

COVID-19 AND THE END OF TOURISM RESEARCH? NEW FORMS OF TOURISM IN THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

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Abstract

The recent virus outbreak of COVID-19 (SARS-COV2), a new virus of the Coronavirous family has brought indescribable consequences for global commerce, mobilities and even for the industry of tourism. To some extent, some voices alerted on the idea probably tourism would be radically shifted, or scholars would witness the end of tourism as known before COVID-19. Most certainly, several studies will be published in the next years on the effects of this virus in the tourism and hospitality industry. This paper explores the changes and challenges of tourism research and epistemology in the years to come. Today's tourism research is based on the needs of asking (interviewing tourists) to test operational hypotheses. From this viewpoint, the tourist seems to be the main source of information towards the consolidation of tourism research. Of course, the lack of activity and the cancellations of flights and bookings, following this reasoning, entail the end of tourism research. This conceptual work focuses on the complex nature of tourism – as a resilient activity – as well as the rise of new forms of tourism which will surely interrogate the discipline.

Key words: COVID-19; Mobilities; Crises; Tourism; End of tourism research.

COVID-19 E O FIM DA PESQUISA EM TURISMO? NOVAS FORMAS DE TURISMO NO ESTADO DE EMERGÊNCIA

Resumo

O recente surto de vírus COVID-19 (SARS-COV2), um novo vírus da família Coronavírus, trouxe conseqüências indescritíveis para o comércio global, as mobilidades e até mesmo para a indústria do turismo. Em certa medida, algumas vozes alertaram sobre a idéia de que provavelmente o turismo seria radicalmente deslocado, ou os estudiosos testemunhariam o fim do turismo como era conhecido antes da COVID-19. Certamente, vários estudos serão publicados nos próximos anos sobre os efeitos deste vírus na indústria do turismo e da hospitalidade. Este artigo explora as mudanças e desafios da pesquisa e epistemologia do turismo nos anos vindouros. A pesquisa de turismo atual se baseia na necessidade de pedir (entrevistar turistas) para testar hipóteses operacionais. Desse ponto de vista, o turista parece ser a principal fonte de informação para a consolidação da pesquisa em turismo. Naturalmente, seguindo este raciocínio, a falta de atividade e o cancelamento de vôos e reservas implicam no fim da pesquisa de turismo. Este trabalho conceitual enfoca a natureza complexa do turismo como uma atividade resiliente, bem como o surgimento de novas formas de turismo que certamente irão questionar a disciplina.

Palavras-chave: COVID-19; Mobilidades; Crises; Turismo; Fim da pesquisa em turismo.

¿EL COVID-19 Y EL FIN DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN TURÍSTICA? NUEVAS FORMAS DE TURISMO EN EL ESTADO DE EMERGENCIA

Resumen

El reciente brote del virus COVID-19 (SARS-COV2), un nuevo virus de la familia Coronavírus, ha traído consecuencias indescritibles para el comercio mundial, las moviidades e incluso para la industria del turismo. En cierta medida, algunas voces alertaron sobre la idea de que probablemente el turismo sufriría un cambio radical, o los estudiosos serían testigos del fin del turismo tal y como se conocía antes del COVID-19. Con toda seguridad, en los próximos años se publicarán varios estudios sobre los efectos de este virus en la industria del turismo y la hostelería. Este artículo explora los cambios y desafíos de la investigación y la epistemología del turismo en los próximos años. La investigación turística actual se basa en la necesidad de preguntar (entrevistar a los turistas) para comprobar las hipótesis operativas. Desde este punto de vista, el turista parece ser la principal fuente de información para la consolidación de la investigación turística. Por supuesto, siguiendo este razonamiento, la falta de actividad y las cancelaciones de vuelos y reservas suponen el fin de la investigación turística. Este trabajo conceptual se centra en la naturaleza compleja del turismo -como actividad resistente- así como en el surgimiento de nuevas formas de turismo que seguramente interrogarán a la disciplina.

Palabras clave: COVID-19; Movilidades; Crisis; Turismo; Fin de la investigación turística.



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1 INTRODUCTION

From its outset, the industries of tourism and hospitality have faced serious and global threats (Bianchi 2006), some of them were potentially of high destructive capacities for services sector (Williams & Balaz, 2015; Becken & Hughey, 2013).

