

ATTRACTIVE TOURISM DESTINATIONS IN THE POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry has grown significantly in recent years, but the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus and the resulting shock to the tourism destination industry has presented significant challenges, including travel protocols, recovery, and destination competition. The goal of this research is to look into the factors that influence the attractiveness of a tourist destination during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, this study is a descriptive survey in terms of development-applied goals and data collection. The research was conducted in two stages: the first stage involved meta-composition and coding of articles to create a conceptual framework, and the second stage involved designing an interview protocol and conducting a semi-structured interview with tourism experts. An appealing destination chosen by tourists during the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have an advanced health system, effective management, and creative marketing, according to the findings. Because of the variety of crises and the nature of the tourism industry, the activity and sustainability of travel protocols, recovery programs, and tourism destination competition in the post-crisis period are critical.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Post-Pandemic Destination Management, Destination Competitiveness, Attractive Destinations, Post-Covid19

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism was the third largest industry in 2019 with a 3.5% increase in the global economy (Poole & Misrahi, 2020). The tourism industry, as the largest service industry in the world, contributes significantly to the economic growth of many countries (Rastegar et al., 2021), and as one of the world's largest sectors, it promotes socioeconomic development and the empowerment of women and youth (Poole & Misrahi, 2020), so any unexpected event that causes a recession in this industry is very concerning for the industry's stakeholders (Blake & Sinclair, 2003). Because of its service nature and sensory experiences, the tourism industry is extremely vulnerable to changes caused by crises and disasters (Sigala, 2020). Various crises and disasters have had direct and indirect effects on the tourism industry in recent years (Aliperti et al., 2019). Stagnation in tourism destinations and job losses in the industry are two of the most serious concerns in tourism crises (Blake & Sinclair, 2003). Pandemics are one type of crisis in the tourism industry (Gössling et al., 2020).

As we all know, a pandemic, as a new crisis with a much higher prevalence and persistence than previous pandemics around the world, has posed significant challenges to the tourism industry (Zheng et al., 2021). COVID19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) after its official announcement March 12, 2020.

Overnight, countries closed their borders to tourists, ports were closed and cruise ships docked (Qiu et al., 2020a), international flights were suspended and tourist destinations were completely closed (Zhang et al., 2021), tourism-related jobs were lost seven times more than on September 11 (Sigala, 2020), and the tourism industry was hit with unprecedented shock from the COVID19 pandemic (Kock et al., 2020). The impact of this disease on the tourism industry was investigated. So that the social effects of the COVID19 crisis (Qiu et al., 2020b), fear of travel after the COVID19 pandemic (Zheng et al., 2021), and national strategies to deal with the disease of the COVID19 pandemic (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2021) and the psychological perception of tourists in the COVID19 crisis (Kock et al., 2020) were examined in the early stages.

Tourism destinations are regarded as the primary pillar of travel and analysis in tourism. Furthermore, tourism destinations are the most important location for tourism activities and research because of the existence of numerous issues and stakeholders, as well as the internal and external complexities of tourism destination management (Fyall & Garrod, 2019). As a result, destination selection is a critical issue in tourism research because tourists avoid visiting a damaged destination when a crisis occurs (Qiu et al., 2020b), crises seriously harm tourism destinations through job losses, resource shortages, declining visitors, rising unemployment, and cuts in government revenues (Novelli et al., 2018), delaying the effects of destination recovery. One of the most serious of these consequences is a decrease in travel demand and post-crisis destination stagnation (Blake & Sinclair, 2003). According to studies, the presence of tourists and their encouragement to travel to a post-crisis-damaged destination is effective in recovery and destination improvement, as well as poverty reduction (Poole & Misrahi, 2020). (Ma et al., 2020)

