



How to Embed Change in Respond to Crisis? A Permanent Way to Adapt to the Crisis

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 has a great impact on the tourism industry, sending it back to 30-year levels in a flash. In response, the focus of the tourism research production has shifted abruptly to the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry. But what exactly did the research on Covid-19 and tourism write about? Our recently published "The Impact of a Global Crisis on Areas and Topics of Tourism Research" article reviewed the research on Covid-19 and tourism from January to December 2020 and found the leading themes.

Reviewing this article, a thought-provoking and urgent question emerges. How should we embed change in respond to crisis? And how should we understand "change"? Scholars have long sought answers to ways to change the crisis, like preventing, mitigating and stopping it. However, given the path-dependency of tourism, other great crises in the past have not proved definitively that we have changed the paradigm of tourism development. Have we really changed anything in our response to the crisis in tourism? Or is it just a new old-approach to develop tourism?

Keywords: Develop tourism; Global crisis; Covid-19; Adaptation

INTRODUCTION

This review article is built on our previous publication, discussing changes in response to crisis. Tourism is a complex adaptive system that includes different types of adopters of innovation. Based on Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion, we proposed that we may not be looking for a way to change the crisis, but a way to permanently adapt to the crisis. Permanently adapting to crises seems easier to achieve than preventing, changing and mitigating them, because we don't know what the next crisis will be, making it harder to prepare for it, and at what cost to maintain and switch new systems. As such, we believe that a permanent adaptation to crisis is the way to embed change in respond to crisis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 brought a century shock to the world, which reduced the international tourism to about 70% in 2020, returning to the level of 30 years ago UNRWTO [1]. Then it seems unsurprising that the focus of tourism research suddenly turned to Covid-19's impact on the travel industry. It is meaningful to conduct a literature review of all current related studies to avoid redundant research and find research gaps. What exactly did the research on Covid-19 and tourism write about? Our recently published "The Impact of a Global Crisis on Areas and Topics of

Tourism Research" article reviews the research on Covid-19 and tourism from January to December 2020 through exploratory and descriptive methods. As a result, we discovered and discussed leading themes and perspectives in this field [2].

Reviewing this article, a thought-provoking and urgent question emerges. In response to the huge losses caused by Covid-19 to the tourism industry, global stakeholders have paid a high price [3]. Scholars have given different attitudes about what kind of future we should wish to. Our research shows that 50% of scholars maintain a neutral attitude. They do not deny the possibility of the transformation of the tourism industry after Covid-19, but argue that such a transformation requires certain institutional conditions, and it is difficult to achieve such conditions [2]. As Ateljevic [4] said: "There has never been a "normal" way of doing things, but a "standardized" way of doing things". The path dependence of the tourism industry has proven to be entrenched through other crises in the past 20 years. Brouder [3] argues that if tourism demand and tourism supply have sufficient institutional innovations to cultivate new paths, tourism transformation can be achieved, but whether the current institutional innovations triggered by COVID-19 will cause fundamental changes in the tourism industry remains to be seen. Therefore, we may never have changed anything, and the new regionalism we have seen caused by Covid-19 may still be the

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old method of tourism development [3]. So how should we embed change in respond to crisis? And how should we understand “change”?

Before answering this question, we need to first figure out who "we" is. Galvani et al. [5] also raised the same question in their study. Our literature review responded to this question to a certain extent. In our research, the 5 leading themes found revealed 5 participants (Table 1). They are the government (from the theme of government crisis management, accounting for 27.59% of the total literature), tourists (from the theme of tourist perception and decision-making, accounting for 21.84% of the total literature), travel service providers (from the theme of tourism service providers, 19.54%), scholars (from the new normal and tourism research themes, the proportions of the two themes in the total literature are 13.79% and 12.64%), and communities. Community is one of the perspectives in the theme of inequality, accounting for 11.49% of the total literature, and is the last participant in the ranking to receive attention.

Then, what did these major participants do? Our research draws a storyline for this question. In this story, the government, scholars and large companies play the role of opinion leaders. The government provides financial support in times of crisis, sets priorities, formulates policies, and cooperates with informal parties. The government is expected to formulate tourism development policies before the crisis and to support the recovery of the tourism market after the crisis. Universities and large corporations that have high scientific resources and interact most closely with other innovators are social, financially mobile, and have a high-risk tolerance that allows them to adopt technologies that may ultimately fail. Second, among tourist groups, small and medium enterprises and some advanced communities in developed countries, we have witnessed early majority, whose social status is above average. They were the first to receive information about Covid-19 and tourism, change their attitudes and perceptions about the development of the tourism industry, and adopt the instructions of opinion leaders. For example, for tourists, the negative effects of Covid-19 significantly

Table 1: Leading themes and perspectives in Covid-19 and tourism and their proportions.

