

# COVID-19 and “New Normal” Tourism: Reconstructing Tourism

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**Abstract** | COVID-19 is an outbreak caused in China and caused by a new type of coronavirus. Declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, COVID-19 has caused and continues to have negative effects that leave deep traces throughout the world. The tourism industry is one of the area’s most adversely affected by the pandemic. However, the restrictive effects of the outbreak, such as human mobility and interpersonal interaction in nature, mediated the balance of relations between nature and humans. In light of this information, this study aims to discuss the role of COVID-19 in the reconstruction of tourism. Curfews in the pandemic, while transforming people’s lifestyles and behavior patterns around the world, it has allowed nature to renew itself. In the pandemic process, the reduction of air, noise and visual pollution in industrial cities and large metropolises, reduction of waste in water, reduction in environmental pollution and physical, social and environmental carrying capacity problems in many destinations have been eliminated. With the reduction of the effects of the pandemic, the foundations of a new normal life are being laid where people will pay attention to their social distance and wear masks. Within this new normal life, there is the possibility of building “new normal tourism” until medical requirements that can cure the outbreak are met.

**Keywords** | Carrying Capacity, COVID-19, “New Normal” Tourism, Overtourism, Social Distancing, Sustainability

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## 1. Introduction

2020 stands out as a year that causes major problems in many issues for the world. Health is at the top of these issues. The new type of coronavirus (COVID-19), which emerged at the beginning of the year and spread almost all over the world over 6 months, has pushed the world into a major crisis in psychological, social and economic terms. The outbreak in Wuhan, China (Gralinski & Menachery, 2020) COVID-19 soon turned into a major health crisis affecting the whole world (Munster et al., 2020; Menachery et al., 2020). The emergence of the virus (Perlman, 2020; Chu et al., 2020) and concerning its source (Wang et al., 2020; Backer et al., 2020) many different studies have been and continue to be done. The virus with a high probability of transmission (Chu et al., 2020: 1) has been declared as a pandemic by the Health Organization due to its global effects (McCartney, 2020).

These developments have negatively affected the tourism industry, which has a fragile identity against crises. Human mobility has come to a halt at national and international levels, and tourism-related businesses have ceased for a certain period in almost every country. As in many previous crises, the global roles of communication and transportation technologies have deepened the negative aspects of COVID-19 on tourism, which has a dynamic structure. The communication and transportation dimensions of globalization have accelerated the feeling of possible reflections of crises towards tourism. Because the effects of an event in different and remote geography of the world can spread all over the world in a short time. These developments, which minimize the dependence on time and space, increase the crisis-tourism interaction (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Del Chiappa & Baggio, 2015).

The industrial development of tourism (Gamble, 1992; Lee & Harrald, 1999), which is affected very quickly by external events and crises, is likewise rapid. For example, tourist arrivals, which

were about 25 million in 1950, approached 459 million in 1990 (Jayawardena, 2002) and 1.5 billion in 2019 (UNWTO, 2020). These figures will be estimated to be in the 1.8-2 billion band by the early 2030s. In particular, as the leisure and disposable incomes increase, international tourist arrivals will increase (Lickorish et al., 1997). Countries tend to continuously increase their share of the tourism market due to their share of employment, income, narrow the (foreign) trade deficit and their economic impact on regional development. These trends lay the groundwork for the formation of some stereotyped problems of tourism, especially in environmental and social terms. Although there are optimistic efforts carried out by different groups to solve the problems, it has often not been possible to come up with deep-rooted solutions within the usual flow of global tourism activities. Radical changes, in which people withdraw from nature and restrict their social lives, seem to be a necessity for solving problems. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an opportunity for that.

This study is aimed to discuss the role of the pandemic in the reconstruction of tourism. It can be said that pandemic is the tool especially in the solution of the stereotyped problems of global tourism such as sustainability. Because, with very sudden decisions, crowded groups of people were taken too closed. Thus the world has witnessed a process that nature has renewed itself. Is it possible to reconstruct tourism with the concept of “new normal tourism” within the “new normal life”, which is proposed and implemented with the reduction of the effects of the pandemic in this study, and which generally foresees “social distance”? the question has been acted upon. Because the new way of life expressed as the new normal contradicts the global tourism movements in many ways. This new life, which aims to minimize human mobility, inter-human relations and human-nature interaction, contains important opportunities for solving a stereotyped problem in tourism. This study is important in terms of examining the positive aspects

of pandemics that affect tourism and many other areas negatively, which may mediate the solution of some stereotyped problems in tourism. In this way, the study provides clues to the construction of the “new normal tourism” after the pandemic, while also contributing to the literature on the future pandemic-tourism interaction.