According to post-crisis tourism studies in China, tourists are more likely to take short weekend trips to nearby destinations (Biran et al., 2014). Many visitors do not appear to be canceling their vacations, but rather changing their plans to pursue a safer and more secure vacation (Smith & Carmichael, 2013). Previous research has also shown that during times of crisis, tourists are more willing to travel short distances, to destinations close to home, with reasonable travel package prices, and they seek new reasons to travel as well as new types of products and services (Smith & Carmichael, 2013). According to (Jiricka-Pürner et al., 2020), tourists traveled during the peak of the Corona pandemic in the summer of 2020, but their preferred destinations were nature trips in the mountains and lakes away from the crowds. Following the September 11th attacks, the Canadian Tourism Commission investigated the impact of the incidents on tourist behavior and discovered that the intention of Canadian tourists to travel was similar to before the incident, but due to security concerns, tourists changed their itinerary to destinations closer to their place of residence (Smith & Carmichael, 2013). In addition, studies on Ebola and SARS have shown that the disease has reduced the demand for travel by avoiding contact with other people, observing social distance, not participating in group travel, choosing unspoiled natural destinations with low population, and it was discovered that approximately 3 million people have lost their jobs as a result of the disease (Zheng et al., 2021). According to (Zenker & Kock, 2020), the COVID19 crisis will end similarly to previous crises and we will return to our normal routine; however, overcoming this crisis will undoubtedly change aspects of our behavior in the tourism industry. Having said that, it appears that understanding the characteristics of an appealing tourist destination for the post-Corona period is critical, as it also helps the destination compete more with other tourist destinations in the future, allowing the tourist destination to return to its best period with a shorter recovery period. This

study also assists tourism destinations in developing long-term competitive programs in addition to resuming tourism in the short term. Furthermore, the findings of this study can assist local governments in cities and tourist destinations in reducing the disease's impact. Because the COVID19 pandemic will benefit the tourism industry, this study will look at the characteristics of appealing tourist destinations in the post-Corona era. The following questions are related to the issue and align with the research objectives:

The main question:

What are the characteristics of attractive tourist destinations in the post-Corona era?

Sub-question:

What is the pattern of the relationship between the desired features in tourism destinations?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Crises in Tourism

A crisis is a phenomenon that suddenly transforms into an unfavorable situation (Ma et al., 2020). It has been argued that disasters are common and geographically diverse in the twenty-first century due to population growth, increasing urbanization, greater use and reliance on technology, and globalization (Biran et al., 2014), and several crises have affected tourism (Zheng et al., 2021). Among the disasters affecting the tourism industry are terrorist attacks, natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and volcanoes, political instability, and, most importantly, pandemics (Gössling et al., 2020). With the global expansion of tourism, tourism destinations are becoming more vulnerable to a variety of crises (Sigala, 2020). The spread of epidemics is one type of crisis. Because of the rapid prevalence and rarity of diseases, epidemic diseases have a greater negative impact on tourism. To control the spread of disease during an outbreak, countries impose travel restrictions, bans on public events, closures, and forced quarantines, all of which prevent people from contacting one another (Zheng et al., 2021). Scientific perspectives on tourism industry crises are divided into supply and demand (Qiu et al., 2020). The existence of tourism crises is well known. From the past to the present, various crises have had varying effects on the tourism industry, and many studies on tourism crises have been conducted (Qiu et al., 2020). Political crises such as terrorist attacks, economic crises such as the 2008 economic crisis, natural crises such as earthquakes, tsunamis, or volcanic eruptions, and finally health crises such as pandemics are the four types of tourism crises (Farmaki, 2021). Some of the most significant global crises for the tourism industry have been SARS in 2003, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the global economic crisis in 2008, and Ebola in 2013 (Gössling et al., 2020). COVID19 in the tourism industry is not only unique, but evidence suggests that it has profound structural effects on various economic and social sectors, implying that crises can drive change (Sigala, 2020). None of the pandemics in the previous four decades have had the same global economic impact as COVID19 (Gössling et al., 2020).

Crisis Management in Tourism Destinations

The management of the negative effects of crises and their subsequent recovery is referred to as crisis management. Furthermore, crisis management can be defined as a comprehensive effort to understand and prevent crises; therefore, crisis management in tourism

is complex due to the multi-sectoral nature of the tourism industry and the duration, different times and places of each crisis, and the unique nature of each crisis (Novelli et al., 2018). The duration, scope, and scale of the event all influence crisis management (Ritchie, 2004a). Management responses to tourism crises typically include government-assisted travel facilities and packages, increased domestic tourism, the development of new products, and cost reductions (Novelli et al., 2018). One of the most important frameworks for tourism crisis management has been proposed by (Ritchie, 2004). Managers can reduce the effects of crises in the tourism industry because they cannot be prevented. In this regard, there is a strategic approach to crisis management in the tourism industry that is implemented in three stages, including active pre-crisis planning, strategic and final feedback evaluation (Ritchie, 2004b). Preparedness and crisis management can protect industry, the economy, and the people. It has also been stated that recovery periods following crises have been greatly reduced from the past to the present, with recovery periods in recent years expected to last approximately 10 months (Poole & Misrahi, 2020).