Since tourists look to maximize their pleasure avoiding the visit to dangerous places, these events harmed seriously the organic image of international destinations (Rack et al 2005; Kozak, Crotts & Law, 2007).

No matter the nature of these risks, experts have reached consensus that the turn of the century has brought many unseen risks such as natural disasters, climate change and terrorism without mentioning lethal virus outbreaks which escaped the national controls of states (Ritchie 2004; 2008; Laws, Prideaux & Chon, 2007; Saha & Gap, 2014; Tzanelli 2016).

This was precisely the case of H1N1, SARS, Ebola and today COVID-19. In this vein, it is important not to lose the sight of the fact that COVID-19 has certainly taken the lives of more than 300.000 victims and the Pandemics seem to be far from being contained. COVID-19 not only shocked the world, stopping the global commerce as never before, but also placed the tourism industry in agony (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020; Gossling, Scott & Hall, 2020; Korstanje 2020).

What is more than important to discuss is that any global state of emergency, as almost always, interrogates the medical and bio-security protocols of the industrialized nations in the North (Hoque et al 2020). As Enrico Quarantelli puts it, the nature of disasters precisely punctuates on the lack of responsiveness of society to deal with new normality or problem experts were unprepared. When disasters take hit, the security-related protocols simply fall short. Equally important, the effects of disasters can be divided into two great families: tangible and perceived effects. While the former signals to material losses, for example after an earthquake, the latter refers to a much deeper emotional and psychological process which is framed in the subject' perception (Quarantelli 1978; 1988; 2005).

Having said this, it is important to add that in tourism fields, the applied research, above all just after 9/11, evolved in two clear-cut poles: *disaster management and risk perception theory*. Disaster management focused strongly not only on the role played by chaos and contingency to affect the rational planning process but in the power of resiliency to accelerate the recovery timeframe. Theorists, who embrace *disaster management paradigm*, agree with the needs of planning while implementing programs to

adapt the industry to a frightening post-disaster context (Ritchie 2009; Hystad & Keller, 2006).

A new emerging segment, experts know as *post-disaster tourism* seems to be part of this established tradition in tourism research (Porttoff & Neal 1994; Tucker, Shelton & Bae 2017; Seraphin, Butcher & Korstanje 2017). Post-disaster tourism has developed an uncanny attraction for sites of mass-death or devastated by disasters situating as a promising form of tourism in the years to come. In underdeveloped economies where there is a great dependency on tourism this new form of consumption helps in alleviating the effects of disasters (Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Handayani, Seraphin & Korstanje 2019).

The risk perception theory, rather, operates in a conceptual and hypothetical framework where the contingency and futurist scenarios are of paramount importance to anticipate and eradicate those dangers that may place the industry in jeopardy (Abdin & Kumar 2020). To put the same differently, risk perception theory punctuates on rational planning to avoid those disrupting events that are potentially destructive for the industry.

This theory, which was originally borrowed from psychology, engulfed in tourism research in the turn of the century (Fuchs & Reichel 2006; Jonas et al. 2011; Schroeder et al 2013). Since its object of study seems to be the tourist's perception, risk perception paradigm alternates a set of quantitative methodologies where researchers actively conducted open or closed-ended questionnaires at bus stations, airports and other transport hubs.

Risk perception theory is entirely based on what anthropologists dubbed as "precautionary principle" which starts from the premise that scientific research helps to infer theoretical models to eradicate potential risks before they take places in reality (Korstanje. 2009).

With their pro and cons, both theories have commonalities and differences. While risk perception theory strictly delves into the role of tourist as the leading agent of consumption, recognizing that the industry is sensitive to risks, disaster management toys with the belief that tourism serves as a mechanism of resiliency in post-disaster environments.

Doubtless, the point of convergence –so to speak in both academic waves– corresponds with an economic-centered viewpoint that defines tourism as a modern industry and evaluates its future according to the profits it potentially generates. The economic-based paradigm not only marks tourism as an economic force alone but also was recently criticized to monopolize knowledge-production, publications at

leading journals without mentioning the education of tourism researchers at universities.

