

## THE REAL IMPLICATIONS AND EFFECTS OF COVID19 IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IN A WORLD WITHOUT TOURISTS?

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### ISSUE PRESENTATION

Although scholars have been particularly fascinated by the effects of covid19, no less true seems to be that we know little about its evolution and practical effects in the tourism industry. What is more important, the real implications of the pandemic in the global economy, as well as tourism, are uncertain (Romagosa, 2020; Korstanje 2020).

In the mid of this mayhem, some voices have alerted on the opportunities of COVID19 to re-found the epistemological borders of tourism research (Wen et al 2020; Rogerson & Baum, 2020) while others called their attention to the problems of an ecological crisis precipitated by the capitalist system (Gossling, Scott & Hall, 2020; Prayag, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

The economic-based theory, which over years monopolized knowledge production and distribution in the academic tribes, failed not only to give a precise definition of tourism but to consolidate the discipline as a serious option. Based on the needs of protecting businesses or the organic image of the destination, this theory emphasized the figure the tourist as the only source of valid information.

Still further, the economic-based paradigm has invariably led the discipline towards an unparalleled crisis, as some scholars adhere (Tribe, Dann & Jamal, 2015; Tribe 1997; 2010). As Adrian Franklin (2007) puts it, "tourist-centricity" exhibits a restrictive viewpoint of tourism which is limited to a managerial perspective based on the tourist as the only agent of the system. As a result of this, other actors and voices are pushed away to peripheral places.

To some extent, COVID19, so far, shows the impossibility to make applied research in a world without tourists. Having said this, the present issue

explores not only the limitation of the current tourism theory –and research- but also the opportunities and challenges posed on the industry in the years to come.

To fill the gap between theory and applied research, the present special issue proffers a strict selection of high-quality papers which focus on the socio-cultural and economic effects of COVID19 in the industry and beyond. Using English as a lingua franca, these studies are certainly authored by a diverse Creole of nationalities which gives to the issue a special interest. Ethnographers have acknowledged that the world is perceived and construed according to our biographical constitutions.

In this process, emotions, fears and experiences of the subject, as well as its cultural background, play a leading role in the configuration of cosmologies. Even if COVID19 varied in intensity worldwide, which is essentially important to discuss is the commonalities in the different nations. Here is where the argument of the different papers integrated into the issue becomes the point more acute.

The crisis of the industry, which originated just after the attacks to the US in September of 2001, was re-affirmed by the COVID19 outbreak. Philosophically speaking, the West closed the doors to the "non-Western Other" in the days after 9/11. As Korstanje eloquently observes, for the colonial period the "alterity" was typically an object of curiosity, fear and admiration.

Over-sea travels and expeditions paved the ways for the rise of a new literary genre, writing travels. A vast European readership –captivated from travellers' stories- imagined the lands beyond the borders of civilization as wild-zones the European rationality should domesticate. The "non-Western Other", like a child, needed to be educated according to the European ideals.

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The globalization process not only flattened the world blurring all geographical (national) borders but created a global (universal) citizen: *the tourist*. In this respect, tourists who came from the “global north” colonized the world enthraling the mobilities values as the quintessential feature of capitalism.

The 9/11 starts a feudalization process which mines the Western civilization from within, affecting not only the social ties but also the trust in the “Other” that is suspected as a potential enemy (terrorist). The COVID19, far from being a foundational event, confirms such a trend but now, “the war on terror” sets the pace to “the war against a virus”.

The “Other” seems to be depicted as a potential terrorist, or a silent carrier who can disseminate the virus placing the health system in jeopardy (Korstanje 2020). Because of this, the future of tourism still remains diffuse, grim and uncertain. The geographical unity, which characterized the design of the nation-state, has been radically shifted to a new landscape where counties, provinces and states claim for autonomy closing their borders to the central administration.

Separatist movements and discourses are setting the political agenda of governments while an anti-tourist sentiment gradually arises. We need to ask special permission to travel to neighbour counties, cities or provinces showing and testing all the time we have not been infected by COVID19. The ideals of the tourist-gaze, as it was imagined by John Urry (2001), are now being replaced by a “wicked-gaze” which demonizes the foreigner visitor (Korstanje 2020).

The first work, elegantly written by Greg Richards & Wendy Morrill brings some reflection on the problem of COVID19 and youth travels. The research centers on the seven months on COVID19 pandemic and its direct effects on youth travel, as a new sub-segment of the tourism industry. Although the negative impact of the pandemic traversed all sectors of the industry, no less true is that some interesting strategies and tactics adopted by youth travel agencies came to fruition.

