



Post-pandemic studies in tourism and hospitality

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Published online: 30 May 2022

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1 Locus of COVID-related research issues

Since the spring of 2020, the breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic has received academic attention from researchers across various disciplines, including tourism and hospitality. Overall, the initial focus of published studies concentrated on immediate and negative impacts of the outbreak of the pandemic on businesses and markets of tourism and hospitality. The main research concerns incorporated individuals' risk perceptions (Zheng et al. 2020), civil liberty (Baum and Hai 2020), and crisis management of businesses (Romagosa 2020). The results of these studies were typically derived from sources of secondary data (World Tourism Organization 2020) or on the basis of behavior observed on online review platforms (Yu et al. 2021). These explorations contributed to the formation of critical arguments and profiles of the pandemic crisis for succeeding research. As the pandemic's spread has been prolonged beyond our expectations, we are convinced that upcoming focuses should be proactive business measures that manage the pandemic's impacts in the longer term, redefine business models, or reform industries for the post-pandemic era.

2 A historic event with multiple implications for industry transformation

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, there had been a substantial amount of research on the use of technology in the tourism and hospitality industries. Outputs of this research contributed to industry innovations, such as the applications of artificial intelligence (Samara et al. 2020), telecommuting (Pecsek 2018), and virtual realities (Lyu et al. 2021). However, these applications and practices had not become prevailing products or models for tourists or consumers because they were deemed as supplements to traditional tourism and hospitality products/models which emphasize contacts in physical environments. The current pandemic has aroused a global demand for tourism and hospitality products that are equipped with information and

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communication technology (ICT) devices. In this sense, we may assume that the pandemic is stimulating the market penetration of ICT-based products or service models that already exist but have not yet been sufficiently accepted by tourism-related markets or industries. In addition, once the pandemic endures long enough for users, from either the consumption or production side, to become used to these supplements during the pandemic, it is possible that users will not revert to their previous choices and usage tendencies after the pandemic.

There are two main reasons for this speculation. First, the involuntary trial of the supplements minimized potential users' resistance to adapt to altered circumstances during the pandemic. Users who perceive value from a trial tend to follow the model in use to solve problems afterward. On the other hand, the processes normalized during the pandemic likely increase the switching costs, such as extra effort and risk, for users who attempt to restore traditional models. Second, for businesses that supplied the supplements, the increased demand was a source of scale economies which brought about higher profitability and profit growth. For high-ICT industries, in particular, compared to the fixed costs of developing the product, the marginal costs of the product are considerably lower (Hill et al. 2014). The profitability shaped by low-cost structure will in turn enable firms to escalate investment in new product development, further intensifying their favorable position in the market.

There are similarities between the current situation and the revolutionary changes to human life during the early twentieth century. What we witness at present appears similar to the transformation of people's livelihood industries in North America after World War II. Drawing on the theory of scientific management and its successful applications in manufacturing industries, such as motor vehicle assembly, supplies of food products became industrialized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Petrick 2012). To a considerable extent, the rapid rise of industrial food, which typically supplemented fresh food, was attributed to the tremendous demand for military supplies during the war. In the post-war period, by way of advanced mass media such as television commercials and new innovations, such as the microwave oven, industrial food firms persuaded consumers to adopt industrial food as their main source of food. As such, the food-industrial complex realized the diet revolution which paved the way for large-scale markets of commercially processed foods today.

3 Industrialization is a keyword for post-pandemic research

Based on the elaborations above, we assume that the role of industrialization in tourism and hospitality under reform is a promising direction for post-pandemic research in three threads. First, industrialization tends to merge fragmented operations and small-sized companies and can thus simultaneously centralize the industries of tourism and hospitality. It will add greatly to theories and practices of strategic management in tourism and hospitality if there are forthcoming endeavors exploring product development frameworks which incorporate complementary elements across industries in an integrated approach (Lee and Trimi 2018).

Second, an industrialized economy of tourism and hospitality suggests that human resources requirements will be very different from those in traditional industries which rely heavily on personal production/service delivery. Applications of ICT and flexible production systems, such as online ordering and delivery platforms and centralized kitchens, have simplified the operations carried out by individuals and shortened the time needed to train employees. It is therefore worth developing proactive human resources strategies in response to new challenges in the post-pandemic era.

Third, trial implementations of telecommuting policies during the pandemic have caused businesses and employees to consider normalizing work from home or work from anywhere as an alternative to the traditional working style because of mutual benefits for both employers and employees (Choudhury et al. 2021). It is recommended that further research be undertaken to assess the long-term effects of normalized work from home or work from anywhere on aspects of employees' work and family life (Vaziri et al. 2020), which will provide tourism and hospitality industries with information needed to develop competitive products and business models for post-pandemic markets.

4 About this special issue

As the guest editor, I am pleased to introduce this compilation of articles on the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism, and hospitality. The eclectic topics and interdisciplinary methods indicate the contemporary significance of this special issue. The scope of this issue incorporates diverse facets of tourism and hospitality during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of product, market, region, consumption behavior, human resource management, and strategy. These articles provide academic insights into, and managerial implications for, today's turbulent environments. Therefore, they match the mission of our journal and are expected to act as a stable base from which further debates and future research will emerge. In summary, the authors of this special issue have done an excellent job and I think you all will enjoy this special issue.

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