its contribution to the sustainability of the destination. The World Tourism Organisation defines the concept of sustainable tourism development "based on meeting the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities" (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2023). In line with this definition and SDG 11, golf tourism destinations where golf facilities are located must be sustainable. Proper land-use planning, the use of environmental management tools, and the development of the legal framework can help to achieve this (Di Giacomo et al., 2021). Some research has noted the opposition of residents in an area to golf course development (Briassoulis, 2011; Huertas et al., 2011). However, other research points to golf as a sport and tourism activity that favors the economy of the place where golf courses are located, thanks to the deseasonalization of golf tourism, as in the case of St. Andrews.

Golf tourism can be integrated with culture and the environment, taking into account the perceptions of the inhabitants and the objectives of a region to make it sustainable (Butler, 2019). In Videira et al. (2006) research on Portugal as a golf tourism destination, it was concluded that it is a socially and economically sustainable destination. However, it was found that golf courses need to improve their environmental management through several tools. Their environmental impacts demand controlled management to be effective. Golf courses play an important role in biodiversity conservation (Tanner & Gange, 2005). Therefore, their environmental management is of great importance.

Sustainability of a golf course is defined by the R&A as "Optimizing the quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound and socially responsible management" (R&A, 2023). A key factor in this definition is the social responsibility of golf courses in the conservation of the natural environment. In line with the SDG 12 goal of responsible consumption and

production, golf courses must behave in an environmentally responsible manner. The social commitment of this type of tourism is fundamental for the achievement of environmental, economic, and social sustainability in the development of golf tourism.

Conclusion

Sports tourism is emerging as a tourism trend in the new normal. Experiencing the combination of physical exercise and travel generates positive emotions and a great sense of well-being, as the positive effects of sports add to the positive effects of tourism (Mirehie et al., 2021). As the results of this research shows, the importance of health, the generation of positive emotions, and well-being in the post-pandemic era have a positive impact on the intention to participate in golf. The search for leisure activities in safe environments favors golf tourism. A form of tourism that has all the benefits of sports tourism in a safe environment in the new normal. This form of tourism must be developed in terms of sustainability. For golf tourism to be sustainable, its development must be responsible for the landscape, the environment, the culture, and the social and economic environment of the destinations where the facilities are installed, in line with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 12 SDGs.

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12

The Role of Self-Service Technologies in the New Normal of Hospitality Service Encounters

Mengni Fu, Barry Fraser, and Charles Arcodia

Introduction

Self-service technologies (SSTs) refer to any technology interface that enables customers to receive services without interacting directly with service employees (Meuter et al., 2000). By utilising SSTs, users act not only as consumers but also as service conductors and value co-creators (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Tracing the history of SSTs more broadly, the first SSTs were automatic teller machines (ATMs) introduced by commercial banks in the early 1980s (Yang, Choi, & Chung, 2021a). Then, in tandem with the rapid development of the Internet and increasing popularity of mobile devices, SSTs progressively immersed into people's life in the early twenty-first century (Yang, Lai, et al., 2021b). However, as information and communication technologies (ICTs) continue to

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advance, the ways in which people live, entertain themselves, and conduct businesses have altered significantly (Tuomi et al., 2021). In addition to becoming more tech-savvy, customers now have less time and demand services to be effective and efficient (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Furthermore, today's business environment is dynamic and intensely competitive, with ever-changing consumer preferences and innovative technologies (Tuomi et al., 2021). Therefore, service organisations are forced to continually reinvent themselves in order to maintain sustainable operations.

For hospitality businesses, rethinking service delivery is becoming more essential and necessary. According to the United Nations (n.d.), the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 9 focuses on "building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and fostering innovation", while Goal No. 11 emphasises "making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable". However, due to the turbulent and complicated business environment and the rapid technology progression, hospitality businesses worldwide have encountered several challenges in pursuing sustainability, such as understaffing and increasing labour costs (Gao & Su, 2018; Tuomi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 restricted consumers' engagement in tourism and hospitality services, leading to a decline in revenues and a threat to business sustainability (Romero & Lado, 2021). Consequently, it is crucial for hospitality businesses to have an effective strategy to combat the COVID-19 pandemic (or similar future events) and adapt to the altered consumer preferences and technological advancements. The adoption of SSTs can be one of the strategies to consider.

Aptly, the focus of this chapter is the role that SSTs play in the hospitality industry and how those roles have changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, the evolution of hospitality technology and operational examples of SSTs are reviewed. Following, the chapter analyses the role SSTs played in hospitality services prior to the COVID-19 outbreak and discusses the reasons for low adoption rates from the demand and supply perspectives. Finally, the chapter concludes by

examining COVID-19's impact on the use of SSTs in the hospitality industry and provides theoretical and practical insights as well as future research directions.

Literature Review

Figure 12.1 depicts the evolution of hospitality technology from the past through to the present and into the future. According to Fig. 12.1, hospitality technology development consists of three stages: hardware technology, information technology, and data technology.

Specifically, the introduction of the first in-room telephone at the Netherland Hotel in 1894 marked the beginning of hospitality technology, and one-hundred years later, Hyatt Hotels and Promus Hotel Corporation launched the very first hotel websites (Law et al., 2020). SSTs were initially introduced to the hospitality industry in 2008 (Kasavana, 2008), and the advent of mobile-based websites and hotel mobile applications caused a shift from desktop- to mobile-based
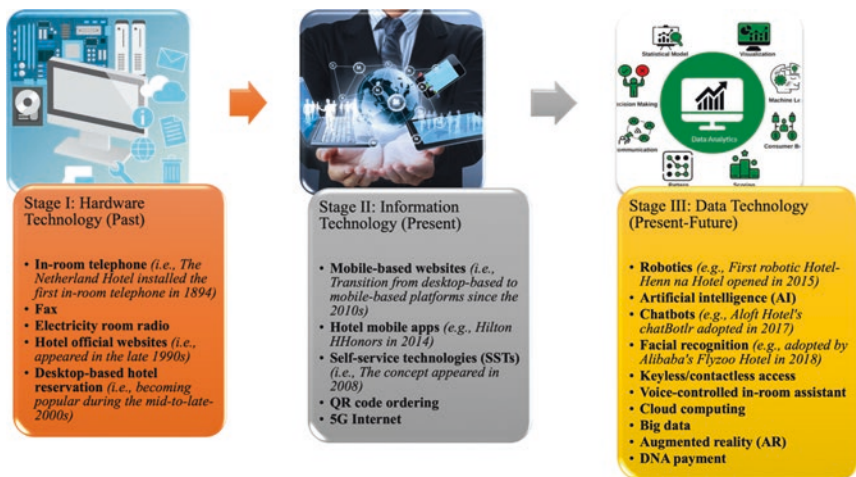
Fig. 12.1   History of hospitality technology development. (Source: Law et al., 2020)

reservations in the 2010s (Law, 2019). Recent advancements in artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotic automation have enabled service robots to replace human employees in hospitality services (Tuomi et al., 2021). Although SSTs have achieved significant success in other service sectors, such as airlines, banks, supermarkets, gas stations, and ticket booths, they have only recently been implemented in the hospitality industry and their usage has remained in its infancy for a considerable amount of time (Gupta & Sharma, 2021; Kasavana, 2008). In addition, many SSTs utilised in hotels were perceived by guests more as a novelty rather than a service instrument (Lukanova & Ilieva, 2019). Hotel operators also face several challenges when implementing SSTs, such as SSTs' compatibility with the property's existing facilities, a large initial capital investment, the reduction in human interaction, employees' resentment towards SSTs, and customers hesitation to use SSTs (Oh et al., 2013; Torres, 2018). Consequently, despite their success in other service sectors, many consumers and hotel operators are still hesitant to adopt SSTs (Sharma et al., 2020). Accordingly, Table 12.1 summarises a range of SSTs adopted by hospitality businesses, which will then be elaborated below.

Self-Service Kiosk (SSK)

A self-service kiosk (SSK) is a self-contained electronic device, generally with a touchscreen, that enables consumers to perform services independently (Hollander, 2023). It is an interactive SST designed for public use and capable of processing information and providing appropriate responses (Meuter et al., 2000). SSKs have become the most pervasive self-service technology with the most diverse formats (Vakulenko et al., 2018) due to technological advancements, decreasing hardware prices, and rising labour costs. Self-check-in/check-out kiosks, information kiosks, self-ordering kiosks, vending machines, and temperature kiosks are among the most prevalent kiosks used in the hospitality industry. Specifically, self-check-in/check-out kiosks enable guests to check-in/out by directly connecting to the hotel's property management system (PMS), issue or collect room key cards, process payment, schedule additional services, and upsell rooms (Hollander, 2023).

Table 12.1 SSTs adopted in hospitality services

Self-service technologies	Stages of hospitality guest cycle	Working examples in hospitality	Functions & characteristics
Self-service kiosks	Arrival Occupancy Departure	• Self-check-in/out kiosks • Self-order kiosks • Vending machines • Information kiosks • Temperature kiosks (during COVID-19 periods)	• Make/place, modify, or cancel reservation/orders; • Check-in/out; • Issue/collect room keycards; • Raise customer requests; • Payment processing; • Upselling & cross-selling; • Information searching; • Body temperature testing and recording
Hotel/Restaurant websites	All five stages of guests' transition from pre-arrival to post-departure	• Hotel official websites (desktop-based & mobile-based) • OTA websites (e.g., Ctrip, Booking, Expedia, Airbnb etc.)	• Information searching; • Make selection and reservations; • Raise customer requests; • Early check-in; • Payment processing; • Upselling; • Promotion and package offering; • Guest comments; • Social media connection; • Loyalty program

(*continued*)

Table 12.1 (continued)

Self-service technologies	Stages of hospitality guest cycle	Working examples in hospitality	Functions & characteristics
Hotel/ Restaurant mobile apps	All five stages of guests' transition from pre-arrival to post-departure	• Hilton Honors • Marriott Bonvoy • World of Hyatt • IHG Hotels & Rewards • Shangri-La Circle • Mymacca's • Domino's	• Information searching; • Make/place, modify, or cancel reservation/ orders; • Check-in/out; • Raise guest requests; • Promotion and package offering; • Guest comments: • Digital room key & Contactless room access; • Payment processing; • In-room service ordering; • Loyalty program
Chatbots	Pre-arrival Arrival Occupancy	• AI customer service chatbot "Xiao Xi" by Hilton China • AI-powered chatbot "Aloft's ChatBotlr" by Marriott International	• Answer guest inquiries; • Information searching; • Offer guests suggestions; • Assist in reservation making

Table 12.1 (continued)

Self-service technologies	Stages of hospitality guest cycle	Working examples in hospitality	Functions & characteristics
Self-ordering technologies	Pre-arrival Occupancy	• Mobile app ordering • Self-order kiosks • Scannable QR code ordering • Tableside tablet ordering	• Accessible digital menu/amenity list/room service list; • Place, modify, or cancel orders; • Promotions and package offering; • Payment processing; • Guest comments
Service robots	Arrival Occupancy Departure	• Robot butler: A.L.O at Aloft Hotels • Robot concierge: Connie at Hilton • Luggage carrying robot: Yobot at New York Yotel Hotel	• Answer guest inquiries; • Information searching and offering; • Luggage storage and delivery; • Preparation of food and drinks • Delivery of food, drinks, and amenities; • Plates collecting; • Room cleaning

Source: Primary data (2023)

Hotel/Restaurant Websites

Prior to the introduction of hotel websites, hotel reservations were made via traditional channels such as the telephone, fax, and travel agents (Law, 2019). Until the mid- to late 1990s, hotel owners began to realise the significance of an online booking platform for enhancing their service quality and sales revenues (Weber & Roehl, 1999). Consequently, by the mid- to late 2000s, a multitude of hotel websites had become available

and navigable, allowing customers to access property information and make reservations online (Law, 2019). Subsequently, hoteliers have steadily enhanced their websites by incorporating new functions, features, and technologies, and the movement from desktop-based to mobile-based websites became increasingly significant in the 2010s (Law et al., 2020). Currently, hotel websites have been acknowledged as an inexpensive and direct distribution channel for hospitality operators (Gilbert & Powell-Perry, 2001), which can influence consumers' purchasing decisions and optimise revenues (Sun et al., 2017).