## 2. Basic Problems of Global Tourism

### *Carrying Capacity*

The three important problems of global tourism, which will be handled within the scope of this study, are interrelated elements. Carrying capacity can be defined as the maximum number of tourists that can be supported without reducing the quality of life and visitor experience to below acceptable levels (Coccosis & Mexa, 2004). In this sense, the carrying capacity began with the co-pronunciation of concepts such as conservation, resource management, sustainable development, and climate change (Ehrlich, 1968; Meadows et al., 1972). Tourism and its carrying capacity have started to be evaluated together, especially in terms of using resources such as nature and history. Mathieson and Wall (1982) stated for the first time that carrying capacity has economic, environmental and socio-cultural dimensions. In the light of this information, it can be said that carrying capacity is a precursor to extreme tourism, which today attracts a lot of attention and emphasizes that the number and behavior of tourists can harm the places they visit with the impact on the lifestyles of local people living in destinations (Wall, 2020). It is known that some theoretical studies about carrying capacity have been carried out. In these studies, it is aimed to solve the bearing capacity problems caused by tourism, thus contributing to the solution of problems related to extreme tourism and sustainability. For the solution to this problem,

Carrying Capacity Analysis (CCA) stands out as a worldwide method (Jurincic, 2005). However, since this method is not widespread all over the world and theoretically does not give the desired result in practice, the carrying capacity still exists as a problem of modern tourism.

### *Over-Tourism*

Over-tourism is a concept that academic studies have been carried out in recent years. In this respect, it is considered as a very new concept as a problem in tourism. However, considering the problems such as carrying capacity and sustainability, the concept of over-tourism can be said to be an old problem for tourism (Wall, 2020). The fact that touristic travel movements have increased significantly with the millennium has led to this problem being pronounced more frequently. Along with the increase in travel movements, some of the behaviors of tourists, the spread of anti-tourism movements in Europe, further accelerated the discussions about over-tourism. In this sense, it is known that one of the first reactions occurred in Barcelona (Coldwell, 2017; Alexis, 2017; Genç, 2020). The behavior of tourists, which negatively affect the quality of life of the local people, set environmental sustainability at risk, violate the moral values of the society and the laws of countries and threaten historical and cultural values has an important role in spreading anti-tourism movements (Buckley, 2017; Seraphin et al., 2018). Due to its concentration on tourist behavior in the destination, it can be said that over-tourism is more concerned with the socio-cultural dimension of carrying capacity and sustainability. According to Jacobsen et al (2019), the fact that excessive tourism-causing crowds contribute to the popularity of destinations is an important factor preventing the solution of the problem.

### *Sustainability*

Sustainable tourism is a philosophy that ensures the transfer of the resources used by tourism to future generations. The overuse of historical, natural, economic, social and cultural resources of tourism has a great share in the emergence of this philosophy. Despite this broad evaluation, Hunter (1997) emphasizes that sustainability is concerned with the profound effects that tourism has on the environmental structure of destinations. Bramwell and Lane (1993) state that sustainable tourism first emerged in Europe at the end of the 1970s and later in North America as a result of concerns about the destruction of resources.

Sustainable tourism is concerned with problems such as carrying capacity and excessive use of resources in tourism and has a goal of solving chronic problems in tourism. Thus, it should be said that sustainability is concerned with some integrative, harmonious, balanced or synergistic developments in the relationship of tourism with its environmental resource base (Butler 1991; Klemm 1992; Darden & Harron 1994; Butler, 1997). The philosophy of sustainable tourism foresees meeting the needs of existing tourists and local people while protecting and developing resources for future generations in carrying capacity and carrying out tourism activities such as over-tourism. The integrity of environmental, socio-cultural or economic resources, protecting and improving basic ecological processes, biodiversity and life support systems are the ultimate goals of sustainable tourism (Liu, 2010). From this point of view, it can be said that sustainable development with the concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism development is targeted with the concept of sustainable tourism (Bryd, 2007). Sustainable tourism is a result of concerns about the use of social, cultural, economic and environmental resources in tourism. Because the resources that provide the development of tourism are consumable resources. Although there have been a lot of different theoretical and

practical studies on sustainable tourism, the issue remains far from the solution.

The development of nature-based tourism activities constitutes one of the main sources of sustainable tourism activities. Eco-based approach has triggered a new sustainable development tendency. The success of this trend can be achieved by taking into account natural, cultural, economic and social issues, in which internal and external conditions are taken into account (Ezequias, 2020). On the other hand, Salvado & Kastenholz (2017) emphasizes that this success can be achieved based on the stakeholders' use of their capacities in line with the sustainability goals of the destinations and stakeholder collaboration.

