



Changes in Tourism Marketing and Sales Post Covid-19 Pandemic

Didem DEMİR¹

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Abstract

The Covid-19 virus, which spread rapidly all over the world as of March 2020, caused many economic, social and cultural changes in people's lives. This epidemic affects many industries including tourism and in this study the level of change in tourism sales and new marketing strategies are discussed through different countries. It was also highlighted that new business models including concepts such as hygiene, social distance, artificial intelligence and robots should be included in the tourism sector in order to ensure the trust of tourists after Covid-19. The purpose of this study is to identify the problems experienced in different countries related to tourism marketing due to covid-19 and to explain the predicted changes to contribute further studies in this field.

1. Introduction

The new coronavirus disease is burdened by an unprecedented scale that no one knows about and is already economically, sociocultural and psychologically unprecedented. This epidemic, which negatively affects all sectors, caused serious damage in the tourism sector. In earlier times tourists had many alternatives to travel around the world although previous health problems occurred such as SARS, Avian Flu, Swine Flu or Ebola, or in times of crisis such as terrorist acts or natural disasters. However, this time in the Covid-19 outbreak, the whole world had to experience restrictions or limitations in many activities (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020). UNCTD (2020) reported that COVID-19 caused a major global economic depression since the end of March 2020 and international travel restrictions caused 80 percent fall in flights worldwide (Sheller, 2020). As disease is spreading all over the World, governments had taken action for closing the borders, announcing quarantine periods, restricting both domestic and international travel, etc. Almost everything is banned, cafes, clubs and restaurants were closed, all activities like conventions, concerts, festivals, meetings, or sports events had been stopped by the authorities of the governments in almost all countries of the World (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020: 2).

¹ Corresponding Author. ORCID: 0000-0003-4589-8240. Dr., Toros Üniversitesi, didem.demir@toros.edu.tr

2. Tourism Marketing Post Covid-19 Pandemia

During the lockdown period almost all markets were down including tourism oriented services. Service-based economies were affected negatively and countries that are more trusted on tourism would be more affected by this pandemic crisis (Fernandes, 2020: 3). Hao, Xiao & Chon (2020) argued 6 phases for anti-pandemic era of tourism sector. These are the phases of management framework of Chinese marketers. During the phase of pre-event, WHO (World Health Organization) alerted the first infected case from Wuhan, China on November 17, 2019. The other cluster of Covid 19 cases were announced on January 4, 2020 and some of the hotels managed to create disaster teams for digital management and in prodromal phase, the cancellations and concerns about the hotel industry were up till Mid-March 2020. In emergency phase the hotels sales were at freezing point, the hotels were converted to hospitals and accommodate both medical staff and infected patients till mid March, 2020. During intermediate phase, they decided to quarantine inbound travellers at airport hotels. In the long-term recovery from May to the end of 2020 the hotels decided to focus on only business travel and local market just for self-saving. They will try to activate and revitalize the business during 2021-2022 as a resolution phase. Tourism industry market will follow short term activities as one-day tours, weekend sightseeing for intraprovincial tourism and crossprovincial domestic travel as long-term activities. In addition, their major strategy would be refunding the cancellations or re-scheduling the bookings, disinfecting service areas, providing contactless service and beginning robotic automation (Hao, Xiao & Chon, 2020: 6).

According to UNWTO Report, all global destinations have reduced travel restrictions by 70% due to the COVID-19 outbreak. In the published report, it is stated that the restrictions applied to 152 destinations from 115 points. As of December 2020, only one of the four destinations continues to have international restrictions but the borders of 59 destinations are still closed to tourists (www.unwto.org).

After Covid19, which negatively impacted the tourism sector, all organizations related to touristic activities are expected to review their business models and redesign according to expected market conditions. It is expected as to reduce the existing workforce or to design the existing workforce in newer roles according to the needs of the enterprises (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020). Because of the fact that tourism is completely human-oriented, businesses should create their new regulations within a new framework by considering people at the center of everything.

3. The Effect of Covid 19 on Tourism Sales in Different Countries

Owing to global lock-out during Covid 19 Pandemic almost all sectors were affected negatively including tourism&hospitality. As a result of their market-based research Sharma & Nicolau (2020) stated that there has been a significant decrease in car rentals, airlines and cruise ships sectors and sales in hotels in US due to Covid19. They also stated that the decline was significant enough to cause concern in the long term and they also estimated that business travels could recover this unexpected drop much faster than leisure travels. Service sectors such as hospitality and tourism will be adversely affected due to the pandemic (Fernandes, 2020).

Jenelius & Cebecauer (2020) analyzed the effects of Covid 19 on daily public transport passengers in Sweden's most popular regions. As the result of the analysis, they report a decrease in passenger ticket purchases of approximately 60% in Stockholm and 40% in Västra Götaland, due to the transportation of fewer active passengers because of the virus and thus people tend to buy a single ticket instead of a period ticket. In addition, it is stated that short-term passenger ticket sales were almost zero.

Spain is one of the most affected countries by both health and economic results of the COVID-19 epidemic through thousands of hotels. González-Torres, Rodríguez-Sánchez & Pelechano-Barahona (2020) state that the disruption of one company puts the other at risk due to the interdependence of the companies that makes up the tourism supply chain and causes a significant decrease in tourism revenues and also causes liquidity problems.