As John Tribe laments, today's tourism graduate courses are mainly oriented to train professional staff such as tour-guides, house-keeping staff or travel agents, instead of skilled scientific researchers well-versed in field-working (Jafari & Ritchie 1981; Tribe 1997; Tribe 2010; Airey & Tribe 2006).

In this vein, the problem of COVID-19 evinces a serious methodological limitation to tourism research because the industry is fully paralyzed or what is worse, constantly changing -if not dying-. This moot point begs some interesting questions, this conceptual research addresses, is the current crisis of tourism being replicated in tourism research and education? Should tourism research be based exclusively on innovating in new forms of tourism to placate poverty and economic stagnation? How can researchers approach their object of study (tourists) in a world without tourists? Should the epistemology of tourism be reformulated before the crisis of COVID19, and finally what are the challenges posed over-tourism research in the next decades?

The first section of this conceptual paper discusses critically the advantages and methodological problems of the economic-based paradigm to understand the nature and evolution of tourism. With strong *foci* on the needs of tourists, this paradigm had a major impact in tourism research, as well as the evolution of discipline. Despite the growth of the discipline epistemologists claim that the discipline lacks a clear object of study which led in years to a knowledge fragmentation.

The point is addressed in second section, where the authoritative voices of tourism epistemology are carefully reviewed. The third section discusses the contraposition of two ways of conceiving tourism. Over the recent years, a hot debate revolves around two contrasting axioms: tourism as an object of study vs. tourism as a commercial activity.

The ultimate section enumerates the challenges and limitations that tourism research meets precisely in a world without tourism. In what experts call a new "normality", a debate around tourism is at least necessary.

Per Ole Jensen (2021), the COVID19 prompts some long-lasting effects oriented to alter the current patterns of mobilities, engagement and embodiment. In this respect, the pandemic exhibits a disruptive movement in three clear axes that change the mediation between proximity and connectivity. The social distancing inaugurates a new form of solidarity which is based on *queuing stickers*, *slipstream*

modeling, and *drive-ins*. The queuing stickers help to keep the social distancing into shot interiors imposing specific norms to regulate queuing practices. Protocolling queues among consumers, queuing stickers inscribes in potential dangers which are activated by the proximity with the "Other". In the same way, slipstream modelling measures the runners and cyclers breathing and the possibilities of contagion. Lastly, the drive-in events employ cars to attend different events as church-going, cinema or other leisure practices. All these combined practices mark the beginning of new modes of mobilities for the decades to come.

2 TOURISM AND THE ECONOMIC-BASED PARADIGM

Some of the seminal works, which voluntarily or not, triggered the rise of the Economic-based paradigm in the constellations of tourism trace back to *Tourism: passport to development?* and *Tourism, dependency and development*, which are authored by Emanuel de Kadt (1979) and Stephen Britton (1981) respectively.

Both books, which anecdotally see the light of publicity during the 70s and 80s decades, focus on two important aspects of the tourism industry. On one hand, tourism encourages economic benefits, as well as the multiplication of jobs and the stimulation of consumption in local communities. This growth not only leads the community to result in negative effects which should be regulated but create a financial dependency, above all in under-developed economies.

Britton turns his attention to the acculturation process and the center-periphery dependency where investors are legally allowed to repatriate their profits at their discretion, leaving the community in a serious crisis. Rather, De Kadt studies the role played by history to explain the reasons behind the failure of development theory in the Third World. As De Kadt observes, those nations, which were historically subject to a colonial past, or whipped by civil wars, have fewer probabilities to adopt tourism in sustainable terms.

While Britton is concerned to decipher the complex interconnection of dependency and economy, in De Kadt, culture occupies a central position. It will come as no surprise that both scholars take seriously the figure of development as the main object of meditation. This coincides in what Jafar Jafari termed as precautionary and advocacy platforms.

Jafari kicked off a new tradition that combines the urgency of protecting the environment (sustainable

issues) and the scientification of tourism (tourism research). In his terms, tourism research should be re-channeled to provide policy-makers with a coherent diagnosis of the system laying the foundations towards an epistemology based on measuring the effects of tourism in society (Jafari 2005; Xiao, 2013; Duarte Pimentel, 2018).