Hotel/Restaurant Apps

Because of the prevalence of mobile devices, booking via mobile platforms has become the most common way for consumers to consider options and purchase travel-related products and services (Murphy et al., 2016). To promote direct bookings and reduce commission fees paid to the third parties, hoteliers have invested extensively in developing their mobile applications (Lei et al., 2019). Additionally, to increase their app's usage rate, hotel operators have gone beyond the fundamentals by incorporating more advanced technologies and personalised services into their apps (Lei et al., 2019). Specifically, the apps of most global hotel chains, such as Hilton, Marriott International, and InterContinental, enable guests to make reservations, check-in/out remotely, make requests at any time during their stay, access their rooms via digital room keys, and order room services with a single click. Accordingly, by 2017, over 90% of hotel index brands have embraced mobile apps into their operations and approximately 70% of hotel loyalty members have downloaded at least one branded hotel app on their phones (Lei et al., 2019).

Self-Ordering Technologies

Self-ordering technologies enable customers to place orders and complete payments independently on a single platform (Yang, Choi, & Chung, 2021a). The use of self-ordering technologies can not only reduce

companies' operational costs but also shorten customers' waiting time and eliminate staffs' ordering mistakes (Chong, 2022). There are two primary types of self-ordering technologies, depending on whether the order is placed online or offline. Online technologies include ordering via websites or mobile apps, which allow guests to place orders on their mobile devices at any time or place, even before their arrival; in contrast, offline technologies, such as self-order kiosks or tableside tablets, enable guests to place orders on-site via the devices provided by service providers, without waiting for a service employee (Gao & Su, 2018). Accordingly, self-ordering technologies have been widely implemented in restaurants, especially fast-food chains (e.g., KFC and McDonald's), to reduce their labour costs, expedite ordering processes, and increase service efficiency (Yang, Lai, et al., 2021b).

Chatbots

A chatbot is an artificial intelligence application, capable of simulating human conversations and interacting with users via text or oral speech (Khanna et al., 2015). Smartphone assistants and home speakers, such as Apple Siri, IBM Watson, Google Assistant, Microsoft Cortana, and Amazon Alexa, are commonly available chatbots. The development of chatbots mostly depends on two methods: Pattern Matching and Machine Learning (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020). Using Pattern Matching algorithms, rule-based chatbots compare user's input to a predefined rule pattern and select a developer-written response from a list of options (Marietto et al., 2013). In contrast, using Machine Learning techniques, AI-based chatbots interpret user's input and comprehend user's intentions using Natural Language Processing (NLP); therefore, AI-based chatbots do not require pre-programmed responses as they continuously learn through interacting with users (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020). Customers prefer chatbots over frequently asked questions (FAQ) lists because chatbots are friendlier and more appealing to them (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020). Chatbots can also free up service personnel from responding repetitive questions, manage multiple

customers concurrently, increase business revenue by streamlining the booking process, and provide visitors with superior and prompt concierge services (Reitknecht, 2020).

Service Robots

A service robot is a systematic, autonomous, and flexible interface that can engage with consumers and offer efficient desired services, such as delivering required amenities to guest rooms (Wirtz et al., 2018). Service robots are more advanced and adaptable to their surroundings than self-service kiosks or pre-programmed devices (Ivanov & Webster, 2019b). Service robots use their sensors to collect data, and then process data, develop action plans, and promptly implement decisions using their physical actuators (Ivanov & Webster, 2019a). Three technology roles have been identified as unique to service robots: "automation for novelty (Differentiate), automation for better products (Improve), and automation for better jobs (Upskill)" (Tuomi et al., 2021, p. 236). Specifically, service providers can deploy service robots to provide guests with innovative and compelling service experiences to differentiate themselves from competition (Murphy et al., 2019). Furthermore, the use of service robots, in conjunction with service personnel, can enhance the service experience (Tuomi et al., 2021), because service robots can take over repetitive tasks and enable service staff to devote more time to guests (Huang & Rust, 2018). In addition, the deployment of service robots results in new job titles, new responsibilities (e.g., from operations to robot management), and new capabilities (e.g., robot maintenance) for staff (Tuomi et al., 2021). Although the use of robots in hospitality services is limited at present (Ivanov & Webster, 2019a), it is anticipated that labour-intensive service sectors will see a significant increase in robotic adoption in the future and that service robots will play an important role in maintaining productivity and contributing to GDP growth (Huang & Rust, 2018).

Overall, hospitality services were traditionally characterised as being "high-touch, low-tech" (Kim & Qu, 2014). However, the introduction of SSTs has significantly altered conventional service delivery, forcing

service staff and consumers to adapt to their new roles in service encounters (Gao & Su, 2018). Therefore, although the preceding discussion demonstrated numerous benefits of SSTs, their application in hospitality services is relatively limited, compared to their use in other industries (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to (1) depict the use of SSTs in hospitality services prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, (2) explain why these technologies were not as prevalent as their use in other service sectors, and (3) demonstrate how COVID-19 has changed the roles of SSTs in hospitality services.

Methodology

This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative research approach using document analysis. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic and analytical procedure that analyses, interprets, and synthesises both physical and electronic documents to answer specific research questions. Regarding this study, the researchers searched for operational examples and empirical studies about the use of SSTs in hospitality services from reputable online and offline sources (i.e., including academic journals, books, newspapers, hotel websites, and industrial websites). Following, to present the research findings in a more logical manner, the Hospitality Guest Cycle was adopted as a theoretical guide. According to Alemar (2022), the Hospitality Guest Cycle—consisting of five stages: pre-arrival, arrival, occupancy, departure, and post-departure— describes all the phases that a typical customer goes through when consuming hospitality services. At each stage of the guest cycle, there are several consumer touchpoints that determine a customer's experience with a service provider and are generally handled by service personnel (Luo & Pan, 2021). However, as technology continues to advance, SSTs are replacing service employees at certain consumer touchpoints, with the purpose of increasing efficiencies and reducing costs (Liu & Hung, 2021). Accordingly, this study illustrates the use of SSTs at each stage of the Hospitality Guest Cycle and how the COVID-19 pandemic has altered consumers' utilisation of SSTs at each stage, via analysing previous studies on the subject and reviewing current hospitality operational examples.

Findings and Discussion

SSTs' Usage Before COVID-19

Although numerous SSTs were introduced to the hospitality industry before the COVID-19 pandemic, their overall adoption remained relatively low, because of consumers' preference for human-delivered services (Kaushik et al., 2015; Liu & Hung, 2021). Prior to COVID-19, customers utilised SSTs predominantly during the pre-arrival phase, particularly when they were searching for, selecting, and reserving a hotel or restaurant online. When guests arrived at the property, they continued to rely significantly on service staff and were unwilling or unable to access SSTs. For instance, before even attempting to use hotel mobile apps, many consumers already believed that a hotel mobile app could only provide basic and limited services and that service employees would ignore guest requests made via the mobile app (Lei et al., 2019). Moreover, many hotels were hesitant to employ SSTs due to concerns regarding the substantial capital investment and the uncertain consumer acceptance (Sharma et al., 2020). Accordingly, this section explores several demand and supply-based explanations for the limited utilisation of SSTs in the hospitality industry before the pandemic.

From the demand perspective, firstly, many consumers continued to hold traditional views and believed that the interpersonal contact was important and essential in hospitality service encounters. Several researchers have found that the needs for direct interactions with service employees negatively affect customers' intention to use SSTs (Kelly et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2012), and the absence of interpersonal contacts can cause consumers to overlook the usefulness of SSTs and underestimate the benefits offered by SSTs (Kaushik et al., 2015). Therefore, the use of SSTs was initially limited, especially during the guest occupancy phase. Secondly, some consumers expressed discomfort, lack of confidence, and fear when using technology in general; this is a phenomenon known as "technology anxiety" (Meuter et al., 2003). Technology anxiety was found to reduce consumers' curiosity and motivation to use emerging technologies (Oh et al., 2016). Thirdly, the use of SSTs altered service

delivery and customer's roles in service encounters dramatically. Thus, customers may perceive an elevated level of risk due to their concerns about data security and technological or service failures (Kokkinou & Cranage, 2015). Consequently, customers' intentions to utilise SSTs can be negatively impacted by their high perceived risk associated with using these novel technologies (Yang, Lai, et al., 2021b).

On the supply side, one of the greatest challenges for hospitality operators is an unclear return on investment and the high initial capital investment (Hao, 2021; Torres, 2018). As an example, the installation of self-ordering kiosks at McDonald's costs between US \$120,000 and \$160,000, which is a significant financial burden for any business owner (Gao & Su, 2018). Moreover, hospitality businesses accommodate a variety of consumers with different preferences and expectations, so it is difficult to integrate a technology which would satisfy everyone (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). Individual differences, such as gender, age, need for interaction, and technology readiness, can substantially affect their intentions to adopt SSTs (Kim et al., 2012). Furthermore, technology is imperfect and does not always function correctly, and technology malfunctions can increase service staff's workloads and delay service delivery. Indeed, the more automated the service process is, the more likely technical issues will arise (Tuomi et al., 2021). Therefore, despite the widespread adoption of SSTs by airlines and other service industries (Antwi et al., 2021), many hospitality operators continue to resist adopting SSTs. Nevertheless, there are examples of hotels implementing SSTs. The following example illustrates how a Japanese hotel uses SSTs at various phases of the Hospitality Guest Cycle, as well as the challenges associated with adopting SSTs.

Case Study: Japan's Henn na Hotel

The first Henn na Hotel, opened in March 2015 near the popular theme park "Huis Ten Bosch" in Nagasaki, Japan, has been regarded as the first robot-staffed hotel worldwide by the Guinness World Record (Henn na Hotel New York, 2023). The brand's mission is to keep evolving and adopting cutting-edge technologies to meet ever-changing guest needs

(Oro, 2021). Upon arrival, customers are greeted by a life-sized T-Rex and can complete self-check-in by interacting with multi-lingual humanoid robots, dinosaur robots, or holographic anime characters. Henn na Hotel adopts facial recognition and allows guests to register their facial authentication for room access. Additionally, robot porters deliver guests' luggage to their rooms, and a large robotic arm helps guests store their luggage before check-in or after check-out. After entering their rooms, the in-room robot assistant "Chu-ri-chan" enables guests to control the lights, acquire weather forecasts, and schedule wake-up calls (Henn na Hotel, 2023). The use of all these advanced technologies was supposed to create a unique, memorable, and high-tech guest experience, while assisting the hotel in reducing its running expenses, increasing its efficiency, and becoming more environmentally friendly (Oro, 2021).

However, this robot-run hotel was not successful at the beginning. In 2019, the hotel operators decided to eliminate more than half of its robotic workforce while replacing them with human labour, due to the complaints received from customers and employees (Hertzfeld, 2019). Particularly, because of the immaturity or obsolescence of the implemented technologies, guests complained about the inability of front-desk robots to answer their questions and the noises made by in-room robot assistants at night in response to guests' snoring (Ryall, 2019). Furthermore, owing to the constant technology faults, the staff complained that they had to repair the robots in addition to resolving guests' enquiries (Newman, 2019). As a result, Henn na Hotel failed to reduce their costs or workloads for their service employees (Hertzfeld, 2019). Despite the initial failure, Henn na Hotel did not abandon their innovation, or their dream of operating robot-staffed hotels, and they continuously incorporated cutting-edge technologies into their service offerings. Today, there are 20 Henn na Hotels in Japan, all of which are outfitted with a variety of robotic employees and innovative technologies (Henn na Hotel New York, 2023). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 period, Henn na Hotels expanded internationally, and in response to the pandemic, the hotel chain effectively provided contactless services via self-service technologies.