### **3. The Role of COVID-19 in Reconstructing Tourism**

International human mobility has had a huge impact on the spread of COVID-19, which emerged in China and shook the world. This interaction between travel and pandemic also shows the relationship between tourism and the spread of the pandemic. The effects of human mobility on the spread of the pandemic have led countries to resort to strict travel restriction practices to prevent human mobility. This situation brought tourism-related destinations to face with some economic problems (Wen, et al., 2020). This interaction between COVID-19 and tourism caused tourism to be one of the areas where the effects of the pandemic are intensely felt. In this sense, the effects of the outbreak that started in China on tourism are naturally seen in China in the first place and in destinations that attract tourists from China at the first stage. As a matter of fact, during the 3 days between 23-26 January 2020, the Chinese hotel market experienced a 71% decline year-on-year (Baker, 2020). With the spread of the virus and the World Health Organization's announcement of

the issue as a pandemic, the effects of COVID-19 on the tourism industry have gained a global character. In such an environment, tourism enterprises have started to give reactions such as stopping their activities due to the epidemic and dismissing the employees. The loss of jobs in the tourism industry is thought to be about 50 million people worldwide (WTTC, 2020). Restaurant, accommodation and travel businesses followed a policy of freeing employees on leave during the epidemic (Lucas, 2020). Şengel et al. (2020a) revealed the devastating effects of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry in their empirical study.

It provides very striking information to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) about the effects of the pandemic on the tourism industry. UNWTO states that the pandemic is on a global scale and is ongoing, so it is early to reveal its effects on tourism. Despite this, considering the border procedures and the functioning of the airline services, it is predicted that COVID-19 may cause a 20-30% decrease in international tourist movements and a loss of approximately 300-450 billion dollars in tourism revenues (UNWTO, 2020). The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported that in 2020 an estimated \$ 113 billion losses (19%) in passenger income (Pearce, 2020). These can be considered as optimistic evaluations. Considering the pleasing developments experienced in some countries where the pandemic is heavy, it is thought that healthier information about the development of tourism will be obtained in the last quarter of 2020.

COVID-19 also caused changes in the basic logic of modern tourism movements. This change is more important than the effect of the pandemic on tourism demand. The pandemic has also changed the perception of geographic distance that dominates the phenomenon of tourism. Also, the thought of tourism belonging to a region, community, country and the world is being redesigned. The density experienced in touristic travel in recent years has decreased significantly in 2020. This

sudden silence brought unanswered questions and widespread uncertainty. The revival of the tourism industry and its sub-sectors, brought to a halt by the COVID-19 global crisis, is expected to go through a difficult process (Tomassini & Cavagnaro, 2020). Although pandemic has negative effects on the quantitative increase of tourism, it is estimated that it may offer some opportunities for tourism activities to be more qualified.

In an environment where normal is a problem in tourism, seeking new normal tourism has some difficulties. It can be said that COVID-19 has an important mediating role both in revealing the challenges of the normal in tourism and in building the normal of the future for tourism. Benjamin et al. (2020) addressed some concerns about tourism activities after the pandemic and stated that the pandemic could be an opportunity to reconsider and find solutions to some problems in the tourism industry. Sudden and intense travel decisions after pandemic cause extreme risks of tourism and some of the characteristics (social structure) of tourism in terms of the new lifestyle called "new normal". The researchers express this with a slogan written on the wall in a protest in Hong Kong: *"We can't return to normal, because the normal that we had was precisely the problem."*

In history, Tourism has normalized several systematic inequalities that have contributed partly to the dilemma that the industry and its societies have in the modern world. After the pandemic, tourism improvement efforts are an opportunity not only to generate income or gain a competitive advantage in the market but also to reorganize and improve the tourism industry in reasonable ways. Because the developments in the pandemic period have been guiding for this. "New normal" clearly recognize global crises in the tourism pre-pandemic, global problems and tensions, the holistic nature of the egalitarian agenda. At this point, COVID-19 provided some opportunities to eliminate or reduce the adverse effects of over-tourism. For example: The pandemic has

helped the environmental renewal of the canals, which have become symbolic for Venice, to remove pollution and waste (Clifford, 2020). Seraphin et al. (2018) state that Venice has difficult problems with extreme tourism. It can be said that at least COVID-19 provides an opportunity for this environmentally. It can be said that the quality of air, soil and water has increased due to curfews for many destinations outside Venice.

In countries where the effects of the pandemic are diminishing, the restrictions brought on by the new lifestyle after COVID-19, which started with "new normal" and "social distancing" slogans, affected the tourism industry and became a determining factor in tourist behavior. Tourists are aware of returning to nature and protecting nature, gaining time for slowing down and are becoming more interested in domestic travel due to international travel barriers. In a certain period after the pandemic, it is estimated that the understanding of "new normal" and "social distancing" can be determinative in travel and tourism decisions. Changing tourist preferences It is thought that there may be an increase in the preferability of the understanding of holiday such as "slow tourism" (Travelzoo, 2020; Benjamin, et al., 2020). Şengel et al. (2020b) examined how to provide social distancing in tourism. In this context, he states that camping and caravan tourism has emerged as an alternative to the new normal tourism.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