As he puts it, the consolidation of the discipline depends upon the possibilities of tourism research in serving as a beacon of light to the problems and challenges the tourism industry goes through (Jafari 2005). The synergy between market and science is vital to understand the original worries of the founding parents of the discipline.

In a landmark book, Jost Krippendorf, applauds the idea of defining tourism as an instrument –neither good nor bad– that revitalizes the psychological and economic frustrations happened in the working environment. In consonance with Jafari, Krippendorf (1987) acknowledges that tourism evolves according to the mainstream cultural values of society. In this respect, tourism research should approach the cultural background of each community, which determines the future sustainable practices. One of the quintessential features of this epoch associates to the needs of measuring the impacts of tourism and its marginal contribution to the economy (Korstanje 2015).

Henceforth, the successive advances in tourism research were notably increased, incorporating to the theme to the career syllabuses, Ph. Doctorate dissertations and academic publications. As never before, although tourism research passed to a stage of maturation and consolidation as some voices predicted (Sheldon, 1991; Xiao & Smith, 2006; Beckendorff & Zherer, 2013; Botterill & Platenkamp, 2012), no less true is that the original influence of the economic-based paradigm strangely continued.

To some extent, quantitative-related methods occupied a central position in tourism fields, probably relegated to other qualitative instruments (Riley & Love 2000). As Gale Jennings (2007) notes, the history of tourism research is based not only on a post-positivist tradition but in a managerial viewpoint which is cemented in a Western-related epistemology.

In consequence, other voices or studies which would contribute to the discipline were systematically marginalized. In an ever-changing and complex world, unilateral quantitative research runs short in explaining the causalities of facts, as Jennings concludes. To wit, Alf Walle (1997) calls attention to the old rivalries between qualitative and quantitative methods. Social sciences, in different contexts, have rationally developed sentiments of acceptance and rejection of qualitative methods. Particularly, both methods can be very well complemented.

It is unfortunate that in tourism research, the urgency of measuring overlapped with understanding. Quantitative instruments have taken the lead in the epistemological debates. The academia, for some reason very hard to precise here, has undermined qualitative methods as a pseudo-scientific or naïve in essence. This happens simply because the successful economic growth of tourism in the last decades led scholars to valorize its economic importance over other criteria.

As Walle adheres, the correlation of variables not always explains social facts. The obtained outcomes are often biased by the researcher's beliefs and cosmologies. He cites the example of cannibalism to expand the understanding of this. What would happen if you eat human flesh by accident? is this cannibalism? what happens when people believe they are eating human flesh but the fieldworker disagrees?

All these above-noted questions give certain hints on how typologies do not suffice to describe tourist behavior. The end of WWII witnessed the rise of managerial disciplines oriented to a methodological purity to legitimate standardized forms of consumption. Of course, tourism was not an exception (Cohen 1979; Walle 1997; Decrop 1999; Franklin 2007).

Over the recent decades, John Tribe –jointly different collaborators– has caustically questioned the hegemony of what he dubbed as *the managerial gaze*. Per his viewpoint, tourism education has evolved towards a managerial perspective where the needs of measuring and metrics are prioritized as the most effective sources of information. In a nutshell, the neoliberal agenda adjoined to the higher massification of education system, coordinated efforts to educate the workforce instead of forming scientific researchers. The curricula contents, as well as the knowledge production, seem to be associated to the forces and the resulting counterforces that molds the needs of the market (Ayikouru, Tribe & Airey, 2009; Airey, Tribe, Beckendorff & Xiao, 2015). This invariably led towards an epistemological crisis, which will be debated in the next section.

3 EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE CRISIS OF TOURISM RESEARCH

One of the troublesome aspects that mark the start of a crisis in tourism research seems to be the paradoxical situation the discipline faces today. Although tourism research has constantly published advances for more than four decades, there is little knowledge about the nature of tourism (Kaspar, 1987; Barca 2011; Coles, Hall & Duval, 2006).

As stated in the earlier section, John Tribe is a pioneering voice in the study of the epistemology of tourism, but he is not the only one. Other critical voices have alerted on the problems of seeing tourism as a commercial activity alone. Stepping back to the previous line for inquiry and returning to Tribe, tourism is resisted to be considered as a serious scientific discipline because there is evidence its epistemological object of study remains unclear.