To expand on the Henn na Hotel's example, the next section discusses the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the use of SSTs in the hospitality industry.

COVID-19's Impact on Traditional Hospitality Human Services

The COVID-19 virus is transmitted mostly by direct or indirect interpersonal contact, particularly through respiratory droplets expelled by infected individuals or touching contaminated public surfaces (WHO, 2022). The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 devastatingly affected the hospitality industry, leading to a sharp decline in occupancy and average daily rates due to massive cancellations and postponements of trips by travellers (Jiang & Wen, 2020). Although vaccinations and epidemic prevention measures have been introduced, COVID-19 has not been eradicated due to its highly contagious and ever-changing nature, and new virus variants continue to emerge, leading to ongoing infections and reinfections (Syal & Miller, 2022).

As a high human-contact industry, hospitality services entail a significant risk of virus infection. For instance, the long-established hotel check-in procedure comprises presenting identification, completing information forms, providing a signature, and then receiving room keys. Prior research conducted at a premium hotel in Jakarta revealed that, on average, each guest required four to five minutes of face-to-face interaction with front-desk receptionists to complete the check-in process (Solichin et al., 2019). Everyday front-desk receptionists greet numerous guests from various locations, who arrive at the hotel by different means of transportation and whose health conditions are unknown. If a member of the service staff unfortunately contracts an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, he/she is likely to transmit the virus to the other employees and/or customers.

Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered customers' consumption and expectations of hospitality services (Chua et al., 2021). For example, as the perceived risk of COVID-19 infection

rose, consumers were reported to prefer robot-staffed hotels over human-service hotels, which was contrary to the research findings obtained prior to the pandemic (Kim et al., 2021). Moreover, when consuming hospitality services during the pandemic, customers' concerns over social distancing, hygiene standards, and personal safety at service venues escalated considerably (Hao, 2021). Furthermore, in the (post-)viral era, individuals are expected to continuously prioritise their personal health during service encounters (Hao & Chon, 2022), and the consumption of hospitality services is expected to remain distorted for some time after the pandemic (Peco-Torres et al., 2021).

COVID-19's Impact on SSTs' Usage

The key responsibility of hospitality providers is to ensure the health and safety of both consumers and employees (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020). Physical distancing is recommended as an effective method to reduce COVID-19 transmission (Foroudi et al., 2021). Physically distant services are defined as "a service in which physical contacts between the service provider and the customer are eliminated", which can be achieved via the use of robotics, chatbots, kiosks, or other SSTs (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020, p. 5). The use of SSTs can reduce human contact in service encounters, aid in physical distancing, facilitate contactless services, and enhance hygienic conditions at service venues, thereby reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission (Shin & Kang, 2020). Consequently, the use of SSTs to provide contactless services has been suggested as an effective COVID-19 mitigation strategy for hospitality businesses (Liu & Hung, 2021; Liu & Yang, 2021).

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the adoption of SSTs across all stages of the Hospitality Guest Cycle (Hao & Chon, 2022; Jiang & Wen, 2020). As an example, according to MCTPRC (2020), there were approximately 9923 star-rated hotels in China by 2020, with the majority offering online reservations, contactless check-in/out, and touchless payment via their official websites and/or mobile apps. Moreover, during the pandemic, numerous hotels underwent several service renovations and adopted "unmanned" technologies to provide

contactless services in their establishments (Luo & Pan, 2021). For instance, as the world's ninth-largest and China's second-largest hotel company, Huazhu Corporation operates nearly 6000 hotels across hundreds of cities in China and has provided 5700 of their hotels with contactless services since January 2020 to combat COVID-19 (Hao et al., 2020). Guests staying in Huazhu-managed hotels can conduct contactless self-check-in/check-out via self-service kiosks or mobile applications equipped with ID scanning and facial recognition (Hu, 2020). Following, guests can access their rooms via digital room keys and order food or request other room services via the hotel's mobile app, which will then be delivered to them by service robots instead of service personnel (Song, 2020).

Consequently, since the outbreak of COVID-19, customers have paid greater attention to their personal health, and their desire for contactless services has increased dramatically (Hao & Chon, 2022). All these emergent phenomena have facilitated the adoption of SSTs throughout the entire Hospitality Guest Cycle, especially during the occupancy stage. In addition, COVID-19 has further exacerbated the labour shortage in the hospitality industry (Causa et al., 2022) and similar health crises are expected to occur more frequently in the future (Peco-Torres et al., 2021). Thus, it is anticipated that the deployment of SSTs will continue to increase post-pandemic (Gursoy & Chi, 2020) and that contactless services will progressively advance in the future (Luo & Pan, 2021).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, many prior studies examined the antecedents that might influence customers' behavioural intentions to use SSTs during hospitality services, while ignoring the actual utilisation of SSTs (Kim, 2016; Hao, 2021). This study has revealed that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the usage of SSTs during hospitality services remained relatively low, with most SSTs being applied in the pre-arrival stage and occasionally at the arrival stage. Moreover, although several past studies claimed that SSTs were underutilised in the hospitality industry, they did not explicitly explain the reasons for the low adoption; rather, they primarily

examined the factors that might influence customers' SST usage intentions (Kaushik et al., 2015; Liu & Hung, 2021). In contrast, by analysing previous empirical studies and current operational examples, this chapter demonstrated several reasons for the low adoption of SSTs, from both consumers' and operators' perspectives. In addition, this chapter adopted the Hospitality Guest Cycle to analyse and present the utilisation of SSTs in the hospitality industry and the changes in the use of SSTs caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Practically, this study confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially altered the consumption patterns and expectations of hospitality services and that the use of SSTs can aid in reducing COVID-19 transmission. Even though the costs of various SSTs have decreased because of constant technological development, investing in these technologies remains costly and challenging for many hospitality businesses (Romero & Lado, 2021). Additionally, a call for action from the World Tourism Organization (2020) encouraged governments to invest in and assist hospitality businesses to speed up their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, governments and policymakers could consider incorporating the use of SSTs as a COVID-19 coping strategy and providing financial support to hospitality businesses to invest in and integrate SSTs, which could provide hotels with greater resilience in the future beyond the current pandemic (Romero & Lado, 2021).

Further, as a demanding and labour-intensive industry, the hospitality sector has always suffered from labour shortages and high staff turnover rates (Bhaswani & Hymavathi, 2022), and COVID-19 has exacerbated these pre-existing issues (Causa et al., 2022). In addition, Peco-Torres et al. (2021) predict that COVID-19-like health crises will occur more frequently in the future. Therefore, compared to the large initial capital investment, the adoption of SSTs could provide hospitality operators with more long-term benefits in the future, such as filling workforce vacancies, reducing labour costs, creating a safer service environment, and providing more consistent and efficient services (Hao et al., 2020). All of these benefits may help hospitality businesses achieve resilient and sustainable operations. Therefore, hospitality operators should consider investing in SSTs and utilising them more frequently in the future.

Conclusion and Future Research Direction

To conclude, compared to the prevalence of SSTs in other service sectors, the use of SSTs in hospitality services has remained limited for an extended period. Initially, consumers preferred traditional human services and perceived SSTs more as a novelty than a useful service instrument. However, the unanticipated outbreak of COVID-19 has caused human services to become more unfavourable and undesirable, whereas the use of SSTs has increased throughout the Hospitality Guest Cycle. In addition, because of consumers' ongoing health concerns, the worsening labour shortages in the hospitality industry, and the likelihood of similar future infectious disease outbreaks, the increasing use of SSTs in hospitality services is expected to continue post the current pandemic. Furthermore, using SSTs to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, adapt to technological advancements, and resolve pre-existing operational issues adheres to the SDGs 9 and 11, thereby aiding hospitality businesses in achieving sustainability. Finally, by considering the increasing use of innovative technologies in the hospitality industry, several directions for future research are suggested. Specifically, future research can concentrate on (1) how customers perceive and interact with the new automated service delivery methods enabled by advanced technologies (Ali et al., 2023); (2) how innovative technologies and service personnel can effectively cooperate with one another (Chen et al., 2022); (3) how different generations perceive and accept innovative service technologies (Gupta & Pande, 2023); and (4) whether customers from different cultural backgrounds or countries with varied levels of technological understanding will perceive the use of service technologies differently (Vitezić & Perić, 2021).

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Part IV

Family Life Cycle, Employee Behavior, and Visitor Behavior in the New Normal (SDG 3 and 8)

13

Mapping the New Normal in Northern California: Innovations in Wine Tourism After COVID-19

Pamela Lanier and Lora Templeton

Introduction: Unfolding the Wine Road Map

Wine is both integral and tangential to virtually all tourism in Sonoma and Napa. Imagine holding a Sonoma or Napa wine road map and you find it filled with all types of tourist attractions in the region. These paper guides, often not to scale but lyrical and pictorial, entice travelers to discover recommended wineries, attractions, and venues. Wine road maps have become such an essential part of wine tourism that decorative versions sold in local gift shops become souvenirs themselves (This Day In Wine History, 2022).

Now imagine a Northern California wine road map drawn to capture wine tourism in the summer of 2020. It still shows all the familiar routes: highways and roads winding through fields and towns. Famous landmarks and wine-tasting rooms dot the landscape but all are marked as closed to the public for the time being. A few open restaurants appear, but only offer curbside pick-up or door-delivery options. Hotels and

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other accommodations are available, but with limited service and stringent safety protocols. All of them advertise vacancies. Looking at this map, we might notice something new and hastily constructed, almost a detour. Our hypothetical road map of wine country during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the intersection of government emergency regulations and changing consumer habits that drove unprecedented change in tourism in Northern California.

In this chapter, we chart the immediate and longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on wine tourism in Northern California through local journalism, state and municipal documents, and our observations. We explore how pre-pandemic trends in consumer demographics and tourism expectations were signposts pointing toward new directions for the industry to take to ensure sustainable success. In the wine industry where innovation normally focuses on viticulture and enology (Alonso et al., 2023), crisis-driven adoptions of new technology, tasting room experiences, and stakeholder partnerships in 2020 accelerated changes in tourist experience.

In addition to our research, we invited 575 Sonoma and Napa wineries, tasting rooms, and wine shops in February and March 2023 to respond to a short online survey hosted by Google Forms and asked them to share pre- and post-pandemic trends in wine-tasting experiences, digital marketing, and regional customer demographics. Additional interviews with individual winemakers were conducted by phone and email communication. We received 60 individual responses ranging from small family-owned ventures to major legacy corporate brands. We spoke with Sonoma winemakers at Domaine de la Rivière and LaRue Wines, and with Jason Hass of Tablas Creek Vineyard in Paso Robles California. Although Tablas Creek is not a Northern California winery, it chronicled a representative first-person history through its award-winning blog which we have also been permitted to quote. Through social media, our survey also reached one venue in Fredericksburg, Texas, delightfully named the Fat Ass Ranch & Winery. All the wineries who chose to participate in our survey and interviews demonstrated a passionate and knowledgeable insight into an industry greatly challenged and ultimately transformed by the events of the last three years.

Winemaking and Wine Tourism Travel Separate Routes

When discussing the impact of COVID-19 on California's wine industry, it is important to note that wine grape cultivation and winemaking are categorized as agriculture and food production and therefore one of 16 critical infrastructure sectors defined by the federal government. During the earliest days of the state of emergency when Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statewide Stay At Home Order, agricultural workers "raising, cultivating, harvesting, packing, storing, or delivering to storage or market or to a carrier for transportation to market any agricultural or horticultural commodity for human consumption" were classified as part of the essential critical infrastructure workforce, where remote work options were not viable (California State Government, 2020).

If wine production continued uninterrupted through the early months of the pandemic, wine tourism was a different matter. Initial emergency orders closed all brewpubs, breweries, bars, pubs, craft distilleries, and wineries and canceled all in-person festivals and cultural events. In the leisure and hospitality sector, stay-at-home orders eliminated day visitors and varying health protocols for airline travel suppressed overnight travelers. In Sonoma, all parks, hiking trails, and beaches were closed to the public from March 24 to May 12, 2020. Accommodation venues remained open, but with a steep decline in occupancy rates, reaching historic lows at 25% capacity in April 2020 (Sonoma County Economic Development Board, 2020).