These measures range from the adoption of changing terms and conditions of the travel, as well as an aggressive marketing campaign to the co-creation of global partnerships. As authors overly said, the crisis generated by the COVID19 opened the doors for the industry to new opportunities and challenges in the years to come.

The second paper, which is authored by M. Korstanje, explores the problem of tourism research to cement a clear methodology beyond Franklin’s concept of tourist-centricity. To put things in a straight, he argues that tourism research gradually evolved according to the economic needs of development the industry generated. The economic-based paradigm

centralized the methodological basis of knowledge production, without mentioning the spirit of the leading journals. Today, COVID 19 threatens to destroy this panacea (dream-like world) anticipating to what some authors dubbed as “the end of tourism research”, at least as we know it.

In the third work, Indian colleagues Rajendra K. Suman & Vijay Kumar review the preliminary impact of COVID19 in the travel industry and other subsectors in India. Each segment of the economy has been whipped by the pandemic, but surely tourism was the most affected one. The strict lockdown imposed by the government grids the tourism industry into a halt. The paper suggests interesting courses of action to adopt by policy-makers to mitigate the negative and devastating impact of the pandemic in the industry.

The fourth paper, which is in charge of Oleg Afanasiev & Alexandra Afanasieva, analyzes carefully the potential effects –in durable terms- of COVID19 in Russia while enumerating the new forms of tourism resulting from the pandemic. The measures oriented to prevent the pandemic have invariably led the industry in a slow death. Although unprepared for the COVID19 tourism industry has many probabilities to rebirth even from its specks of dust. As a resilient institution, tourism moves the necessary synergy not only to keep the society united but also to revitalizes social frustrations. Probably policymakers would experience new version (forms) of tourism accelerated by the COVID19 in the years to come.

Mohammad Faisal & Devendra K. Dhusia, colleagues from Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi (India) offer a fifth chapter where they move through the psychological terrain of Indian tourists to gain further understanding of the durable consequences of the global pandemic, known as COVID19. Following earlier studies published in the field, authors suggest that consulted people only are opting to travel abroad after one year after the vaccination or when the virus disappears.

By this end, Professor Salla Vijay Kumar gives a practical snapshot on the opportunities of adjustment in education in a post COVID19 context. Per their stance, digital literacy offers a fertile ground to enhance the teaching and learning skills in the tourism fields, overcoming the lack of dialogue between the academia and the industry. The global crisis accelerated by the virus outbreak -recently originated in Wuhan, China- allows to digital technologies to mediate between produced knowledge and future tourism-related students. Echoing the legacy of Paul Gilster, our author says overtly that a set of new gen-hoteliers are familiar with the recent innovation in the world of digital technologies devoting efforts in making a more resilient industry.

In a more than an interesting note of research, Jyoti Prakash & Karan Bir Singh introduces readers in the new ways of perceiving Indian cuisine in a post-COVID19 world. From its inception, food, shelter and drink were major worries for mankind. They evoke not only a much deeper sense of protection but of survival. Now, thousands of tourists travel long distances to taste new culinary products while enjoying of novel experiences. In India, local cuisine offers an opportunity to revitalize affected economies. Authors discuss the future of this segment in a world where (foreigner) tourists are seen with some mistrust and fear. Jointly, Babu P. George who does not need the previous presentation, Reyhaneh Jalalinejad & Sara Mirzaee offer a pungent second note which explores the significance of COVID19 vaccine for the future of travels.

In sharp opposition to the WHO's recommendations, the debate about the country-of-origin has a major impact in public opinion triggering a partisan position. While the Russian vaccine is enthralled by some sectors while the British one is rejected, the opposite is equally true. This note stresses the importance of country-of-origin branding process to ensure a rapid economic recovery of the tourism industry. In a world where the industry future is still uncertain, this discussion is vital to understand the durable effects of COVID19 on tourism consumption.

A third and last note authored by Ramanpreet Kaur, analyzes the negative effects of the lockdown in the tourism sector in Punjab, India. Per her findings, the economic prosperity facilitated by the tourism industry in Punjab is next to dilute. In the same way, she enumerates a number of pragmatic policies and programs to reactive the industry in the post pandemic days. The imposition of restriction to tourist circulation and mobilities wreaked havoc at tourist destinations worldwide, but particularly it becomes more acute in India.

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