While sociology, psychology or anthropology are considered disciplines with a clear object, parks, recreation and leisure are certainly not, as Tribe laments. The problem surely aggravates by the obsession with tourism management and marketing. Both are valuable instruments that operationalize in a network of principles (following a business function), which articulates specific policies to protect the industry. The current tourism research is not interested in explaining but in measuring (Tribe 1997).

He starts from the premise tourism research traverses an important crisis because of two main reasons. On one hand, the rapid growth of tourism knowledge has successfully reached a point of maturation, but far from being homogenous, it is based on a great dispersion that he calls "indiscipline". Each academician tribe not only has developed its conception of tourism but also borrowed methods from other disciplines. Having said this, the cult of the multidisciplinary approach obscured more than it clarified. As a result, scholars navigate through a knowledge fragmentation which impedes the formation of a catch-all epistemology.

On another hand, The Academia has kept an indifferent attitude respecting to what the hegemonic paradigms that should rule the discipline. Tribe's analysis shows that tourism academic community rests on a reasonably uninformed group, the elite, in contraposition to a great divergent community of scholars who freely adopt their epistemologies (Tribe 1997; 2010).

To put this differently, the lack of dialogue between Academia and scholarship has been one of the reasons of the crisis the discipline has in these days; a position which was hotly debated by Pritchard & Morgan (2007) in the introductory chapter of their edited book *The Critical Turn of tourism studies*. The plurality of academic positions and definitions converged with a crystallized and closed discourse elaborated by Academia. Authors invited to deconstruct the dominant discourses of Academia to change the contours of the discipline. This chapter, in response to the critiques of Michael Hall, who argues tourism research was unable to outcast the role of knowledge gate-keepers, punctuates that there is a silent cultural matrix that precedes gatekeepers and

marks the steps of research as well as hierarchies and asymmetries among scholars.

Pritchard & Morgan remind that the dominant position of the Academia is given by the presence of male editorial board member in the leading journals, a point unexplored for research. At the same time, the recruitment of new members of IAST (International Academy for the study of Tourism) is placed by the critical lens of scrutiny without mentioning the presence and domination of English native scholars. The academia moves finely-ingrained in a dense network of positivist discourses where quantification, measurement, so-called neutrality and forecasting converge. It is safe to say the critical turn should be certainly opposed to positivism criticizing not only the role of observer –as an objective agent– but also the ideological power of knowledge.

It is instructive to see how universities are widely influenced by the managerial perspective taking the cue of entrepreneurialism as a dominant factor which remains inextinguishable for students. Enmeshed into the professional discourse tourism management encouraged ideals associated with competition, consumer satisfaction, and profitability (only to new a few) (Tribe 2007). Still further, Harris, Wilson & Altejevic (2007) coin the term *the strategy of audiencing* to refer the different voices finely orchestrated to give a plural interpretation of tourism. The metaphor of audience paves the ways for the fieldworker sees the world beyond its cognitive frames. The process of reflexivity, which is proper of ethnography, does not resolve the native-ethnography tensions but allows understanding the influence of political hierarchies in the field-working. "*Knowing our audience/s also enables us to make decisions regarding the content and the style of the knowledge we package for them, to ideally bring closer to them*" (2007: p 76).

As the previous argument is given, echoing Donna Chambers, critical turn in tourism research has historically facilitated a caustic understanding of the function of ideology in the knowledge production process but paradoxically at the same time, the doctrine failed to offer an alternative program to replace the economic-based paradigm. To some extent, the term critical denotes certain attachment to social change, but principally when it is applied to research, social scientists run the risk of affirming their own ideology.

A theory may be critical or not, but what is important, paradigmatic assumptions projected against a particular object of study are often claimed to be critical. In fact, as she puts it, when all researchers adopt a radical lens, the discipline is doomed to rest in a point of stagnation. Disciplines

need and evolve according to the paradigms that indicate what should be researched and how (Chambers 2007).