From the start, state public health guidelines for alcohol service venues differentiated between those that included onsite preparation of meals provided by a full kitchen and those that did not. This would have significant implications throughout the pandemic, especially in the initial stages of reopening wine-tasting rooms and wineries and particularly in Napa where older county ordinance restricted the role of food service to activities specific to wine-related education and marketing (County of Napa, 2010).

In April 2020, California's Roadmap to Pandemic Resilience outlined four stages of reopening which moved from lower- to higher-risk

workplaces and activities. In May, 53 of 58 California counties were eligible for Stage 2 of reopening which allowed the return of sit-down dining, but only outdoors and with social-distancing requirements, at all applicable venues including qualifying bars, pubs, and wineries. Bars, pubs, and wineries without food service were relegated to Stage 3 of reopening, which did not fully occur until March of the following year.

State government's demarcation between wineries that served food and wineries that did not had quickly become a point of contention. Noting that food service increased the contact points of possible contamination, one local journalist argued that the requirement to add full food service presented more risk (Mobley, 2020). Regional wine associations, including the Napa Valley Vintners, the Lodi Winegrape Commission, and Monterey County Vintners, petitioned the Governor to reconsider the food service condition. One Napa winery filed a lawsuit in May which was later dropped in June when the state progressed to a reopening of all tasting rooms.

In Sonoma, the Sonoma Valley Vintners & Growers Alliance, Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau launched Sonoma Valley Safe, a partnership of key stakeholders and businesses pledged to follow state and local guidelines, including customer outreach and education. Wine tourism partially resumed in June 2020 and remained open until November, when a surge in COVID-19 cases closed all businesses again.

New Roads in Technology

The pandemic lockdowns of 2020 spurred successive innovations in digital marketing as wineries coped with the loss of their wine-tasting room and restaurant sales channels. In our survey, 32% of the respondents expanded their company website to include direct-to-consumer shipping and 24% launched an opt-in newsletter to attract customers and retain wine club members within the last three years. But there was one digital experience, almost universally adopted in Northern California and other wine regions, which was previously unknown to the industry and challenged older industry norms in several key ways.

Online wine tastings (OWTs) utilizing user-friendly platforms such as FaceTime, Zoom, and Instagram emerged in early 2020 as a significant way wineries connected with customers and replaced direct sales lost to in-person venue closures. Online wine tastings were an immediate success that provided a live, interactive experience between the winery and tourists. Per-person fees covered wine and shipping costs. Seventy-five percent of the wineries we surveyed hosted OWT events featuring their product to new and existing customers, 54% of wineries surveyed also participated in OWTs jointly with other wineries, and 34% participated in an online event or webinar in partnership with a restaurant or other hospitality venue. It is striking that our research showed a higher rate of OWT adoption in Northern California than a global study conducted in January 2021 by Professor Dr. Gergely Szolnoki at Geisenheim University. Of the 1423 wineries surveyed in that study, only 36% had introduced online wine tasting in lieu of in-person events canceled by the pandemic (Winetourism.com, 2021). In Sonoma, demand for virtual tastings lasted well into the spring of 2022 culminating with "Sip from Home," a festival organized by Sonoma County Vintners, with live streams, online cooking classes, and private happy hours with several winemakers in the region.

Overall, online wine-tasting events receded in popularity as tasting rooms reopened. According to one Direct-to-Consumer survey conducted by the Silicon Valley Bank wine division, 40% of the wineries who responded had discontinued their virtual programs by 2022 (McMillan, 2023). [1] At Tablas Creek, customer demand for virtual tastings disappeared rapidly when in-person tastings returned. Jason Haas tracked the sudden shift in his blog (Haas, 2020):

> We pivoted to offer virtual wine tastings during the three months when our tasting room was closed. And we enjoyed them and got lots of positive feedback. But as things have moved toward reopening, we've seen demand

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[1] Rob McMillan, EVP and founder of the Silicon Valley Bank Wine Division, has chronicled the wine industry of Northern California since 1995. His advocacy and business analysis is disseminated annually, and free of charge, in the SVB State of the Wine Industry Report. Additionally, McMillan's team assembled the Direct-to-Consumer Wine Survey Report, traditionally released in May. Our team is greatly indebted to their work.

fall pretty sharply. In April, we sold 58 of our virtual tasting packs per week. In May, that declined to 23 per week. In June, it fell to 8 per week.

There are some exceptions. Napa Valley's Jessup Cellars continues to market virtual tasting events for both corporate and private audiences. Senior wine educator John Buechsenstein partnered with the University of California, Davis, and Coursera to offer an online educational course in wine tasting.

However temporary this industry-wide embrace of a new channel—and the immediate success it enjoyed with consumers in 2020 and 2021—online wine tastings contributed to the post-pandemic consumer expectation for more focused, educational, and attentive wine-tasting experiences. In addition to demonstrating that the industry could innovate quickly when in crisis mode, the short-lived but significant success of OWTs surely played their part in disrupting the old "elbows at the bar" walk-in tasting room experience.

Spotlight: Domaine de la Rivière, Russian River Valley AVA

Domaine de la Rivière is a limited production winery that focuses on growing and sourcing ultra-premium Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Rosé from four vineyards in the Middle Reach of the Russian River Valley region. Owners Marla and Geoffrey Bedrosian purchased the 21-acre estate vineyard in 2011 but were challenged by vines suffering from a red-blotch virus. A systematic replanting schedule began in 2016, of their Heritage Block, and their first harvest for Domaine de la Rivière Wines was completed in August 2017 from the original Red Barn Block. The initial release of their signature 2017 Shoshana Rosé of Pinot Noir was in 2018, followed by their 2017 vintage release of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in 2019.

In 2020, the winery lost the majority of its harvest to smoke-taint damage from the Glass Fire. The Pommard from the newly planted Red Barn Block for Shoshana Rosé was harvested early with 100 cases

produced and some Pinot grapes were salvaged from their estate and another nearby vintage with only 120 cases of Pinot produced for the year. Yet under the leadership of Marla Bedrosian, who has a background in event planning in the hospitality sector and immediately began networking with colleagues and contacts, Domaine de la Rivière not only survived but thrived through virtual tastings directed to the corporate and business world.

"In the 2020 period, we hosted over 300 virtual wine experiences," Bedrosian states. "Of these, 96% were to corporate audiences. One company out of Charlotte, North Carolina, had 450 employees attending from around the country and each employee received four bottles of our wine. The company was able to organize this out of a budget originally intended for in-person meetings that year."

For the company's Canadian employees, Bedrosian researched Canadian wines that would offer a similar taste and history as her own and worked with two wine stores in British Columbia and Ontario to become the suppliers.

Bedrosian credits these virtual tastings with building recognition for the winery and the region. "People who first encountered our wines virtually in 2020 have now traveled to meet us in person. They remember what we offered. In one scenario and because of the experience we gave one company during COVID-19, their employees chose Sonoma County in a company-wide survey as the preferred destination for their in-person conference."

The hospitality ethos also inspires Bedrosian's approach to the wine-tasting experience. Domaine de la Rivière has always offered wine tastings by appointment only because it allows the winery to build a relationship with each customer who will improve their experience but also to determine if that customer is serious in their intention to engage with the wines. She sees each tasting as a "room night" where the role of the host is to ensure that the room is perfect when the guest arrives and that the guest's preferences are confirmed and catered to in advance. Additionally, Bedrosian provides her guests with suitable recommendations for other local amenities, including hotels, restaurants, and other wineries.

Bedrosian is a firm advocate for being a knowledgeable and passionate ambassador of your region and other stakeholders in the hospitality community and offers this advice: "Form a relationship with another boutique winery and refer your customers to them; they'll reciprocate. Become a trusted advisor. The same goes for the hotels, refer business to them and they'll refer their customers back to you. Their customer is our customer. My goal is to have them walk back into that hotel and tell the concierge 'That was the best experience I've had. Thank you.'"

Walk-In Tastings Take a Back Seat in the "New Normal"

As noted above, the statewide reopening of California's wine-tasting rooms and the resumption of wine tourism were hampered by variables including legacy laws at the county level, existing or newly acquired onsite food service capabilities, and government mandates for outdoor and socially distanced service. In the months where it was possible to do so, wineries wishing to welcome back a cautious public were required to comply with health and safety protocols limiting the number of patrons that could be served at a given time. To facilitate this, they utilized the by-appointment model of service.

In our survey, we asked wineries to describe the tasting room experiences offered in 2019. A majority of 54% offered both walk-in and by-appointment tastings before the pandemic, which grew to 57% in 2023. Wineries that offered wine tasting by reservation or appointment only at that time represented 32% of the responses and another 18% catered exclusively to walk-in customers. When asked about their business model in 2023, wineries offering tastings by appointment only had increased to 43% of our total responses. For those who responded to our survey, the walk-in-only wine-tasting experience disappeared.

The by-appointment trend is not without its critics. One winery responding to our survey expressed concern that the reservation system drove customers away. In September 2022, the *San Francisco Chronicle* highlighted unfavorable local opinions about rising prices in tasting

rooms and the ubiquitous by-appointment requirement in a two-article series (Lander, 2022a; Lander, 2022b).

Yet, in his annual report released in January 2023, wine-business analyst Rob McMillan defends the by-appointment model:

> By-appointment tastings, which many feared before COVID, were mandated by state and local officials, and the results were positive. Now what consumer wants to taste again at an elbow-to-elbow walk-in tasting bar? As a result of COVID, by-appointment or a mix of walk-in and by-appointment tasting is the favored approach. (McMillan, 2023)

As McMillan notes, consumer demand has indeed sustained the by-appointment business model over a full return to a pre-pandemic "normal" of a walk-in. This seems incongruous with popular criticism of this model, but we have seen that consumer sentiment against wine tastings by appointment is often paired with nostalgia for other, older wine country traditions and norms, including free tastings and less crowded tasting rooms. This image of wine tourism evokes earlier eras of the 1970s and 1980s and reflects the experiences of an older demographic.

We have observed that the wineries we studied offering walk-in and by-appointment will use the by-appointment for larger groups of 10 or more. While wine tourism cannot turn back the clock on history, prices, or rural development, its pivot to the by-appointment model, accelerated by pandemic safety requirements, now addresses long-standing complaints of over-crowded, unfocused, and noisy wine-tasting experiences that the walk-in model fostered.

To illustrate our belief that by-appointment wine tasting would have gained favor with the industry and consumers over time, we turned to past travel writing and customer reviews. One 2019 blog captures consumers' pre-pandemic distaste for wine roads well-traveled:

> Napa has some stunning wineries: Medieval castles, Tuscan manors, and Downton Abbey-style estates. But these are also the wineries that are most likely to be included on wine bus and limousine tours and thronged by visitors who've read the latest 10-best list. For a more individual experience, try visiting wineries that are off the beaten path, have an unusual

back story, or require prior appointments, which tends to cut down on numbers. (Haiken, 2019)

In the summer of 2021, reopened wineries had other incentives beyond health and safety to keep the by-appointment model. Pent-up tourist demand for premium wine experiences was threatening to exceed the supply (Mobley, 2021). Wineries facing post-pandemic challenges in recruitment and retention of staff in a competitive market used the by-appointment model to plan their business day and ensure adequate staffing and hosts for the visitor's experience (Swindell, 2021).

Tourists are already accustomed to making reservations for hotels and restaurants. In the "new normal" of 2020 and 2021 where staffing and regular hours at hospitality venues were not always guaranteed, it became a natural progression to call ahead and confirm protocols and book that winery experience in advance as well.