Research Background

(Yeh, 2021) investigated the qualitative effects of the Coronavirus epidemic and discovered that communication is the key to success in combating the negative effects of COVID19 in the tourism industry. 2021 (Zhang et al.) The profound effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism have improved forecasts of tourism demand during the COVID19 recovery period for tourism destinations. (Fotiadis et al., 2021) forecasts post-epidemic tourism demand, estimating that international tourism demand will fall by 30.8% to 76.3%. (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2021) investigates the tourism industry's recovery following the COVID19 pandemic, addressing issues such as developing national COVID19 crisis strategies, comparing and analyzing current strategies, and evaluating organizational strategies to better understand the pandemic and implement policies globally. (Rastegar et al., 2021) developed a framework for justice in post-Corona tourism development and recovery programs, which broadens the concept of justice in society, economy, and environment. (Karroubi et al., 1399) studied the consequences and solutions to COVID19 and sports tourism, four concepts in this study include job consequences, events, sustainable development, and post-corona consequences, as well as economic, health, infrastructure, and management solutions. (Brouder, 2020) investigates the evolution and development of the tourism industry in the post-Corona era. (Jiricka-Pürer et al., 2020) investigates the climate change and COVID19 crises and concludes that, as a result of urbanization, crisis management strategies should be developed in a more sustainable and balanced manner. (Qiu et al., 2020a) investigated the destination community's safety and well-being, as well as the costs incurred by the destination community as a result of the COVID19 crisis, focusing on local residents' perceptions of the dangers of tourism activities. Based on the findings of this study, the most appropriate action was taken by local authorities and tourism organizations after the epidemic to improve the destination. (Sigala, 2020) investigated the effects and consequences of the COVID19 pandemic crisis on tourism industry advancement and reconstruction. (Romagosa, 2020) by examining the COVID19 crisis and the sustainable development of tourism, and making recommendations for future crises. (Aliperti et al., 2019) investigate tourism, crises, and disasters from an interdisciplinary perspective. (Blake & Sinclair, 2003) discussed crisis management in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks in the United States.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has two stages and is based on an applied purpose. The first stage is meta-composition, which includes a thorough review of prior research. The second stage consists of a semi-structured case study with tourism professionals.

Measurement Instrument

In the first stage, data collection tools included taking notes from scientific and library sources from which relevant literature was extracted. In addition, using the developed framework, a semi-structured case interview with an exploratory approach was conducted with tourism experts up to the stage of theoretical saturation in the second phase of the research. The validity of the framework was confirmed in the first stage by 5 tourism professors.

Data Collection

The sample community is in the initial stages of developing scientific resources and a library. In this stage, the sample is purposefully chosen by using keywords such as tourism crises, crisis management in tourism destinations, tourism and pandemics, and competition of tourism destinations during and after a crisis. At this point, a number of samples were discovered, and after evaluating the sources discovered, irrelevant articles and data were removed before the relevant articles were chosen as the final sample.

In the second stage, the sample population included all tourism experts, and the sampling was purposeful and judgmental. The final sample consisted of 7 people (2 women and 5 men) from tourism experts, all of whom have more than 8 years of experience in the field of tourism.

First step: In the first step, we used the meta-composition method to extract relevant literature by purposefully sampling scientific and library resources. Examples of tourism crises, management of tourism destinations after crises, tourism and pandemics, and competition of tourist destinations during and after the crisis are among the findings. After evaluating the resources found, irrelevant articles and data were removed, and finally, 10 articles were chosen as the final sample, and effective factors were extracted, as well as its framework, through theme analysis. The validity of the framework was confirmed by five tourism professors.

Second stage: Using the created framework, a semi-structured case interview with an exploratory approach with experts in the field of tourism was performed up to the theoretical saturation stage, based on the studies performed and the components obtained in the second stage of the research. The statistical population included all tourism experts, and the sampling method was purposeful and judgmental. The final sample consisted of 7 people (2 women and 5 men) from the tourism industry, all of whom have more than 8 years of experience in this field. The interview text was meticulously implemented, and the data was analyzed using the theme analysis method.