COVID-19 has influenced the world in many different ways. Production system, health, education, tourism, etc. It is possible to see the effects of the pandemic in many fields. In the macro sense countries in the micro sense, firms and individuals in the economic, social and psychological sense have affected. Each of these interconnected economic and social factors was negatively affected by

this pandemic process. Therefore, it can be stated that the negative effects of COVID-19 increase with the interplay of different economic units. Cities, which are tourism destinations with different supply sources, have turned into ghost cities during the pandemic process (Haywood, 2020). Thus, people were forced to spend time in their homes and withdrew from nature. In places where the effects of the pandemic are reduced, tourism movements are tried to be developed with some special measures. Despite these developments, it can be said that tourism activities display an image remotely from before COVID-19. With the empirical study conducted by Carvalho (2020), it has been revealed that these developments negatively affect the tour guides who are among the important stakeholder and professional groups in tourism activities. Because the restrictions for travels continue and tourism activities are mostly oriented towards domestic tourism or short-distance countries. All this raises one question: Is it possible to reconstructing tourism after COVID-19?

Tourism activities, which are largely based on human relations, seem to have a different identity after the pandemic. Because the high contagiousness of the pandemic leads tourists psychologically to alternative sources of supply where human density and relationships are low and social distance is high. There is an increasing demand for alternative tourism types related to nature. In this context, Zhu and Deng (2020) determined in their empirical research that the Chinese prefer nature-based tourism. Li and colleagues (2021) also revealed similar results. In their study, it was stated that rural tourism activities increased in the post-COVID-19 period. However, there is an emphasis on the need for low human density in tourism activities here. Despite this, nature, which renews itself with compulsory home restrictions, faces again danger with its changing tourism paradigm. It is critical to carry out controlled tourism activities in rural areas where nature tourism takes place for the reconstruction of tourism.

Tourism types such as culture-based tours in metropolitan and crowded cities, gambling tourism (Wong, 2020) where human interaction is intense and shopping tourism in crowded environments have been adversely affected by the pandemic. This negativity is actually an opportunity to restructure over-tourism, which is one of the most current problems of contemporary tourism. Because the major metropolises face a serious density especially in certain periods and in certain regions of the cities. This density has decreased due to the COVID-19 and has even come to a halt. With appropriate policies, these densities can be reduced in the post-pandemic period and spread to dates or regions where the density is low. Thus, COVID-19 can be converted as an opportunity to overcome the extreme tourism problem.

There are also some concerns about mass tourism, which uses resources such as sea, sand and sun, and is especially in demand in summer. Although there is no information about the risk of transmission of the virus in the common areas of the sea or the pool people, these are not based on finalized scientific data. This is one of the most important risks associated with COVID-19. Because factors such as experience and time come to the fore to make the information related to the pandemic certain. Although there are some studies about “social distancing” and some other rules in coastal cities, this is not as successful as it is seen from different countries in the world. It can be said that especially people almost do not follow the rules anywhere in the world and this brings the risk of a second wave related to pandemics (Şengel et al., 2020b).

Mass tourism is touristic products that are standardized, rigidly packaged, can be marketed to anyone without differentiation strategies, and are consumed collectively by tourists regardless of local culture and norms (Poon, 1993). It, therefore, relies on a logic that masses production, consumption and destinations. This mass-qualified perspective causes some negative consequences regar-

ding tourism activities. For this reason, it is beneficial to rethinking mass tourism (Vainikka, 2013). Thus, Mass tourism is considered risky for all problems such as over-tourism, carrying capacity and sustainability. It can be said that although the beaches relaxed in the COVID-19 process, the next process was not very successful. The most important task here belongs to public authorities. The chronic problems faced by the social, environmental, economic and physical resources of tourism, which take a comfortable breath with COVID-19, should be overcome with good planning and should not be a problem after the pandemic process. Although Jurincic (2005) refers that good tourism planning is essential for the solution of these problems, it is difficult to realize in an ordinary process. COVID-19 is an extraordinary situation that will enable this planning.

This study is based on a conceptual review. Therefore, the fact that it was not supported by empirical findings can be expressed as an important limitation of this study. However, it can be said that the study contains strong information about the subject depending on the research purpose and question. Also, since COVID-19 is a very new problem, it is difficult to study such issues empirically. For empirical studies to take place, pandemics should be taken under control in the world and their results should become more evident. Towards the end of 2020, a significant increase was observed in the number of empirical studies on the subject. In these studies, generally changing behaviors of tourists depending on risk, safety and anxiety were examined (Abraham et al, 2020; Şengel et al, 2020c; Wang et al, 2021). Therefore, after the pandemic’s control gold is taken in the future and its effects are demonstrated, the impact of the pandemic on current tourism problems such as sustainable tourism, extreme tourism and carrying capacity can be studied empirically.

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