Spotlight: Region at Barlow

Region at Barlow is a wine bar specializing in small-production wines in Sebastopol, a town in Sonoma County. It is one of over 40 food and drink vendors in the Barlow Market, a 12-acre outdoor shopping campus focusing on local food, wine, beer, spirits, and crafts made by Sonoma County artisans.

With its rotating menu of 50 local wines, Region offers smaller Sonoma wineries a business option to the tasting room model and provides customers with a walk-in experience that is more informal and self-guided. Most notably, Region utilizes WineStations, self-service beverage control, and management systems developed by Napa Technology. With a tasting card linked to their credit card, customers are then able to select their tastings in 1, 2.5, or 5 oz. pours. Napa Technology's self-service and automated wine stations had been industry staples since 2005, but when Region opened for business in July 2020, the contactless tasting room experience they offered made headlines (Lander, 2020a).

Notably, the team behind Region began conceptualizing their experience in 2019 to support smaller wineries unable to build expensive

tasting rooms of their own. Region's founders also wanted to create a modern, casual experience, similar to local craft brew pubs. Their choice to introduce self-serve stations into Sonoma's wine scene was not driven by pandemic-era concerns.

Region partnered with other Barlow Market vendors to provide food options for its patrons. This beneficial partnership allowed Region to open in the summer of 2020 without the expense of building its separate full-meal kitchen to satisfy mandates that required food service with alcohol sales. Its outdoor seating expanded options for Barlow visitors—a win-win for venue and customer alike.

Sharing the Ride: Wine Tourism Partnerships

As noted above, state mandates in 2020 favored restaurants and wineries with full food service for reopening in advance of venues that served only alcohol. Hotels were considered essential and many stayed open throughout the summer with limited services offered. Some voluntarily closed as a response to severe declines in occupancy rates (Baskas, 2020). Others, such as the Best Western Dry Creek Inn, met revenue goals through county-level contracts such as quarantine housing (Callahan, 2020).

Tourism in Sonoma and Napa is a highly competitive industry, and this division of reopening spoils seemed designed to push stakeholders further apart. In reality, the opposite occurred. One representative statement from owner and winemaker Katy Wilson of LaRue Wines captured an emerging collaborative spirit: "Wineries, restaurants, and the whole hospitality industry are all connected. I want to do everything I can to help because I know that every little bit matters" (Lander, 2020b). A 2021 study of a select group of hospitality leaders in the USA, Israel, and Sweden reported increased feelings of empathy and compassion in the US cohort interviewed (Shapoval et al., 2021). In Sonoma and Napa, both altruism and pragmatism fostered new and creative partnerships between wineries, restaurants, and hotels.

Early partnerships between wineries and restaurants focused on take-home gourmet meals paired with local wines, such as a Memorial Day Weekend BBQ Oyster Kit, complete with wine pairings and a virtual

cooking class from Napa's Round Pound Estate and Sonoma's Bodega Bay Oyster Company. Other initiatives had altruistic goals that highlighted relief efforts for hospitality workers impacted by pandemic-driven layoffs. Over 140 California wineries donated to an online auction organized by the nonprofit organization Wine Country for Restaurants, raising nearly $20,000 for the national nonprofit Restaurant Workers' Community Foundation (RWCF) in one weekend alone (Hurt, 2020).

When limited reopening of wineries and restaurants with outdoor food service was permitted in May 2020, partnerships became mutually beneficial relationships allowing venues to satisfy the mandates. Wineries unable to deal with the investment, logistics, or safety risk of food service found willing partners with restaurants hampered by limited capacity requirements or lacking outdoor space of their own. In Sonoma, the executive chef and managing partner of legendary Girl & the Fig noted that wineries offered an ideal space for outdoor dining with the room to provide socially distanced seating in an attractive setting (Lander, 2020b).

Spotlight: LaRue Wines, Sonoma Coast AVA

LaRue Wines is a boutique winery dedicated to showcasing small lots of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay from six vineyards within 7–10 miles of the Pacific Ocean. LaRue Wines made its debut in 2009 and currently produces 500 cases of premium brand wine per year. Owner Katy Wilson began her study of winemaking at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, and follows a non-interventionist winemaking philosophy that champions the land. She also makes wine for three other artisan wineries based in Sonoma— Anaba Wines, Reeve Wines, and Smith Story Wine Cellars.

In 2020, as state and local orders closed wine-tasting rooms and restaurants across the country, LaRue Wines lost one part-time staff member who needed to turn their attention to home-schooling. By May, when Stage 2 allowed for a possible reopening, Katy Wilson was the solo full-time employee with no bandwidth or existing resources to host in-person tastings during the years 2020 and 2021. In 2022, LaRue was able to partner with Farmhouse at Anaba Wines, a separate space from their tasting room.

Throughout the pandemic, her advocacy for others in the industry, particularly in the restaurant sector, was an instinctive and immediate action. In an informal interview in 2023, she recounted both professional and personal initiatives taken.

"One of the biggest things we did during COVID was a fundraising effort on behalf of Anton's Café and Wine Bar in New York City. Early on wineries were adopting restaurants to support in the spirit of 'pay it forward.' We raised a couple of thousand dollars for fellow hospitality workers that were hit the hardest by the closures."

In addition to charitable efforts utilizing her winery's brand and reach, Wilson made a concentrated effort as a consumer herself to order take-out from local, favorite restaurants.

"Always keep in mind that you support the tourism sector not just with recommendations to your customers but with your own time and money too," Wilson stated. "In 2020, the people that were invested in helping others in the tourism sector severely impacted by the lockdowns, were the people who recognized the interconnectedness of the tourist economy before the crisis. But also, more than just that. That winery down the road isn't our competition, it is part of our community."

In 2023, partnerships between LaRue and local restaurants are a staple of their business and marketing plans. At the time of our interview, Wilson was the featured winemaker of the month at Sonoma restaurant Wit & Wisdom, where wines from LaRue, Reeve, and Anaba were available to patrons by bottle or glass. Wilson has personally guest-hosted two evenings within the month, providing diners an opportunity to learn more about her wines. Healdsburg restaurant Barndiva has also partnered with Wilson to spotlight LaRue wines.

As a family-owned winery, LaRue Wines has always followed the by-appointment model for onsite wine tastings. Their digital reservation management tool of choice is Tock, an online solution from Squarespace that serves both restaurants and wineries in the United States.

The Road Ahead: Wine Tourism's Future

We have shown how COVID-19 lockdowns led to innovations in the wine tourism industry in the areas of technology, marketing, and customer experience. As in-person sales channels closed, winemakers embraced solutions that pre-pandemic trends in consumer demographics were already signaling. But what was originally plotted on our imagined 2020 Wine Road map before the pandemic? Where was the industry heading if not for the sudden and unexpected existential crisis of lockdown and shelter-in-place mandates? According to industry analysis and demographic trends: not in a particularly good direction. Direct-to-consumer marketing reliance on traditional tasting room and wine club models, which required customers to come to the product, was stagnating. Younger customers were not onboarding at the rate that loyal customers in Boomer and Gen-X demographics were aging out (McMillan, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic synchronized the industry and drew attention to these chronic issues. Large or small, every wine tourism venue faced the same challenges in direct-to-consumer sales channels and discovered similar solutions in online marketing, demographic analysis, and collaborative partnerships. Winery websites with state-of-the-art online reservation systems for tastings and protocol statements for guest and employee safety illustrate how profoundly the industry was impacted. The full summer of reopening in 2021, when jubilant crowds flocked to Sonoma and Napa wineries, venues, and restaurants, is now as much a local legend as the post-Prohibition summers of the 1930s when Napa's Beringer Vineyards was the first in the region to offer tours and wine tastings.

Today, wine tourism faces new headwinds in inflation and ongoing impacts of supply chain issues. Winemakers continue to grapple with climate change. But the industry demonstrates an unexpected strength and resourcefulness in adapting quickly when change is needed.

On our hypothetical Wine Road Map of 2020, the route we traveled through lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 was detoured around the closed roads of in-person wine marketing and customer experiences disrupted

by the crisis. Now, when wine country venues and stakeholders embark on another summer season welcoming a new generation of tourists, those detours have become valuable shortcuts to new tourist experiences, new technologies in the industry, and a renewed commitment to partnerships in the hospitality community.

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14

Firm Innovation Capability, Visitors' Behavior, and Sustainability of Hospitality Firms in Kenya: A Post-Coronavirus Disease 2019 Assessment

Hannah Orwa Bula and Paul Thumbi Njoroge

Introduction

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) crisis had the greatest impact on the global hospitality industry. Many countries issued travel advisories and lockdowns: a move that restricted the movement of tourists globally which put the sustainability of the sector into question (Fowler, 2022; Hao et al., 2020; Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021; Korinth, 2022; Sahoo et al., 2021). In Kenya, the major crises that have affected the hospitality industry in the past include the threat of terrorism, political instability, and economic recession (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2020). These crises slowed down the growth of the industry, but their impact on the

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sustainability of the industry has been mitigated through government interventions. However, in the case of Covid-19 crisis, the impact of the crisis continues to be felt three years down the line. The most evident impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the tourism industry was on visitors' behavior, which is a key indicator of the quality and effectiveness of tourism activities. Kenya recorded a significant decline in the purchase and uptake of tourist services during and after the Covid-19 period (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Understanding the behavior of visitors is critical to tourism stakeholders, especially those in the hospitality sector such as hotels, as it provides significant information in the assessment of the current and future state of the industry (Pearce, 2005). In this regard, the current state of industry points to its stability and future state points to its sustainability. Visitors' behavior influences business decisions and product development. For instance, information on holiday plans, uptake of holidays, and post-holiday feedback provide hotels with data that can be used to inform service improvement, new product development, and assess future business outlooks (Juvan et al., 2017). Given that Covid-19 impacted on visitors' behavior, it is crucial to assess the effect of this impact on the sustainability of hospitality firms. In addition, investigating factors that underpin the performance of hospitality firms in a volatile business environment would equally be paramount.

The concept of sustainability in the hospitality sector has gained prominence in the last decade. Increasingly, hospitality firms are expected to integrate business strategies that drive sustainability from the point of view of both internal and external stakeholders (Jones et al., 2014). However, sustainable growth amid global challenges, pandemics, and economic recession may become a mirage unless the sector embraces innovation (Moghimi et al., 2016). Recent studies have established the critical role of innovative capability as a pathway to recovery from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic (Alotaibi & Khan, 2022; Breier et al., 2021). According to the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) (Report, 2021), the sector needs to boost firm innovation to effectively adapt to the changing business environment and sustain growth in the post-Covid-19 era.

The general objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between firm innovative capability, visitors' behavior, and sustainability of hospitality firms in Kenya. This study contributes to the empirical literature on firm innovation, visitors' behavior, and sustainability in the hospitality industry in the post-Covid-19 era. The findings are significant to policymakers such as government agencies as it makes policy recommendations on tourism regulations and government interventions. In addition, the study makes recommendations relevant to practitioners in the hospitality industry on how firms can leverage firm innovation capability to effectively respond to visitors' behavior and ultimately influence firm sustainability in a Covid-19 environment.

Literature Review

Theoretical Literature Review

Concept of Crisis in Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Crisis management in the tourism and hospitality industry has been approached from different perspectives in literature (Faulkner, 2001; Mansfeld, 1999; Ritter & Pedersen, 2020; Wang & Ritchie, 2010). This renders a precise definition of the term "crisis" elusive (Hao et al., 2020). However, notions of what constitutes a crisis constellate around events, threats, catastrophes, pandemics, and disasters that affect business operations, structures, and sustainability (Faulkner, 2001). Further, Mansfeld propounded a three-pronged approach to counter the crisis. This approach comprised three interventions namely innovative marketing, structural reconfiguration, and government support. This approach has been replicated by Ritter and Pederson's (2020) push for process and market innovation to address the effects of the Covid-19 crisis. Similarly, albeit more comprehensively, Breier et al. (2021) argue that business model innovation is the panacea for recovery from a global crisis such as the Covid-19 crisis. This position is held by other scholars who have

emphasized the role of creativity and innovation in sustainable businesses (Bilgihan & Nejad, 2015; Bula, 2019; Florida, 2005).