Analytical Technique

The first stage's data analysis method was meta-composition, which identified the desired framework for the research process's continuation. In addition, in the second stage, the interview text was carefully implemented, and the data was analyzed using the theme analysis method.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the First Stage: Systematic Review of Past Studies and Research

The purpose of this research was to look into the characteristics of appealing travel destinations in the post-Corona era. In this regard, the primary research question was, "What are the characteristics of appealing tourist destinations in the post-Corona era?" As a result, based on a systematic review of previous studies, 10 articles and the final document were identified in order to answer the research's main question in the first stage. Previous studies and research on tourism industry crises, particularly the COVID19 crisis (the focus of this research), were divided into three major sections: travel protocols, tourism destination recovery, and competition for tourism destinations following the COVID19 crisis. It should be noted that at the start of the COVID19 crisis, the travel protocol section was mostly regulated by global tourism organizations such as UNWTO (2020), WTTC, and PATA.

The factors influencing the attractiveness of tourist destinations in the post-Corona era were extracted and coded based on the review of the above articles. Table 3 contains codes that indicate which factors influence the attractiveness of a tourist destination in the post-Corona era.

The extracted codes were categorized according to the topics in Table 3 below after identifying the factors influencing the attractiveness of tourist destinations in the post-Corona era.

Articles Related to Travel Protocols and Extracted Codes

Health factors in the travel protocols section were one of the most frequently extracted codes from the articles, according to the findings in the studied articles. Table 4 summarizes these health factors into three categories: health services, health information, and health facilities.

Articles Related to the Recovery of Tourism Destinations after the Crisis of COVID19 and the Extracted Codes

Furthermore, according to articles published on the subject of tourist destination recovery in the post-Corona era, the most frequent discussion on the recovery of tourist destinations after the COVID19 crisis is related to management issues and crisis management. Tourism destination management in this section includes effective management, training, and available resources.

Articles Related to the Competition of Tourism Destinations after the Crisis of COVID19 and the Extracted Codes

It should be noted that, after reviewing the codes extracted in previous articles on the competition for tourism destinations following the crisis, it can be stated that the marketing category is most related to this stage, which is one of the most important marketing sectors in this period to develop products, creativity in advertising, and transparency in information.

Findings of the Second Stage: A Study of the Views of Tourism Experts

The interview protocol was then designed in the second stage of the research using the framework obtained from the first stage's articles and tables and based on the research's second question. The perspectives of tourism experts obtained through interviews were conceptually coded, and some of the most important responses are presented in Table 8.

Combining and Comparing the Findings of the First and Second Stages of Research

Combining the findings from the first phase of the research (systematic review of previous studies) and the second phase (interviews with tourism experts), shows what factors have been raised in previous studies and what cases have been charged by experts.

Combination of codes extracted from the first and second steps

Both studies and tourism experts highlight critical issues such as health access, quality of service and the breadth of health information available at the destination, crisis management, effective training, and the development of service products and new tourism markets.

Furthermore, issues such as crisis recovery campaigns for tourism destinations and reducing tourists' perceived risk of crisis have only been discussed in previous articles and have not been mentioned in expert interviews.

Furthermore, issues such as sustainability and activity in crisis management programs, as well as the recovery of tourism destinations, have been considered by tourism experts and confirmed by previous studies.

The question that should be asked, based on the research's main question and the findings of the first and second stages, is what are the characteristics of tourism destinations in the post-Corona era? So the response is that in the post-Corona era, there are more appealing destinations that, first and foremost, have an advanced health system, including access to effective health services, trustworthy health information, and safety for tourists and host communities. Second, the findings indicate that tourists planning future trips are likely to seek out sustainable experiences, new destinations free of crowds, as well as a welcoming local community with a sense of high security and high-quality accommodation and food. Third, it is predicted that advanced and effective crisis management systems, effective government performance in dealing with crises, and digital development of touchless travel for tourists in the selection of the destination will be more important than ever, so it is critical that the brand strategy is developed in line with the attractiveness and safety of the destination. Furthermore, tourism destinations must clearly rebuild tourists' trust in health and safety as a result of the existence of their data, information, and performance, as well as demonstrate readiness for unforeseen events.

