

Editor  
Kir Kuščer

330

320

310

300

290

280

# Influence of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies

A 8 4 5 4 2 3 2 3 5 5 6

90

80

70

60

50

40

30

20

10

0

Editor: Kir Kuščer

# INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES

University of *Ljubljana* SCHOOL OF **ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS**  
**Publishing**

School of Economics and Business University of Ljubljana

E-edition

**Editor: Kir Kuščer**

**Authors: Kir Kuščer, Erik Dallakyan, Mariana Ojeda Garcia, Belinda Akpene Ledi, Helina Betre, Ella Pommeranz, Peter Lewin, Theodora-Ioana Dragomir, Paula Rabanales Lau**  
**Influence of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies**

Publisher: School of Economics and Business, Ljubljana  
For publisher: Dean, prof. dr. Metka Tekavčič

Editorial board: prof. dr. Mojca Marc (predsednica), doc. dr. Mateja Bodlaj,  
prof. dr. Andreja Cirman, lekt. dr. Nadja Dobnik,  
prof. dr. Marko Košak, prof. dr. Tjaša Redek  
prof. dr. Miha Škerlavaj

Reviewers: doc. dr. Daša Farčnik, prof. dr. sc. Oliver Kesar  
Proofread by: Murray James Bales

Cover page designed by: Robert Ilovar  
Design and layout: Nina Kotar

Monograph is available online: [http://www.ef.uni-lj.si/zaloznistvo/raziskovalne\\_publicacije](http://www.ef.uni-lj.si/zaloznistvo/raziskovalne_publicacije)  
Price: 0,00€  
Ljubljana, 2023



---

Katalogni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani  
COBISS.SI-ID 156715523  
ISBN 978-961-240-391-1 (PDF)

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES</b>	<b>1</b>
	<i>Kir Kuščer and the EMTM 2020/2022 generation</i>	
1.1	Literature review	1
1.2	Purpose	2
1.3	Goals	3
1.4	Research questions	3
1.5	Methodology	4
1.6	Structure of the chapters in the monograph	6
<b>2</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN CYPRUS</b>	<b>7</b>
	<i>Erik Dallakyan</i>	
	ABSTRACT	7
2.1	Introduction	7
2.2	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tourism Policies	9
2.3	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism policies	10
2.4	Sustainability Pillars for Cyprus	10
2.4.1	Economic Pillar	11
2.4.2	Socio-Cultural Pillar	12
2.4.3	Natural Pillar	12
2.5	Responsibility Enablers for Cyprus	13
2.5.1	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	13
2.5.2	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	14
2.5.3	Socio-Political Capacity	14
2.6	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in Cyprus	15
2.7	Recommendations for Cyprus	19
<b>3</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN COSTA RICA</b>	<b>21</b>
	<i>Mariana Ojeda Garcia</i>	
	ABSTRACT	21
3.1	Introduction	21
3.2	Sustainability Pillars for Costa Rica	22
3.2.1	Economic Pillar	22
3.2.2	Socio-cultural Pillar	23
3.2.3	Natural Pillar	24
3.3	Responsibility Enablers for Costa Rica	24
3.3.1	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	25
3.3.2	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	25
3.3.3	Socio-Political Capacity	25
3.4	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in Costa Rica	26
3.5	Recommendations for Costa Rica	29

<b>4</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN MAURITIUS</b>	<b>31</b>
	<i>Belinda Akpene Ledi</i>	
	ABSTRACT	31
	4.1 Introduction	31
	4.2 Sustainability Pillars for Mauritius	33
	4.2.1 Economic Pillar	33
	4.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar	33
	4.2.3 Natural Pillar	34
	4.3 Responsibility Enablers for Mauritius	35
	4.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	35
	4.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	35
	4.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity	36
	4.4 Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies on Mauritius	36
	4.5 Recommendations for Mauritius	38
<b>5</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN GOTLAND, SWEDEN</b>	<b>40</b>
	<i>Helina Betre</i>	
	ABSTRACT	40
	5.1 Introduction	40
	5.2 Sustainability Pillars for Gotland, Sweden	42
	5.2.1 Economic Pillar	42
	5.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar	43
	5.2.3 Natural Pillar	43
	5.3 Responsibility Enablers for Gotland	44
	5.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	44
	5.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	44
	5.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity	45
	5.4 Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in Gotland	45
	5.5 Recommendations for Gotland	49
<b>6</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN COLOGNE, GERMANY</b>	<b>50</b>
	<i>Ella Pommeranz</i>	
	ABSTRACT	50
	6.1 Introduction	50
	6.2 Sustainability Pillars for Cologne	51
	6.2.1 Economic Pillar	52
	6.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar	53
	6.2.3 Natural Pillar	53
	6.3 Responsibility Enablers for Cologne	54
	6.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	55
	6.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	56
	6.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity	56

6.4	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in Cologne	57
6.5	Recommendations for Cologne	60
<b>7</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN LJUBLJANA</b>	<b>62</b>
	<i>Peter Lewin</i>	
	ABSTRACT	62
7.1	Introduction	62
7.2	Sustainability Pillars for Ljubljana	63
7.2.1	Economic Pillar	63
7.2.2	Socio-Cultural Pillar	64
7.2.3	Natural Pillar	64
7.3	Responsibility Enablers for Ljubljana	65
7.3.1	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	65
7.3.2	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	66
7.3.3	Socio-Political Capacity	66
7.4	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in Ljubljana	67
<b>8</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN THE DANUBE DELTA</b>	<b>72</b>
	<i>Theodora-Ioana Dragomir</i>	
	ABSTRACT	72
8.1	Introduction	72
8.2	Sustainability Pillars for the Danube Delta	73
8.2.1	Economic Pillar	74
8.2.2	Socio-Cultural Pillar	74
8.2.3	Natural Pillar	75
8.3	Responsibility Enablers for the Danube Delta	75
8.3.1	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	76
8.3.2	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	77
8.3.3	Socio-Political Capacity	77
8.4	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in the Danube Delta	79
8.5	Recommendations for the Danube Delta	81
<b>9</b>	<b>INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN LAKE ATITLAN, GUATEMALA</b>	<b>83</b>
	<i>Paula Rabanales Lau</i>	
	ABSTRACT	83
9.1	Introduction	83
9.2	Sustainability Pillars for Lake Atitlán, Guatemala	84
9.2.1	Economic Pillar	84
9.2.2	Socio-Cultural Pillar	84
9.2.3	Natural Pillar	85
9.3	Responsibility Enablers for Lake Atitlan, Guatemala	85
9.3.1	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply	85

9.3.2	Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand	86
9.3.3	Socio-Political Capacity	86
9.4	Influence of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sustainable Tourism Policies in Lake Atitlán, Guatemala	87
9.5	Recommendations for Lake Atitlán, Guatemala	90
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>92</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Basic Indicators for Cyprus	8
Table 2: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Cyprus	16
Table 3: Basic Indicators for Costa Rica	22
Table 4: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Costa Rica	27
Table 5: Basic Indicators for Mauritius	32
Table 6: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Mauritius	37
Table 7: Basic Indicators for Gotland, Sweden	41
Table 8: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Gotland	46
Table 9: Basic Indicators for Cologne, Germany	51
Table 10: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Cologne, Germany	58
Table 11: Basic Indicators for Ljubljana	62
Table 12: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Ljubljana	69
Table 13: Basic Indicators for the Danube Delta	73
Table 14: Sustainable Tourism Policies for the Danube Delta	81
Table 15: Basic Indicators for Guatemala	84
Table 16: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Lake Atitlan, Guatemala	89

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Responsustainable Model	4
-----------------------------------	---

# 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES

**Kir Kuščer and the EMTM 2020/2022 generation**

## 1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Policymaking regarding tourism in the times of COVID-19 has shifted from being understood as an enabler of tourism by regulating and guiding it, developing strategies of tourism development (Velasco, 2016; Ritchie, Goeldner & McIntosh, 2003) to using policymaking to dictate tourism flows and even closures of tourism enterprises (Kennell, 2020). During the pandemic, governments designed policies on social distance, travel bans, and quarantine (Sigala, 2020). The fact a tourism product is service-based and perishable means it has been one of the hardest hit industries (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020). Policymaking has replaced its previous passive role with a proactive role (Hall, Scott & Gössling, 2020; Kennell, 2020; Khalid, Okafor & Burzynska, 2021). Gravity and the prolonged nature of the COVID-19 crisis could change the face of tourism drastically (Dolnicar & Zare, 2020). It is sometimes argued that policies are more affected by politics than shown by empirical evidence (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020). Across the globe, travel restrictions were introduced that hold serious ramifications for the tourism industry (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020; Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020). Still, there was no single correct way to battle the COVID-19 crisis, countries were affected differently due to variances in their culture, politics, forms of tourism and the stakeholders and thus individual countries needed to formulate their own scheme to respond to it (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis can be seen in the response, recovery and restart phases of tourism policymaking (Sigala, 2020). Financial initiatives for the tourism industry feature in the response phase that reflects immediate action following the start of the COVID-19 crisis (Bhuiyan et al., 2020; Persson-Fischer & Liu, 2021). Fiscal stimuli are also introduced (ETC, 2020): the more important the tourism industry for the country, the bigger the stimulus packages (Khalid, Okafor, & Burzynska, 2021). Innovation, digitalisation and entrepreneurship are typical for the recovery phase. Sustainability, crisis management, stakeholder collaboration and product development are visible in this phase, which builds resilience. UNWTO (2020a) solutions to the crisis were formed regarding crisis management, recovery improvement and planning for the future. Tourism policies will in the future need to become more adaptive and react quicker to changes in the environment (OECD, 2020a).

UNWTO (n.d.a) defines sustainable tourism development as three pillars and three requirements. The economic, socio-cultural and environmental pillars are the building blocks of sustainable development, whereas the requirements in the form of tourist satisfaction, environmental education and collaboration of all stakeholders are vital for sustainable development to be successfully implemented in tourism. These three pillars of sustainability must be balanced if we are to recover from the COVID-19 crisis in the best way and build a sustainable tourism future (Polukhina et al., 2021).

Before the COVID-19 crisis, tourism policies had focused on digitalisation, sustainability and improvements in quality (OECD, 2020b). With the onset of the crisis, policies have shifted towards restoring consumer confidence, promoting domestic tourism, supporting businesses, employment and limiting uncertainty, while still trying to be sustainable (OECD, 2020a). Financial incentives have the power to make the development of tourism more sustainable or merely promote the current approach to growth (Khalid, Okafor & Burzynska, 2021). They feel the emphasis should be on the environmental and social characteristics of sustainable tourism development. Yet, the COVID-19 crisis has hampered efforts towards sustainable development where especially the social dimension, the labour market in tourism, has been seriously affected (Seshaiyer & McNeely, 2020). Sustainable tourism policymaking means including and cultivating relationships among all stakeholders (Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021). The COVID-19 crisis did, however, help to limit both resource use and environmental pollution (Bhuiyan, et al., 2020) through lower energy and oil consumption, which might bounce back immediately once the crisis is over (Nagaj & Zuromskaite, 2021). Tourism must strive to become more locally oriented and environmentally conscious (Brouder, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis gave an opportunity to rethink the current form of tourism and move from volume- to quality-oriented sustainable tourism (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020). Ioannides and Gyimóthy (2020), Higgins-Desbiolles (2020) and Niewiadomski (2020) all see the Bhuiyan COVID-19 crisis as a chance to move towards more sustainable tourism development. Resource use, waste, tourists' behaviour and the quality of life of locals should be the focus of tourism development following the COVID-19 crisis (Bhuiyan et al., 2020). The restart stage should move the tourism industry towards environmental and social sustainability along with education to bring about the recovery (Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021).

The fact countries have different forms of tourism and governments means there is no single solution for ensuring that tourism develops properly (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020) and the pledge of the international community to implement sustainable tourism policies to create a better and more crisis-resistant tourism sector is vital (Hall, Scott & Gössling, 2020). This should be based on the tourism sector's inclusivity, sustainability and responsibility for its improvement (UNWTO, 2020a), while no carbon emissions, digitalisation, minimising leakages and better distribution of value should become the new norms (Gössling, McCabe & Chen, 2020; OECD, 2020b). This led Cohen (2020) to urge for a rethink and to implement systemic change in travel and tourism in the direction of sustainability during the COVID-19 era to ensure a bright and sustainable future for humanity.

## 1.2 PURPOSE

The main purpose of this qualitative research was to identify and assess tourism policies and sustainable tourism policies applied to selected destinations prior to and throughout the stages of response, recovery and restart with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also aimed to look into the social, political and psychological capacities of tourism in various destinations via the lens of responsustainability.

### 1.3 GOALS

Among key goals of the research, the following aspects were the main areas of focus:

1. To identify the demand and supply of tourism by defining the three pillars of sustainability through a secondary data analysis.
2. To analyse sustainable tourism development with regard to the rationale of particular policies adopted by destinations. Related to the COVID-19 pandemic, to examine the response, recovery and restart stages.
3. To analyse destination policies based on the three enablers of the Responsustainable model, including social-psychological tourism demand, tourism supply and social-political capacity. To evaluate and address (sustainable) tourism policies and changes, implemental tools and action plans formulated for tourism recovery. To develop recommendations for monitoring and evaluating tourism policies used at a particular destination.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

› Sustainability pillars: Social, Economic and Environmental pillars

1. How did sustainable tourism policies develop during the COVID-19 crisis to tackle each sustainability pillar at the destination?

› Tourism Demand and Supply

2. Which measures were taken to satisfy tourist needs following the safety regulations?
3. How did the drop in tourist arrivals allow or a rethinking of sustainable policy?
4. Which marketing approaches have tourism destinations adopted to become more competitive and retain their market presence during COVID-19?
5. What are the internal and external influences on the policymaking process?
6. How has the public sector engaged stakeholder inclusivity in a destination's planning process?

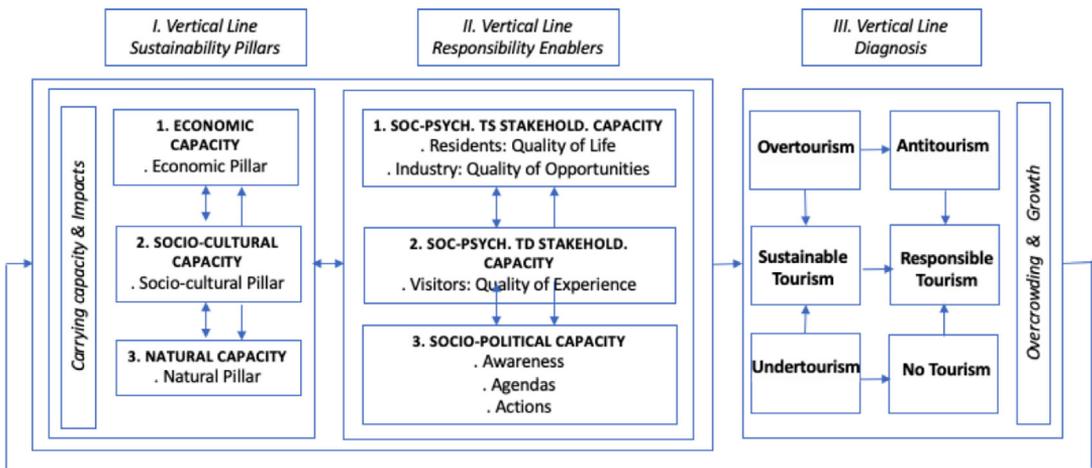
› Socio-Political capacity

7. How did the perception of sustainability change during the COVID-19 pandemic (from awareness to actions) for a given destination?
8. Which actions were taken to comply with national policy and regulations (external factors)?

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

The methodology part describes the model used while conducting the research: the Responsustainable Model (SRT) proposed by Mihalic (2020). The qualitative research entailed a semi-structured interview with purposive sampling as the primary data collection source.

Figure 1: Responsustainable Model



TS... tourism supply; TD ... tourism demand.

Source: Adapted from Mihalic, 2020.

Following the Responsustainable Model (SRT) adapted from Mihalic (2020), the analysis in this monograph is based on the sustainability pillars and the responsibility enablers of a destination. The pillars are represented by the first vertical line in the model and will provide the basis for the secondary research presented in this monograph. Data on the economic, socio-cultural and natural pillars were collected through secondary data analysis. The latter element – the responsibility enablers of a destination – which is found on the second vertical line of the model is the target of the primary research and the core of the interviews we conducted: this section focuses on the social-psychological capacity for tourism supply, the socio-psychological capacity for tourism demand, and the socio-political capacity.

The SRT paradigm aims to bring the six relevant elements together – the pillars and the triggers – to determine sustainable agendas in tourism. This model was created to establish better understanding and a new awareness of responsible tourism through the actions and behaviours of all stakeholders involved. This paradigm was chosen to stress the importance of environmental awareness and the improvement of sustainable tourism policies, which underpins this paper (Mihalic, 2021).

For the purpose of this research, interviews will be conducted in a primarily face-to-face format with the use of Zoom or other video conferencing software. This method has been chosen as it comes with the advantages of an in-person interview, such as the possibility for the interviewee to expand on the questions we have chosen, the ability for the interviewer to engage with non-verbal cues, and for the length of the interview to be less regimented based on the extent of the answer (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011). Further, given the current epidemiological situation, which has acted as a driver of this research, the use of video conferencing software will permit us to conduct the interviews while adhering to the safety measures in place. In addition, specific interview questions will be prepared in order to mitigate the potential weaknesses of the interview method such as undisclosed bias and the desire to answer questions 'correctly' (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011). Where not possible, interviews will be conducted via email. We believe the validity of email interviews is the next-best alternative to face-to-face options as both parties will have time to prepare questions and answers in a well-structured manner, while with the pre-selected interview questions feel that we can combat the weaknesses of an email interview like its time-consuming nature and possibility of misunderstanding (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011).

The semi-structured interview (SSI) is perceived here as the optimal way for conducting our research as it is a combination of structured and unstructured interview with closed-, open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions give respondents a limited set of options while open-ended questions allow them to freely express their own ideas and knowledge. Open-ended questions therefore become stepping stones for open-ended probing. For example, possible questions can be "Why is that?" or "Why do you feel that way?" (William, 2015). The SSI is flexible and detail-oriented because it allows the conversation to meander around the topic and not just stick to the standard questions. This is also a good approach while exploring unpredictable issues (William, 2015). According to William (2015), use of the SSI has some drawbacks since it requires knowledgeable interviewers and time-consuming processes. The SSI includes tasks of selecting prospective respondents; preparing, setting up the interviews and analysing the variable answers. The credibility of the responses must also be considered as the participants may hold biased views on specific issues. In this research, the interviewees are small groups of people and thus it is to be believed that the SSI's disadvantages can be mitigated.

Researchers use several types of nonprobability samples. These include purposive samples, snowball samples, quota samples and convenience samples (DeCarlo, 2018). For the purpose of gathering relevant and credible data regarding the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable tourism policies, the purposive sampling method has been applied. Purposive sampling refers to a process where participants are selected because they meet criteria predetermined by the researcher as relevant to addressing the research question (e.g., people of a particular age or other demographic category) (Given, 2008). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). According to Bernard (2002), it is important to note the availability and willingness to participate and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner. Accordingly, interviewees operating solely within the tourism industry and based on the role they have in the organisation were chosen.

## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS IN THE MONOGRAPH**

The monograph discusses tourism policies in numerous destinations and explores the differences and similarities of these policies across the globe. It adds to the body of knowledge with the analysis of actions taken during the second wave of COVID-19. The chapters that follow show the sustainable and ordinary tourism policies implemented or discussed at the analysed destinations: Cyprus, Costa Rica, Mauritius, Gotland (Sweden), Cologne (Germany), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Danube Delta (Romania) and Lake Atitlan (Guatemala). The chapters present the results for the selected countries/destinations while the Conclusion outlines the overall results, generalises the findings and provides a 'bigger picture' of this research.

## 2 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN CYPRUS

**Erik Dallakyan**

### ABSTRACT

Despite the major decline in international tourism arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis also became an opportunity for policymakers around the world to rethink their sustainable tourism policies. Cyprus is a small Mediterranean island that suffered economically and hence policies had to be formulated to adapt to the new changes, an area the paper aims to explore. In this context, the Responsustable Model is applied to analyse the economic, socio-cultural and natural pillars of sustainability for Cyprus, as well as its socio-psychological and socio-political capacities. The model helps to understand how Cyprus is doing in each of the sustainability pillars, how the quality of life of the stakeholders is addressed and what the policies entail. The sustainable tourism policies of Cyprus, even though already in place before the pandemic, fail to address all of the sustainability pillars and all stakeholders' needs. The paper further explores which actions are taken for ensuring sustainability apart from the policy and how these policies changed due to the pandemic. Insights were gained from an interview with a tourism officer at the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus. The paper also looks at where Cyprus was standing on the Triple-A (Awareness, Agenda, Action) Model of responsible actions prior to the pandemic and in which phase it is currently.

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The exceptional features of islands in the Mediterranean like their climate, exotic elements and being physically separated from the continent make them unique destinations offering desirable experiences to tourists (Carlsen & Butler, 2011). Thus, the majority of the islands in the Mediterranean basin have mostly been trying to satisfy mass tourism needs, which poses a threat to sustainability (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). As an island state, Cyprus has all of the above characteristics and been relying on mass tourism since becoming independent from the United Kingdom in 1960 (Farmaki et al., 2015). The country experienced the first major decline in tourism arrivals in 1974 after the north of the island was occupied by Turkey (Farmaki et al., 2015). Despite the challenges, the country managed to reach about 4 million tourism arrivals in 2019 (CYSTAT, 2021b). However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused another major decline in tourism arrivals impacting the economic pillar of sustainability (Cyprus Profile, 2020). The presented research attempts to reveal how sustainable tourism policies in Cyprus changed during the pandemic.