Research suggests that failure to effectively manage crises may result in undesirable effects of under-tourism and over-tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Gowreesunkar & Séraphin, 2019; Mihalic, 2020). Gowreesunkar and Thanh (2020) have advanced the concepts of under-tourism and over-tourism in the sphere of sustainable tourism development by examining their impact and implications. Over-tourism connotes a situation where the number of tourists or visitors exceeds the capacity of the destination leading to negative outcomes such as overcrowding, environmental challenges, and housing problems. This situation may be caused by a crisis in alternative destinations (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Tourism, on the other hand, describes the phenomenon in which the number of tourists is below the capacity of the destination. Tourists generally avoid crisis-prone and post-crisis destinations (Mihalic, 2020). Gowreesunker and Seraphin (2019) argue that destinations that are safe and secure are more likely to have sustainable tourism development. Achieving a balance between under-tourism and over-tourism has been greatly hampered by crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Tourism Behavior

The literature on consumer behavior explains the purchase intention as the predictor of actual purchase (Engel et al., 1993). Similarly, the behavior of tourists or visitors is a key factor in the performance of the hospitality industry (Scott et al., 2014). The theory of planned versus realized tourism behavior lays bare the behavior canvas of consumers of tourism and hospitality products/services, which comprise the elements of planned consumption and realized consumption (March & Woodside, 2005). Contingent factors such as characteristics of tourists (purchaser), product/service experience, and purchase motivation notwithstanding may not be critical in determining in isolation tourism behavior.

According to Scott et al. (2014) tourism behavior entails selecting, purchasing, and utilizing tourism services and decisions which are determined by values, motivation, expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty. Juvan

et al. (2017) argue that tourism behavior should be understood in three phases: planning phase, tour/holiday phase, and post-tour/holiday phase. In the planning phase, the tourist identifies a destination and does the booking. Several factors are considered during this phase, such as cost, past experience, and social media reports, among others. The second phase involves the actual visit and the activities carried out during the visit. The post-visit phase entails assessment of the experience which may influence future behavior.

The stages of tourist behavior consist of identifying the need for tourism, gathering information about possible tourism destinations, making tourist decisions, taking the tour, and evaluating the tour experience. Tourist decision-making is influenced by several factors that include personal characteristics which include attitudes, norms, values, and motivation; demographic factors such as age, gender, and social and economic factors; alternative tourists' destinations; and situational or contingent factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic, political environment, and weather conditions (Wu et al., 2011).

It is instructive to note that the theory of tourist's behavior, planned versus realized behavior, helps to understand the behavior of tourists/visitors. It provides significant indicators that can assist in predicting the performance of the hospitality industry (March & Woodside, 2005). In the context of pre- and post-Covid-19 crisis, the theory provides a framework to use in assessing the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on visitors' behavior and sustainability of the hospitality industry. In addition, understanding tourists' behavior provides information that is critical in innovation of new products/services, processes, and markets.

Innovation Capability

Literature on innovative capability revolves around a firm's inherent ability to generate new innovations or potential to leverage on existing resources. It is the capacity of a firm to generate new innovations (Laforet, 2011). Lawson and Samson (2001) describe innovative capability as the ability to exploit knowledge and ideas to improve or produce new products/services, processes, technology, and organizational systems. The

construction of firm innovation capability according to Scott and Bruce (1994) involves ability to generate new ideas triggered by micro and macro contexts, advocacy and promotion of the new ideas to workmates and members of management, and creation of prototypes and models of innovation. This model is popular in literature because of its overarching approach to innovation.

Newer models and frameworks applicable to the hospitality and tourism industry have emerged. This development could have been triggered by the view that innovation adoption varies from one context to another (Bilgihan & Nejad, 2015). Paalanen et al. (2009) categorize innovative capability into absorptive capacity and external knowledge, organizational structure and culture, leadership and communication, and individual creativity and innovativeness. On the contrary, Tura et al. (2008) describe innovative capability as consisting of creativity (search for new ideas), knowledge (acquisition of necessary knowledge), and operationalization (exploitation and application of knowledge or ideas).

According to Saunila and Ukko (2012), innovation capability comprises three elements, which include innovation potential, innovation processes, and innovation results. Innovation potential consists of present factors that determine the potential of the firm to be innovative; innovative processes comprise systems and activities that enable the firm to exploit their potential for new innovations; and innovative results involve actual innovations. From this model, the practical indicators of innovative capability would include creativity potential, motivation for creativity and innovativeness, leadership support for innovation, quality of communication channels, idea creation and assessment, new products/services, and new procedures/processes/systems. Kallmuenzer (2018) suggests that innovation in hospitality firms takes the form of products/services, processes, and structural innovations. Innovation culture should be cultivated in an organization. Failure to allocate time to pursue new ideas and trajectory can thwart innovation efforts. Organizational structures, processes, lack of a precise innovation methodology, fear of getting out of the norm, and not exploring the capacity to think abnormally can stifle innovation. Outliers or inhibitors can pose a great threat to innovation. Innovation is difficult for organizations to accomplish, especially on

a consistent basis, if there is lack of total commitment as a holistic approach in the organization.

Commercializing Innovation

Commercialization is a process of value addition to a discovery or introduction of a new process, new service, or new product, thus making use of innovation for organization's gain. In the context of tourism industry, innovation may be linked to performance and growth through improvements in efficiency, productivity, quality, competitive positioning, and market share. New developments clear away or change the old organizational forms and practices that may pose risks to organizations, making them perish, or being driven out of their market by those that innovate. Innovation involves digging deep into what works for organizations by expending time and effort to know the customer's demands and what works for a particular market niche (Bula, 2019).

Organizations should have a capability to speculate about market behavior and ultimate outcome of the decisions that the stakeholders make, as this capability to make the informed decisions has a great bearing on consumer behavior. There is a need to always relook at what the current market entails to enhance their performance as well as to figure out how to plunge into the untapped new markets by understanding market situations through analyzing their trends in terms of demand and supply with respect to price elasticity. Markets are very volatile and the tourism market is even more volatile, given that it belongs to a service industry; any small turbulence brings a swift downward in destabilizing the equilibrium. Innovation has a way of creating tensions because it introduces change; it questions the "status quo" by getting people out of their comfort zones. In most instances it shakes the structures and the very fabric of organizations; therefore, those who are not innovative will definitely resist it. The Covid-19 pandemic did bring a lot of turbulence not only in the service industry but also in the commodity industry; therefore, the tourism industry was greatly shaken and affected as a service-oriented industry. Innovation is a behavior that is geared toward

enhancing performance. A good illustration is expressed in an equation as follows:

> Innovation model: Innovation = Creativity + Capital + Risk taking + Patience + Transformation
> I = C + C + R + P + T (Bula, 2021)

Innovation process starts with an idea generation through creativity shrouded with risk-taking, resilience, and transformation. Many entrepreneurs and business people fail not just once but repeatedly; the gist is not to focus on failure but the ability to go beyond the failure by rising up to rethink the vision of the organization and where you need to be as an enterprise, and most successful organizations factor in an appropriate level of risk. Failures should be identified and screened out before they escalate to an unmanageable situation. Early screening prevents awkward and mediocre notions, consuming scarce resources that are required to catapult organizations to the greatest heights of excellence. Organizations should avoid failure by openly having discussions and daily roundtable briefs. The lessons learned from failure often reside longer in the institution's memory than those learned from success stories (Bula, 2019).

Firm Sustainability

The existence of hospitality firms goes beyond the profitability and growth dimensions onto the more holistic dimension of sustainability. The concept of sustainability has become important in the hospitality and tourism literature. This has been driven by shifts in the global stage where firms are required to embed sustainability activities in their core business (Jones et al., 2016). Firm sustainability is described as the state in which a firm creates, maintains, and fulfills the social, environmental, and economic requirements of present and future stakeholders (Jayawardena et al., 2013). Pursuit of sustainability provides both challenges and opportunities for the global hospitality and tourism industry.

Literature on sustainability shows that the integration of sustainability efforts into business/corporate strategy is no longer a discretionary action

but a mandatory commitment to the stakeholders, both present and future. It also emphasizes that the organization is concerned about its social, economic, and environmental responsibilities in cognizance of issues such as climate change, green energy, pollution, depletion of natural resources, carbon emission, and deforestation (Jones et al., 2014; Sloan et al., 2013). Therefore, today, hospitality firms integrate sustainability in product/service offerings, technology deployment, infrastructure development, marketing activities, and institutional structure and culture. It is not uncommon for large multinational hotels to have sustainability strategies that are very unique from the business strategies.

Although literature is inconclusive on the construction and measurement of sustainability in a firm, there is a general acceptance of the broad dimensions of sustainability to constitute social, economic, and environmental issues. The social dimension may include issues such as diversity, equal employment, human rights, safety and health, working conditions, and social corporate responsibility. On the other hand, the economic dimension may focus on value creation, profitability, market share, competitive advantage, and business growth. Finally, the environmental dimension involves a firm's responsibility in climate change, energy efficiency, waste management, green construction, and preservation of natural resources (Bonilla-Priego et al., 2014). This description of sustainability provides a broad framework applicable in the hospitality industry.

Empirical Literature Review

Impact of Covid-19 Crisis on Hospitality Industry

The view that Covid-19 crisis has changed the business environment in the hospitality industry cannot be overemphasized. Recent studies have pointed to the need to reconfigure business models through innovative approaches in order to respond to the threats and opportunities brought by the Covid-19 crisis (Jones et al., 2020; Korinth, 2022). Although past studies (e.g., Jauhari, 2014; Jayawardena et al., 2013) have underscored the relevance of innovation in enhancing performance of the hospitality

industry, the current study has highlighted the need for innovative capability for sustainable development.

Breier et al. (2021) studied the role of innovation in the hospitality industry during the Covid-19 crisis in Austria. Using a multiple-case study of six hospitality firms, the findings showed that innovation is significant for firm performance in post-Covid-19 pandemic. The results also emphasized the need to invest resources in strategic developments rather than in operational activities. Further, the study revealed that adoption of innovation during and after the crisis created new revenue streams and enhanced firm's liquidity. Further, previous studies such as Moghimi et al. (2016) and Jauhari (2014) emphasize the significance of innovation on sustainability in the hospitality industry.

Assessing the state of tourism in selected European countries during Covid-19 pandemic time, Korinth (2022) asserts that the crisis has disrupted the global tourism and hospitality supply and value chains. This move poses a negative impact that may continue to be felt years after the end of the pandemic, more so in international travel, occupancy of tourist accommodation, and general consumption of tourism and hospitality services. The study recommends enhancement of domestic tourism and agri-tourism. In a similar vein, Sahoo et al. (2021) established that Covid-19 pandemic had the greatest impact on the economic aspects of the hospitality industry in Kenya. In the hotel industry, the large hotels (5-star) were negatively affected by disruption of international travel and foreign tourism. Therefore, an adversely disrupted social-cultural and economic environment defines the context within which the hospitality industry is operating today.

Several studies have been conducted to establish the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on visitors' (tourists') behavior. For instance, Abraham et al. (2020) suggest that Covid-19 pandemic had negatively impacted visitors' intentions, plans, and consumption of hospitality and tourism services. In the same light, Bae and Chang (2021) established that Covid-19 pandemic had adversely impacted visitors' behavioral intentions toward hospitality and tourism services in South Korea. The results of the study further indicated that risk perception influences attitude and norms of the visitors, particularly in relation to Covid-19 crisis. From these studies, it is apparent that Covid-19 had a significant negative

impact on visitors' behavior and consequently had an effect on performance and sustainability of the hospitality industry.