During the crisis, companies tried to ensure continuity in their access with their customers through their applications on digital platforms. Raj, Sundararajan & You (2020) examined the supply and demand of restaurants on the Uber Eats digital platform as businesses shut down in the United States with the outbreak of COVID-19. They associated the significant increase in both daily and hourly orders with the expansion of the digital market due to Covid 19 and the increase in the intensity of competition between manufacturers and suppliers on this platforms. Companies which are able to provide flexibility can survive in the post-COVID 19 economy by shaping their new business models with new managerial insights on digital platforms considering supply and demand-side factors.

In Colombia, after Covid-19, some tough decisions have been made regarding air transport, freight transport and urban transport and changes have been started to be implemented. The transport sector experienced a financial crisis, especially with the ban on border crossings. They also aim to remove unnecessary products from the supply chain to reduce freight flights (Arellana, Márquez & Cantillo, 2020: 1). Furthermore, because of the decrease on demand of motor vehicles the need of infrastructure both for pedestrians and cyclists should be encouraged. Dalgic, Toksoz, Birdir, S. and Birdir, K. (2019) stated that rural tourism differs especially in terms of 'location size' and 'population density and composition'. Accordingly, it can be aimed to increase the incentives of rural tourism, which is one of the most important strategies in tourism marketing, due to the importance of social distance, especially after Covid 19 outbreak. Besides, Motoyama (2020) predicts

that employment in restaurants in small cities will decrease significantly due to Covid-19, and regions with low income levels may suffer even more than large cities (Arellana, Márquez, Cantillo, 2020).

Countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, which are more dependent on tourism, will have a slower growth rate due to the crisis. In such a period when a global recession is inevitable, it has been observed that the psychological need of consumers to return to normal in China is very high (Pantano, Pizzi, Scarpi, & Dennis, 2020). As a result of this, it is predicted that a recovery will occur with return to normal life, but this effect will not last much (Deng, Wang, & Chao, 2020).

4. Conclusion

Paul (2012) stated that tourism is very important in the global economy, especially for developing countries, and that it is directly related to many other sectors, but especially policy makers should act in a way of promoting sustainability while tourism operators develop the tourism market and tourism products. It is predicted that Covid-19, which has significant effects in all societies and sectors, will also cause changes in the tourism sector. Thus, it is very important to provide sustainable development while making decisions about the changes for the welfare of future generations. Cooperation was needed during the pandemic, and even those of past competitors should cooperate in this context for the sustainability of tourism. Post Covid-19 untouched travel activities began to be implemented such as camps and excursions in nature or tourist attractions isolated for families only (Park et al., 2020). Yoo & Managi (2020) pointed out the importance of encouraging outdoor activities rather than indoor activities by leaving a space between tables or limiting the number of daily visitors in cafes and restaurants for a safe travel experience based on social distance. Some regulations need to be made in order to increase tourism sales after the pandemic. The most important of these may be the provision of services based on high level of privatization. For example, breakfast buffets in hotels were one of the most attractive factors to attract customers in Korea, but post Covid-19 pandemic breakfast buffets offered with room service became more popular (Bae & Chang, 2021). In addition, taking customized reservations in small groups according to crowded groups, personalized room offerings according to the needs of the customers, certifications obtained in the field of health will normally meet the demands of tourism. As a result, all these efforts need to be transferred to customers by using appropriate channels.

Due to the restriction and quarantine caused by Covid 19, in order to reduce contact with people, takeaway orders have become more popular than eating in restaurants. One of the most important factors affecting the travel choices of tourists is food, so restaurants can increase and sterilize their package service options by adhering to safety and hygiene protocols and emphasize this issue in their advertisements (Wen et al., 2020). It is recommended that local governments work to offer hiking trails or driving routes with local views. In addition, hotels should provide private dining rooms, buffet room service and live chat concierge services.

Hotels negatively affected by the Covid-19 epidemic are expected to turn to use robots and artificial intelligence that can increase physical distance while

minimizing social distance. Check-in and check-out operations with face scanning or voice recognition and the presence of robots in service areas could make tourists feel safer. (Jiang & Wen, 2020: 2567). It is predicted that such new technological applications offered in hotels can create trust in terms of both health and hygiene, and this can help to increase the occupancy rates of the hotels.

All actors in the tourism market need to notice the changes caused by the Covid-19 virus and find solutions to existing problems. The socio-economic dimensions of the COVID-19 epidemic affecting tourism should be examined based on the behavior of incoming tourists. Governments can take protective measures such as social distancing, wearing masks, caring hygiene and even curfew restrictions and prohibitions in order to fight Covid-19 that effected tourism sector negatively. Therefore, governments might specify the intensity of Covid-19 in tourism destinations and let the tourists check the update versions. They also should take measures especially in the transportation, accommodation and food & beverage sector to provide the health security for the tourists. Thus, redesignation of the websites could be effective in a way of allowing tourists to compare different destinations during their decision process (Grech, Grech, Fabri, 2020: 121).

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