Tourism is one of the best performing economic sectors in Cyprus, with the last few decades having been record-breaking regarding both the number of international tourism arrivals and revenues (Cyprus Profile, 2020). In 2019, there were 3,976,777 tourists arrived in Cyprus, namely the highest number of tourism arrivals the country had ever experienced (CYSTAT, 2021b). However,

the global outbreak of COVID-19 severely impacted the tourism industry whereby all numbers saw a drastic reduction. Table 1 illustrates the main indicators for Cyprus and demonstrates how tourism-related indicators changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Table 1: Basic Indicators for Cyprus*

Indicator	Cyprus
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	9,251
Population	1,207,359
Registered unemployment rate in tourism 2020 (%)	19.6*
Unemployment rate change in tourism 2020/2019	+6%
Tourism arrivals in 2020	631,609
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-84.1
Nights spent in 2020	Not available
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	Not available

*Source: CYSTAT, 2021a; CYSTAT, 2021b; Visit Cyprus, n.d.; Worldometer, 2020*

\*Tourism is not regarded as a separate economic activity by the Statistical Service of Cyprus. For statistical purposes, Accommodation and Food Service Activities represent the tourism industry and therefore the unemployment rate for that sector is used (Tourism Officer, personal communication, 26 April 2021).

Cyprus is the third-largest island in the Mediterranean basin and has a land area of 9,251 square kilometres. The island nation is situated at the north-eastern end of the Mediterranean and has a population of 1,207,359 (Visit Cyprus, n.d.). With around 4 million tourism arrivals for the 2 years preceding the pandemic, Cyprus is the 7th most visited country in the world based on the total number of tourists per capita (Travelmag, 2018). The year 2020 started with an annual rise of 2% in tourism arrivals for the first 2 months, but then tourism arrivals decreased significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions (CYSTAT, 2021b). In 2020, tourism arrivals in Cyprus totalled 631,609, representing a 84.1% decrease compared to 2019. This decrease was mostly caused by the ban of entering the country imposed on several categories of people, including tourists, from mid-March to June 2020. For this reason, Cyprus recorded 0 tourism arrivals in the months of April and May. Later, the travel restrictions were gradually lifted, allowing arrivals from specific countries based on an epidemiological risk assessment of them. While tourism arrivals increased non-significantly for the rest of 2020, they were still well below those seen in 2019.

Since gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, Cyprus has managed to keep its employment rate high (Farmaki et al., 2015). Accommodation and Food Services, which officially represent the tourism industry in Cyprus, employ over 10% of the labour force. In 2019, only 5,976 people were unemployed in the Cyprus tourism industry, equivalent to a 13.6% unemployment rate. In 2020, the unemployment rate in the tourism industry grew by 6 percentage points, reaching 19.6% or 7,002 unemployed people (CYSTAT, 2021a).

As stated by the tourism officer at the Deputy Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Cyprus, overnight stays made by tourists for 2020 have still not been released. This means it is impossible to compare how the number of overnight stays was affected by the pandemic. It should be noted that overnight stays in Cyprus also had an increasing tendency before the pandemic. In 2019, 17,573,684 guest nights were spent in hotel and tourism establishments in tourism, a 2.4% increase over 2018 (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020a).

The paper starts by discussing how tourism and sustainable tourism policies were impacted around the world and which policies were designed for the response, recovery and restart stages of the pandemic. Major statistical indicators for Cyprus are then analysed. The economic, socio-cultural and natural pillars of sustainability are analysed for Cyprus too, together with the responsibility enablers. They are placed together in the Responsustainable Model to better understand how sustainable tourism policies changed due to the pandemic. The following sections describe the purpose, goals and methodology of the paper. The findings section is designed based on the interview with a representative of the tourism industry, which addresses the research questions. Finally, the last section concludes and provides recommendations for Cyprus and future research based on the paper's limitations.

## 2.2 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TOURISM POLICIES

Tourism policy is defined as a set of regulations, rules, guidelines and strategies that is translated into actions to affect long-term tourism development and activities at a destination (Velasco, 2016; Ritchie, Goeldner & McIntosh, 2003). Tourism policymaking was affected by COVID-19 and the assumption, in place prior to the pandemic, that the state only has an enabling presence in the tourism industry has been questioned (Kennell, 2020). Across nations, the state has become the most important actor in policymaking using its power to close and open borders for tourists, as well as close and open tourism enterprises (Kennell, 2020). While this approach suggests that COVID-19 meant that many stakeholders participated in tourism policymaking to a lesser extent, some authors find that good relationships among all stakeholders are vital for crisis management (Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021). Tourism policies can be discussed with reference to the three stages of the pandemic – response, recovery and restart (Sigala, 2020). In the response stage, tourism policies were characterised by different financial initiatives such as insurance and subsidy programmes for employees and companies in the tourism industry (Bhuiyan et al., 2020; Persson-Fischer & Liu, 2021; Rodríguez-Antón & Alonso-Almeida, 2020). Besides, policymakers created phased recovery plans, stimulating smart and digital tourism, restoring the confidence of travellers (Zhang et al., 2021). A large number of studies also suggests that policy measures aim to make the regions more resilient to shocks/crises (Kaczmarek, 2021; Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021; Sobaih et al., 2021). The measures include prioritising government actions to respond to the crisis, technology innovation, the involvement of local communities etc., – thereby preparing for the restart stage (Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021). However, Collins-Kreiner and Ram (2020) suggest that many policy decisions were derived from politics rather than facts and empirical research. Moreover, governments did not consider the special features of different tourism businesses while

imposing the restrictive measures (Chen et al., 2020). To sum up, the COVID-19 pandemic has made crisis management a focus area in tourism policies, leading to sustainability becoming more prominent in tourism choices (OECD, 2020a).

### 2.3 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES

According to UNWTO, sustainable tourism should be mindful of “its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNWTO, n.d.a.). The COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdown conditions resulted in less pollution and limited use of natural resources (Bhuiyan, et al., 2020). This led sustainability to become more prominent due to greater awareness of climate change and the negative impacts of tourism (OECD, 2020a). Historically and prior to the pandemic, the ‘success’ of tourism was measured by the growth in tourism numbers, yet, the COVID-19 crisis is seen as an opportunity to reconsider the logic that more arrivals bring more benefits (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020). The pandemic encouraged the reconsideration of the “global volume growth model of tourism” (Gössling, Scott & Hall, 2020). Ioannides and Gyimóthy (2020) state that COVID-19 gave the perfect opportunity to choose a brand-new direction for tourism policies towards a more sustainable tourism development path. The response and recovery stages of the pandemic have therefore been characterised by governments recognising the prominence of sustainable tourism. As for the restart stage, Sharma, Thomas and Paul (2021) state that it is necessary to reorganise the tourism industry based on actual planning rather than paperwork. This will lead the industry toward education, environmental and social justice, and gradual recovery (Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021). Further, the post-pandemic situation calls for sustainable tourism development based on different environmental aspects, the use of natural resources, waste management practices together with tourists’ behaviour, destination choice and the quality of life of the local communities (Bhuiyan et al., 2020). It should be noted that no single policy can fit all situations and different countries have adopted different sustainability policies based on their local politics, tourism actors, society and culture (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020). Nevertheless, “without an international commitment to sustainable tourism, this sector will not become more resilient and better prepared for future crises” (Hall, Scott & Gössling, 2020).

### 2.4 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR CYPRUS

The fact that Cyprus has been heavily investing in mass tourism since the 1960s makes the destination over-reliant on tourism, poses threats to its limited natural resources, causes the gradual loss of cultural identity and the creation of its traditional “sun and sand image” (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016; Clerides & Pashourtidou, 2007). The tourism authorities in Cyprus have thus highlighted the need for a more sustainable tourism development strategy to balance the economic, socio-cultural and natural pillars (Farmaki et al., 2015). Since 2010, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (now transformed into the Deputy Ministry of Tourism) and the Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative have worked together to make Cyprus a leader in sustainable tourism, ensuring maximum economic benefits, promoting the local culture and conserving the natural environment (Deputy

Ministry of Tourism, 2013). In 2015, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation won a Silver Award as “Best Destination for Responsible Tourism” at the World Responsible Tourism Awards ceremony. The tourism industry of Cyprus has additionally received various international awards, including the sustainable Destinations Global Top 100, VISION on Sustainable Tourism, Totem Tourism and Green Destination titles awarded to the cities of Limassol and Paphos (KPMG Cyprus, 2017). The next sections will discuss how Cyprus is performing in each sustainability pillar. The three pillars are subject to the positive or negative impacts of tourism and relate to the economic, socio-cultural and natural capacities shown in Figure 1 (Mihalic, 2020). Economic capacity is the minimum production volume that is still economically viable and is subject to the mass production effects of tourism enterprises (Mihalic, 2021). Socio-cultural capacity is the maximum number of tourists that does not trigger negative social and cultural effects at the destination (Mihalic, 2021). Natural capacity refers to the level of natural resource use after which nature is damaged (Mihalic, 2021).

### 2.4.1 Economic Pillar

In relation to the economic pillar, sustainable tourism should provide economic benefits to all stakeholders establishing viable and long-term economic operations (UNWTO, n.d.a.). The economic pillar of sustainability has been the best performing for Cyprus in recent years. Tourism contributes (directly and indirectly) close to 20% of Cyprus’ GDP (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020b). Following the 2007–2008 financial crisis, the number of international tourism arrivals ranged from 2.1 million tourists in 2009 to about 4 million in 2019 (CYSTAT, 2021b). Revenue from tourism in 2019 was estimated at EUR 2.7 billion and tourism expenditure per person reached EUR 674.65 (CYSTAT, 2021b). These numbers indicate that tourism is a huge contributor to Cyprus’ economy. Still, the economic pillar also faces some challenges.

The first big challenge relates to the seasonality of tourism in Cyprus. Cyprus has traditionally been seen as a summer destination because the promotion of tourism has mainly focused on the concepts of sun and sea. This creates seasonality for tourism, meaning that tourism inflows are spread unevenly in the year. For example, although in 2019 tourism arrivals exceeded 0.5 million between July and September, they were only around 100,000 during the winter months (CYSTAT, 2021b). This causes issues such as unequal distribution of the revenue from tourism throughout the year and a higher unemployment rate in the winter season.

The other big challenge is too much dependence on tourism. Should the demand for tourism change, the number of visitors to a destination could decrease and if an economy is dependent on tourism, it will also be negatively affected, as occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourism arrivals and revenues fell 84.1% and 85.4%, respectively, there was a sharp rise in unemployment in services and, even following a gradual recovery, in 2020 tourism could only hover around 25% of the 2019 revenues (CYSTAT, 2021b).

### 2.4.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

When it comes to the socio-cultural pillar, sustainable tourism should respect the socio-cultural authenticity of the local communities, conserving their cultural heritage and traditions (UNWTO, n.d.a.). The fact that Cyprus has been developed as a mass tourism destination makes it hard to keep its socio-cultural integrity and the communities' quality of life. Although tourism brings an income to locals, there are still social problems that alter their quality of life (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). The seasonal character of Cypriot tourism means local employees in the tourism industry must work long hours during the summer period, whereas the unemployment rate rises during the low-peak season because many hotels and tourist businesses stop operating then (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). In an attempt to combat the seasonality of tourism and unbalanced tourism development entailing high levels of concentration in some coastal areas, several golf courses were constructed and golf tourism started to be promoted as part of the Cypriot tourism policy (Boukas, Boustras & Sinka, 2011). Yet, Boukas and Ziakas (2016) argue that to maintain these golf courses a considerable amount of water is needed and, given that water is scarce or absent on the dry Mediterranean island, this threatens the prosperity of the locals. Nevertheless, one should note that during COVID-19 there was no mass tourism and seasonality did not feature much on Cyprus.

The cultural side of Cyprus' tourism is sometimes overlooked. The majority of studies show that leading reasons for tourists to visit Cyprus are leisure, sun and sea (KPMG, 2017). Cyprus' key advantages for cultural tourism are the clean archaeological sites, which are easily accessible, and its heritage (KPMG, 2017). Cyprus has three UNESCO world heritage sites, all of which are cultural and special management plans have been prepared to ensure their conservation and promotion for future generations (UNESCO, n.d.). In addition, other elements of the local culture like the local food, wine, traditional crafts and artistic events form an integral part of the tourist experience (VisitCyprus, n.d.). Yet, Boukas and Ziakas (2016) note that tourism suppliers in Cyprus have frequently adjusted themselves to specific markets (such as the Russian and British ones from where most tourists come) without maintaining the cultural identity.

### 2.4.3 Natural Pillar

With respect to the natural pillar, sustainable tourism should utilise environmental resources in an optimal way to maintain vital ecological processes and preserve biodiversity (UNWTO, n.d.a.). Cyprus' dependence on tourism and the seasonality of tourism also pose a challenge for the sustainability of the natural pillar. Cyprus, as a small island, is characterised by limited space, resources and water supplies, as well as a dry climate. Excessive and uncarefully planned tourism development can hence put pressure on these resources, bring about deforestation and the elimination of wildlife. One example of careless development planning is the construction of golf courses to combat tourism's seasonality during the winter months. This development has led to the excessive use of water and land, namely, both elements of which Cyprus has limited amounts (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016).

However, when it comes to the pollution of the natural environment, Cyprus is doing better. Cyprus' famous beaches have been crowned "Cleanest Bathing Waters in Europe" after enjoying a consistent 100% score (KPMG, 2017). The beaches have been awarded 57 Blue Flags, which make Cyprus the country with the most Blue Flags per capita in the world. Cyprus also has the densest concentration of Blue Flag beaches and the most Blue Flag beaches per coastline in the world (KPMG, 2017).

## 2.5 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR CYPRUS

Since sustainability is seen as a concept or theory, responsibility came into play to emphasise the implementation of sustainable tourism through sustainable practices and appropriate actions (Mihalic, 2016). Responsible tourism means taking actions and taking responsibility by consumers, suppliers and governments to address the impacts of tourism, enhancing the positive impacts and reducing the negative ones (Mihalic, 2016).

Considering that there is a risk of unsustainability in any destination, the risk can be viewed from the perspective of responsibility enablers (Mihalic, 2020). Responsibility enablers help to ensure the well-being and satisfaction of the local communities, the tourism industry and tourists (Mihalic, 2020). The second column in Figure 1 illustrates the three responsibility enablers. The first two boxes represent the socio-psychological capacity of tourism stakeholders on the supply and demand sides, respectively. The third box, called socio-political capacity, is about the awareness, agenda and actions by relevant stakeholders (Mihalic, 2020). It should be noted that while these enablers are presented separately, they are interdependent and the relationships among them are not simple. To further understand the three responsibility enablers, they will be discussed individually and exemplified with the case of Cyprus.

### 2.5.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

The World Tourism Organisation defines carrying capacity as "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, sociocultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction" (UNWTO, 1981). Socio-psychological capacity is the first responsibility enabler, as shown in the first box of the second column in Figure 1. This enabler refers to the destination's supply side and represents the satisfaction of relevant stakeholders from the private, public and social sectors of a destination, specifically the residents' quality of life and industry's opportunities. These can refer to perceptions of tourism's impacts on the destination or possible irritations that local stakeholders experience because of the growth in tourism (Mihalic, 2020). The irritation of residents can be explained by Doxey's destination irritation index. According to the index, as visitation numbers grow at a destination, residents pass through several stages of emotions. Initially, tourists are welcomed. However, as the number of tourists keeps rising and causes congestion and rising prices etc., the acceptance of tourists turns negative (Doxey, 1975). As for the tourism industry, with growing numbers of tourists tourism businesses struggle to alleviate and manage the negative environmental impacts of tourism (Mihalic, 2020).

According to a study conducted by Boukas and Ziakas in 2016, although local communities benefit from tourism, that is chiefly because of the economic benefits that tourism brings to Cyprus. In fact, locals' voice is missing in the tourism policies as regards how the tourist activity impacts their quality of life and what needs to be improved (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). Since the majority of tourists are mass tourists, local interaction is principally part of the cheap tourism package, which mostly focuses on tourists' satisfaction while ignoring how the tourism is impacting the quality of life of the locals (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016).

The national tourism strategy of Cyprus for 2030, which was released in 2020, namely before the COVID-19 pandemic started, highlights that residents should enjoy the island equally as tourists do (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020b). The pandemic and lower number of tourists have helped to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on residents, however the tourism industry is being deprived of the economic benefits.

### 2.5.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

The second box of the second column of Figure 1 presents the socio-psychological capacity for tourism demand. Visitors' satisfaction is considered on the tourism demand side and can also be diminished by the overgrowth of tourism arrivals. Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle concept (TALC) links a destination's carrying capacity to its irritation level (Butler, 1980). More specifically, it suggests that when the carrying capacities of a destination have been reached, the destination's development and visitations decline. Crowding can change the perception of the desirability, liveability and economic viability of an area (Gössling, McCabe & Chen, 2020). This means that the attractiveness and image of a destination decline because of the negative impacts of tourism (Butler, 1980). A destination can reverse the decline and rejuvenate tourism subject to appropriate destination management and socio-political capacities, as is discussed in the next sub-section.

In the early 2000s, Cyprus was experiencing a decline in tourism arrivals after having promoted mass tourism. While tourism arrivals were 2.4 million in 2002, they reached 2.1 million in 2009, showing Cyprus was losing its competitive edge (CYSTAT, 2021b). After the financial crisis, the tourism planning started to become more short-term to adapt to rapid changes and increase the quality of the tourism product (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). The most recent National Tourism Strategy for 2030 mentions several actions to be taken to enhance visitor satisfaction in the future. These include rebranding Cyprus internationally as a destination that offers more than sun and sand, improving airline connectivity to the island, encouraging repeat visits to Cyprus through a loyalty scheme etc. (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020b).

### 2.5.3 Socio-Political Capacity

The socio-political capacity is displayed in the third box of the second column in Figure 1. It relates to the three social stages of responsible behaviour presented in the Triple-A Model – Awareness, Agenda and Action (Mihalic, 2016). Awareness means being aware of the environmental impacts

of tourism on the destination. Agenda means turning the identified sustainability issues into goals that are then included in the destination's strategy. Finally, action is the implementation of a sustainable policy and sustainable actions (Mihalic, 2016).

Looking at the National Tourism Strategy 2030 of Cyprus, one may assume that the destination is at least on the agenda stage with respect to all three sustainability pillars. The strategy includes goals to allow future travellers and residents to enjoy the island in equal measure, and to make Cyprus a year-round and digitally smart destination. To enable all residents to benefit from tourism the Deputy Ministry of Tourism plans to spread tourism revenue across all regions of Cyprus by promoting rural and mountainous areas (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020b). This will also help to avoid the concentration of tourists in coastal areas. It is also planned to link authentic gastronomy with agriculture to spread the benefits of tourism to other sectors of the economy (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020b).

A destination can proceed to the next stage of responsible behaviour even if the previous stage has not fully matured (Mihalic, 2016). In the case of Cyprus, actions are being taken for the natural pillar, even though the destination is mostly in the awareness stage. The Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative together with the Deputy Ministry of Tourism implemented a programme to provide hoteliers with minimum standards and guidelines for sustainability. These guidelines outline the importance for hotels to be committed to reducing their impacts on the natural environment. They also help them obtain certification from a GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria) scheme (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2013). How sustainability policies changed because of COVID-19 in Cyprus and whether the destination has moved to a higher or lower level of responsible behaviour is discussed next.

## **2.6 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN CYPRUS**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism of Cyprus had released the National Tourism Strategy 2030, which already tackled sustainability issues. The strategy's vision is to develop tourism in Cyprus in a sustainable way, in turn positively impacting the economy, society and nature (Deputy Ministry of Tourism, 2020b). According to the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, instead of simply focusing on increasing the number of tourism arrivals, they plan to develop the destination as a whole and in a sustainable way to preserve its natural and cultural assets for future generations.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an affect on Cyprus' tourism and sustainable tourism policies, very similar to that discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.2. For example, it started with the role of the state becoming more prominent when it closed the borders to tourists for almost 3 months (Cyprus Profile, 2020). Financial incentives were also provided, like in the majority of destinations. For example, in June 2020, after the country started to gradually open its borders, a new scheme with a budget of EUR 6.3 million was launched to support the aviation industry. The scheme aimed to encourage airlines to provide flights even with low occupancy rates (Cyprus Profile, 2020)

More detailed findings concerning how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the sustainable tourism policies of Cyprus are to be discussed later in the paper. The findings will be linked with the response, recovery and restart stages of the pandemic discussed in sections 1.1 and 1.2. The next sub-sections will introduce the purpose and goals of this research along with the research questions and methodology applied. The findings will then be presented as part of answering the research questions.

This section aims to outline the findings regarding the sustainable tourism policies in Cyprus by answering the research questions. The information related to sustainable tourism policies was obtained through an interview with a tourism officer at the Deputy Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus. Table 2 gives an overview of those policies.