In a study on the impact of Covid-19 on the global hospitality industry, Fowler (2022) identified five predominant areas of impact and concern: sustainability, health, financial, employees and employment, and safety. A similar study by Kaushal and Srivastava (2021) examined the challenges faced and lessons learnt from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality and tourism industry in India. The qualitative enquiry revealed the need for better crisis preparedness, professional development, and enhanced standard operating procedures. The significant challenges that emerged relate to human resource management, health and hygiene, and business continuity. In a similar vein, Korinth (2022) concludes that Covid-19 had caused a global tourism recession, while Jung et al. (2021) argue that the crisis posed both threats and opportunities in the industry.

Hao et al. (2020) investigated the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on China's hotel industry. The study predicted that Covid-19 crisis would significantly influence the future of the following aspects of the hospitality industry: multi-business channels, product/service design, investment preference, digital transformation, and market reshuffle. On the other hand, the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife Report on impact of Covid-19 on tourism in Kenya (MTW, 2020) predicted that the long-term impact of the crisis would include closure of business, lack of capital for business recovery, increased running costs, reduced number of bookings and visits, slow growth of tourism sector, decline in international tourism, change in tourism behavior, and increased barriers in international travel.

Scholars have asserted that Covid-19 crisis had threatened the sustainability of hospitality industry (Jones et al., 2020) and call for investment of resources in sustainable recovery efforts (McCartney et al., 2022) and adoption of innovation in products/services, technology, human resources, marketing, and supply chain systems (Alotaibi & Khan, 2022) for long-term solutions. The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (2020) in Kenya recommended innovative approaches to presentation of tourism resources, product innovation, and technological innovation. This

position is echoed by Korinth's (2022) view that the survival of hospitality firms is hinged on innovation.

From the foregoing empirical studies, it is evident that Covid-19 crisis caused a major disruption in the hospitality and tourism industry and that innovation plays a critical role in recovery and sustainability of the industry. Given the contextual nature of Covid-19 crisis, the current study extends this literature.

Methodology

To study the relationship between innovation capability, visitors' behavior, and sustainability of hospitality firms in Kenya, this study adopted cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. This approach is recommended for collection of both qualitative and quantitative data (Cooper & Schindler, 2013) and especially in situations where there is limited theoretical and empirical literature, as is the case of the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis. The study targeted classified hospitality firms in Nairobi, Kenya. Using purposive sampling, 15 firms were selected for the study. This comprised four 5-star, six 4-star, and five 3-star hospitality firms that had been adversely affected by Covid-19 pandemic and had instituted recovery measures. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. For each firm, three questionnaires were administered online or/and via email, two for members of management and one for a visitor/guest/patron. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques and results presented in tables and charts.

Results and Discussions

The study was carried out more than one year after full relaxation of Covid-19 travel restrictions and lockdowns in Kenya. Although the Kenya government had lifted the Covid-19 protocols by the start of 2022, some European and Asian countries had varied their protocols which left the recovery and future of the tourism and hospitality industry in abeyance. In light of this, the study sought to establish the extent to

which hospitality firms in Kenya had recovered from the impact of Covid-19 crisis, the post-Covid-19 behavior patterns of visitors, the state of innovative capability and its effect on performance, and sustainability of hospitality firms in the post-Covid-19 era. The results and discussions are presented below.

Recovery from Covid-19 Impact

The study sought to determine whether the firms had "fully recovered," "partially recovered," or "not recovered" from the impact of Covid-19 pandemic. The results showed that 61% of the firms had partially recovered, 22% had fully recovered, and 17% had not recovered. The following factors were identified as barriers to full recovery: high operating costs, depreciation of Kenyan shilling against the dollar which affected international travel, inadequate recovery capital, and electioneering process in the year 2022 which created apprehension that caused travel advisories.

In order to establish the extent of recovery of hospitality firms from the impact of Covid-19 six indicators of performance were assessed: level of booking, occupancy capacity, conference services uptake, operations capacity, revenue generation, and new hires (rehires). The respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the given statement. A Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) was used. The results are presented in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1 Extent of recovery from Covid-19 impact

Statement	Mean	Std. dev.
Booking for hotel services has increased in the last one year	4.069	0.841
Room occupancy has increased in the last one year	3.425	0.717
Uptake of conference services has increased in the last one year	3.294	0.942
Operations have been at full capacity for the last one year	3.377	0.996
Revenue generated from hotel products/services has increased	3.182	0.805
New employees have been hired within the last one year	3.873	0.768

Likert scale (1–5): ≤ 2.49 = Low; ≥ 2.50 ≤ 3.49 = Moderate; ≥ 3.50 = High

The results in Table 14.1 reveal that hospitality firms have partially recovered from the Covid-19 crisis, although not to the level of the pre-Covid-19 period. This may be attributed to the lifting of lockdowns and easing of Covid-19 protocols. It is evident that the number of visitors planning to visit the hotels has increased, although not at a proportionate level with actual visits as shown by moderate levels of room occupancy, uptake of conference services, and revenue generation. As a result of moderate increase in business activity, the firms have hired new employees (to replace those who were retrenched or resigned during the Covid-19 lockdown when the operations of hotels had been halted). This moderate level of recovery validates Fowler's (2022) view that Covid-19 pandemic had a far-reaching impact on sustainability of hospitality firms and Jones et al.'s (2020) prediction that Covid-19 crisis had a permanent impact on the future of hospitality industry.

Visitors' Behavior

The study sought to establish how the behavior of visitors had changed after the Covid-19 crisis and what this portended for the hospitality firms in Kenya. Using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), the respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the given statements. The results are summarized in Table 14.2.

The results presented in Table 14.2 show that Covid-19 had a consequential effect on visitor's behavior. It is evident that the factors that are influencing the visitor's choice and decision are their own motivation, past experience, and cost. The post-Covid-19 period has witnessed visitors who are more demanding, willing to spend more for additional services, and taking longer holiday visits. This situation may imply that the visitor/tourist has become more self-conscious and self-aware after the perils of Covid-19 pandemic. The increased level of satisfaction in hospitality services may be attributed to enhanced safety and health measures that firms have undertaken and also the operational changes that have been affected by most firms. These findings validate the theory of planned versus realized tourism behavior in the sense that visitors have the power

Table 14.2 Assessment of visitors' behavior

Statement	Mean	Std. dev.
Visitors have different motivation to buy hospitality services	4.225	0.813
Past experience influences choice of hotel after Covid-19 crisis	4.116	0.838
Cost is an important factor in visitor's choice of hotel and services	4.255	0.785
Bookings have resulted into actual visits after Covid-19 crisis	3.899	0.778
Visitors are much more demanding than before	3.734	0.862
Visitors are taking longer holiday visits after the Covid-19 crisis	3.433	0.874
Visitors are willing to spend more for additional services	3.586	1.117
Visitors are satisfied with our services after Covid-19 crisis	3.667	0.946
Complaints about our services have reduced after Covid-19 crisis	3.692	0.895
The number of repeat visitors have increased after Covid-19 crisis	3.147	1.053

Likert scale (1–5): ≤ 2.49 = Low; ≥ 2.50 ≤ 3.49 = Moderate; ≥ 3.50 = High

to decide on services they purchase and by extension influence the services provided by the hospitality firms.

On the question of whether visitors' behavior was crucial in the hospitality industry, the findings indicated that 59% of respondents felt the information was very important, 32% indicated it as important, while 7% considered the information as less important and 2% as not important. This information, about visitor's behavior, is mainly used to predict performance (56%), improve service delivery (76%), enhance marketing activities (68%), develop new products/services (73%), understand market dynamics (71%), and forecast business trends and future behavior (54%). These findings emphasize the significance of visitors' behavior in the operations of the hospitality industry.

Firm Innovation Capability

The study sought to determine the level of innovation capability in hospitality firms in Kenya. The respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the given statement. A Likert scale

Table 14.3 Innovation capability

Statement	Mean	Std. dev.
Our organization values creativity and innovation	4.069	0.793
Employees with right expertise are retained	3.955	0.885
We invest resources in search of new knowledge	3.159	0.962
Leadership supports creative and innovative ideas	3.588	0.796
Adequate resources are allocated for implementation of ideas	2.947	0.825
Employees are encouraged to be creative and innovative	3.697	0.943
New ideas are discussed before implementation	3.751	0.859
Effective channels are used to communicate new ideas	3.536	0.956
Knowledge is shared across the organization	3.675	0.921
We have introduced new products/services	3.184	0.947
We have introduced new technology in the organization	3.226	0.893
Process efficiency has been enhanced through innovation	3.081	0.918
Marketing activities are largely online-based	3.579	0.933

Likert scale (1–5): ≤ 2.49 = Low; ≥ 2.50 ≤ 3.49 = Moderate; ≥ 3.50 = High

ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) was used. The results are presented in Table 14.3.

From the results presented in Table 14.3, hospitality firms have innovation capability. It is evident that innovation potential is mainly evidenced in the culture of the organization and quality of employees hired and retained. The firm's value creativity (mean, 4.069) and employees with expertise are retained (mean, 3.955) in order to enhance innovative potential. The leadership of these firms demonstrates some level of commitment to innovation by supporting innovative ideas but there is need to allocate adequate resources for search of new knowledge, which is critical for innovation. On innovative process, the findings reveal that firms have put in place measures to ensure innovation takes place. For instance, employees are encouraged to be creative and innovative (mean, 3.697), ideas are discussed before implementation (mean, 3.751), and knowledge is shared across the organization through effective channels. This state of affairs ensures that innovation is an organization-wide endeavor. Although the moderate innovation is attributable to inadequacy of resources allocated for idea implementation (mean, 2.947), the actual innovation undertaken (i.e., product, process, technological, and marketing innovations) is a response to the effects of Covid-19 crisis.

Further, the study examined the perception of the role of innovation capability on performance. The indicators of performance used include market share, competitive advantage, profitability, growth, operational efficiency, service delivery, and customer satisfaction. The results showed that the role of innovation capability in improving market share was rated at 44%, enhancing competitiveness (51%), increasing profitability (41%), enhancing growth (49%), improving operational efficiency (56%), enhancing service delivery (59%), and increasing customer satisfaction (54%), in the post-Covid-19 era. This is in line with Kallmuenzer's (2018) assertion that innovation in hospitality firms takes the form of changes in products, services, managerial practices, operational processes, marketing activities, and technological advancement. These findings underscore the centrality and appreciation of innovation capability in the performance of hospitality firms.

Firm Sustainability

To assess the sustainability of the firms, the study evaluated the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability in the firms. Using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), the respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the given statements. The results are summarized in Table 14.4.

The results presented in Table 14.4 indicate that the economic dimension of sustainability is more important than the social and environmental dimensions in hospitality firms in Kenya. It is evident that hospitality firms are more concerned about shareholders' value (mean, 4.099), profitability (mean, 4.136), competitiveness (mean, 3.981), and market share (4.149). On the social dimension of sustainability, firms have demonstrated responsibility in observing human rights, diversity in employment, and safety and health of staff and visitors with means of 3.925, 3.894, and 4.107 respectively. On the other hand, the hospitality firms are committed to environmental sustainability at a moderate level. Although they have invested in environmental friendly programs, this is not their primary objective in the post-Covid-19 era. It can be construed that these firms commit to environmental conservation, clean energy,

Table 14.4 Firm sustainability

Statement	Mean	Std. dev.
We respect human rights in all our engagements	3.925	0.647
We guarantee diversity in our workforce	3.894	0.853
We ensure safety and health of our employees and visitors	4.107	0.669
We have set up programs for welfare of our employees	3.736	0.811
We engage in corporate social responsibility programs	3.657	0.938
Our business model aims at increasing the shareholders' value	4.099	0.701
Our business strategies aim at improving the firm's profitability	4.136	0.783
We have implemented strategies to enhance our competitiveness	3.981	0.654
We have implemented strategies to increase our market share	4.149	0.713
We are committed to creating new employment opportunities	3.524	0.962
Our business activities adhere to environmental conservation	3.582	0.855
We use efficient, safe, and clean energy	3.493	0.961
We are committed to climate change mitigation	2.833	1.247
We have adopted effective waste management system	3.642	0.813
We are committed to preservation of natural resources	3.358	0.826

Likert scale (1–5): ≤ 2.49 = Low; ≥ 2.50 ≤ 3.49 = Moderate; ≥ 3.50 = High

climate change mitigation, and preservation of natural resources both for compliance and to safeguard their image at the international market (it is worth noting that some of the sampled firms are multinationals).