In a seminal book, which is co-edited jointly Tanja Rakic (2015), Chambers re-discusses the needs of adopting new methodological horizons to overcome the tourism research crisis. Echoing Jafari's contributions, Chambers & Rakic turn their attention to the function of the frontier, as the liminoid space between the known and unknown. At the time research sheds light in one direction, a dark place emerges as unexplored.

The legitimacy of disciplines, far from being static, rests on the levels of credibility each one has to explain –or describe– the surrounding environment. Those frontiers, where disciplines constitute their authorities, are constantly negotiated. Recently, the critical turn moves its guns forward to the anomalies and contradictions of tourism research, but as they note, instead of effacing the conceptual pillars of the discipline, it is preferable to redefine the horizons and objects of study of tourism.

In sum, the economic-based paradigm alimented the cultivation of quantitative-related methods over other forms of knowledge. In so doing, the tourist, its feelings, experiences and fears, corresponded with a valuable source of information in order for the expert to validate their hypotheses. The discipline revolved around the urgency of measuring, to create more competitive destinations, and create new segments to gain the consumers' loyalties. The economic paradigm is interested in articulating programs to protect tourist destinations instead of coordinative endeavors to understand what tourism is (Botterill, 2007; Franklin 2007).

Not surprisingly, marketing and management engulfed in tourism research to subordinate other sub-disciplines, imposing a materialist view which widely focused on profits and business. In consequence, professional researchers recurred to the administration of open or closed-end questionnaires to tourists. The gathered outcomes were organized to confirm or refute previously-formulated hypotheses. This represented a serious methodological mistake because sometimes interviewees lie to protect their interests or simply are not familiar with their inner-world. What would respond to a gangster when he is asked about his profession? probably businessman but indeed is he a real businessman? Here there is a misconception between causality and cosmology.

The tourists' opinion takes part of a much deeper cosmology which does not denote scientific correlation. This tradition coincides what Adrian Franklin dubbed as "touristcentricity" which obviously means that a deep ingrained motion aimed at focusing

on tourists rather than the social background around them. The touristcentricity legitimates itself in the creation and reproduction of tourist site which takes considerable value as an object of study (Franklin 2007).

An additional problem suggests that other actors who daily take a full-fledged part of the tourist system are overlooked or marginalized as bit-players. The epistemological crisis accentuates when the commercial activity and consumption energized by tourism is stopped or locked because of the health emergency COVID-19 finally accelerated. This raises the question to what extent can fieldworkers make tourism research in a world without tourism?

4 MAKING TOURISM vs. APPROACHING TOURISM

The process of fragmentation originally denounced by Tribe seems to be given by the needs of adopting research to the demands of the market. In this section, we explain the differences between making tourism and approaching tourism as an object of study. At a closer look, the term tourism should be traced back to its etymological origin which is subject to controversy (Franklin 2007; Korstanje 2007), but what is more than important is that the homology of terms does not entail the same meaning.

What is more important, each discipline maintains its conception and core paradigm to analyze the evolution of tourism. While sociologists and social anthropologists are widely convinced tourism derived from the technological breakthrough proper of industrialism, archeologists gathered convincing evidence that there were ancient forms of tourism in other civilizations. The same practice, different names.

To put the problem in bluntly, other ancient civilizations have practiced similar forms of tourism, though they never employed the term. For example, in ancient Rome, the term *feriae* (Lat.) denoted a leave given to roman citizens to visit friends and relatives after one year of hard work. From this term derives the modern holidays in German (*die Ferien*) and Portuguese (*das Ferias*). So the question points why do we believe tourism is a modern phenomenon?

Quite aside from this controversial point, as buzzword appeared since the 70s decade, the meaning of tourism experienced many interpretations and diversifications. Today, we have many applications for the term derived in heritage-tourism, slum-tourism, snow-tourism, Dark-tourism, Virtual Tourism and so forth. Although each term includes the same activity, tourism, no less true is that the managerial perspective classifies different forms of tourism tailored to consumers' demands.

There are many sub-types of tourism insofar as consumers have. The epistemology of tourism, at least for the managerial gaze, is shaped and subordinated to tourists' preferences. Here it is important to distinguish between *making tourism* (or what tourists do) from *approaching tourism* (a task conducted by researchers).