*Table 2: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Cyprus*

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: National Regional Local
National Tourism Strategy 2030	Yes	Make the destination more environmentally friendly and greener	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	National
Green initiatives	Yes	Promote rural tourism, agrotourism, make hotels environmentally friendly	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	National
Financial initiatives to support businesses	Yes	Help businesses retain their employees to keep unemployment low	Deputy Ministry of Tourism Ministry of Labour	National
Financial instruments for businesses	Yes	Help businesses with freezing and repaying their loans	Ministry of Finance	National
Incentive Schemes for restaurants	Yes	Help restaurants to undertake renovation works	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	National
Online advertising of Cyprus	Yes	Promote Cyprus virtually so that travellers are motivated to book their holidays on Cyprus after the pandemic	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	National
Promotion of domestic tourism	Yes	Paying part of the overnight rate to hotels so that Cypriots can have their holidays on Cyprus	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	National
Green Digital Certificate	No	Allow travellers from Cyprus to travel more freely within the European Union	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	EU / National

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: National Regional Local
European Recovery and Resiliency Fund for member states (including Cyprus)	No	Make the tourism industry more sustainable and more resilient to future challenges, emphasising the green transition, digitalisation and differentiation of the tourism product	Deputy Ministry of Tourism	EU / National

*Source: Tourism Officer, personal communication, 26 April 2021*

To answer the first sub-research question about how each sustainability pillar was tackled in Cyprus during the stages of the pandemic, it is worth reminding that the economic pillar suffered the most from COVID-19. This explains why the government provided financial assistance to tourism businesses. The Deputy Ministry of Tourism in fact paid part of the overnight rate to hotels (as the interviewee stated, many hotels did not wish to open without international tourism) so that Cypriots could travel within the country cheaply. This also partially addressed the social pillar considering that it would improve their quality of life (Tourism Officer, personal communication, 26 April 2021). However, no specific policies to deal with the socio-cultural and natural pillars were considered during the pandemic.

To satisfy the needs of travellers following the safety regulations (sub-research question 2), the government started promoting slow tourism. “I think travellers want to go to a destination and they want to have authentic experiences, sensory experiences, they want to come into contact with the local population”, the interviewee stated. As for sub-research question 3, the interviewee indicated that the drop in tourists was a wake-up call for how much the country depends on tourism and that is necessary to diversify the economy and income of Cyprus. Accordingly, to bring back tourists after the pandemic the Deputy Ministry of Tourism started the virtual promotion of Cyprus and, as the interviewee claimed, “diverted its marketing budget to online advertising.” This also addresses sub research question 4 regarding marketing approaches. The factors influencing the policymaking process (that sub research question 5 aims to explore) are the budget of tourism businesses (explaining why the government provided them with financial assistance to invest in initiatives like the circular economy and waste management) and Cyprus’ geographical location. As explained by the interviewee, even after Cyprus was gradually opened to tourists, tourists still preferred to travel in their own countries or to travel to their neighbouring countries by train, which for an island nation is impossible. The Deputy Ministry of Tourism therefore started a scheme to promote domestic tourism. “We made a scheme at the national level with hotels that would be interested to open for domestic tourism. And the financial scheme was also to support Cypriots to have their holidays in Cyprus. So, part of the overnight rate would be paid by the government”, the interviewee elaborated. Speaking of sub research question 6 about stakeholders’ inclusion in policymaking, the interviewee stated that everything they do entails close collaboration with stakeholders. For instance, during the interview it was mentioned that many stakeholders (tourist guides, agencies) are against digitalisation, which had started before the pandemic and was

enhanced by it. The reason is that people book everything online and no longer need their services. However, the Deputy Ministry of Tourism always acts in close collaboration with stakeholders to help them adapt to this new era (Tourism Officer, personal communication, 26 April 2021). This concludes the second group of sub research questions regarding tourism demand and supply.

Sub research question 7 attempts to determine how the perception of sustainability changed during the COVID-19 pandemic at the destination. According to the interviewee, the sustainability issue was already present before the pandemic. “What changed is the urgency [the timeline]. Under ‘normal’ circumstances, maybe some of the changes that we had foreseen would have been implemented in the long run, like until 2030. I think we sort of realised that we really need to speed up these changes for a more sustainable destination”. One may thus assume that the destination stayed in the agenda stage of responsible action, with certain sustainability aspects already in the action stage, as noted already in section 2.2.3. To address the last sub research question, it should be noted that the lockdown actions (total closure of the borders and tourism businesses) were taken due to external factors (the government deciding to prioritise public health). As the interviewee stressed “it was a hard decision economically, but there was a consensus even within the tourism industry that public safety was above anything else”. This concludes the research questions on the socio-political capacity of Cyprus.

To demonstrate the key findings of this research and answer the main research question regarding sustainable tourism policies during the response, recovery and restart phases of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cyprus, Table 2 and a careful review of the interview content are useful. The findings suggest that even before the COVID-19 pandemic sustainability was already on the policymaking agenda of Cyprus, as codified in the National Tourism Strategy 2030. Besides, the Deputy Ministry had implemented green initiatives to promote agrotourism and rural tourism instead of mass tourism on the beaches. COVID-19 came as a surprise according to the interviewee and the first measure was the total closure of the tourism industry. The response stage in Cyprus was characterised by financial schemes to support businesses, employees and help tourism enterprises undertake renovation works. As a response to the pandemic, the government also started promoting the destination virtually through slogans such as “better days will come”, “we’ll face this all together” (Tourism Officer, personal communication, 26 April 2021). Another major policy in the response stage was the promotion of domestic tourism. Still, although the policy was on the national level, only inland areas benefited from it because most people in Cyprus live in urban areas and beside the sea (Tourism Officer, personal communication, 26 April 2021). When asked about the recovery stage, the interviewee mentioned the Green Digital Certificate implemented on the European level to allow travellers to travel freely within the European Union. The Deputy Ministry of Tourism is in favour of this programme, even though it has yet to be implemented in the country. For the restart stage, the government plans to obtain funding from the European Recovery and Resiliency Fund to focus on digitalisation as well as differentiation and enrichment of the tourism product. “Cyprus has already made some proposals to the European Commission, and some of these funds will be used for the tourism industry to make it more sustainable and more resilient to future challenges” the interviewee added.

## 2.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CYPRUS

After analysing relevant literature concerning sustainable tourism policies and conducting the online interview with a tourism officer in Cyprus, one may conclude that, unlike at many destinations, sustainability did not become more prominent in the policymaking of Cyprus specifically due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sustainable tourism was already part of tourism strategies long before the pandemic. The studies showed that Cyprus was performing especially well in the economic pillar since tourism had been bringing economic benefits to the country for years. The sustainability awards Cyprus has received and impressive number of Blue Flags its beaches have been awarded demonstrate that the island's main natural asset – bathing water – has not been damaged by tourism. However, the tourism policies reviewed in while preparing this paper did not tackle the issues the local communities might encounter while interacting with tourists. The socio-psychological capacity of the tourism supply indicates similar outcomes. Another issue was identified while studying the socio-psychological capacity of the tourism demand – Cyprus is generally seen as a destination offering only ‘sun and sand’ and this makes it necessary to differentiate the tourism product. Analysing the socio-political capacity for Cyprus led to the conclusion that Cyprus was in the agenda stage as concerns responsible actions, though as regards certain aspects of sustainability it is already in the action stage.

The sustainability pillars and the responsibility enablers were brought together in the Responsustainable Model to better understand the awareness of sustainable tourism and actions in pursuit of it in Cyprus. The semi-structured interview revealed that after the pandemic started the government sector of Cyprus began to help tourism businesses, promote domestic, slow tourism and conduct online marketing campaigns for the destination. These policy changes are consistent with those reviewed in the introduction section. However, the research also indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic did not make policymakers rethink the sustainability of tourism in Cyprus. The destination still seems to be thinking about bringing tourists back at any cost, and even sustainability initiatives are still aimed at satisfying future tourists' needs. The environmental issues are only mentioned because travellers are conscientious of them. One may hence conclude that residents' needs are missing from the national policies. The approach to sustainability after the COVID-19 pandemic only changed in relation to the time frames – the destination realised that it needs to implement changes faster to stay resilient in the future. By way of a final conclusion, we can say that even after the pandemic Cyprus is still in the agenda stage of responsible behaviour and only partly in the actions phase.

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. The first one relates to the fact that the interview was conducted with only one representative of the tourism industry. The conclusions were based on secondary research and solely on one interview. However, the interviewee might be missing some aspects that other industry representatives could have. Namely, one interview cannot fully represent the awareness about sustainability and actions taken regarding it in the whole country. Another limitation is the lack of primary research with the local communities of Cyprus. Although it was identified that the socio-cultural pillar of sustainability is overlooked

in Cyprus, this finding emerged through secondary research. Conducting primary research with local communities would give more insights into how they feel about tourism, how their quality of life is impacted and whether they want to have a voice in tourism policymaking.

Therefore, the following recommendations for future research are listed. First, further research is needed to conduct interviews with more stakeholders from the tourism industry in Cyprus to better understand how sustainability is perceived in the destination, what actions have been taken in pursuit of it, and how the COVID-19 pandemic changed their approach to sustainability. Moreover, future research could include surveys or in-depth interviews to gather more data about the opinions held by Cyprus' residents.

Based on the issues identified through the analysis of secondary and primary data, several recommendations can be derived in order to address the aspects of sustainable tourism that Cyprus is missing. First, the sustainable tourism policies of Cyprus have focused solely on tourists, excluding other relevant stakeholders such as local communities. It is accordingly recommended that policies concentrate on the socio-psychological capacity of the tourism supply. As mentioned in the paper, any destination is at risk of unsustainable practices. For Cyprus, this risk can be addressed by ensuring the well-being of local communities and involving them in sustainable tourism policies, instead of focusing on the idea that they should be sustainable only because today's travellers are aware of sustainability issues. Another recommendation is for tourism policymakers in Cyprus to adopt a holistic approach to sustainability so that all three pillars are addressed equally. The research revealed that even after the pandemic tourism policies in Cyprus are mainly focused on the economic pillar in an attempt to compensate for the lost income. This is understandable for a destination like Cyprus, which relies heavily on tourism, and where nearly all businesses rely on tourists as a source of income. Yet, although the government realised the urgent need to diversify the Cyprus economy and become less dependent on tourism, the approaches taken to the socio-cultural and natural pillars of sustainability seem not have changed, even after the pandemic. However, if the destination wants to be sustainable in the long run and tourists to return, the potential impacts of tourism on the natural and socio-cultural pillars should be considered and measures devised to put in place when the destination comes back to its pre-pandemic level of tourism arrivals.

# 3 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN COSTA RICA

**Mariana Ojeda Garcia**

## ABSTRACT

This paper contains an assessment of sustainable tourism policies applied in Costa Rica during the COVID-19 pandemic. The assessment uses the Responsustable Tourism (SRT) model as the theoretical framework. Key findings include that, despite Costa Rica's comprehensive sustainable tourism policy, uncertainty prevented policymakers from designing and implementing specific policies that aid the sector navigate the response, recovery and restart stages of the crisis. This caused setbacks to certain challenges Costa Rica had previously addressed in an attempt to make tourism more sustainable and responsible.

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Costa Rica is a country located in Central America. It neighbours Nicaragua to the north, Panama to the southeast and is surrounded by the Caribbean Sea to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. This advantageous location means the country holds a great diversity of natural resources that act as primary tourist attractions in the country. The country is also characterised by its safety and features a stable political environment and economic development and for this reason, unlike most countries around the globe (ICT, n.d.), it has no army.

The Costa Rican Tourism Board (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo, ICT) is responsible for managing tourism activity in the country, including the tourism policy. There are no regional or local institutions responsible for tourism and, therefore the ICT cooperates closely with local governments with respect to the management of local destinations (OECD, 2020c).

The country's brand is "Essential Costa Rica" that aims to promote organic ingredients, pristine nature and unique experiences. Some relevant destinations within Costa Rica are Guanacaste, which comprises the coastline along the Pacific Ocean; the Caribbean coastline; and Puntarenas, Central Valley. These destinations are generally popular for their natural resources like landscapes, beaches, turtle-nesting zones (ICT, n.d.). Between 2017 and 2019, the most popular activities for tourists included: Going to the beach (72%), Hiking (40.3%), Flora and Fauna observation (38.6%), Shopping (36.6%), Visit to volcanoes (34.5%), Visit hot springs (30.5%), Ziplining (29.2%), Boat rides (22.7%) and Snorkelling (17.8%) (ICT, 2019b).

According to the OECD (2020c), tourism makes a significant contribution to the Costa Rican economy and is the country's key source of foreign exchange. The destination is considered a year-round, long-stay destination, meaning that some issues concerning tourism seasonality have been addressed. The impact of the standstill in tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is easily seen by observing the drop in arrivals (Table 3).

Table 3: Basic Indicators for Costa Rica

Indicator	Costa Rica
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	51,100
Population	5,047,561
Working age population employed in hotels and restaurants. April – June 2020	77,188
Working age population employed in hotels and restaurants. April – June 2020/2019 (%)	-66
International tourism arrivals in 2020	1,011,912
International tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-68
Nights spent in 2020	Not available
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	Not available

Sources: FAO, 2016; ICT, 2021a; INEC, 2020; The World Bank, 2021.

### 3.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR COSTA RICA

According to Mihalič (2021), the sustainability pillars are economic, socio-cultural and natural. The first pillar refers to assuring “viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed” (2021, p. 95). Human activities shape the second one, which includes the “immediate physical and social setting in which people live” (2021, p. 50). This pillar is concerned with preserving and respecting host communities' socio-cultural authenticity, heritage, values and fostering intercultural understanding. The last one, natural, includes elements such as “climate, weather, land and its soil, topography, water features, flora, fauna and ecological systems” (2021, p. 50). The natural pillar seeks chiefly to “mak[ing] optimal use of environmental resources, maintain ecological processes and help conserve natural resources and biodiversity” (2021, p. 95).

Costa Rica has made meaningful efforts towards sustainable development. It recently ranked 33 out of 162 countries in the Sustainable Development Goals Index with an overall score of 74.98, which also made it the 3rd-best country in the performance of the said Index for America (Mideplan, 2020). In addition, Costa Rica was ranked fifth in the top 10 Countries for Environmental Sustainability 2020 (Euromonitor International, 2021).

The economic, socio-cultural and natural pillars are described in the Midplane following section.

#### 3.2.1 Economic Pillar

Tourism is one of the most important sectors for the Costa Rican economy. In 2016, it directly contributed 6.3% to GDP and indirectly 8.2%. Around 13 subsectors are involved in the tourism activity, including air transport, 85.2% of whose total production is destined for tourism, travel agencies (84.1%), accommodation (81.0%), car rentals (60.1%), entertainment and recreational activities (45.2%), food and beverages (44.1%), handicrafts (38.7%), land transportation (25%), health services (20.0%), among others (Banco Central de Costa Rica, 2017). This points to the

activity's relevant multiplier effect across the country's economy. Further, by 2015 tourism was responsible for around 160,000 direct jobs in the country, where it is estimated that indirect jobs triple this amount, meaning that 450,000 additional indirect jobs were related connected to tourism (ICT, 2017).

In the last few years, tourism in Costa Rica has enjoyed a continual rise in demand that was only affected by the worldwide crisis economic in 2009 and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In the last 10 years, international arrivals have annually grown by an average of 4% that was stopped only by the 'crisis after 2020 which led to a decrease of 68% (UNWTO, 2021a). In 2019, the country had a maximum of 3,139,008 international arrivals that plummeted to 1,011,912 by 2020 (ICT, 2021a). Likewise, average spending varied depending on the destination, from USD 800 for those international tourists travelling to Guanacaste to USD 1,507 for those travelling to San José. The length of a stay ranged from 8 to 13 days (ICT, 2017). While there is no set methodology to measure domestic tourism, it is estimated that in 2014 there were 4,761,807 domestic travellers (ICT, 2017). Understanding the relevant role played by tourism in Costa Rica's economic sustainability can shed light on the magnitude of the impacts the sudden shutting down of tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3.2.2 Socio-cultural Pillar

Among the guidelines of the tourism model of Costa Rica, respect of the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities is encouraged, along with their tangible and intangible heritage and values, as well as contributing to mutual understanding and intercultural tolerance (ICT, 2017).

Costa Rica possesses cultural heritage like the Precolumbian Chiefdom Settlements with Stone Spheres of the Diquís, this archaeological site represents a unique collection of stone spheres that date back to between 500 and -1500 CE. The site also reveals the complex political, social and productive structures of this Precolumbian society. This area is a good example of cultural heritage preservation and is included on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, n.d.). Among other cultural heritage chapels, one can find churches, monuments and buildings. Evidence of the country's tangible and intangible heritage is exhibited in museums like the Costa Rican National Museum and the Jade Museum. In addition, intangible and living heritage is used for tourism purposes by sharing culinary and artistic traditions and expressions, such as social attractions like community-based rural tourism that are attractive for allowing visitors to experience the country's rural life (ICT, n.d.).

When it comes to gender equality, Costa Rica and the tourism sector still need to address issues arising from inequality. Of those working in the tourism sector, 60.3% are men (Banco Central de Costa Rica, 2017) while recent studies also show that women are more affected by unemployment than men. Here, it is important to note that women are expected to perform household chores, which translates to women working double or triple the hours men do, sometimes without pay. The salary among women who work is 10% lower than for men (Mideplan, 2020).

### 3.2.3 Natural Pillar

Costa Rica is considered a megadiverse country featuring great biodiversity in a small geographical area. The country displays considerable respect and commitment to the conservation of biodiversity. Here it is important to state that, besides the tangible aspects of biodiversity, the aim is also to protect the intangible aspects. When it comes to tourism, nature and biodiversity are viewed as the country's primary resources and attractions (ICT, 2021c; MINAE et al., 2016). Costa Rica is rich in parks and natural areas and carries out significant efforts for their conservation. Natural protected areas account for 27% of the country's territory and 50% of the marine area (Mideplan, 2020). Natural resources include beaches, the coastal zone, rainforest, volcanoes, waterfalls, hot springs and the outstanding biodiversity (ICT, n.d.).

The country demonstrates great awareness in this pillar by making important efforts for the conservation and good management of its natural resources. According to the Second Voluntary National Review of Sustainable Development Goals (Mideplan, 2020), Costa Rica recently created a decarbonisation plan; larger challenges for this plan relate to the transport and agriculture sectors. In this sense, one strategy already being working on is a carbon-offsetting programme for tourists that will compensate emissions by protecting environmental services and developing agroforestry systems. In addition, the country has stepped up efforts to improve the collection and treatment of waste, increasing the amount of recycled waste from 40,000 to 100,000 tonnes in the 2016–2017 period. However, the need to raise public awareness and civic education is still recognised and thus the plan for the future is to promote change in the production and consumption habits to align them with the circular economy. Regarding water, it is recognised that access to sewerage and good quality water must be improved since reducing the amount of untreated wastewater discharged into the environment has been a slow and complicated process. Finally, the country's power generation is provided by public utilities and 99% of it is generated from clean energy sources.

## 3.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR COSTA RICA

According to Mihalič (2021), responsibility is emerging as a complement to sustainability to guarantee that the latter is not only considered in theory but shown in practice. Here, three elements will enable sustainability. The first is the socio-political capacity, which represents how environmentally responsible a society is. Such capacity corresponds to the Awareness-Agenda-Action phases described in the triple A model. The first of these phases, Awareness, represents the moment when the a given society acquires consciousness about ecological issues. The second phase, Agenda, refers to the start of discussion leading towards sustainability policy. The third one, Action, represents responsibility, meaning that the society displays sustainable behaviour.

The second enabler corresponds to the socio-psychological capacity for tourism supply. It represents the right of residents and the tourism sector to have quality of life and opportunities, respectively. The third enabler, the socio-psychological capacity for tourism demand, represents the right of tourists to be offered a high-quality experience.

In the section below, the mentioned enablers are explored in the case of the destination of Costa Rica.

### 3.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

A big challenge facing the tourism sector is its tendency to treat the quality of the tourist's experience as superior to the quality of life of the residents or to provide fair working conditions for those employed in the activity.

Regarding the tourism supply, Costa Rica has an estimated 3,148 businesses for the accommodation sector in 2018, with these holding 57,233 rooms. Rooms are distributed across the country at various destinations but are more concentrated on the Pacific Ocean coastline and in the capital city of San José (ICT, 2019a). Costa Rica also reported the arrival of 262 cruise ships in the period 2018–2019, with 239,723 passengers (ICT, 2021b). Regarding the food and beverages subsector, establishments were 335 reported in 2015, albeit the figure is neither updated nor comprehensive (ICT, 2017).

### 3.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

One may argue that an important determinant of tourism is the geographical factors making Costa Rica's location convenient since it is relatively accessible. In 2018, the destination's largest international market was the United States holding 41.9% of the total share, followed by Central America with a share of 22.9%, Europe with 15.9% and South America with 6.3%.

As concerns tourist satisfaction, although there is no information on this indicator regarding the whole destination a recent study analysed the perceived satisfaction with ecotourism for two protected areas of Costa Rica: the Arenal National Park and the Caño Negro National Wildlife Refuge. The results showed an overall high level of tourist satisfaction at the destinations (4.36/5) when evaluating economic-functional value, emotional value and social value. Nevertheless, intentions to revisit the destination were not as high (3.72/5), whereas the need to improve prices and the quality of services to increase satisfaction was established. An important finding showed that the emotional value was the most significant for recommending the destination (Carvache-Franco et al., 2020).

### 3.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

Costa Rica has entered the second phase of the triple A model as revealed by the responsible sustainable tourism agenda being well established in the destination's tourism policy and contained in the current National Plan of Tourism Development of Costa Rica for 2017 to –2021. The goals in place for sustainable tourism target natural (land, water, energy and waste management, carbon emissions), socio-cultural (heritage protection, cultural offer, community well-being, local collaboration, local development) and economic factors (tourist satisfaction, social equity, quality of employment, local prosperity, economic viability), with these acting the foundation for the sustainable tourism policy model built on three pillars: sustainability, inclusion and innovation (ICT, 2017).

Moreover, Costa Rica has made progress in the Action phase. Examples of sustainable behaviour are demonstrated in the Certificate of Tourism Sustainability (CST) standard, a tool developed to recognise efficient and innovative resource management as well as socio-environmental management of tourism companies, such as tour operators, restaurants, hotels, theme parks, and car rentals (Mideplan, 2020). The CST is recognised by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). Five aspects are evaluated for a CST: business management, social, ecological, economic and cultural sustainability (ICT, n.d.).