Theme	Proportion of total literature (n=87)	Perspective	Proportion of literature on the theme	
Government crisis management	27.59%	Before the crisis	Tourism policy planning	4.17%
			Financial support	50%
		In crisis	Functions of the informal sector	12.50%
			Prioritize actions	8.33%
			Formulate public policy	16.67%
		After the crisis	Support domestic and regional tourism	12.50%
			Restore market confidence	20.83%
			Carry out intergovernmental cooperation	12.50%
			Redefine community-based tourism	12.50%
			Conduct recovery marketing	4.17%
Tourists' perception and decision-making	21.84%	Tourists' current attitudes and perceptions of travel under Covid-19	61.11%	
		The change in the values of tourists from Covid-19	38.89%	
Travel service providers	19.54%	Before the crisis	Build trust and commitment	5.88%
			Employee training	5.88%
		In crisis	Obtain government support	11.76%
			Fulfill corporate social responsibility	47.06%
			Cooperation, learning and knowledge sharing	29.41%
			Business management and innovation	11.76%
			Financial management	11.76%
		After the crisis	Analyze the market	11.76%
			Establish sanitation measures and punishment methods	5.88%
			Marketing, forecasting, and sales plan	17.65%
New normal	13.79%	Positive attitude	>=36	
		Neutral attitude	>=36	
		Negative attitude	>=36	
Tourism research	12.64%	The importance of tourism research and education	>=36	
		Adhere to the principles of impartiality and criticality in Covid-19 and tourism research	>=36	
		Set the priority of tourism research	>=36	
Inequality	11.49%	Community inequality in tourism	>=36	
		Inequality between developing and developed countries	>=36	
		Inequality in the nature of tourism	>=36	
		Inequality of tourism development within the country	>=36	

affect their perceived health risks and transform their views on sustainable tourism consumption and ethics to a certain extent [6]. In contrast to this is the late majority, whose social status is below average and adopts innovation after ordinary participants. They are highly skeptical of these initiatives and innovative proposals to counter the negative impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry. It wasn't until the majority of society stopped traveling and started reading about Covid-19 and sustainable tourism that they made a change in their actions. Finally, there are laggards. They are the oldest of all adopters and only have contact with family members and close friends.

This participant structure reflects the category of adopters of innovation and change in Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory (DOI). The innovation analysis originally proposed by Everett Rogers [7] in the 1960 defined the stages of adoption of changes (such as new technologies) and the factors affecting success or failure [7]. Rogers [7] defines this category as a classification of individuals in the social system based on innovation [7]. The above five categories of adopters (innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards) were proposed in his book "The Diffusion of Innovation" to standardize the use of categories of adopters in diffusion studies Rogers, [7] In addition to gatekeepers and opinion leaders in a particular community, change agents may come from outside the community. This may be another major stakeholder-NGOs that have been overlooked in Covid-19 research.

We do not yet know what the next crisis will be, making it harder to prepare for it, and at what cost to maintain and switch new systems [3]. However, the experience of global stakeholders in Covid-19 provides lessons on how to embed change in respond to crisis.

The first is the embedded change, which refers to new ideas on tourism development initiatives proposed by individuals or other adopters. Over the past two decades, scholars have been looking for ways to change the crisis, such as preventing, mitigating and stopping it. But have these efforts made any difference to the crisis? Have we really changed anything in the development of tourism? Due to the path dependence of the tourism industry, the radical change will be institutional. It is closely related to the country's historical and cultural background and is difficult to be changed. In this case, the change may be innovation, that is, new methods based on existing experience, such as the national prohibition of travel to a certain destination, investment in sustainable education and research on climate change issues, virtual tours and virtual meetings proposed by travel companies in response to travel restrictions. Therefore, rather than making changes, it may be more precious to say that we are embedding innovation in our response to the crisis, which may be a new old-approach to develop tourism.