With the benefits of hindsight, professional fieldwork or research centers on two important elements: *the object* and *the stage of reproduction*. The former characterizes what is being studied, whereas the latter focuses on the contextual environment where the study is ultimately performed.

To put the same in other terms, and as a mode of anecdote, I decided to make an investigation on the host and guest relations. In so doing, I targeted to the Argentinean professional staff –geographically located in Buenos Aires city– that is in contact with Chilean tourists (this includes tour-guides, travel agents and hospitality workers). The successive geopolitical disputes between Argentina and Chile by the Beagle left many long-dormant hostilities in both sides. Of course, this hostility –if not racism– was never accepted and remained invisible to the eyes of ethnographers. Not only the open questionnaires did not provide accurate evidence but also the consulted interviewees only manifested their prejudices when the tape-recorder was switched off. Here my object of study seems to be the prejudice or hostility derived from previous historical geopolitical discrepancies. The stage, where the situation reproduces, rather is the tourist system.

The challenges posed on tourism research in post-COVID-19 contexts leads to thinking that even if the stage, which means hotels, tourist destinations and the tourist infrastructure, has been temporarily shut down, no less true is that the object of study still is the same. The point suggests the following paradox, though the tourism industry is in a complete crisis and economic stagnation, the future of tourism research is uncompromised. It is important not to lose the sight here of the fact that one thing is making tourism, being a tourist in the strict sense of the word, and another is approaching scientifically tourism issues. Hence, in next I shall review part of the publications discussing the impact of a virus outbreak in the tourism system, as well as the challenges posited in tourism research in the years to come.

5 CHALLENGES FOR TOURISM RESEARCH POST COVID-19

Since the SARS-COV2 (popularly known as COVID19) seems to be a new virus few research has been published by these days. However, earlier

outbreaks of SARS, H1N1 and Ebola have populated the leading tourism-related journals in the past years. In some perspective, the studies emphasize on the risks of mobilities and tourism as natural carriers to disseminate the virus, as well as in the material losses pandemics represent for the tourism and hospitality industries (Henderson & Ng, 2004; Monterrubio 2010; Cooper 2006; McKercher & Chon 20004; Page, Song & Wu, 2012; Rassy & Smith 2013).

To sum up all the published literature in few lines is an impossible task, but basically these studies can be classified in three clear-cut families a) the economic effects of virus outbreaks and pandemics on the economy of tourism (Zeng, Carter & de Lacy, 2005; Dwyer et al 2006; Dombey 2004; Cheng 2012); b) the demographic and social aspects of tourists to correlate directly to risk perception (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006; Seabra et al 2013; Yang & Nair, 2014) and c) the communication process and the organic image of the destination (Wall, 2006; Hall 2010; Dolnicar & Grabler, 2004). All these families have some commonalities to mention. The influence of economic-based paradigm, as well as the urgency to measure the psychological impact of pandemics in the tourist' mind.

As the previous backdrop, Wen et al (2020) call scholarship to coordinate efforts to find efficient protocols to placate the negative effects of tourism in the economy. From their viewpoint, they stress on the importance of interdisciplinary research as a valid form to resolve the current health crisis. Authors enumerate the language differences and the previous methodological disputes –among disciplines- as the main barriers against multidisciplinary research.

In this token, Ioannides & Gymothy (2020) speak of an opportunity –which if taken- can help reversing the negative effects of global tourism in the environment. Since any crisis opens the door to new opportunities of growth, Ioannides & Gymothy hold that the neoliberal agenda had new fewer problems to deal with the environmental issues and the current ecological crisis.

The education on future tourism leaders and professionals, associated to a new synergy among stakeholders leads to overcome deeper flawed market logic. Other epidemics have placed the industry between the wall and the deep blue sea, but in those instances, the status quo finally prevailed. Nowadays, COVID-19 should be seen as a foundational event to change the mainstream cultural values of global capitalism.

In the same direction goes a recently published paper authored by Gossling, Scott & Hall (2020). In this conceptual work, these scholars highlight the inconveniences of researchers to measure the post-

covid19 effects in view of the fact the tourism industry is fully paralyzed. Social distancing and the strict quarantine imposed in the world have ushered the industry to an inevitable collapse. Gossling, Scott & Hall (2020) not only elaborate an analysis of the pandemics in the different subsectors forming the industry, but prognosticate the horizons of a new tourism research.