The country's brand "Essential Costa Rica" additionally recognises companies that meet social and environmental standards, with criteria for environmental culture, energy management, emissions management, waste management and water management. It recognises not only enterprises in the tourism sector but also in food, agriculture, industry and services. Finally, in 2019 over 400 organisations were awarded with a Blue Flag, a recognition which acknowledges good practices in the management of resources for beaches and marinas (Mideplan, 2020).

### **3.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN COSTA RICA**

As mentioned, the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic caused an abrupt state of emergency all around the world. "I believe that not even in the worst nightmare of a tourism planner, the destination was going to turn off", commented the Director of Planning and Development at the Costa Rican Tourism Board (personal communication, 29 April 2021). "Airports were closed, people were confined, mobility was restricted, hotels were closed, beaches were closed, practically everything was closed... The land borders were closed and we turned off tourism". This refers to one of the earliest policies implemented in the response stage of this emergency by Costa Rica and all countries, the implementation of international travel restrictions, social distancing and closing of non-essential businesses and spaces that could become a site for infection.

When asked about the policies created during different stages of the pandemic, the Director stated that "there is no response on tourism policy because tourism policies are supposed to be medium-term, [or] long-term", meaning that the destination views the strategies taken more as "actions", not policies. In this sense, the long-term policy currently guiding the tourism activity in the different stages (response, recover, restart) of the crisis is the National Plan of Tourism Development of Costa Rica 2017–2021.

As the number of cases fell by the summer of 2020, the government prepared to lift certain restrictions, transiting towards the recovery stage where Costa Rica remains at the time of writing this paper. Some actions taken were the limited opening of beaches, allowing hotels to operate at 50% of their capacity and an easing of the mobility restrictions. This promoted domestic tourism, which helped to alleviate the challenging situation facing many tourism businesses. Table 4 presents the sustainable tourism policies or actions identified in this interview, where most can be traced back as the government's first response to the crisis while trying to contain and mitigate its effects. The last three are located in the recovery stage.

Table 4: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Costa Rica

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level:
				National Regional Local
National Plan of Tourism Development of Costa Rica 2017–2021	Yes	Impulse an innovative and inclusive sustainable tourism development model that contributes to the improvement of the quality of life	Costa Rican Tourism Board	National
First response to the COVID-19 pandemic	Yes	Stop the spread of SARS-CoV-2	Ministry of Health of Costa Rica	National
Bono Proteger	Yes	Aiding people who lost their job or whose working hours were reduced by giving economic support	Ministry of Human Development and Social Inclusion Ministry of Labour and Social Security	National
Monetary policy	Yes	Providing monetary flexibility: Decrease in interest rates, extension of payment deadlines and credit period	Central Bank of Costa Rica	National
Economic aid	No	Assuring the bailout of businesses: Granting non-reimbursable funds	Costa Rican Tourism Board	National
Reopening of tourism	Yes	Provide safe protocols and measures for the reopening of borders and businesses	Ministry of Health of Costa Rica Costa Rican Tourism Board	National
Domestic tourism	Yes	Rescheduling of holidays to incentivise domestic tourism	Costa Rican Tourism Board	National
Safe Travels stamp	Yes	Guarantee to tourists that a destination complies with the required sanitary measures to ensure a safe experience	Costa Rican Tourism Board World Travel and Tourism Council	National

The way in which most of these policies tackle each sustainability pillar is by safeguarding some aspect of sustainability in the economic and social pillars. Still, the National Plan of Tourism Development of Costa Rica 2017–2021 is more comprehensive: “Its policy model focuses on sustainability, inclusion and innovation; those are the three pillars”. This is understandable given that it was designed through a more complex, pre-emergency process aimed at guiding

development of the activity over 4 years unlike reactive policies that seek to address specific urgent problems like containing the spread of the virus or reducing the economic impact by way of jobs and revenue losses.

One sign of the way the health emergency reveals a rethinking of sustainable policy is that Costa Rica is already working on sustainable management protocols per destination. For this project, global partnerships for sustainable development are being promoted. Actors like the German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH; GIZ) are involved here. These protocols may give an opportunity to switch the method of planning and action in Costa Rica towards a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down one. Further, as the interviewee commented, one of the main areas of action in these protocols would be adequate waste management, which is currently a challenge and even a setback due to the amount of waste produced during the pandemic (e.g., face masks and disposable gloves).

Regarding other internal and external factors influencing the policymaking process, the core challenge is the uncertainty and lack of information and precision. “You can't plan right now. The first reading that one does is what we expect for the future? Then it is so uncertain and the scenarios are so mobile ... so we have to wait”. The complexity of this situation has also not only prevented the creation of policies that address urgent problems but the design of long-term policies for the destination. Since there is no certainty regarding what future they should plan for, policymakers can only project scenarios, closely monitor the behaviour of the pandemic as well as world trends and prepare for them. However, he argued that it is always essential to plan for such emergency scenarios.

Another challenge is the participation of stakeholders in the planning process. “If, at this moment, I call the private sector to make a strategic plan for 2030, they would throw me out of the window”. This is a considerable problem when policies are being designed for crisis management because while the participation of several stakeholders is vital, they are likely dealing with more urgent problems. In normal times, creating tourism policies in Costa Rica is a very inclusive process since business chambers, state institutions and NGOs are invited to propose ideas, give their opinions and discuss the proposals.

The quality of opportunities for the tourism sector is one of the more severely damaged responsibility enablers. The Director noted that “many of those companies, we are sure that they have had a very bad time. They are still having a very bad time and we already believe that some will not be able to take off again”. It was estimated that the activity of tourism in Costa Rica shrank by one-third during the crisis, resulting in massive job losses and significantly threatening the survival of many tourism enterprises, especially small- and medium-sized businesses, given that large companies had more resources to keep themselves afloat in the shutdown period. In this sense, neither the aid from the state nor the revenue generated by domestic tourism will be enough to ensure the survival of all businesses in the sector. For the ICT itself, as an autonomous entity funded by tourism taxes, the stream of money stopped and it was forced to stop many of its usual activities and only continue with the essential ones.

Regarding the quality of life and quality of experience for residents and tourists, respectively, the Director mentioned that it is impossible to provide a comprehensive answer since “[they] cannot measure these things [as they] no longer have ... the methods used to measure all that, [they had] to suspend it”. For tourists, measures taken to ensure a safe experience included implementing entry requirements like filling in a health pass form online and acquiring an insurance policy. Moreover, the destination implemented the “Safe Travels” stamp designed by the World Travel and Tourism Council to demonstrate that tourism enterprises comply with the health and hygiene protocols imposed. For domestic tourism, the shutdown of international travel was translated into an opportunity for individuals to visit traditional and non-traditional destinations in their own country, including destinations not usually affordable as they were marketed for international tourism.

Finally, Costa Rica has passed the awareness phase regarding the socio-political capacity, set an agenda and is presently in the action phase towards SRT. The interviewed director stated: “It is a very long process. It has been going on for many years, so it has been getting into our DNA. And the new generations even more. Let's see what happens now. After the pandemic, I hope that we start getting ready for things related to climate change. I think it is time to realise that climate change is the next pandemic that will affect us”.

Costa Rica started including the notion of sustainable tourism development over 20 years ago. Nowadays and despite the evident impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism and the possible stagnation or going backwards of particular strategies for sustainability, the interviewee made clear their commitment to continuing and increasing the efforts made in this direction and even more to making progress towards tourism that is resilient to the crisis to come.

### 3.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COSTA RICA

Throughout this paper, the sustainable tourism policies applied in Costa Rica during the COVID-19 pandemic were revised using the SRT model as a framework.

As noted, the National Plan of Tourism Development for Costa Rica 2017–2021 was the most relevant tourism policy in Costa Rica before the pandemic and the findings show that this did not change due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this sense, the Costa Rica tourism policy's sustainability pillars, represented as the first vertical line in the SRT model, are already successfully addressing many of the challenges associated with the economic, natural and socio-cultural pillars and succeeding in many of them. In the future, it will be necessary to keep working on the water and waste management and those indicators that have made slow progress. However, the current crisis has threatened tourism's economic and social sustainability by heavily impacting the livelihoods of those dependent on tourism activity, with this having prompted the reactive policies shown in Table 4.

Regarding the second vertical line, responsibility enablers, the tourism policy of Costa Rica presently considers both quality of life and opportunity for the supply side of tourism and quality of experience for the demand side, with goals like the generation of a local impact, while encouraging

SMEs and the commitment to provide high-quality experiences. Nonetheless, in the two stages of the crisis that Costa Rica has been transiting –response and recovery– these have been severely harmed. The policies and actions implemented as mitigation have not been entirely successful since many external and internal factors do not provide the right conditions to address them.

Finally, the third vertical line corresponds to a diagnostic. Prior to the pandemic, the tourism policy of Costa Rica had successfully addressed the pillars and enablers of the SRT model, not only in the Agenda phase but also in the Awareness one. For this reason, tourism in Costa Rica could be regarded as sustainable and responsible. Notwithstanding this, the COVID-19 pandemic disturbed the conditions that allowed tourism to be developed in the mentioned way. The restriction of international travel and closing of non-essential businesses had an immense negative impact. Tourism in Costa Rica during the pandemic may for this reason be considered as undertourism.

As for the design and implementation process of sustainable tourism policies during the pandemic, the response of the public sector might seem relatively passive. However, the uncertainty, lack of information and changing scenarios greatly influenced these processes. The lack of government funding for the institution that manages one of the most significant and worse impacted activities of the country may have limited the capacity to gather information and respond to the crisis. It must also be considered that Costa Rica's tourism activity is managed solely by the ICT since there are no local or regional offices. Two recommendations can be made here. First, to set up an emergency fund for ICT's operations and, second, to promote the planning and management of the tourism activity with a bottom-up approach. Moreover, this lack of resources might affect the restart of tourism in the future since according to the information obtained, there is no clear nor comprehensive plan for restarting the activity in Costa Rica.

Another recommendation is to maintain the support for domestic tourism. The uncertain behaviour of the virus includes a surge of new variants and new waves, while the delay in the vaccination process did not provide clarity regarding the reopening of the borders or the restart of tourism. As concerns the future, the efforts Costa Rica has made to make tourism more sustainable and responsible are comprehensive. Yet, now is the time to make tourism resilient as well. Costa Rica must follow its own advice and prepare tourism to face the upcoming challenges.

## **4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN MAURITIUS**

**Belinda Akpene Ledi**

### **ABSTRACT**

Mauritius is among the many destinations to have been hit by the COVID-19 Pandemic (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). The National Government of Mauritius has been the major pivot in the design and implementation of sustainable tourism policies at the destination. The World Travel and Tourism Council (n.d.a.) recognised Mauritius as one of the earliest countries to successfully implement safety and health protocols to contain the COVID-19 virus. The goal of this research is therefore to assess tourism policies and sustainable tourism policies applied in Mauritius before and during the stages of response, recovery and the restart of tourism. The study also seeks to discover the social, political and psychological capacities of tourism in Mauritius using the Sustainable Responsible Tourism Model for analysis. The methodology employed is qualitative, with a semi-structured interview.

Various sustainable tourism policies were identified in the research as well as those designed and implemented during the crisis. One example is the premium visa for tourists, renewable every year. These policies are targeted at improving the quality of opportunities for local residents, tourists and tourism business owners at the destination. Overall, the pandemic has given Mauritius the opportunity to consider more sustainable paths in restarting its tourism. There are other sustainable tourism policies that have been designed, but not yet implemented. It was also discovered that implementation of these policies has led to an increase in the quality of life and opportunities of local residents. Still, it is recommended that tourism stakeholders be involved in the design and implementation of these policies. Community participation must be improved to allow the voices of the residents to be heard and their opinions to be taken into consideration while designing these sustainable policies.

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Tourism has been one of the most vulnerable industries to crises (Santana, 2004). In reacting to and recovering from these crises, the approach, strategies and actions taken to contain and reduce impacts are key to destinations' sustainability (Pforr & Hosie, 2006). The tourism industry remains a significant economic backbone of many countries (Vellas, 2011) and thus the general recession the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered in many national economies is overwhelming (OECD, 2020b). Although undesirable, the pandemic allowed policymakers to consider new directions towards a more sustainable path in the design and implementation of sustainable tourism policies (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020). There have been various forms of government interventions to build resilience and respond, recover and restart tourism, while observing practices of economic, socio-cultural and environmental protection (OECD, 2020b).

Mauritius is a small developing island state located in the Indian Ocean (Wortman, Donaldson, & van Western, 2016). It is a popular destination for beach resort and coastal tourists (Naidoo, Ramseook-Munhurrin, & Durbarray, 2010). Tourism in Mauritius is the third major pillar of the economy following agriculture and the manufacturing sector (Naidoo & Sharpley, 2016). In past years, the island experienced steady growth in tourism, with 1,383,488 international arrivals in 2019 (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). Just like many other destinations, the tourism sector of Mauritius was hit hard by the pandemic and the impact was felt by all tourism stakeholders (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). Nonetheless, Mauritius was among the earliest countries to have been awarded the “Safe Destination” label by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) for being proactive in its management of the COVID-19 crisis with a DuBarry direct influence on the tourism industry (WTTC, n.d.a.).

In the presented research, we examine the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism policies and sustainable tourism policies. We look at tourism stakeholders’ involvement in the design and implementation of these policies and particular challenges they encounter in rolling these policies out. We also analyse the three pillars of sustainability and the responsibility enablers using the SRT model by Mihalic (2020). We consider how these policies have affected the quality of life of stakeholders like residents, tourists and the tourism industry. Finally, the research findings and recommendations based on them are presented to guide the development of sustainable tourism policies in Mauritius.

*Table 5: Basic Indicators for Mauritius*

Indicator	Mauritius
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	2,030
Population	1,265,711 (2019)
Registered unemployment rate in tourism 2020 (%)	21.0
Unemployment rate change in tourism 2020/2019	213.43
Tourism arrivals in 2020	308,980
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-77.7
Nights spent in 2020 from January to September	4,276,577
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	60.2%

*Sources: Mauritius National Statistics (2021); Ministry of Finance and Economic Development: Statistics Mauritius (2021); United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2019)*

## 4.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR MAURITIUS

### 4.2.1 Economic Pillar

The concept of economic sustainability remains an integrated part of sustainability whose emphasis is on how “we must use, safeguard, and sustain human and material resources to create long term sustainable values” (University of Gävle, 2018). According to Mbaiwa (2005), the economic pillar of sustainability denotes satisfying the economic needs of the people, generating maximum productivity in order to achieve a high standard of living within the existing resource constraints. As a result, in most destinations economic business thinking and profit mindedness is of priority to the point of neglecting ethical demands on ecology and the rights/interests of locals. On the small island of Mauritius, tourism has been seen as a substantial economic activity for over 30 years (Durbarry, 2004). Tourism has been used as a diversification strategy and to reduce poverty levels in Mauritius (Ranzani, Bergmann & Tandrayen-Ragoobur, 2019). There has been growth in small and medium sized tourism enterprises (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). Tourism activities coupled with trends in tourist arrivals act as indications of the growth of tourism in Mauritius (Durbarry, 2004). According to World Travel and Tourism Council (n.d.b) statistics, the contribution made by travel and tourism to Mauritius’ GDP has seen fluctuations in several recent years: 2019 they recorded a 23.9% contribution to GDP, yet in 2020 however, following the outbreak of COVID-19, there was a 2.8% decrease, which in statistics was reflected in an 18.8% contribution to GDP. On the other hand, the contribution of travel and tourism to employment in 2019 was 104,200 , representing 19.1% of total employment. These figures indicate the significant contribution made to the Mauritius economy and how tourism has been used as a catalogue for development on this small island economy. Further, with the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic United Nations sustainable development goal 17, which emphasises promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all (UN, 2020), is threatened since the tourism economy is one of the worst hit by the pandemic (Nicola et al., 2020). As such, both internal and international travel restrictions have been adopted to contain the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). The utmost importance of tourism for the Mauritian economy makes it of supreme relevance to ensure its sustainability, especially in such times of crisis.

### 4.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

The next factor on which sustainability rests is the socio-cultural pillar. This pillar focuses on the cultural aspects of human-environment interactions and the preservation of the socio-cultural resources of local residents and host communities as well as promoting the need to develop a cultural interaction and interchange in tourism (Pearce, 1995). These interactions and change are what leads to a tremendous social impact on local communities and the cultures that define them. However, the sustainable development of tourist destinations taking the socio-cultural pillar into consideration holds the potential to affect aspects of their management (Iniesta-Bonillo, Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2016). Mauritius is a highly developed multicultural society (Eisenlohr, 2007) made up of various ethnic groups like Indo-Mauritians, Creoles, Sino-

Mauritian, Franco-Mauritian and different religions like Muslim, Hindu, Christianity and others (UKdiss.com, 2019). A study conducted by Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2007) revealed that while local residents in Mauritius encourage tourism development, they are concerned about the impact of tourism activities on the destination's image. This makes the local community's cooperation and views vital for considerations such as sustainable policymaking (Dyer et al., 2007; Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Some local residents have also complained about social vices like theft, robbery and prostitution, although the positive benefits tourism brings them outweigh the negative ones (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2007). Tourism has also led to the establishment of social amenities, infrastructure and facilities that are beneficial not only for tourists, but for residents and the entire tourism industry (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.) Still, following higher prices, an increase in general costs of living and greater use of existing facilities by tourists tension sometimes develop between local residents and visitors (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2007).

### 4.2.3 Natural Pillar

Tourism research shows that tourism and the environment are interrelated as tourists increasingly interact with the natural environment (Holden, 2000). However, as much as tourism has the capacity to preserve the environment, unsustainable use and development can also destroy it. The natural pillar of sustainability accordingly remains paramount in tourism development and considering the impacts on it is a critical part of understanding how tourism affects the natural environment in Mauritius (UKdiss.com 2019). The natural pillar of sustainability relates to all forms of renewable and non-renewable resources provided by nature (Iniesta-Bonillo, Sánchez-Fernández & Jiménez-Castillo, 2016). Environmental pollution, noise and congestion are but some of the negative environmental impacts of tourism (Latkova & Vogt, 2012, Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2007), however, on the brighter side too, it can also improve the environment's appearance by enhancing natural beauty and protection (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009). In Mauritius, sea, sand and beach are the destination biggest natural assets; tourism in Mauritius has encouraged the establishing of preserved and protected areas like the Ebony Forest Sustainable Project regulated by the Mauritius Government and Environmental Protection Agencies (Senior Marketing Manager Mauritius, 2021 30 April, personal communication). There are also cleaning programmes to keep the island clean and attractive to tourists. The Mauritius Tourism Authority puts measures in place following planning to reduce the stress on the destination that may result in negative changes to physical attributes of the natural resources (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). The Ministry of Tourism, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, Association of Inbound Operators Mauritius, and Association of Tourist Operators came together to form a partnership that then produced strategies. These strategies are included in a number of projects on the island to promote sustainability with a focus on environmental wellness. These projects encompass the SUS-Island project (Sustainable Island Project) aimed at reducing emissions, waste generation, resource overuse, water pollution and preserving the overall quality of the entire ecosystem (Sustainable Tourism Mauritius, 2018). Biodiversity protection is also given very high priority by the Mauritian government and various national programmes for the conservation of biodiversity are being implemented (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.).

### 4.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR MAURITIUS

#### 4.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

The development of tourism is inseparably connected to the operation of tourism organisations and enterprises that offer tourism products and services known as tourism industries (Szpilko, 2017). These industries are the supply side of tourism and offer various services like accommodation, food and beverages, tourism packages and services intended to satisfy tourists (Zhang, Song & Huang, 2009). The biggest stakeholder on the supply side in Mauritius is the host community. The socio-psychological capacity of tourism supply therefore is the limit to which the local population is willing to accept the impact of tourism (Bezzola, 1975). One of the main elements of tourism development is boosting local communities' participation and satisfaction because it is central to the tourism industry's sustainability (Muganda, Sirima & Ezra, 2013). Hence, local residents willingly support tourism depending on their satisfaction and quality of life (Dyer et al., 2007; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009). In Mauritius, negative socio-cultural impacts like theft, robbery and prostitution have been complained about by some local residents. Still, a research study by Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2007) on "residents' perceptions of the socio-cultural impact of tourism in Mauritius" revealed that the Mauritian residents generally support tourism development and around 71% of the locals hold a positive attitude and opinion about the tourism industry. To support this claim, the Senior Marketing Manager Mauritius (2021 30 April, personal communication) also expressed how the presence of tourism has created many local businesses, in turn leading to an increase in quality of life and social welfare. Quality of life according to Mihalic (2020) is the "feeling that life is going well overall and concerns people's perceived satisfaction with the circumstances in which they live". According to the interviewee, (the full interview transcript is found in Appendix A), tourism has created local jobs from which residents of Mauritius benefit, which has overall increased the quality of industry opportunities for the entire country. Upon the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, local residents were one of the foremost priorities and targets for which the Mauritius government designed some sustainable tourism policies. An example is the discount policy on accommodation services for residents. This was to ensure the wellness and safety of the residents. For tourism to be successful, it needs to involve as many people as possible (Durbarray, 2004) and this includes the local residents.