As previously stated, the closure of borders due to the COVID19 pandemic has come as a surprise to the tourism industry (PATA, 2020). However, the nature of the COVID crisis, as well as its economic, social, and psychological impact on stakeholders in the tourism industry, has been unprecedented (Sigala, 2020). Because of the magnitude of the COVID19 crisis's effects and the persistence of this phenomenon, crisis management solutions and tourist destination recovery are more complex and require additional research. As it turns out, the COVID-19 pandemic will be over, and travel restrictions will be lifted (Kock et al., 2020).

The limited reopening of tourist destinations and the resumption of travel indicate a shift in tourist behavior in terms of destination selection (Kock et al., 2020). Marketers and tourism destination management organizations must identify tourist needs and the concept of changing their behavior in order to understand tourist desires and change their behavior when selecting tourist destinations, as these factors are critical for survival in a competitive tourism market.

The current study sought to investigate appealing and competitive travel destinations following the COVID19 pandemic. According to the findings of the researchers, an appealing destination chosen by tourists in the post-Corona era is likely to have an advanced health system because it has a strong relation with the inclination category (Shafiee, 2022), effective

management, and creative marketing. Given the variety of crises and the nature of the tourism industry, the activity and sustainability of recovery programs, as well as competition for tourism destinations, in the post-crisis period is critical, because the evidence and effects of COVID19 on the tourism industry represent a cohesive, complex, and rapidly changing world (Sigala, 2020). While ensuring the safety of tourists and the local community, crisis management must also be immediate and long-term (Novelli et al., 2018).

Health under the Consideration of Travel Protocols

According to studies, the stage of travel protocols is more closely related to health issues. At this stage, health issues are classified into sub-categories such as health services, health information, and health facilities. In this regard, we can emphasize the significance of a comprehensive, strong, and effective health-care system. In addition, the presence of a comprehensive, extensive, and dependable information system in the health sector can aid in the effective implementation of health protocols. Advanced and effective health system including easy and immediate access to health services (such as extensive vaccination of the host community, distribution of free health items including masks and sanitizers), creation of databases, and up-to-date health and safety information (such as health certificates for tourists and suppliers, health and safety guide and accurate and up-to-date statistics on the number of people affected by the disease and the recovered people) and the existence of health facilities (such as equipped hospitals, proper ventilation of tourist facilities, safe water, and sanitation) are the most important criteria for choosing a tourist destination by tourists in the post-Corona era.

In the absence of the aforementioned items, tourism destination management organizations in the field of health measures are advised to collaborate with other related organizations in order to make the necessary health investments in order to attract visitors following the COVID19 pandemic.

Management as a Major Point in Recovering Tourism Destinations after Crisis

CONCLUSION

Previous research indicates that the tourism industry has faced numerous crises throughout its history, and that these crises were never left unresolved as issues. Because scientific progress and evolution show that after crises, tourism destinations are engaged in recovery, the current study in the section on tourism destinations addresses an important management issue. The findings show that in the management sector, the attractiveness of a post-crisis tourist destination is dependent on factors such as effective destination management, adequate training, and available resources. An effective crisis management system and an effective government response to crises, prompt training and the provision of sufficient and up-to-date information to suppliers and the local community, as well as the availability of sufficient and accessible resources (such as organizational liquidity, tourism infrastructure, human resources, and electronic equipment), can all play a role in the management of appealing travel destinations following the COVID19 disease.

Tourism destination management organizations should digitally develop touchless travel because online and remote booking will be one of the most important trends in the future of tourist travel.

Marketing is Key to Competing for Post-Crisis Tourism Destinations

In the face of a crisis, developing products and services, being creative in advertising, and providing transparent information and data on destination performance will renew tourists' trust in the destination. The findings indicate that tourists planning future trips are likely to seek out sustainable experiences, new destinations free of crowds, and a welcoming local community with a high sense of security and quality of accommodation and food. As a result, destination management organizations and tourism marketers are advised to try to diversify tourist products and experiences, facilitate tourism routes for different age groups, create content to introduce new products and destinations, and demonstrate the positive feelings of the local community of tourist arrivals.

It is recommended that tourism destination management organizations develop a brand strategy to demonstrate the destination's preparedness for unexpected events in order to make the destination appealing and safe.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Due to the limited time and resources, access to people, and the complexity of crises, it is suggested that researchers conduct a statistical review and quantitative evaluation of the findings of this research among tourists in future studies.

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