The pandemics mushroomed suddenly because of the global transport system and the densely-overcrowded population cities in the industrialized world. Now, the tourism industry will mutate to a more slow form of consumption. As they firmly put the issue,

"The COVID-19 crisis should thus be seen as an opportunity to critically reconsider tourism's growth trajectory, and to question the logic of more arrivals implying greater benefits. This may be with a review of the positive outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic" (Gossling, Scott & Hall, 2020: 13-14).

After further discussion, some comments are at least necessary. First and foremost, tourism research seems to face a methodological crisis time earlier the outbreak of Coronavirous. This crisis was mainly associated to a lack of a negotiated object of study, accompanied with serious problems to understand the nature of tourism. To this John Tribe adds, tourism research rests on a state of great dispersion and fragmentation, a situation aggravated by the lack of interest of the Academia to fix agenda (Tribe 2010).

Secondly, the economic-centered paradigm has unilaterally set the pace incorporating an economic viewpoint of tourism while relegating other voices or definition to a marginal position. As a result, the idea of measuring –which is based on quantitative– led methods- occupied a central place in the configuration of tourism studies. The tourist, as debated, is esteemed as the only scientific source of information, and of course, by paraphrasing Franklin (2007), the discipline adopts a tourist-centrism which today remains seriously questioned.

Besides the opportunity Gossling, Scott & Hall claim, COVID-19 reveals the limitations for the discipline to find and develop alternative objects of study, expanding the horizon of research. COVID-19 not only shakes the industry accelerating its decline but offers a fertile ground towards the cultivation of new methodologies, and instruments.

The present conceptual paper targeted a criticism to the economic-based paradigm while lays the foundations towards a new understanding of tourism epistemology. The digital technologies now interrogate even furtherly the nature of tourism, promoting forms of consumption where travelers visit

exotic landscapes and culture without moving. In effect, virtual tourism allows the emulation of new realities where mobilities play a marginal role. The process confronts to the classical definition of tourism without mentioning with the tourist-centrism.

Last but not least, scholars will witness the rise of more virtual forms of tourism which accompanied with more decentralized forms of production and consumption, as Scott Lash & John Urry originally imagined (Lash & Urry 1992).

6 CONCLUSION

The appearance of COVID-19 has brought devastating consequences for the tourism industry worldwide. Unlike in other cases (SARS or H1N1), were the virus outbreak was rapidly contained, there are no secure barriers for COVID-19. Without a vaccine, or an alternative health treatment, governments closed their airspace and borders limiting the public circulation or imposed a strict lockdown (quarantine).

In terms of Jacques Derrida, who was originally concerned on the effects of terrorism (Borradori 2013), we might cite the metaphor of autoimmune disease in the War against COVID-19. The virus seems not affect tourism, but the governments severe reactions to mobilities do so.

Having said this, it is important to add that COVID-19 interrogate furtherly not only the industry but also the tourist-centricity, adhering to Franklin's thesis, which characterizes the current tourism research. How can we make tourism research in a world without tourism?

The present conceptual essay-review provides two potential answers. On one hand, tourism should be seen as a social institution that transcends the market or the figure of tourists. Many other actors, probably potentiated by digital technologies, are fertile ground for investigation.

For example, virtual tourism, travel websites, travel writings, and other actors are interesting material of consult for next research. On another, the economic-based paradigm, which over-valORIZED the tourist' opinion, overlooked the possibility to study tourism beyond the tourist site. Is COVID19 evincing the end of tourism research?

In fact, there is little evidence of investigation that takes lay-people –once returned from their holidays- as object of study. People are normally interviewed at transport hubs, airports, bus station, but less is known of their experiences once returning to home.

Probably what is more interesting is to inspect furtherly on those vacationers, businessmen, or travelers who were or still are stranded at airports

because of the lockdown. Last but not least, in consonance with Chambers & Rakic, one might speculate that COVID-19 invites today readers to re-imagine new horizons for the tourism research in order to resolve the current stagnation the discipline suffers.

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