#### 4.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

According to Kaspar (1991), tourism demand is the "willingness of tourists to acquire a certain amount of tourist goods in exchange of a certain amount of money". Therefore, the socio-psychological capacity for tourism demand is the limit to which tourists are willing to accept and be at a particular destination. In Mauritius, the quality of the visitor experience and satisfaction is the topmost priority. This led the Mauritius government to come out with a premium visa policy so that tourists can extend time to increase the quality of their experience. In a bid to increase the Socio-Psychological Capacity for tourism demand, Mauritius has diversified its tourism product offering and offers cultural and entertainment attractions to its sea and beaches. This diversity appeals to various types of tourists such as cultural tourists, eco tourists, coastal tourists, agricultural tourists

etc. The government also organises social and cultural events on the national level involving the participation of tourists. This has boosted the variety of tourist activities on offer and consequently increased tourism demand. The accommodation sector has also introduced online booking and check ins allowing tourists to make bookings and reservations online. Also on offer is high-quality and healthy food with a good variety to add to the quality of the visitor experience. The destination has additionally launched the “Mauritius Now” marketing campaign to reach potential source markets to increase tourism demand. The quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into the local community, and the Mauritius Tourism Authority has thus developed hiking trails, electronic biking, diving activities and national parks to improve the quality and diversity of the Mauritian experience given that this is one of the key elements for ensuring visitor satisfaction.

### 4.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

The critical socio-political enablers of sustainable tourism are the use of ethics and the involvement of stakeholders Mihalic (2020). The socio-political capacity enabler comprises “awareness, agendas and actions”, which has to do with the knowledge, planning and effective implementation of sustainable practices at the destination. Mauritius has become increasingly aware of sustainability over time and tried to spread this awareness through education and training of employees within tourism (Mauritius Tourism Authority, n.d.). The political structure on Mauritius has put the function of awareness of the sustainable development goals in place. Guidelines also exist to manage tourists’ behaviour towards protecting the environment and respecting the local culture. According to the interviewee, certain codes are communicated to visitors regarding the protection of the coral reefs, sanitation of the beach and the need to enjoy the local culture without disregarding the local residents’ values and norms. There are also sustainable projects like the SUS Island project, which promotes sustainable environmental and socio-cultural practices and aims to build the capacity of stakeholders along the whole value chain in the tourism sector. The project is targeted to destination management companies, hotels, taxi drivers, tour guides, handicraft makers, and pleasure craft operators. The scheme is funded by the European Union and the Mauritius Tourism Authority. Visitors also have an opportunity to engage in any kind of work if they hold the premium visa. The Ebony Forest project has also been established where visitors plant trees to help sustain the environment and obtain social acknowledgement of having planted a tree. The destination also holds plans to make the island become greener than it is currently. Hence, in terms of socio-political capacity, the destination has moved through the three stages of awareness, agenda and action.

## 4.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES ON MAURITIUS

It was discovered in the research that the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the entire tourism ecosystem globally and the destination of Mauritius is no exception. The recession Mauritius has faced because of the crisis has influenced and led the country to consider new and more sustainable tourism policies to aid in the destination’s quick recovery. In reopening

and rebuilding Mauritius, the government has taken up measures that prioritise stakeholders, especially, local residents. In the response, recovery and restart phases of the pandemic, different sustainable policies were implemented. As established by the interviewee consulted as part of this research, upon the initial outbreak of the virus Mauritius was very quick to close all its borders and impose travel restrictions that prevented tourists from entering the country. This early policy proved fruitful as reflected in the low numbers of COVID-19 infections recorded on the island destination. Further, when the pandemic led to the layover of many tourism workers and in response to reduce the pandemic's negative economic impact on tourism employees in the region, the government of Mauritius designed and implemented a policy to pay a monthly allowance to all tourism workers who had lost their jobs in the process. Subsequently, to restart tourism, sustainable tourism policies like the premium visa, the Mauritius campaign were also implemented. The interviewee established that while it is clear that the pandemic hit the country very hard, it also gave them an opportunity to roll out sustainable tourism policies seeking for the destination to recover quickly and reduce the financial recession faced by the stakeholders.

*Table 6: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Mauritius*

Policy	Pre-COVID, Response, Recovery or Restart stage	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution
Travel restrictions and health protocols	Response stage	Yes	To contain and prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus on Mauritius	Government of Mauritius
Laboratory for carrying out COVID-19 rapid tests at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport	Recovery stage	Yes	To test all passengers entering Mauritius for better control of COVID-19	Ministry of Tourism
Monthly allowance for tourism employees who lost their jobs	Response stage	Yes	To support tourism employees who lost their job due to the corona virus	Government of Mauritius
Premium Visa (long-stay visa), renewable every year	Restart stage	Yes	To attract long-stay visitors and extended overnight stays	Government of Mauritius and Mauritius Tourism Authority
The marketing campaign called "Mauritius Now"	Restart stage	Yes	To promote the image of Mauritius even during the crisis, thereby keep the destination on the minds and lists of travellers when they decide to travel again	Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority

Policy	Pre-COVID, Response, Recovery or Restart stage	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution
COVID-19 vaccination for all tourism employees	Recovery stage	Yes	To ensure the health and safety of frontline tourism workers as tourism restarts slowly	Government of Mauritius
Special discount services on accommodation for indigenous people in the Mauritian region	Recovery stage	Yes	To encourage local residents to patronise accommodation services in Mauritius, encourage domestic travel and keep businesses running for service providers in the accommodation sector	Mauritius Association of Hoteliers
Wastewater treatment and management	Pre-COVID stage	Yes	To manage water in a sustainable way, notably with reference to the accommodation sector	Government of Mauritius and Mauritius Tourism Authority
Planting of trees by couples on their honeymoon	Pre-COVID stage	Yes	To grow more trees to help with the environmental sustainability of Mauritius	Environmental Protection Authority and Mauritius Tourism Authority

#### 4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAURITIUS

Analysis of the current plans, actions and strategies of Mauritius to respond, recover and restart tourism leads to the following suggestions for improving the destination's sustainable tourism policies.

The first recommendation is to establish coordinated ways of involving tourism stakeholders in Mauritius and ensure proper collaboration among them. According to the Senior Marketing Manager Mauritius, a major challenge in the design and execution of sustainable tourism policies is the lack of stakeholder involvement and collaboration. The dissatisfaction and poor outcomes resulting from when stakeholders feel reluctant to engage in sustainable policymaking activities is enormous. This means it is crucial to develop engaging strategies able to bring all people on board because inclusivity is one of the ways of achieving sustainability. Tourism stakeholders like local residents, tourists, business owners and tour operators all have a role to play in supporting a good recovery from the pandemic since everybody is affected. For this reason, the Mauritius tourism authority must find coordinated ways of bringing all tourism actors on board. Stakeholders, however, need to be educated on the benefits of participating and be motivated to do so by giving them the power to make certain decisions and by making their voices heard.

Second, there is the need to increase community participation. While developing tourism, community participation is fundamental not only for the effectiveness of sustainable tourism policies but also influences such policies' outcomes and results. Community participation refers to the involvement of the local community in decision-making on environmental, social and economic levels (Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2016). This engagement motivates locals to be part of the tourism development process while their involvement will also help policymakers design policies that reflect their needs and those of the tourism industry.

Moreover, there is a need to improve sustainability impacts at the destination. Even though Mauritius is making efforts to become a sustainable destination, it is recommended that it improve the sustainability impacts on both the environment and local residents. Accordingly, sustainable tourism policies must be targeted more at protecting the environment and enhancing the lives of residents. There is a further need to create sustainable tourism policies that will keep the negative socio-cultural impacts to a minimum when tourism fully restarts on Mauritius. In particular, this is due to the premium visa which offers opportunities for work and long stays for tourists that could lead to a rise in longer-stay tourists at the destination.

Finally, it is acknowledged that the limitations of this research may include the fact it was carried out in a short period of time and thus this paper may be viewed as a basis for further research into the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable tourism policies on Mauritius.

## 5 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN GOTLAND, SWEDEN

**Helina Betre**

### ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism policies have been developed around the world with the goal of effective destination management. In response to the new global challenge SARS-COV 19 or the COVID-19 pandemic, destinations have been introducing new policies to mitigate the social, environmental and economic impacts. For this study, we selected the island of Gotland in southern Sweden. This research sheds light on the social, political and psychological capacities of tourism in Gotland through the lens of the responsustainability (SRT) model. A qualitative research method was applied to obtain primary and secondary data and analyse the state of sustainable tourism policies during the response, recovery and restart phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 response policies were mainly applied on the national level and targeted the economic sustainability of tourism businesses. However, the sustainable tourism strategies already in existence have been drastically slowed by COVID-19 and there has been little effort to revive the project participants. Based on other destinations, actions are recommended to restart the sustainable tourism initiatives. More research and indicator analysis are needed in order to diagnose the state of sustainability in Gotland's tourism.

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Although policy is complex to define, the main idea refers to regulations and decisions taken by the government based on factors such as political ideology and procedures (Scott, 2011, pp. 7–11). Policy related to tourism is a similar concept and interpreted in various ways. For the purposes of this study, we decided to follow Ritchie, Goeldner and McIntosh (2003, p. 415):

... tourism policy can be defined as a set of regulations, rules, guidelines directives and development/promotion objectives and strategies that provide a framework within which the collective and individual decisions directly affecting long-term tourism development and the daily activities within a destination are taken....

As described in the above statement, with policy development it is important to understand that planning is not policy but a set of actions that leads to a policy stance. In the context of tourism policy, the terms policy, strategy and planning usually overlap. Tourism policies are typically produced as part of the regional development, in particular economic development, of a destination. Generally speaking, the goal of tourism policy and especially sustainable tourism policies is to excel in areas like economic development, competitiveness and local community well-being. In the following sections, we discuss the impacts of SARS-COV 2 or the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism policies and sustainable tourism policies and introduce the background for our case study of Gotland.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused more shock waves in the economic systems of the world than any pandemic in history (OECD, 2020a). Tourism was particularly affected given its characteristics as a service-based industry and the tourism product being perishable (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020; UNWTO, 2019). The sudden drop in tourism demand caused by the travel restrictions, notably in markets that depend on incoming international tourism, held great significance. One way that governments tackled the impacts is through policymaking. The World Bank's report on tourism rebuilding through policy states that policymaking has three phases – response, recovery and long-term recovery or restart (Perrottet, 2020). Policies related to the response stage of COVID strived to take immediate action and aimed for the industry's immediate survival. These could be adapted on the national, regional or local level (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020). Examples include government grants, training for workers and reallocating tourism facilities for crisis operation. Recovery-related policies are the second phase of policy and focus on the short-term recovery of the tourism sector. Policies here included incentivising innovation and entrepreneurship, marketing to relaunch destinations in source markets and expanding digitalisation. The last phase is Restart whose goal is not just longer-term recovery but also to build resilience for future crises. This can be accomplished through policy concerning investments in sustainability and product development, training destination managers about crisis management and improving stakeholder collaboration.

The table below compares sustainability indicators for Gotland between 2019 and 2020.

*Table 7: Basic Indicators for Gotland, Sweden*

Indicator	Gotland, Sweden
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	2,994
Population	57,221 (check)
Registered unemployment rate in tourism 2020 (%)	NA
Unemployment rate change in tourism 2020/2019	16
Tourism arrivals in 2020	679,000
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-40
Nights spent in 2020	727,000
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	-29

*Sources: Region Gotland, 2021; Strategist, personal communication, 28 April 2021*

The island of Gotland in Sweden was chosen for this study. It is located approximately 120 km off the coast of mainland Sweden (Sundkvist, Jansson & Larsson, 2001), one of the 20 administrative regions in Sweden and situated next to the Baltic Sea. It hosts the medieval city of Visby, one of the most visited destinations in the country, albeit Gotland has other attractions as well. Table 7 presents the general statistics and tourism indicators. Tourism is made up of approximately 60% of domestic tourists while the remainder are international, mainly coming from Germany, Norway, Finland and Denmark, respectively (Strategist, personal communication, 28 April 2021). One can travel in three ways to reach the island, including ferry (79%) and flight (21%).

Gotland is home to numerous heritage sites, the most popular being the town of Visby, which in 1995 was listed as a UNESCO heritage site. It constitutes a 16th century wall that surrounds the inner city and, within the city, 10 church ruins and a cathedral. Moreover, the island hosts many heritage sites from the stone ages, Middle Ages and Viking age, including Tjelvar's grave. After the wall, the next big attraction is the Gotland Museum. The island also has some culinary heritage such as saffron pancake, a distinct breed of sheep, and many restaurants and farms and events that promote the local gastronomy. A very prominent cultural event is medieval week, which attracts approximately 200,000 participants every year (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

As the largest island in the Baltic Sea, Gotland features numerous natural attractions such as the Stora Karlso National Park, the Lummendula caves, the limestone formations of Langhammar, Sundersand beach and the Eska coast (Visit Gotland, n.d.). There is also the development of the biggest national park on the north-east tip of the island near the famous 'blue lagoon' attraction (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

## 5.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR GOTLAND, SWEDEN

The Gotland region and the Swedish government have been developing sustainability policies and strategies since 2010 (Region Gotland, 2019a). Following the national plan for the Swedish hospitality industry in 2010, Region Gotland drafted the Visitor's regional development strategy and Regional hospitality industry strategy for 2019–2022. They identified tourism along with agriculture as key industries to act as a future economic powerhouse. In the section below, we use the Responsustainability model (SRT) proposed by Mihalič (2021; pp. 107–110) to illustrate the different aspects of tourism in Gotland, starting with the sustainability pillars (economic, socio-cultural, natural) and then the responsibility enablers. Each sustainability pillar can be either negatively or positively impacted by tourism. All of these six elements of the literature review are then connected to Figure 2 in the methodology section, which considers the overtourism conceptualisation model by Mihalič (2020).

### 5.2.1 Economic Pillar

The economic pillar of sustainability in the SRT model is inspired by UNWTO's (2019) concept of sustainable tourism development as the provision of long-term economic operations while ensuring benefits to all stakeholders, promoting equality and opportunities in employment and improving poverty levels (Mihalič, 2021; p. 108). Region Gotland refers to increasing business sales, local prosperity and social capital in its latest Visitor strategy for regional development for 2019–2027 and Regional hospitality industry strategy for 2019–2022. For instance, one goal is to develop more culinary attractions. Gotland has three main industries supporting its economy (Region Gotland, 2018): Government tax, Agriculture, Energy and tourism. According to the regional statistics agency RegionFakta, over 14,000 people or 9.4% of those employed in Gotland are in tourism (RegionFakta, 2021). One way that Gotland measures its tourism performance is through the number of guest nights and revenue. In 2019, total nights spent reached 1,026,000, showing

growth of at least 3% over the previous year. According to the National Statistics agency (SCB), more than 71% of tourism revenue comes in the summer months (RegionFakta, 2021; Strategist, personal communication, 5 May 2021). Gotland as a destination experienced tremendous changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown in Table 7, the number of tourists arrivals fell reduced by 40 in 2020. Nights spent were also reduced by more than 29 (Table 7). Moreover, in excess of 600 people lost their jobs in the tourism sector, especially in the youth age group (Strategist, personal communication, 26 April 2021).

### 5.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

Returning now to UNWTO's (2019) sustainability principles, the social-cultural pillar must maintain the host community's socio-cultural authenticity by protecting its cultural heritage and values. In the most recent strategy, Region Gotland highlights cultural conservation and enhancement as part of its 12 goals (Region Gotland, 2019a). Gotland has hosted numerous cultural events and new upcoming projects to promote cultural attractions (Region Gotland, 2019a). In its latest strategy, culture and food are identified as two themes on which collaboration should increase. An example of such a project is "Sustainable species", a partnership between several food suppliers, restaurants around the island along one route (Strategist, personal communication, 26 April 2021).

### 5.2.3 Natural Pillar

The natural pillar supporting sustainable tourism is about utilising natural resources without depleting them, thereby protecting ecological processes and biodiversity (UNWTO, 2019). Both Region Gotland's Visitor and Hospitality strategies list conserving the environment, minimising damage and improving the quality of the landscape as part of their goals (Region Gotland, 2019a; Region Gotland, 2019b). Our Gotland 2040, which is the regional development plan for all sectors, declares that Gotland aims to become 100% renewable-energy-dependent and carbon-neutral by 2040. According to the Sustainable Gotland Strategy Report 2040, the region has been making steady progress in expanding renewable energies such as wind power projects. At the moment, over 40% of energy comes from wind (Strategist, personal communication, 28 April 2021). All waste is either recycled or incinerated and the region is striving to reduce waste and increase recycling (Region Gotland, 2018). Most businesses around Gotland are voluntarily developing their own sustainability goals (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021). For example, Destination Gotland, the ferry company that transports passengers from the mainland to the island, has switched over to biofuel. However, the tourism leadership provides neither universal training nor sustainable tourism certification or accreditation.

### 5.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR GOTLAND

Responsibility enablers encompass implementation of the sustainability pillars and concepts (Mihalič, 2021, pp. 114–117). They include stakeholders on the supply and demand sides as well as the socio-political environment. These elements are essentially the qualitative indicators of the SRT model and frequently neglected at most destinations (Mihalič, 2020). In order to determine their sustainability performance, destinations must consider how the impacts of tourism within each pillar are affected regarding each capacity. In turn, these capacities also influence the pillars and sustainability and diagnose the risk of overtourism. In the next section, we discuss how each capacity is performing on Gotland.

#### 5.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

Socio-psychological capacity for tourism supply concerns how well the quality of life is met for the host community and the opportunities that are available for tourism-related businesses (Mihalič, 2021, pp. 114–117). For instance, impacts on the socio-cultural pillar and capacity affect the quality of life, which can lead to resistance from stakeholders (Mihalič and Kuščer, 2021). Sometimes, this appears in the form of anti-tourism sentiments. In the case of Gotland, rapid developments can be seen on the economic side. Prior to 2016, Airbnb was introduced and new entrepreneurs emerged, especially in rural communities (Oxenswärdh, 2020a). This produced a shortage of housing for workers and residents during peak seasons. In 2018, a new cruise ship quay was launched and resulted in an outcry from residents and hotel businesses (Oxenswärdh, 2020b, p. 11). The reason for this outcry is that this new quay accommodates more and larger ships. The opposers' main argument was that cruise ship tourists spend less and contribute to overcrowding of the centre (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021). Regardless, the cruise ship quay was opened and there have been no developments (Oxenswärdh, 2020b, p. 11). Moreover, there are issues with tourism infrastructure support, e.g., an increase in public transport, accessibility and information language materials (Region Gotland, 2019b). One of the major attractions has complained that its toilet facilities are not large enough (Persson-Fischier, 2019). To address the overcrowdedness and divert tourist traffic, the Visitor regional strategy from 2019 designed three tourist routes into the rural parts of Gotland. Popular paths include Gotland Out and Sustainable Species, which is a gastronomy route connecting several restaurants that focus on sustainable and local cuisine (Region Gotland, 2021).

#### 5.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

Socio-psychological capacity for tourism demand tourists relates to visitors' satisfaction with the destination (Mihalič, 2021, pp. 114–117). This refers to the law of diminishing demand whereby destinations becoming more and more overcrowded would reduce such satisfaction. With regard to Gotland, there has been no published review of tourists by the regional government. However, the local university, Campus Gotland, has been collaborating on conducting surveys of cruise ship tourists, although it is not yet published (Persson-Fischier, 2019). According to the most recent report, Gotland Besöksnäring or GFB (2020), Gotland's largest tourism business association,

COVID-19 drastically reduced tourism demand from foreign markets. Hotel owners also show a desire to improve the training for staff by Region Gotland having a uniform quality of service and awareness about sustainability (Oxenswärdh, 2020a). This may be due to complaints made by tourists.

### 5.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

Socio-political capacity involves the sustainability awareness of stakeholders, agenda development by destination managers, and action taken to achieve the goals (Mihalič, 2020). This also includes partnerships between tourism actors and networks. In the case of Gotland, tourism management has switched numerous times (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021). According to GFB, the Gotland Tourist Board was closed in 2011 (GFB, n.d.). Since then, Region Gotland had partially been managing the tourism planning. It developed Visit Gotland, which is its trademark name for marketing operations. In 2014, GFB was established and today is the biggest tourism association. Its members are the main correspondents that convey the interests of the association to Region Gotland. As already explained, the cruise ship quay is a topic of conflict between the public and private sectors. Another vital tourism actor is Campus Gotland, which is currently conducting seven projects on tourism sustainability (Uppsala University, n.d.). They also have an innovation lab called Science Park that hosts various talks between both public and private sectors on sustainability issues and solutions.

## 5.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN GOTLAND

Sustainable tourism in tourism has been developed in the Visitor Regional Tourism Development strategy for 2027. It began with Sweden's national tourism industry plan for 2010– 2020 (Region Gotland, 2019a). The goal for national tourism was to double the revenue by 2020. Similarly, Gotland's current regional plan strives to double the growth of tourism while being a sustainable destination. To achieve this, 12 goals were adopted, each targeting specific sustainability issues on the island. As mentioned, the goals of these projects include diverting tourist traffic towards rural attractions and to grow tourism businesses in rural regions. Over 10 projects have been launched since 2018. This study explores the impact of the pandemic on these policies and other policies that have influenced Gotland's tourism sector.

As described in the analysis section, COVID-19 changed the number of visitors and slashed the number of international tourist visitors. The numbers in the summer of 2020 were significantly lower than in the previous year due to the travel restrictions imposed by Swedish regions and abroad. One exception was certain parts of Germany that permitted travel if they had cases lower than 50 per 10,000 individuals (Strategist, Personal communication, April 2021). Table 8 outlines the sustainable tourism policies in Gotland and the response and recovery policies for COVID-19. The pandemic law had the greatest influence and allowed some regional action for response efforts by tourism stakeholders.