Relationship Between Visitors' Behavior and Firm Sustainability

Using Pearson's correlation, the study sought to determine whether there was a relationship between visitors' behavior and firm sustainability in hospitality firms in Kenya. The correlation was statistically significant if p value was less than 0.05 at 95% confidence level. The results revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between visitors' behavior and firm sustainability, $r = 0.782^*$, p (0.001) < 0.05 at 95% confidence level. These findings imply that there is a strong positive linear relationship between visitors' behavior and firm sustainability.

Regression analysis was used to examine how changes in visitors' behavior influenced changes in firm sustainability. The results revealed that the relationship between visitors' behavior and firm sustainability in hospitality firms in Kenya was statistically significant (R^2 = 0.491). This implies that visitors' behavior explains 49.1% of the changes on firm sustainability. The regression coefficients showed that visitors' behavior predicted firm sustainability (regression model, Y = 2.594 + 0.861X + ε, $β$ = 0.861, p (0.001) < 0.05 at 95% confidence level). Therefore, visitors' behavior has statistically significant positive effects on firm sustainability. A study by Juvan et al. (2017) avers that tourist's/visitor's behavior is critical in predicting performance of the hospitality industry. Therefore, understanding visitors' behavior is significant in managing the sustainability aspects of hospitality firms.

Relationship Between Innovation Capability and Firm Sustainability

The relationship between innovation capability and firm sustainability was determined using Pearson's correlation analysis. The results of the analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between innovation capability and firm sustainability, r = 0.679*, p (0.001) < 0.05 at 95% confidence level. This finding implies that there is a strong positive linear relationship between innovation capability and firm sustainability in hospitality firms in Kenya.

Using regression analysis to examine how changes in innovation capability influenced changes in firm sustainability, the results revealed that the relationship between innovation capability and firm sustainability in hospitality firms in Kenya was statistically significant (R^2 = 0.426). This finding implies that innovation capability explains 42.6% of the changes on firm sustainability. The regression coefficients showed that innovation capability predicted firm sustainability (regression model, Y = 1.962 + 0.784X + ε, $β$ = 0.784, p (0.001) < 0.05 at 95% confidence level). Therefore, innovation capability has statistically significant positive effects on firm sustainability. Some past studies have drawn similar

conclusions. Breier et al. (2021) posit that innovation is a significant determinant of sustainable performance of hospitality firms during and after the Covid-19 crisis. Alotaibi and Khan (2022) recommended the adoption of innovation for sustainable solutions in the hospitality industry. Therefore, it can be argued that innovation capability is a panacea to address the sustainability challenge in the hospitality industry.

Conclusions

This study concludes that hospitality firms have partially recovered from the Covid-19 crisis. The firms are still grappling with room occupancy, uptake of conference facilities, and revenue generation. Some of the barriers to full recovery include high operating costs, depreciation of Kenyan shilling against the dollar, inadequate recovery capital, and electioneering process in the year 2022 which created apprehension that caused travel advisories. However, it was noted that as a result of moderate increase in business activity, the firms have hired new employees, new products and services have been introduced, and hotel bookings have increased, catapulted by higher domestic visits. The slow pace of recovery implies that Covid-19 pandemic had a far-reaching impact on the sustainability of hospitality firms.

The sustainability of the hospitality industry in Kenya after Covid-19 crisis is not guaranteed. The findings of this study revealed that hospitality firms in Kenya are more focused on the economic dimension of sustainability, that is, shareholders' value, profitability, competitiveness, and market share. Although it may be argued that owing to the devastating impact of Covid-19 pandemic, the firm's priority ought to be recovery, a holistic approach to sustainability is more beneficial in the long run. Despite demonstrable effort in some aspects of sustainability, such as human rights, diversity and inclusivity, and safety and health, the performance of hospitality firms on environmental sustainability is wanting.

The study established that visitors' behavior has statistically significant positive effects on firm sustainability. The Covid-19 pandemic had a consequential effect on visitor's behavior. The visitors are more demanding, willing to spend more for additional services, and taking longer holiday

visits. Information about visitors' behavior is critical in hospitality firms. They have the power to decide on services they purchase and by extension influence the services provided by the hospitality firms. Visitors' behavior information should be analyzed throughout the three phases. This information should be used to predict future performance, improve service delivery, enhance marketing activities, and develop new products/services. Therefore, effective use of visitors' behavior information is crucial in addressing the sustainability challenge in the hospitality industry.

Innovation capability has statistically significant positive effects on firm sustainability. The findings revealed that innovation in hospitality firms was inhibited by inadequate resource allocation for idea implementation. The limited innovations undertaken include product, process, technological, and marketing innovations which are a response to the effects of Covid-19 crisis. Firms should enhance their innovative capability in order to enhance sustainability. In particular, the firms should inculcate a culture of innovation in the organization, hire and retain quality employees, allocate adequate resources for innovation, provide leadership support for innovative ventures, search for new knowledge, encourage creativity among employees, and stimulate knowledge-sharing practice.

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Conclusion: Tourist Behavior in the New Normal—Emerging Frontiers Toward Tourism Resilience

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Over recent years, scholars have theorized about the possibility of a global pandemic that can affect the operations of the tourism industry globally. The overcrowding of cities, associated with a net of faster transport means, makes the virus transmission almost impossible to stop (Dombey, 2004; Novelli et al., 2018). Needless to say, not only global pandemic happened but also the COVID-19 pandemic introduced radical shifts in travel behavior as well as in migratory requirements (Korstanje & George,

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2021; Kulshreshtha, 2021). The adoption of health passports or PCR tests reminded the changes in international flights and air commerce flights after 9/11. As stated in several parts of this book, COVID-19 placed the tourism industry as well as other service sectors to an unparalleled halt. In so doing, the tourism industry became the main carrier and victim of this virus (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021). Governments adopted restrictive measures to stop the virus outbreak which included the closure of borders, airspace, bus stations, and airports, or simply the imposition of lockdown that banned the free circulation of streets. Scholars in the academia debated persistently about the extent to which this founding event signified a new opportunity for degrowth tourism and a more sustainable form of consumption (Ratten, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) or a new challenge to tourism research (Liu et al., 2022). This begged the question of how we can study or educate students on tourism in a world without tourism (Zuccoli & Korstanje, 2023). The COVID-19 has implied positive and negative effects on operational issues, local development (Monterrubio, 2022), economies, social relations, and geopolitical tensions (Korstanje, 2022), without mentioning tourism higher education (Seo & Kim, 2021; Tiwari et al., 2021).

As the previous backdrop, the present book is oriented to deal with and give fresh answers on both aspects. In this conclusion, we will enumerate (not in order) the main contributions and open points left by the selected chapters to enrich the proper readers´ conclusions. What is more important is that the COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal have changed forever the travel behavior and the decision-making process for consumers to select a safer destination. As Lash and Urry put it, the expansion of the tourism industry has generated a double-sided effect. On the one hand, the travel decision-making process is subject to countless risks, but on the other, these risks are administered by a set of experts (tour operators) who explains which is a desirable destination or which destinations should be avoided (Lash & Urry, 1993). M. Korstanje infers that the new normal has brought a new climate of low mobilities, in which case, the right to travel, as least as it was legislated in modern jurisprudence, has been temporarily suspended. The tourism industry has suffered qualitative changes which remains unexplored by the specialized literature. Though this is the main merit of this chapter, there are some

pending points regarding the future of tourism, in a grey zone where tourists are undesired guests, as the author concludes. In the second chapter, Pinaz Tiwari brings some reflections on the case of the Maldives in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. This country took the initiative and opened its borders while launching a new marketing campaign known as *A Safe Haven for Travellers*. As a result of this, the Maldives is considered as a targeted destination in the new normal. The government successfully implemented new policies oriented not only to offer a safe destination to the international niche but also to innovate in branding strategies. The study offers practical implications for Indian destinations as well though the obtained outcomes are not determinant. Similar conclusions can be made for the Chinese market which is carefully analyzed by Evangelia Rapti, and Georgia Zouni in the third chapter. At a closer look, the COVID-19 pandemic affected not only daily habits but also travel behavior globally. The chapter gives some insight into the travel behavior of Chinese tourists before and after the pandemic. As per their results, among the most important changes, as authors overly declare, tourists pondered those destinations that prioritized safety and health. This represents fertile ground for future policies and layouts in tourism management. In the fourth chapter, Anubha Mahender Singh, Sarah Hussain, Priyakrushna Mohanty, and Mahender Reddy Gavinolla discuss to what extent Anthropocene has mutated to a new stage, dubbed as "anthropause". This term is used to denote the suspension of natural rights and habits as a result of the virus outbreak. The chapter focuses on the variables that explain the changes suffered by the tourism industry. Conceptually, the author sheds light on the future of tourism in a low-mobile culture. In the fifth chapter, Barak Atasoy and Oguz Turkay describe the travel behavior of young Turkish tourists during the lockdown and restrictive measures implemented in the country. These restrictive measures included PCR tests, health protocols applied to curfews or the closure of borders, and new migratory requirements. Young tourists target nature-based destinations as their main place to stay during holidays. Anyway, some concerns and fears about health and safety are widely recognized. In the sixth chapter, Isaac Kimunio, Martin W. Nandelenga, and Steve Makambi explore the challenges and opportunities of the industry in the new normal. Some of these opportunities are certainly

associated with advances in digital technologies. In consonance with this, the seventh chapter, which is authored by Eliyas Ebrahim Aman, Deborah Kangai, Árpád Ferenc Papp-Váry, contends that the effects of digital marketing on tourist behavior in the new normal are at the least unquestionable. Methodologically, the chapter uses secondary sources of data extracted from WOS and Scopus to give readers a firm conceptual background as well as a comprehensive overview of the role of marketing tourism in the rebranding process. I Nengah Subadra—in the eighth chapter—shares interesting conclusions regarding the role of cloud tour services in Bali tourism. Prithvi Roy and Aruditya Jasrotia call attention to the opportunities for tourism policymakers to take advantage of recent digital technological advances and developments. For a new generation of young consumers, digital platforms occupy a central position in the decision-making process. What is more important is tech-savvy millennials developed successfully innovative strategies to adapt their travel behavior to the new normal. The rest of the book is formed by four chapters which discuss the health protocols in sport tourism (Maria del Mar Martín Garcia) and the role of auto-service or self-service technologies applied in hospitality services in the days post-COVID-19 (a good point successfully developed by Mengni Fu, Charles Arcodia and Barry Fraser)

Last but not least, Pamela Lanier and Lora Templeton analyze the family life cycle and visitors' behavior in Northern California. At the same time, Paul Njoroge and Hannah Bula show how organic innovation in tourism firms leads to promising results for Kenya's tourism. While the industry devotes efforts and time to recovering from the devastating effects of the pandemic, no less true seems to be that innovation plays a leading role in optimizing the recovery time frame. Both variables, so to say, tourist behavior and innovation firm capacity, contribute positively to tourism sustainability.

Most certainly, it is very early to say what have been the palpable consequences of COVID-19 in the global trade and the tourism industry at this stage. As F. Romagosa notes what we know about COVID-19 is that we know little about its long-lasting effects in modern economies. This book aims to be a good initiative in describing—if not measuring—the radical shifts in travel behavior in the new normal. This volume leaves some open questions which should be re-approached in the next layouts,

such as, what is the future of virtual tourism in a world dominated by digital technologies? What are the instruments applied for making more resilient destinations? Is COVID-19 the rebirth of a new industry? In what ways has COVID-19 changed tourism education and applied research? How do we make tourism in a world fraught with geopolitical tensions? And is the virocene and tourism compatible?

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