Second, adopters when they have the right to choose, individuals usually choose to interact with people similar to themselves to achieve the purpose of effective communication and lead to more knowledge acquisition and changes in attitudes or behaviors [7]. Although homogeneity promotes the spread of change and innovation, performance gaps usually trigger innovation [7]. Research on Covid-19 proves that communication requires a certain degree of heterogeneity to introduce new ideas into relationships. That is, if groups have similar ideas about Covid-19 and the future of sustainable tourism, diffusion will not happen because there is no new information to exchange. At this point, NGOs and other outsiders emerged as potential adopters, sparking the spread of ideas about sustainable consumption and the ethics of travel. However, our study found that the role of NGOs as

external change agents was rarely addressed in Covid-19 and tourism research.

Third, social systems, not all people wield equal influence over others. In Covid-19, opinion leaders have been influential in disseminating innovative ideas and information on how to address the challenges Covid-19 poses to the travel industry. Rogers relied on the ideas of Katz et al. [8] and the two-step flow theory to develop his thoughts on the influence of opinion leaders [8]. Opinion leaders play an important role in guiding public opinion in Covid-19. They dominate the exposure of mass media, are more innovative than others, and manipulate the direction of research. Other adoptions of the world's tourism industry under the opinion leader attempt to integrate "community" into the decision-making process, but often fail to unravel the complexities of society, regional history, social institutions and politics. As a result, the decision-making process is characterized by inconsistencies of existing powers rather than embedded inclusive approaches, resulting in tension and conflict in the collaborative process [3]. Even though collaboration in a crisis can be challenging, Covid-19 teaches that we cannot solve complex challenges alone and that collaboration is still needed to expand global awareness. Whether tourism will play a leading role in this effort will depend on the sustained efforts of many stakeholders, some of whom have been transformed and some of whom have high expectations [9]. On the other hand, digitalization plays a crucial role in the diffusion of innovation. What we need to consider is how to use the digitalization in an appropriate way, and is there any sustainable digitalization? As far as restaurants are concerned, smart food delivery services in tourist destinations are widely adopted during lock-in periods, but should we encourage food delivery? Can social media prolong the detention of tourists, promote reflection and positive encounters with local residents at their destination, and in turn translate into long-term positive behavioral change [10]?

Departing from Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion, for the question of how we embed change in a crisis, for a long time, we may not be looking for a way to change the crisis, but a way to permanently adapt to the crisis. Permanently adapting to crises seems easier to achieve than preventing, changing and mitigating them, because we do not yet know what the next crisis will be. It is more difficult for us to get ready for the next crisis, and it is not yet clear what cost to maintain and convert the new system [5].

Covid-19 points us in the direction of achieving a permanent adaptation to crisis. Tourism is a complex adaptive system that includes different types of adopters of innovation. For innovation, we first need a degree of heterogeneity to be able to introduce new ideas into relationships. For a sustainable future after Covid-19, most people are waiting majority, the rest are opinion leaders who make positive changes, and opponents with highly skeptical attitude. The success of innovation is the rational and communicative process of decision-making. Organizations have goals, roles, and regulations, and informal behavior influences processes. However, we are critical of Rogers' radical role as an opinion leader, as the Covid-19 experience shows that resilience, adaptability, flexibility, collaboration, and co-creation are relevant ways to address sustainability challenges [2].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Governments need to plan for tourism before the crisis, by taking into account the voices of communities, universities, NGOs and other stakeholders. Tourism companies can build trust

and commitment with agents, tourists and other stakeholders, and enable employees to participate in multiple roles through multi-skill training. Tourists should be given opportunity to understand what sustainable tourism is. In times of crisis, the government should provide financial support (such as insurance and subsidy programs for employees, support the survival of the hotel and aviation industry), cooperate with informal parties (such as microfinance, bancassurance), and formulate relevant policies (such as restrictions on the arrival of the giant cruise ship). Tourism companies should actively communicate with the government and non-government sectors to obtain support, and fulfill corporate social responsibilities (such as not raising prices during a crisis, protecting the interests of customers, and alleviating pressure on employees). Tourism companies should also actively carry out cooperation, knowledge sharing, and business and financial management and innovation (such as flexible financial management arrangements, multi-asset portfolio diversification). Tourists should actively fulfill the tourism ethics and form a good host-guests relationship with the local community. After the crisis, the government should actively support domestic and regional tourism (such as providing digital coupons), use big data to investigate the perception of tourists and locals to restore market confidence, and cooperate with governments to establish common standards and sanitation agreements. Tourism companies should utilize social media to market to visitors and be flexible in adjusting sales plans. Universities need to play the role of opinion leaders conduct critical exploration and to abandon selfish ideas and. As such, we believe that a permanent adaptation to crisis is the way to

embed change in respond to crisis.

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