Table 8: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Gotland

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: National Regional Local
Pandemic law	Yes	Through the turnover support programme, the goal is to support all businesses experiencing reduced sales by providing financial support New loans to support revenue loss Temporary tax relief Reduced employee fees	Verketsamt (Government services for businesses), Tillväxtverket (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth)	National
	Yes	Ensure employees receive financial support due to the shorter work hours or in taking sick days Hotline to help with applications	Verketsamt (Government services for businesses), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth	National
	Yes	Businesses provided with financial compensation for prolonging or hiring staff	Verketsamt (Government services for businesses), Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth	National
	Yes	To support business ideas related to tourism during COVID-19 with start-up capital	Region Gotland	Regional
	Yes	To assist businesses applying for the national relief fund application	Region Gotland	Regional
	Yes	Update businesses about sanitation guidelines	Region Gotland, Public Health Agency Sweden, GFB	Regional
Visitor Regional Development Plan 2027	Yes	Collaboration project on a similar theme (food, outdoors, culture) to expand tourism to rural areas and make Gotland a year-round destination Maintain contact with all stakeholders to check progress of the project	Region Gotland, GFB, Tillväxtverket	Regional

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: National Regional Local
Regional hospitality industry strategy for 2019–2022	Yes	Update and maintain contact with tourism stakeholders Hold meetings and workshops on the current status, future projects on travel restrictions	Region Gotland, GFB, SMEs	Regional

*Sources: Strategist, personal communication 24 April, 2021; Verksamhet, 2021; Tillväxtverket, 2021; Region Gotland, 2018; Region Gotland, 2019a; Region Gotland 2019b*

In terms of the research question “What are the sustainable tourism policies during the response, recovery and restart phases of the COVID-19 pandemic?”, Gotland had sustainability tourism strategies in place prior to COVID-19, including the Visitor Regional Development Plan and the Regional Hospitality Strategy. Each strategy contains over 12 goals and within each goal over 5–10 activities have been underway. According to the Strategist, these activities drastically slowed at the beginning of the pandemic. One reason for this was that meetings of large groups was limited and all participants were forced to host online meetings. A major project is “Project Gotland Out” where since 2018 tourists can take special routes for outdoor activities around the island (RF-SISU, n.d.). According to the Strategist, the significant drop in tourist numbers negatively affected them and in the response and recovery stage some effort was made to recover and restart.

All these projects are up and running in these thematic areas we will start to do different tours to take tourists there, not just Visby where tourists are heavily concentrated, but to the north, south and west parts of Gotland where these activities are. So, we were planning to sit all these stakeholders down together and ask them if they would be interested to be part of a tour but then COVID. We had a rollout plan for March–November of last year (2020) but had to postpone it (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

From then on, to keep meetings happening, they had to resort to hosting online talks on Facebook about the state of tourism and ensuring stakeholders remained engaged. On the national level, the pandemic law has provided financial relief for both businesses and employees alike (see Table 8). The actions of the policy principally targeted the economic pillar of sustainability. On the regional level, the actions taken were more to support the national policy, which included providing assistance by way of financial support and incentives for start-up programmes.

To answer the sub research questions about how sustainable tourism policies developed during COVID-19, the national policy emerged to tackle the economic pillars in terms of relaying subsidies and employee pay (see Table 8). As concerns other sectors, the interviewed strategist implied that they (public sector) are still working to tackle social and environmental plans for the recovery and restart plans for Gotland. This also addresses sub research question 8 about the role of national policy. As shown in Table 8, the majority of recovery action occurred on the national level. It was

limited to business owners and, according to the mentioned strategist, they did not use the 'short work pay' programme and give more hours to employees, nor keep employees on long term. This may be seen in Table 7, with over 600 people losing their jobs.

Some measures have been taken to meet hygiene and sanitation needs for tourists that entailed information to hotels given by the Swedish Health Agency, Region Gotland, and GFB (Strategist, personal communication, 29 April 2021). Unlike most countries, Sweden did not go into a full lockdown and hotels and restaurants were allowed to serve customers within the introduced parameters of social distancing and new hygiene codes. Travellers to Gotland were provided with up-to-date information on the Visit Gotland site about the travel restrictions, especially if a travel ban between regions was in existence (Visit Gotland, n.d.). The drop in tourist arrivals has not changed the sustainable policy thinking for Gotland because the recovery action and modification for the region is still in progress (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021). With respect to marketing plans to develop competitiveness after COVID-19, he mentioned they are still in progress. For the next meeting agenda, he referred to the following plans to develop new sustainability measurements and certifications with the collaboration of Campus Gotland:

What we want to kick off with or roll out is getting more businesses and stakeholders on strategies moving forward, so education for companies on different levels and also how to manage and develop their companies and build different competencies, so they make better jobs for companies but also destinations as part of that (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

Although sustainability competitiveness has been more individual-based for stakeholders, Region Gotland now wants to create specific measurement indicators for Gotland (Strategist, personal communication, 27 April 2021). This is to fulfil one of its policy strategies to keep quality consistent and the same brand of destination. In terms of policy development, the external factors are government agencies on the national level and GFB. Before the pandemic, sustainable tourism policies were developed with the help of stakeholder meetings and the 2010–2020 national agenda for tourism by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. Public meetings have been limited by the COVID-19-related restrictions and it is unclear whether local residents have an influence on policymaking. With regard to stakeholder inclusivity, the interviewed strategist explained that they had strived to involve stakeholders in the decision-making as much as possible. Still, they received complaints that the meetings were not interesting and they had to hire a consulting agency to do the planning. It is unclear whether this consulting agency was involving stakeholders in the planning process. During COVID-19, Region Gotland and GFB hosted online events for stakeholders, with over 300 views. These are one of the few actions related to the response stage.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOTLAND

The findings allow the conclusion that Gotland had taken extensive action for sustainable tourism policy before COVID-19. After the pandemic, there has been wide-ranging action on the national level for the economic sector but limited action on the regional level to recover and restart the sustainable tourism action plans. Work has been done on the socio-political capacity and supply level. The interviewee indicated that talks were underway for relaunching the meetings with project owners, the marketing plans and a destination-level sustainability programme.

This study has limitations in terms of addressing how sustainable tourism strategies were developed or affected in the response, recovery and restart stages of COVID-19. First although the strategist selected for the study was the person responsible for the sustainable tourism policymaking process, he did not address how local employment and housing issues were being addressed. In terms of the socio-psychological capacity on the tourism-supply level, there is still a lack of communication with temporary workers. There is also the question of which stakeholders are included in the tourism planning process. With GFB, members of the group of business stakeholders are the most dominant in the tourism policy conversation. It would be interesting to study the dynamics of tourism stakeholders and conduct a more in-depth study of local residents. This is especially possible with quality-of-life studies on residents, similar to the one conducted by Mihalič & Kuščer (2021). For COVID-19 responses and recovery, more research could delve into whether the national policies were effective for project participants and workers. Further, visitor satisfaction surveys should be performed to learn more about the socio-psychological capacity for the tourist demand. Finally, researchers could also more deeply investigate the potential sustainability impact indicators (Mihalič, 2021; p. 100). This would help to diagnose overtourism and also with the design of a resilience plan for future crises.

The findings show that Gotland can do more to improve its recovery and resilience phase of the pandemic. There are challenges in collaboration between tourism stakeholders, according to studies by Oxenswärdh (2020a) and Persson-Fischier (2019). This crisis is an opportunity to provide a liaison between tourism stakeholders by building more trust and a stronger relationship, not just with those within the sustainable tourism projects but beyond them as well. The interviewed strategist mentioned that they hoped to update the strategy with greater cooperation with policy planners in the Sustainable Gotland strategy for 2040. Further, Gotland could introduce more marketing plans to help recover Swedish and international tourists. One way to accomplish this is to collaborate with Visit Sweden, the national DMO and promote Gotland as a destination and these sustainability projects in the four major markets. Many DMOs such as Visit Estonia have already begun to communicate their openness to customers after the pandemic (OECD, 2020a). Iceland's government recently supplied vouchers to stimulate domestic tourism for specific destinations. It is now working further on a new strategy to become a more resilient destination in future crises. As a destination that seeks to be the most sustainable in northern Europe, Gotland's tourism planners can use this opportunity to utilise more tools like the Responsustainable (SRT) model to strengthen the participation of stakeholders and design effective policies for the future of tourism.

## 6 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN COLOGNE, GERMANY

**Ella Pommeranz**

### ABSTRACT

The global tourism sector came to a halt following the restrictions imposed around the world to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments introduced a variety of tourism policies to tackle the crisis and at the same time previous policies have been severely affected. This study focuses on sustainable tourism policies and examines the pandemic's impacts on their implementation by considering a case study of Cologne, Germany. The article delivers insights into the different actions taken during the response, recovery and restart phases of the pandemic. Cologne is found to be mainly concentrating on promotional activities while the national government provided funding to compensate for losses incurred by businesses due to the restrictions imposed. Based on the analysis of secondary data and a semi-structured interview, actions regarding the enforcement of potential sustainable tourism practices are recommended.

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Cologne is Germany's fourth-largest city, has a population of over 1 million people and is a significant contributor to the country's tourism industry (DRV, 2021; Statistisches Landesamt NRW, 2021). It is located in Western Germany, close to the Dutch and Belgian borders which can be reached within a 1-hour drive (DZT, n.d.). Cologne has its own airport together with the neighbouring city of Bonn, is well connected to the European train network and has several harbours (Cologne.de, n.d.a; Berentsen et al., 2020). The city's gothic cathedral, a designated UNESCO world heritage site, is one of Cologne's most famous attractions (DZT, n.d.). Moreover, the MICE location Cologne is also known for its trade fairs, especially Gamescom that is the world's largest trade fair for interactive games and entertainment (Koelnmesse, n.d.). The locals are very open to members of the LGTBQ+ community and annually celebrate a Pride parade called Christopher Street Day (DZT, n.d.). In addition, the Carnival celebrations in February/March are an important aspect of Cologne's culture. During wintertime, the city's Christmas markets draw a considerable number of visitors every year (Cologne.de, n.d.b). Finally, Cologne also has an extensive cultural offering, including world-class museums, theatres and a philharmonic (DZT, n.d.).

Table 9: Basic Indicators for Cologne, Germany

Indicator	Gotland, Sweden
Area in km <sup>2</sup> (2019)	405.01a
Population (2019)	1,087,863a
Registered unemployment rate in tourism in June 2020 (%)	15.74b
Unemployment rate change in tourism in June 2020/2019	146.24b
Tourism arrivals in 2020	1,441,825c
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-62.3c
Nights spent in 2020	2,557,212c
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	-61.1c

Sources: a Statistisches Landesamt NRW (2021), b Nottebrock, B. (personal communication, 26 April 2021), c KölnTourismus (2021)

All of these factors make Cologne an attractive destination for travellers. In 2020, guests spent on average 1.8 days in Cologne, an increase of 5.9% over the previous year (KölnTourismus, 2020a). The city can thus be classified as a city break and business destination.

In January and February 2020, Cologne recorded around 500,000 overnight stays per month (KölnTourismus, 2020a). Upon the outbreak of the coronavirus in March 2020, the figures dropped rapidly to reach an all-time low in April 2020 of just 28,399 overnight stays. As Germany saw continuous improvements in the COVID situation towards the summer of 2020, the regulations were slowly lifted, enabling a subtle recovery of tourism. In August, more than 300,000 overnight stays were registered. Yet, thereafter the numbers continued to fall again as the second lockdown in Germany was approaching.

In 2020, 76% of all arrivals came from within Germany, with foreign arrivals accounting for 24% (KölnTourismus, 2020a). In comparison, in the previous year 35.2% of all arrivals came from abroad (KölnTourismus, 2019). In 2019, 63% of international arrivals in Cologne came from other European countries (KölnTourismus, 2019). The neighbouring countries of the Netherlands and Belgium made up 8.4% and 4.8%, respectively. Other main markets were the UK (9.6%), Italy (5%), Switzerland (4.4%), France (4.3%) and Spain (4.3%). Despite the distance, US citizens accounted for 9.4% of all international tourist arrivals in Cologne in 2019. While international visitors stayed an average of 1.9 days, Germans remained in Cologne just for 1.7 days. What is noteworthy here is that visitors from Asia and Africa usually spend more than 2 days in the city, namely, the longest duration overall. Within Europe, Bulgarians and Maltese stayed the longest with 2.8 and 2.4 days, respectively.

## 6.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR COLOGNE

Sustainability is today an omnipresent topic receiving global attention (DesJardins, 2018). It is also discussed and implemented in various ways in Cologne. SmartCity Cologne is one of the initiatives that revolve around sustainability and brings people, businesses and organisations

together to collaboratively create innovations and solutions to make Cologne a better place to live in (SmartCity Cologne, n.d.; Sustain Europe, 2019). This initiative mainly advocates for the sustainable and conscious use of energy as it was founded by the local energy provider Rhein-Energie AG and thereby responds to the challenges of climate change. The project “Cologne: global – sustainable” of the alliance for the municipal sustainability of Cologne, on the other hand, focuses on implementing and raising awareness of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN (Köln global-nachhaltig, n.d.). The production of waste as a by-product of consumption is a relevant issue and sought to be tackled by Zero Waste, a network dedicated to reducing waste in Cologne (Zero Waste Köln, n.d.). This network hosts events and seminars to educate and inspire stakeholders to work together on this issue.

Municipal measures, such as urban transport or renewable energy, are also being taken, as will be addressed in more detail in the following parts of section two. Further, although the aforementioned projects primarily target the natural pillar of sustainability, achieving a sustainable future also requires economic and social issues to be addressed. Below, the three pillars of sustainability are applied to Cologne as part of analysis of the present state and the initiatives in place.

### 6.2.1 Economic Pillar

Tourism constitutes an important part of Germany’s economy, particularly Cologne’s. The GDP generated by Cologne’s economy amounted to EUR 64,407 million in 2017, namely EUR 84,530 per capita. As for tourism, nation-wide the sector directly contributed around EUR 105 billion (or 3.9%) to the German economy in 2015, with a further EUR 76.1 billion indirectly (OECD, n.d.). Not only does the tourism industry have economic impacts on Cologne, but it also is a generator of employment. The tourism sector in Cologne directly provided 18,922 jobs in September 2019, equalling 3.2% of the total workforce in the city (Nottebrock, B., personal communication, 26 April 2021). Yet, due to the COVID crisis this amount dropped in June 2020 to just 16,747 and 2.9%, respectively, whilst the unemployment rate in tourism increased almost 1.5-fold (Nottebrock, B., personal communication, 26 April 2021; cf. Table 9). In general, the workforce is slightly seasonal. Over the past 2 years, there have been variations of some 500 employees between the summer and winter seasons in Cologne’s tourism sector. In 2019, the two busiest months were October and November with more than 600,000 overnight stays, respectively and thereby accounting for a combined total of 18.3% of overnight stays in that year (KölnTourismus, 2019). In terms of seasonality and tourism flow, the share of overnight stays was the lowest in January and February and then continuously rose up until November with only small fluctuations.

In the last 5 years, the number of tourists grew up until 2019, which was a record year for Cologne with 3,826,360 arrivals and 6,549,119 overnight stays (KölnTourismus, 2021). The travel restrictions imposed following the outbreak of the pandemic saw these numbers fall drastically in 2020 and were expected to remain low in 2021. Nonetheless, the numbers of international tourist arrivals and overnight stays do not reflect the number of day visitors a destination receives, which could account for a much bigger amount. In Cologne’s case, it welcomes 100 million day-visitors a year (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

Between 2015 and 2018, the number of accommodation providers slowly decreased from a yearly average of 289 operating providers in 2015 to 280 in 2018 (Stadt Köln, 2019). Once again, the number of available beds grew steadily from around 32,000 in 2016 to 34,000 in 2019 whilst the occupancy rate of beds rose slightly from 49% in 2016 to 53% in 2019, indicating an increase in tourism demand and supply (KölnTourismus, 2020b). Recently, however, the bed occupancy rate fell from 44.9% in January 2020 to 7.4% in January 2021 (KölnTourismus, 2020b; KölnTourismus, 2021). In the same time frame, the number of beds shrank from 33,830 to 26,960, providing a clear indicator of the coronavirus' impact on the tourism industry in Cologne.

### 6.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

Cologne is a city rich in culture. *Kölsch* is not only the name of the local beer but also the name of the dialect spoken in the city. A beer culture is well evident in Cologne where one can find 0.2-litre glasses of *Kölsch* at every *Kiosk* (convenience store) or *Kneipe* (traditional bar) around the corner. Next to the cathedral, Cologne has 12 large Romanesque churches showcasing impressive architecture (Cologne Tourism, n.d.). Within the old town of Cologne, cobblestone streets run through narrow alleys surrounded by even narrower traditional and colourful buildings. Reflecting its history, Roman artifacts can still be found in the Roman and Germanic Museum as well as in the city centre (Berentsen et al. 2020). Cologne boasts not only a variety of museums, but musical programmes, theatres and operas as well.

With regard to the social environment, the locals of Cologne are known for being tolerant, especially as concerns foreigners and gays (Berentsen et al. 2020). The local government has also created policies to continuously improve the inclusion of the disabled in the community by removing barriers and integrating them into the education system (Stadt Köln, n.d.a.). Nonetheless, the metropolis experiences difficulties in the areas of safety and crime. In a regional study published in 2018 concerning the safety of cities and counties in Germany, Cologne was ranked 400th out of 401 (Brasack, 2018). Indicators included not only criminal records but also traffic security or economic security in terms of the unemployment rate. Regarding crime in the city, a recent development is the 16.38% drop in pickpocketing in 2020. While this is relevant for travellers' security, it is noted that this fall in numbers might also be due to fewer tourists arriving in Cologne and thus fewer opportunities for thieves (Polizeipräsidium Köln, 2020).

In any event, the effects of tourism on the cultural and social environment of Cologne have yet to be determined.

### 6.2.3 Natural Pillar

The natural environment is a crucial factor not simply for attracting tourists but in terms of liveability for residents as well.

In 2018, 11% of the area of Cologne was made up of parks, sports and green facilities, alongside 17.3% consisting of forests and 4.8% of water areas (Stadt Köln, 2019). While the share of land use remained steady for parks between 2014 and 2018, the share of area used for forests grew by 0.4%,

albeit the water areas shrank by 0.2%. The Cologne-based clean-up initiative K.R.A.K.E. brings volunteers together to collect trash and clean up public spaces like parks and the Rhine River that runs through the city (Krake Köln, n.d.). Moreover, on the side of the city government, several measures and plans are implemented to regulate, protect and monitor the environment. As part of the Clean Air Plan initiated in 2006, the majority of Cologne's metropolitan area is designated as a low-emissions area, with the intention to reduce emissions in the city centre (Stadt Köln, n.d.b; Stadt Köln, n.d.c). Air quality and air pollutants are also regularly measured and monitored (Stadt Köln, n.d.d). Cologne has set climate protection targets in its climate plan KölnKlimaaktiv 2022 (Stadt Köln, n.d.e). It includes intelligent urban development and urban planning, climate-change-compatible landscape management and green-space planning. Thereby, it aims to improve the quality of life for its residents. In order to educate locals about the environment and raise awareness of climate change, workshops and contests are organised, targeting children in particular (Stadt Köln, n.d.f).

Cologne's compact city centre means that tourists can easily reach all major attractions within 20 minutes by foot, bike or public transport. As the operator of Cologne's bus and tram systems, KVB is not only a member of the international Sustainable Development Charter but also carries the EMAS certification of the Environmental Audit of the European Communities (KVB, n.d.a). It is trying to make its fleet eco-friendlier, meaning that all of its energy comes from renewable sources powered by Rhein-Energie, with nine e-buses currently connecting the people of Cologne (KVB, n.d.b). KVB provides online ticket purchasing, which helps to minimise paper waste. For tourists, Cologne offers the KölnCard that provides free public transportation within Cologne along with discounts of up to 50% at several museums, hotels, stores and attractions (KVB, n.d.c). KVB also operates a bicycle rental programme known as KVB-Rad. These bikes can be booked using an app or by phone and picked up and dropped off anywhere within designated areas of Cologne (KVB, n.d.b; Sustain Europe, 2019). Other providers like DriveNow offer car-sharing, whereas electric scooters can be rented from Lime or Tier (KVB, n.d.b). Ultimately, a well-built public transport system will make the use of polluting vehicles like cars redundant.

### 6.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR COLOGNE

The three responsibility enablers form part of the Responsustainable Model and are capacities describing the limits of various aspects which, if exceeded, would lead to an unacceptable degrading of residents', visitors' or other stakeholders' experience (Mihalic, 2021; cf. figure 2). The socio-psychological capacity of tourism stakeholders is split into tourism demand and tourism supply. The demand side deals with the satisfaction of tourists and the quality of their experience while other relevant stakeholders from the private or public sectors, especially residents and the tourism industry, are part of a destination's supply side (Mihalic, 2020). Issues could be the impacts of the existence of tourism and its growth on the locals' quality of life as well as on the quality of opportunities for tourism businesses. The two sides of supply and demand are thus interdependent.

Finally, the socio-political environment is concerned with the awareness, agendas and actions of a destination (Mihalic, 2020). It describes the tourism actions of and collaboration between stakeholders from the public, private and non-governmental sectors to ultimately achieve

responsible sustainable action. In particular, awareness of sustainable tourism, tourism governance and management, political agendas and legislation, civil movements together with ethics and values are discussed as part of the socio-political capacity.

the above-mentioned responsibility enablers are applied to Cologne below.

### 6.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

Tourism development is often largely focused on meeting tourists' needs. However, successful and sustainable tourism also depends on keeping the interests of both residents and businesses in mind.

The concentration of supply can be measured by the number of hotel or hostel beds per resident. In 2018, 280 accommodation providers were present in Cologne, with a yearly average of 32,726 beds, namely around 0.03 beds per resident (Stadt Köln, 2019). As for Airbnb, 2,706 housings were listed in the city in January 2021 (Statista, 2021). Still, there has been a discussion concerning the sub-renting of apartments for leisure purposes (Stadt Köln, 2020). In order to protect living spaces for locals and prevent residential misappropriation, the local government of Cologne has regulated the use of apartments for solely tourism purposes. According to a study, such regulation deprives locals of living spaces and is intensifying the current tension in the housing market by adding to the housing shortage whilst simultaneously increasing rental prices.

