

# Almatourism

*Journal of Tourism, Culture and Territorial Development*

Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna

Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST), Rimini Campus

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## Call for papers:

### **Tourism-specific and Tourism-related Pandemic Public Policies. An Evaluation of the Short to Medium Run Perspectives**

Guest Editor: Antonello Scorcu (University of Bologna)

1. In several occasions, the tourism sector has suffered a series of important but temporary and geographically localized shocks (like natural disasters, terrorist attacks...). In these situations, a specific country or destination suffers a drop in both demand and (possibly) supply but in most of the cases quickly recovers, reverting with limited adjustments to the existing market structure.

Even if the development of a vaccine could take some time, also the global COVID-19 shock is expected to be temporary. The attitude of several practitioners is that, after some hard times, with (marginal) competitors driven out of the business, the tourism industry could revert along roughly unchanged trends, again with low-cost flights and overcrowded superstar museum or concert halls.

Because of the size and the nature of the pandemic shock, this bet can be extremely hazardous. The pandemic shock is a temporary but affects the tourism of specific countries and destinations in different ways and with different intensity. More importantly, the transmission mechanism and the degree of persistence of the shock differs, again depending upon the country and the specific segment of tourism (e.g. entertainment/culture, urban/rural, seaside/mountains, hotel/holiday houses; air travel/cruising...).

Faced with such dilemma, national and local governments in most of the cases are now providing temporary emergency funding to firms and workers. These emergency relief packages are in most of the cases non-selective, non-discretionary, and are provided after a simple administrative implementation process. In the short run, the challenge for the public sector is to define a consistent set of rules that keep the market afloat, in compliance with the new strict public health rules - rules enforced on both the supply and the demand side of the tourism industry. Too stringent rules (at the extreme, the mandatory lockdown) help to contain the pandemic but put the firms out of business. Loose rules are possibly too risky for large part of the demand and of the workers of the industry, and are likely to be unstable over time, being unable to dampen the likelihood of the resurgence of new waves of the pandemic. Within this framework, a first research question is:

*(Q1) the development of an understandable and consistent picture of the emergency relief programs provided by the public sector at national/ local level specifically targeted at the tourism industry narrowly defined.*

2. The initially common pandemic shock is now developing into a series of idiosyncratic shocks, as the tourist industry could comprise very different typologies of services and the post-pandemic tourism industry is likely to become structurally different with respect to the pre-pandemic one.

The objective of these emergency packages is to avoid the collapse of the tourism industry (as well of several other industries) and restore a sort of "normal" course of the business. However, these non-selective funding

will help more some activities than others with specific needs, as some specific activities, markets, regions and nations are less severely affected or are more resilient to the shock. Different municipalities, regions, countries are now providing different types of funds (e.g. some offer vouchers to tourists sustaining the demand, while others sustain the supply through a generous funding, enhancing the chance of survival of the latter with respect to competitors) trying to put local (or national) markets and sectors on a more advantageous competitive position. Somewhat paradoxically, the current financial imbalances might be less worrisome for non-market, publicly funded cultural activities, whose market revenues already constitutes a minor part of the total revenues.

In short, the severity and the pervasivity of the pandemic shock, the different situations of different nations, regions or destinations and the wide variety of supporting public policies are likely to induce a deep change in the structure of the tourism industry at various (geographical and sectoral) levels. A series of related research questions are:

*Q2. Are these public policies developed mainly on a short-run perspective only? Are these public policies tailored on the different needs of different regions/destinations/sectors? Are public and private actors are expected to work together with the local communities (insiders and outsiders) to deal with the issue of territorial resilience in parallel with local sustainability?*

3. The previous considerations make it clear that, even in the current short run perspective, the whole picture of the market is changing, and that the design of effective medium-run public policies cannot elude or postpone the analysis of the **structural changes** that are under way in the industry.

The effectiveness of the emergency policies, depends crucially on their actual consistency with the already discernible long-run trend of the tourism industry. The pandemic is likely to induce a strong acceleration in a few months or years, rather than diluted in decades, of the underlying trends already at work (e.g. digitalization of the museums, blended cultural experiences...). On the contrary, other trends might be reversed (e.g. short stays in overcrowded destinations...)

Hence rather than try to continuing subsidizing models of business that are likely to become obsolete, unprofitable or not sustainable from the cultural, social or environmental point of view, the public support could develop fresh strategies for the tourism industry. These innovative sector-specific public policies could be aimed primarily at sustaining and/or developing, among others, sustainable/eco-friendly tourism, slow tourism off the beaten track, (e.g. in the form of rural, natural park, diffuse and short-distance tourism, walking religious pilgrimages, cyclo-tour...).

Even more than in the pre-pandemic, public policies should therefore offer a guidance to the industry and constitute a sort of “financial incubator” for these (sometime not yet designed) developments. The connected research question is:

*Q3. Are some of the public funding programs developed for the tourism sector and already included in the current pandemic strategies conditional to the implementation of innovative industry practices?*

Although the current pandemic is exceptional in many respects, single countries and the world as a whole faced other exogenous shocks, often but not always epidemic. On the occasion, local and national governments as well as international agencies funded emergency packages or designed long run public policies. By using the historical perspective, it is possible to analyse both the shaping and the impact of such policies.

*Q4. What can be learned by past pandemics and other exogenous shocks? Did the public policies designed in the past had a long-lasting effect and drive tourism towards new developments? Or did they slowdown changes?*

## Submissions

- Submission of full papers: **30<sup>th</sup> October 2020**
- First notifications to authors: **15<sup>th</sup> November 2020**
- Expected publication: **January 2021**

Articles must be submitted through the Almatourism Platform:

<https://almatourism.unibo.it/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions>

In order to properly prepare the submission, authors are recommended to follow the general guidelines of the magazine by downloading the file at the following link:

<https://journals.unibo.it//download/almatourism/AuthorGuidelinesAlmatourism.pdf>

Please note that submitted papers will undergo plagiarism checks through *iThenticate*, and a first selection procedure before accessing the double-blind review process.

All submissions must be written in English and submitted after undergoing a professional language review and proof-reading. Papers not in line with quality academic writing in English will be desk rejected.

For any questions or concerns, please contact: [almatourism@unibo.it](mailto:almatourism@unibo.it)