Issues like these heavily influence the satisfaction of locals. Among 14,400 people from Cologne aged between 18–80 years who participated in a survey in 2016, 61% stated they were either very content or content with living in Cologne (Stadt Köln, 2019), while 32% were partly satisfied and 7% were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Some of Cologne's strengths are its shopping facilities along with its offer of restaurants and bars, with 80% of the residents evaluating them as good or very good. Further, two-thirds were content or very content with the city's cultural offerings. On the other hand, 55% rated Cologne's cleanliness and the housing market as bad or very bad (Stadt Köln, 2016).

Yet Cologne is not only a tourist destination, but also an internationally significant trade fair venue, a cultural and media hotspot, a large transportation hub and a major economic centre (Teleport, n.d.). According to Teleport's quality of life assessment, Cologne ranks as one of the best cities with a free business environment based on low business corruption (Teleport, n.d.). This speaks for the high quality of opportunities for the industry. Still, despite that, the city scored just 3 out of 10 for venture capital and 4 out of 10 for its taxation policies, which does not indicate ease of doing business. Companies in Germany must pay a corporation tax of 15.825% as well as a trade tax that differs depending on where a business is permanently established (PWC, 2021).

### 6.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

Tourism demand is driving all tourism development and this makes it important to determine and monitor what visitors need and want. To capture the tourists' satisfaction and identify areas for improvement, KölnTourismus published a survey on its website until the end of 2020 (KölnTourismus, n.d.). However, the results are not publicly available. Changes in both consumer behaviour as well as travel demand caused by COVID-19 have thus yet to be diagnosed.

In 2020, Cologne recorded 1.3 tourist arrivals per resident compared to around 3.5 tourist arrivals in previous years (KölnTourismus, 2021; Statistisches Landesamt NRW, 2021). These numbers reflect a concentration of demand and indicate over- or undertourism. In this case, one cannot speak of overtourism that would deteriorate the residents' quality of life.

Socio-cultural issues like the safety of Cologne also impact tourism demand and the quality of visitors' experience. Cologne experienced a temporary drop in foreign visitors after women were assaulted in public on New Year's Eve in 2016, causing an immediate nationwide outrage and attracting international media coverage (Alen, 2017). Shortly after, hundreds of concerned prospective visitors together with tour operators from all over the world called Cologne's official tourism board to learn more about the city's security situation following these attacks.

### 6.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

Establishing an effective policy framework for tourism in Germany is largely the responsibility of the federal government (OECD, n.d.). The Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy is in charge of tourism policy and supported by the Advisory Council on Tourism Issues, which brings together the government, tourism industry, academics and other stakeholders. The German National Tourist Board, in comparison, is in charge of promoting Germany internationally.

In response to COVID-19, Germany has introduced several measures to support the travel and tourism sector (UNWTO, n.d.b). The federal government passed two supplementary budgets to help with the overall economy's recovery. The first of these was adopted in March 2020 and totalled EUR 156 billion (4.9% of GDP), while the second budget in June 2020 was EUR 130 billion (4% of GDP). In addition, the government compensated up to 75% of the revenues of affected businesses, facilitated access to public loans and provided basic income. To protect jobs, the use of short-term job allowances was enabled in a more flexible manner. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that these measures were not specifically targeted at the tourism industry, but at the general German economy.

Regarding sustainability, the National Sustainable Development Strategy was passed in 2016 by the government, reflecting its vision of sustainability (Bundesregierung, n.d.). The strategy is consistent with the UN's 17 SDGs and places considerable emphasis on global responsibility. As discussed in section 7.1.3, Cologne has already put in action several measures concerning protection of the environment. The city is also actively working to raise the awareness of locals

about sustainability issues and encourage environmentally-friendly behaviour. One can therefore say that Germany and Cologne in particular have completed all three stages of awareness, agenda and action.

## 6.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN COLOGNE

To help identify what had been changed in the tourism policies implemented and determine the responsibility enablers, an interview with the CEO of KölnTourismus was conducted (cf. the Appendix). The CEO stated that “there was no explicit tourism policy in Cologne before the pandemic” (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). He explained that tourism policies are hardly ever implemented on a city level in Germany, but on the federal state level. Before the pandemic hit, KölnTourismus acted more as a tourist information centre and worked actively with people present in Cologne. One could even say that KölnTourismus had “a very classical understanding of tourism promotion” (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). It was only after the start of February 2020, soon after Mr. Amann had taken over as the CEO of KölnTourismus, that steps were taken to develop from a Destination Marketing Organisation to a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) that then entailed a redefinition of the target groups and instruments needed. The mentioned representative described them within the Sinus-Milieus, namely a classification of target groups (Sinus Institut, n.d.), as being expeditives and liberal-intellectuals. When asked what would attract those milieus to come visit Cologne, he responded:

The USPs for them are, of course, above all the cathedral. For the expeditive ones: the diversity of the Veedel (a district of Cologne) culture – they have 99 Veedels and 99 different cultures, that is like visiting 99 cities. For the liberal intellectuals, certainly the cultural offerings and by that I am not thinking exclusively of the high-culture offerings but also, in the context of the expanded concept of culture, of gastronomy and the culinary arts, breweries and, of course, to a certain extent, the carnival (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

### Response phase

The first lockdown in Germany began in March 2020 and lasted till the end of April (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). During that time period, overnight stays for leisure purposes were forbidden, leaving only business travellers in the hotels of Cologne. In a specific time frame, these were even further limited to solely business trips in system-relevant economic sectors like the food industry.

KölnTourismus responded to the pandemic immediately in March by launching crisis management in the form of providing information to its partners. Further response measures included the publishing of videos to help pacify the population and by reminding people to stay at home on its social media channels in cooperation with Stadt Köln (cf. Table 10). These efforts were aimed at the people of Cologne in the initial weeks and months of the pandemic. As the first wave slowly

started to ease, new campaigns were introduced, starting to concentrically also target the regions around Cologne, then the federal state North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) and eventually all of Germany. Given their proximity, Belgium and the Netherlands were viewed as being part of the nearby market, with Cologne recording a number of Belgian and Dutch visitors in the summer of 2020. These promotions were intended to stimulate visitors to come back and explore the corners of the city they had not seen before. This included the “out of home” posters which were spread right across Germany and the publishing of offers on KölnTourismus’ websites. To sum up, one can say that depending on the restrictions in place and possibilities in existence, KölnTourismus expanded or scaled down the outreach of its initiatives. Moreover, it took both a reactive and active stance. KölnTourismus reacted to the pandemic by pursuing crisis management whilst also actively realigning its conceptual strategies and thus shaping the tourism of the future.

*Table 10: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Cologne, Germany*

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Institution responsible	Indicator
Social media promotion	Yes	Restarting domestic tourism, marketing	KölnTourismus and Stadt Köln	Local and regional
Discover Cologne Day	Yes	Restarting domestic tourism, generating a quick return, making locals ambassadors of the city	KölnTourismus	Local
Promotion of urban outdoor activities	Yes	Image enforcement	KölnTourismus	Local

*Source: Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021*

## Recovery phase

The recovery phase is predicted to remain in place for the coming 2 years in Cologne (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). This phase is mainly concerned with generating quick returns for the tourism partners of KölnTourismus, thereby contributing to the quality of opportunities in the tourism sector. This also means that the recovery stage “is not strategic-conceptual with long-term measures”, but more short-term oriented (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). One of the primary targets is to maintain the tourism infrastructure of Cologne, next to generating revenue for KölnTourismus’ partners, by promoting the city. Here, the focus lays on attracting visitors from nearby markets as international markets continue to reveal difficulties in terms of accessibility since flight connections are being reduced due to travel restrictions. The biggest problem at the moment is that “[...] up to now, no prospects have been opened up [by the government] as to how things should continue, when they can continue, [and] what kind of framework conditions can continue to exist” (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). Upholding the

infrastructure would not only benefit the quality of experience of tourists, but also the quality of life of residents who profit from establishments like star-rated restaurants, public transport or cultural facilities.

With regard to the future, KölnTourismus is structurally realigning its concept. Target groups are being adjusted, yet new themes like sustainability are also essential for addressing these identified groups. With respect to the latter, urban outdoor offerings like hiking or bike trails with a stress on street art are being peculiarly promoted to both prospective tourists of nearby markets but also locals. However, these promotions generally aim to cover certain topics, rather than highlighting biking itself given that Cologne does not want to position itself as a biking destination because this is not its strongest trait. The city instead wants to be seen as a metropolis “stand[ing] for progress, for development, for European space travel, for digitalisation” (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021). Further, Mr. Amann sees no need for sustainability strategies specifically for tourism on the local level. In his opinion, the market automatically forces companies in Germany to implement sustainable measures nowadays in terms of profitability and construction permits.

Another measure in the recovery campaign #inKöllezeHus (= #homeinCologne) was the “Discover Cologne Day” (cf. Figure 2). Mr. Amann described it as follows:

We offered guided tours free of charge off the beaten track and we included overnight accommodations in the “Discover Cologne Day” on the condition that some add-on was included that allowed a look behind the scenes. The 25hours hotel had rental bikes that you could just ride, away from the cathedral [in the city centre], into the neighbourhoods. There were other hotels where you could mix cocktails together with the bartender or you got a house tour. At the Hotel Excelsior, you could take a look behind the scenes of the hotel with the concierge, with a bit of storytelling about famous guests who had already spent the night, so that was quite a good story (Representative of the DMO of Cologne, personal communication, 27 April 2021).

The mission of this campaign was to make residents of the city and region tourism ambassadors for Cologne. In September 2021, the “Discover Cologne Day 2” was planned, with a similar theme and goal: to encourage people to explore their own city once more. Another ongoing endeavour refers motivating stakeholders to remain positive and participate in the recovery measures.

### **Restart phase**

According to the Representative of the DMO of Cologne (personal communication, 27 April 2021), the restart phase has not been reached yet and is not expected to be reached within the next 2 years. This means the recovery mode will remain in place until 2023 as international tourism is not anticipated to revive before then. Since the focus continues to be on recovering from the pandemic’s consequences in Cologne, no prospective measures have been taken. However, shifting away from being fixated with economic quantitative key performance indicators (KPIs) towards more qualitative ones is intended.

## 6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLOGNE

The gathered qualitative data and analysis of secondary sources were used while examining the sustainable tourism policies in Cologne in the response, recovery and restart phases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cologne's tourism industry has been hit by the pandemic in terms of KPIs (international arrivals and overnight stays) and economic impacts. Still, since there were no explicit sustainable tourism policies, or tourism policies at all, in place in Cologne before the outbreak of COVID-19, a comparison of the pandemic's impact on implementation of such policies in Cologne is impossible. Nonetheless, new campaigns and measures were being introduced as a response to the pandemic and to consequently facilitate the recovery of local tourism businesses, despite not having a focus on sustainability. More specifically, domestic tourism and sustainable modes of transportation were promoted. While these measures include a sustainable aspect, this was not the main motive for introducing them.

According to UNWTO's three recovery strategies, Cologne is currently addressing crisis management and impact mitigation on the local level as well as stimulus provision and recovery acceleration on the national level. Measures concerning preparations for the future are not being fully focused on yet. The local tourism industry is currently mainly counteracting the negative effects of COVID-19 and does not have the capacity to grasp the positive outcome this halt might bring by using it to restructure sustainably. The focus is on local and short-term tactics for restarting tourism instead of long-term sustainable agendas. It should also be noted that the measures enforced generally concern the economic and socio-cultural pillar, not the natural one. While regulations can be found on the municipal level, none are specifically targeted at the tourism sector.

With regard to maintaining and improving Cologne's future market competitiveness by concentrating on aspects of sustainability, it is recommended to additionally address the pillars of socio-cultural and natural sustainability in the destination's tourism sector. While market forces might regulate the enactment of sustainable actions in the tourism industry, one should not rely on those. Further, involving stakeholders like local residents is critical for progressing towards a more sustainable and resilient environment. This would avoid potential conflicts and any deterioration of the quality of life and opportunities that might come along with tourism. Collaboration with other stakeholders in the tourism industry would build a stronger business environment and could lead the establishing of a lobby. Nonetheless, one must keep in mind that the position held by tourism in Germany is currently underestimated and the passing of tourism policies is subject to a hierarchical structure. Obtaining appropriate funding to integrate the above-mentioned recommendations might thus be problematic. Instead, a bottom-up approach to policy implementation across Germany would be a better solution.

As the primary data were solely based on one interview with the CEO of KölnTourismus, the results presented in this paper might not be a comprehensive and multi-faceted representation of the response, recovery and restart measures. In future research, it is recommended to include a wider variety of stakeholders.

## 7 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN LJUBLJANA

**Peter Lewin**

### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected the travel and tourism industry in more ways than traditionally understood by the general public. While the loss of jobs, international standstill of travel, and economic downturn has been difficult to observe, the implications of the pandemic on sustainability has to be addressed. Luckily for Ljubljana, sustainability has been a priority for the better part of two decades and the pandemic's effects on those priorities has not changed. COVID-19 has played a role in the reformulation of the tourism sector of Ljubljana but the goals remain the same and the vision is unwavering. Their commitment to being “green” and offering a visitor experience that reflects these values remains unchanged throughout the problems associated with the pandemic, and with solid strategic plans already adopted for the future, Ljubljana is poised to transition out of the pandemic more successfully than a lot of other tourism destinations.

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread further and further across the world, its impacts could be seen across the tourism industry in dramatic ways. From the grounding of entire airline fleets, closing of international borders through to images of empty streets as the world entered lockdowns, the pandemic brought widespread economic, social and environmental impacts. International arrivals fell 74% in 2020, equating to over 1 billion fewer arrivals than in the previous year and, when compared with data for the 2008/2009 global economic crisis that also had lasting effects yet only caused a 4% change in arrivals, it is clear that 2020 was the worst year for tourism in history (UNWTO, 2021b). The crisis has put approximately 120 million jobs in the tourism industry at risk, many with small to medium-sized enterprises without large cash reserves to protect them and a sufficient economic size to be able to affect policy in their favour (UNWTO, 2021b). The following section discusses the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on tourism and sustainable tourism policies. The policies in place as part of the initial response were introduced in addition to the larger sustainable tourism policy discourse over the last 3 decades that has led to calls for a complete overhaul of consumerism and a push towards dematerialisation (Miličević, 2021).

Table 11: Basic Indicators for Ljubljana

Indicator	Ljubljana
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	274.99
Population	292,988
Registered unemployment rate in tourism 2020 (%)	-4.7
Change in tourism GDP 2020/2019 (%)	-66.5
Tourism arrivals in 2020	254,946
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-77
Nights spent in 2020	540,195
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	-76

Sources: WTTC (n.d.b), VisitLjubljana (2021a), City of Ljubljana (2021)

## 7.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR LJUBLJANA

This section discusses the three sustainability pillars as they are traditionally known and shows which elements were present in Ljubljana prior to the onset of the pandemic. Mihalic (2021) describes how the mainstream sustainable development paradigm connects the three known pillars: economic, socio-cultural and natural. In addition to being their own systems, these pillars relate to each area individually and have individual driving forces of profit, people and planet, commonly referred to as the triple bottom line (Mihalic, 2021). To provide context, the activities of each pillar can be generalised as follows. Economic sustainability relates to the social science of economics and the subsequent production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Socio-cultural sustainability refers to the sociological aspects of human society and development while natural sustainability deals with ecology and the relationship between humans and nature (Mihalic, 2021).

### 7.2.1 Economic Pillar

Numerous examples of a circular economy and subsequent contributions to economic sustainability can be found throughout the city. Defined as a regenerative system that minimises resource input, waste, emissions and energy leakage by slowing, closing and minimising energy loops, through lasting design, repair, reuse, recycling etc (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017). An excellent example of this in Ljubljana is the Reuse and Repair Café located at 4 Povšetova. Opened in early 2013, the centre employs jobseekers who have had trouble obtaining employment elsewhere and hosts volunteers from professions like electricians and other trades to provide workshops and development training to help repair and refurbish products (City of Ljubljana, 2021). Further, in the age of digitisation, Kabine Šerinjon is an online e-library of clothing that is trying to alter the way users think about consumption. Known for its economic exploitation of workers, fast fashion is what Kabine Šerinjon is seeking to combat with several options to reuse and co-use, including to rent from Slovenian designers (City of Ljubljana, 2021). Ljubljana has also made strides in terms of shortening supply chains of organic and local produce in ways that aid the local

tourism gastronomy offerings as well as locals. In cooperation with numerous statistical regions, new stalls have been set up in the town centre that provide smaller, artisanal producers with direct access to consumers, otherwise unreachable or nonviable (City of Ljubljana, 2021).

### 7.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

Ljubljana has received a lot of recognition for its commitment to preserving the city's socio-cultural elements. A large element of socio-cultural sustainability is that of social capital, which may loosely be defined as a network of relationships, social structures of society (Coleman, 1994) and freely accessible elements of culture involving civic engagement and associated membership (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2013). As a European Capital of Culture 2025 candidate city, Ljubljana is using the opportunity to realise strategic development goals relating to the progress of social capital such as establishing new connections between culture and other fields like ecology and healthcare, increasing the number of cultural tourists and assuring an improvement of social cohesion, identity and inclusion via community programmes and participatory engagement (City of Ljubljana, 2021). The city is also a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, becoming a permanent member in 2015 when it received the title City of Literature on top of it having been "World Book Capital" in 2010 (UNESCO, 2015). These accolades were presented due to the commitment to the vision of a creative city that promotes the accessibility of reading and books for all, establishes creative yet economically viable opportunities for literary entrepreneurs, and promotes festivals and events that fill public spaces with literally content in a way that is engaging and develops access to cultural life (City of Ljubljana, 2021). Moreover, these initiatives have enjoyed widespread government support and between 2016 and 2019 the city council unanimously voted to adopt the Strategy for the Development of Culture in the City of Ljubljana, which included the bid to compete for the title of European Capital of Culture 2025 (City of Ljubljana, 2021). This support undoubtedly plays a considerable role in the development of social capital and in turn helps to create an environment in which the socio-cultural elements of sustainability, whilst interconnected with the other pillars, can be advanced and flourish.

### 7.2.3 Natural Pillar

Ljubljana is no stranger to environmental sustainability, with the efforts of the last 10 years to transform the city into a 'green' capital having truly transformed this once somewhat dreary destination. As the first former socialist city to be given the European Green Capital Award in 2016, Ljubljana has undergone a period of urbanisation that has coincided with an increase of green infrastructure and community involvement (Svirčič Gotovac & Kerbler, 2019). The process was a well-planned, interdisciplinary approach that prioritised improving the quality of life for residents in a manner that also supported the development of the city's cultural, touristic and economic identity in 'green' ways, reiterating the three pillars' inevitable interconnectedness. Defined as a "strategically planned network of natural or semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services" (European Commission, 2021), Ljubljana has focused on traffic reduction, bicycle and pedestrian access and developing public spaces that open the city up to residents and tourists (Svirčič Gotovac & Kerbler, 2019). Further,

the Environmental Protection Department of the City of Ljubljana holds the ISO 14001:2015 certificate (City of Ljubljana, 2021), awarded for successful environmental management practices that have allowed for the management of environmental responsibilities in a “systematic manner that contributes to the environmental pillar of sustainability” (ISO, 2021). Finally, as a result of these initiatives, today the city boasts upwards of 540 square metres of green space per resident and each resident is at most 300 metres away from a public green space regardless of their location within the city’s limits. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this progress, like with the economic and socio-cultural pillars, would not have been achievable without the multi-tiered support of government agencies regarding the strategic sustainability vision for Ljubljana 2025 created in 2007 as the guiding framework for developmental success (City of Ljubljana, 2016).

### 7.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR LJUBLJANA

While the aforementioned sustainability pillars are the overarching concepts we build upon to create the sustainable tourism paradigm, the enablers or triggers are also very important in the responsustainable model. Generally speaking, enablers or triggers demonstrate the responsibility side, meaning they represent the actions and behaviours of the tourism industry to ensure its continued success via responsible implementation of the concepts within each pillar (Mihalic, 2021). The next section analyses the ‘steps’ upon which the ‘pillars’ stand in the SRT model, but before then what each capacity involves should be clarified. First and foremost, socio-psychological capacity on the supply side of tourism encompasses the limits on the attitudes and interests of the host communities to support tourism development, while the demand side of socio-psychological capacity refers to the limitations on tourists’ willingness to accept overcrowding before they decide to change location (Mihalic, 2021). (Socio)-political capacity refers to the level of tourism development that is beyond what is socially and politically acceptable while acknowledging political, environmental, economic and social priorities, yet it is noted that the definition is in the early stages of development and should further encompass more of the social situation in terms of the governance and management of tourism development (Mihalic, 2021).

#### 7.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

The socio-psychological capacity on the tourism supply side of Ljubljana involved two main stakeholder groups. First, we must examine the supply from the perspective of residents’ quality of life. As mentioned, Ljubljana's vision for strategic long-term tourism largely prioritised residents’ quality of life by implementing planning processes that improved the quality of the urban experience (Svirčić Gotovac & Kerbler, 2019). These initiatives, particularly those that transformed the transport situation in the city centre and enhanced the prominence of green spaces that really set Ljubljana apart in terms of improving residents’ quality of life and easily met the 12 criteria for the European Green Capital award. Demonstrated by residents’ perceived “right to the city” (Harvey, 2012), these policies showed that Ljubljana is cognizant of the needs of tourists, but even more so those of the residents by implementing an action that helped make the city more liveable and sustainable in conjunction with the goals to commercialise and become more of a defined destination (Svirčić Gotovac & Kerbler, 2019). Second, we must examine the supply from the

perspective of the quality of present opportunities in tourism. In the years leading up to the start of the pandemic, tourism was on a steady rise in Slovenia, while in 2018 the total contribution made to employment by travel and tourism in the country was 110,700 jobs, or around 12.8% (WTTC, 2019). Further, this number grew to 121,800 in 2019, demonstrating viable opportunities in the sector overall (WTTC, 2019). In Ljubljana specifically, the quality of opportunities for residents pre-COVID was evident. As an up-and-coming food and culture tourism hub, Ljubljana has branded these opportunities under specific titles like Gourmet Ljubljana and Taste Ljubljana (VisitLjubljana, 2021b) and now boasts six Michelin-starred institutions (Michelin Guide, 2021). Ljubljana's vision and strategy for tourism includes nods to sports, luxury and business tourism, all indicating anticipated growth in each subsequent field. This largely mirrors the trends observed on the national level pre-pandemic in relation to the UN's (SDGs, specifically SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, with the country remaining on track to maintain the realisation of SDG 8 across five of six indicators (OECD, 2020b).

### 7.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

The socio-psychological capacity for tourism demand in contrast only relates to one major group of stakeholders: visitors and the quality of their experience (Mihalic, 2021). A study conducted by the European Parliament Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies found that Ljubljana was already suffering from overtourism as an urban destination and, with approximately 2.55 visitors per resident, the scales had clearly tipped in the direction of overtourism (Kuscer & Mihalic, 2019). That being said, the pre-pandemic demand data did not reflect a change in visitors' perception that Ljubljana was an overvisited destination. In 2018, Ljubljana recorded 1.1 million arrivals and 2.2 million overnight stays, with the vast majority generated by international traffic (VisitLjubljana, 2021a). The two biggest markets recorded were from Germany and Italy, making up almost 20% of the 2018 demand, followed respectively by the United States and the United Kingdom (VisitLjubljana, 2021a). Interestingly, both demand from the USA and the UK resulted in longer average overnight stays at 2.3 and 2.5, respectively, while German and Italian visitors recorded average stays of 2 and 2.1 overnights (VisitLjubljana, 2021a). The longest overnight stays were recorded (average value 2.7) by Spanish and Russian tourists with the shortest being the average 1.5 overnight stays recorded by Chinese tourists (VisitLjubljana, 2021a). In terms of how this demand has changed following the pandemic, Ljubljana saw a 77% decrease in arrivals and a 76% decrease in overnights for 2020, a sad reflection of the industry as a whole during 2020 (VisitLjubljana, 2021a). Further, domestic tourism that used to make up less than 5% of the total demand increased to around 15% in 2020.

### 7.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

With respect to this capacity, the approach taken reflects the triple-A perspective described by Mihalic (2021) in terms of the awareness, agendas and actions of responsible tourist behaviours. Speaking directly to awareness, it is clear from the development of Ljubljana that sustainability awareness has been prevalent for the better part of the last 15 years. Socially and politically speaking, sustainability awareness has been an element of the larger discourse since the mid

2000s following the creation of the Office for Citizens' Initiative as a way to better communicate with the city's residents and disseminate information (City of Ljubljana, 2021). From its inception in 2008 until 2017, the web portal for the Initiative received almost 17,000 user created data points that, whether consciously or not, largely reflected sustainability issues regarding transport arrangements, environmental issues, social and cultural life, as well as municipality plans. Regarding agendas, Ljubljana has extensive examples of strategic plans that incorporate sustainability and has dedicated written sections to initiatives that cover all three pillars. One example here is the Environmental Actions Programme (EAP) for 2014–2020 that includes agendas for water protection, natural environment protection, land use for self-sufficiency and the promotion of connectivity for sustainable living. Initially adopted in 2007, the EAP has been one of the driving agendas in creating the city known today and can be attributed to many of the upgrades the city centre underwent in the last 10 years (City of Ljubljana, 2021). Finally, in regard to action, the results are visible all over the city. In particular, the city's public and natural areas have been revitalised by the investment outlined in the above-mentioned agendas, as well by cultural and economic actions. With over EUR 27 million invested in cultural activities annually, 1,800+ projects implemented to increase quality of life since 2011 and a large innovation hub, the City of Ljubljana clearly converts sustainability policy into responsible action in several ways across all three pillars that positively affects all of the supply and demand triggers in its tourism offering (City of Ljubljana, 2021).

#### **7.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN LJUBLJANA**

To answer our research questions as formulated, the larger thematic elements present in the data are first discussed, followed by specific answers to the research question and sub research questions, and then for clarity a table of the exact policies referred to in this section. In the interview with the Deputy Managing Director (DMD) of Ljubljana Tourism, clear insights into Ljubljana and the policies enacted were provided, yet he was also able to add a layer of personality to the data that demonstrated the city's tourism sector's interconnectivity with how the community was affected, beyond the somewhat abstract nature of 'those affected by COVID' since he maintains numerous personal relationships with the stakeholders.

The overwhelming theme of the data in relation to the response stage was that the government did not act in a way sufficient to support the tourism industry's needs. On the national level, Slovenia was able to pass eight pieces of legislation in direct response to the pandemic that restructured public spending and offered aid. However, tourism was largely underrepresented in these items of legislation, with the DMD stating, "you know how negotiation goes, you have say 10 bullet points you would like to get out of the ministry and through talks it gets to 5 and then the government says things have changed again so it shrinks to maybe just 1 and then once it gets to parliament the bullet is gone" (full interview transcript available in Appendix A). In the recovery stage, it generally seems that the majority of tourism organisations in Slovenia such as Visit Ljubljana and the equivalent organisations in Maribor and the Soča for example collaboratively assessed the likelihood of their sector surviving and together created proposals for the national government regarding their respective tourism needs and, while some headway was made in terms of loan

repayment and other fiscal measures, the story is overwhelmingly the same – the government did not do enough to support tourism stakeholders with recovery. The DMD commented on this stage: “they very quickly started two different groups where they were together like we are now thinking what they can do what they can propose to the government to the public sector to ministries what are the tasks that they could put on the table on the government and table so that we could talk about it”. Finally, in the restart phase, the general theme is of small steps leading towards a better collective future. There have been modest milestones in marketing as the region begins to reopen where the focus seems to have temporarily shifted as the demand pool has changed and thus the emphasis on promotions and marketing is within a catchment area of 300–500 km from the city. The DMD noted, “we are preparing our activities for the circle of around 300 to 500 kilometres countries cities places so this is where we will do the promotion and try to get people to Ljubljana”.

Accordingly, the answer to the main research question is as follows. Although the majority of the sustainable tourism policies during the response phase included aid packages to businesses to pay for lost revenue and ensure the retention of specialists, the tourism stakeholders perceived it as not enough. In the recovery phase, currently a special tourism law is being negotiated in parliament to aid in the sector’s recovery which calls for both operational support and investment support for tourism stakeholders, The DMD acknowledges that the law will bring economic support for cultural tourism and continue to uphold environmental goals through economic stimulus, reiterating the interconnectedness of the three conceptual sustainability pillars. Finally, in terms of restarting, the aforementioned regional promotion policy is the main strategy contributing to tourism sustainability at the moment. At its core, the goal is to tap into consumers’ newfound appreciation for ‘green’ tourism and time with nature to lure people to a city destination that has that experience offering on a sustainable scale. Regarding this, the DMD elaborated: “so people really realised how nature is important, how having an active and safe life is important, and this is what we can for sure offer in cities the size of Ljubljana and around so our task is down to wake people up to the fact that we are here”.

With regard to sub-question 1, an answer can be found in the DMD’s description of the aid being offered in the special tourism law that is still being negotiated and hence not yet public, albeit he reiterated that “it’s not only about tourism ... the cultural sector is also hard hit in this whole story so sometimes they were successful but more or less within the day the government doesn't pay enough attention to the tourism sector”. Sub question 2 has a relatively straightforward answer by referring to the requirements to maintain a social distance of 1.5 m, masks being required indoors/ on public transport, the closure of specific sites etc. Sub question 3 calls for a consideration of the big picture given that, as mentioned, sustainability policy has been part of Ljubljana since the early 2000s, which means that while the 77% drop in arrivals was a huge shock to the whole system, sustainable policies were in place before the pandemic and will continue to be a priority for the foreseeable future as demonstrated in the 2021–2027 plan. Sub-question 4 in relation to marketing during the pandemic can be answered via the regional promotional policy that targets markets in a 300–500 km radius from Ljubljana in an attempt to remind people that the city is a viable option for nature-based tourism and those wanting a ‘sustainable’ experience. Further,

there is a campaign aimed at showing residents the benefits of tourism apparently in an attempt to reduce the negative connotations of tourism as the campaign focuses on how the tourist tax has previously been used to the advantage of local residents.

Sub-questions 5 and 6 regarding external and internal influences and inclusion in policymaking can be answered by referring to the town-hall-type meetings the DMD mentioned: “well they have meetings amongst different groups of stakeholders held weekly... when the law is going to be passed even more frequently with stakeholders ... about as I said the main topics how to help them”. The previously mentioned consideration for other aspects of the industry such as culture and the fact that the 2021–2027 plan encompasses strategies for subsectors like city-break products, gastronomy, culture and sports demonstrates an intersectional approach to the city’s offerings and its development planning. Sub-question 7, which focuses on perceptions of sustainability, brings another straightforward answer due to the prolific work the city’s leadership has done to weave sustainability into the DNA of the development plans. When asked if the COVID relief laws or the special tourism law being formulated have had any effect on the sustainability policies and strategies already in place, the DMD simply answered “I won’t say anything”. Finally, in answer to sub-question 8 regarding national policy and actions, all of the mentioned adopted pieces of legislation in which tourism was neglected or underrepresented were on the national level. The special tourism law is also a national initiative where Ljubljana is the biggest stakeholder and, while the Municipality of Ljubljana has been vital in supporting the survival of the DMD’s organisation – VisitLjubljana, national aid has been somewhat difficult to come by for a public sector organisation such as his. Put bluntly, (the municipalities) “passed a decision that restaurants and bars which have gardens on the streets and squares do not have to pay taxes to the municipality because of the critical year” but also “it was a really important thing that if you have a restaurant and have no guests you have to pay taxes... the government is deaf! they don't give you any money for the employees who are waiting at home”, which paints the clearest picture of how the federal governance of the sector is perceived to have performed throughout this crisis.

Below is a table that outlines the aforementioned policies to provide greater clarity concerning what was discussed:

Table 12: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Ljubljana

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution
Tourism development strategy for Ljubljana and the Ljubljana Region for the period 2021–2027	Yes	The new strategy brings an array of substantial novelties directed at creating innovative tourism experiences and attractions, increasing the average length of a stay at the destination, increasing the daily spending of tourists and connecting tourism with other important areas	City Council of the City of Ljubljana
Regional Promotion of Ljubljana	Yes	Focus on markets in a 300–500 km radius from Ljubljana to bring people who have 'green' and 'nature' based tourism experiences in mind	VisitLjubljana
Special Tourism Law	No	To provide economic aid to tourism stakeholders across hospitality, accommodation, gastronomy, culture, sports etc.	National government (Gov .si)
Anti-Corona Laws (8)	Yes	Economic support for the tourism industry by delaying tax payments, load payments and other forms of deferral	Bank of Slovenia, Gov .si

The analysis and findings section of this body of work make it clear that Ljubljana is a city and destination that has sustainability at the forefront of its missions for the current crisis and future. Like many tourism destinations around the world, COVID-19 did not spare the city in any way but the foresight of the organisations responsible for tourism development means that the global pause in tourism has not caused an excessive reversal of sustainable policymaking. However, it is also clear that Ljubljana has ample opportunities to improve upon the pre-existing elements of sustainable tourism policy that allowed the city to develop to become the first post-socialist European Green Capital. While we cannot change history and amend the anti-corona relief laws already passed by the federal government, the City of Ljubljana has a chance to affect policy on the federal level in the ongoing negotiations over the special tourism law. Accordingly, recommendations for advancing the policy of sustainability are as follows. First, a substantial opportunity exists for the City of Ljubljana to sustainably develop its international connectivity via Ljubljana International Airport. Following the collapse of Adria Airways, the national flag carrier of Slovenia, air connectivity has significantly declined and hence the formulation of a policy that not only revives this connectivity but incorporates it into levels of the city's infrastructure is key. Known as intramodality, if the city can connect the airport with reliable public transit (buses or trains), this will aid significantly in tourism's recovery and allow for a reduction of the environmental impacts of having an isolated airfield that is somewhat difficult to reach in a similar way to how Lufthansa and DeustchBahn are working on a partnership (Mann, 2021), only aided by the fact that the airport is managed by a German entity. Second, the City of Ljubljana has an opportunity to use the sharp decline in arrivals to benchmark the sustainability activities of all stakeholders. Namely, the specialists who

remain at Visit Ljubljana or tourism management organisations may use this time to assess the sustainability of their partner organisations across accommodation, gastronomy, culture and sports to ensure a plurality of the core elements of the tourism product Ljubljana is attempting to sell post-pandemic. While the overall strategy for the city is comprehensive in its commitment to sustainability, it skirts the line between agendas and action of the responsustable model so as to mitigate potential lapses in proper implementation, benchmarking certain providers in terms of supply chain length, waste management, resource use etc. could provide significant data insights into the individual sub-sectors that make up tourism supply in Ljubljana. Finally, as the MICE market was previously so large for the city and a big revenue source, it is recommended that resources be further devoted to the Regional Promotion Plan such that Ljubljana becomes the flagship nature and green tourism destination in the region to the extent that leisure tourists start to be drawn to the city in ways that cater to the emerging demand trends described by the DMD. Based on data gathered from the interview conducted for this article, it seems that the last recommendation is well on the way to being realised, albeit it will take time to fully understand the campaign's effectiveness and reception.

To conclude, the numerous awards and international recognition Ljubljana has received for its commitment to sustainability make it clear that the city has a promising vision for the future and its place among the sustainable tourism discourse. While there are numerous opportunities to improve and advance the strategies for the city, sustainability has been deeply ingrained into tourism values in terms of both supply and demand, thereby fostering an environment that puts the needs of residents and tourists alike at the forefront of development in ways that are mutually beneficial. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has not been felt any less in this small Balkan nation, but thanks to the frameworks for tourism sustainability already in place, the pandemic has largely left those policies, strategies and initiatives untouched. Although the current situation has affected many industry stakeholders in largely negative ways, the pandemic has allowed Ljubljana to pause and reflect on what is important for the city, as is being undertaken by organisations like VisitLjubljana that aim to retain as much expertise and specialties as possible because of the value that knowledge holds for favourable future outcomes. The future of tourism in Ljubljana has always been green and, even though the negative impacts of the pandemic will be experienced for some time, hope arises from the fact that the goals of the city's strategies for tourism have not wavered in their commitment to the economic success of its residents, environmental stewardship and cultural heritage preservation for all.

## 8 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN THE DANUBE DELTA

**Theodora-Ioana Dragomir**

### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the tourism industry around the world. It has not only considerably reduced tourist numbers at all destinations, but influenced how the industry created new policies. The crisis was seen as a hard hit for the tourism industry, but also as an opportunity to rethink tourism in a more sustainable way and develop new policies to help with sustainable development. The presented research was conducted to determine which policies (related to sustainable development) have been implemented in the Danube Delta destination. The paper also aims to show how the DMO reacted to the pandemic in each of the response-recovery-restart stages of tourism during this period. The results reveal good coordination and communication from the Delta's official DMO with different stakeholders and an improvement in the organisation's efforts to bring the destination a step closer to sustainability. Still, there is room for improvement and the organisation should continue to communicate with all stakeholders and seek further investments for sustainable development.

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

It is no news that the recent COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected people's lives, forcing political, economic and socio-behavioural changes on societies (Baum & Hai, 2020). Although the effects of the pandemic have arguably been uneven in space and time, the impacts on the tourism industry have been significant, with international tourist arrivals dropping by 78% in 2020, causing a loss of USD 1.2 trillion in export revenues from tourism and the cutting of 120 million direct tourism job, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2020a).

Romanian tourism is no exception from the pandemic's effects, with the country's tourism agencies reporting that their businesses dropped by 80% to 90% in 2020 (Biz, 2020). Nevertheless, the Alliance for Tourism NGO in Romania stated that Romania's tourism could recover by 2025 should appropriate measures be taken in this regard (Incoming Romania, 2020). The mentioned NGO has already established measures for the revival of tourism, which include supporting and prioritising the tourism sector within the national economy, digitisation and implementing new technologies in tourism, the sustainability and development of sustainable tourism, highlighting Romania's competitive advantages through smart promotion, tourism development by encouraging public and private investments, supporting participatory tourism via use of public-private partnerships, reducing tax evasion in tourism, and administrative efficiency (Volkmann et al., 2021). The Volkmann et al. (2021) study concludes that for this recovery in the Romanian tourism to happen the industry needs a rapid and complex revival supported not only by tourism owners, operators and employees, but also by tourists, suppliers, politicians and officials.

The Danube Delta and other nature destinations were preferred by Romanian tourists in 2020 due to the new trend in tourism demand for safe tourism given that 2020 was a year of tourists changing their preferences and habits (Popescu, 2021). Still, actions were taken at this destination to reduce the COVID-19 pandemic's impacts and create safer tourism, as described by the president of the official DMO of the Danube Delta (AMDTDD President, 2021, full interview transcripts are presented in Appendix A).

*Table 13: Basic Indicators for the Danube Delta*

Indicator	Danube Delta
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	580,000
Population	27,000
Registered unemployment rate in tourism 2020 (%)	No data
Unemployment rate change in tourism 2020/2019	Unchanged, according to the president of the official DMO of the Danube Delta
Tourism arrivals in 2020	119,019
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-29
Nights spent in 2020	3.4 nights average per person
Nights spent change 2020/2019	+0.2 nights average per person

*Source: AMDTDD (2021b)*

## 8.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR THE DANUBE DELTA

There are three kinds of pillars or 'impacts' of sustainable tourism: economic, socio-cultural and environmental (Kuscer & Mihalic, 2019). These impacts represent the concept part of sustainable-responsible tourism (SRT) and enable tourism operations to remain competitive in the long run (economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability).

Barukchieva (2017) describes how in the DDBR the environment and cultural values underwent changes following social, political and economic influence. In 2005, when the Delta had already been a biosphere reserve for 15 years, tourism development still faced many drawbacks like low socio-economic development and the lack of jobs and education, the harsh living conditions in the rural areas, youth migration to urban centres, insufficient accommodation, the lack of local handicraftsmen to build houses, restricted access to natural resources, the high prices of harvesting reeds for the locals due to the DDBR objectives, inadequate staff in the Delta to supervise, inform and direct tourists and the little funding available for cultural activities (Popa, Nichersu & Poruncia, 2005). In the meantime, some support has been provided for sustainable tourism development at the destination: The Government of Romania through the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA) has requested World Bank support. The World Bank agreed to provide advisory services to prepare an integrated sustainable development strategy for the Danube Delta and identify action plans for implement it (The World Bank, 2015). An action plan for the three pillars has thus been created and, along with the actions taken further by the DDBRA and AMDTDD, there have been improvements with respect to sustainable tourism at the destination.

### 8.2.1 Economic Pillar

Agriculture is the main economic pillar in the DDBR (Andrei, Lianu & Gudei, 2016). Nevertheless, the region's richness and culture and environmental diversity bring economic opportunities to businesses and locals, especially since local residents actively participate in the tourism industry by offering their own houses as accommodation for tourists (AMDTDD President, 2021). Tourism is today the second-biggest industry in the area, while fishing is also an important income source (AMDTDD President, 2021). The Delta's uniqueness offers great potential to influence the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, handicraft workshops, preservation of traditions, art, local cuisine, sites and cultural events as well as the creating of local brands such as Deltaica (Deltaica, 2021). In other words, the natural capital of the reserve is an asset of the destination that can be used to not only preserve and protect the area, but develop businesses and economic opportunities for the locals. Yet some authors point out the Deltaic lack of investments, including in tourism and shrinking of the number of job vacancies following the processes of deindustrialisation and the reduction of transport activities are considerable issues encountered by tourism at the destination (Ianos et al., 2012).

In addition to tourist spending on food and accommodation while at the destination, tourists must pay a daily fee of RON 5 per day (or RON 15 for 7 days or RON 30 for the whole year in 2021) to be able to enter the actual nature reserve (Crapmania, 2021). Fishing permits must also be obtained in advance, although they can be obtained for free. Nonetheless, the Delta continues to battle illegal fishing with reported illegal captures of up to 200 kg of wels catfish (Romania Libera, 2018). According to Petrisor, Petre and Meita (2016), these environmental issues associated with the lack of environmental awareness are a consequence of poverty or at least connected to it, or when natural resources are not seen as solutions for reducing poverty through their sustainable use. Finally, emigration of the workforce, especially in the rural areas, led in past years to an increase in the elderly and poor population at the destination (Nancu, Guran-Nica and Perşu, 2010).

### 8.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

The socio-cultural pillar of sustainability in the DDBR appears in many strategic plans for the Delta's sustainable development. In the last few decades, low salaries encouraged workers to migrate to developed European Union countries, in turn leading to population ageing and poverty. The Danube Delta Integrated Development Strategy (DDIDS), an outcome of the MRDPA-World Bank partnership, led to the development of a project in collaboration with local residents. Voica and Sbarcea (2018) confirm this initiative's potential to ensure the continuation of the tradition in the destination and that can promote its sustainable development. As already mentioned, the natural and cultural features of the biosphere can be a useful tool for conserving local traditions and cultural identity if used properly.

Cultural tourism has grown since 2003 when a film festival in Sfantu Gheorghe (a locality in the Delta) started that mostly attracts young adults who camp inside the Green Village resort and occasionally eat fish cooked by the local women (Ivan, 2017). In Sfantu Gheorghe, not only is most of the accommodation provided by the villagers who rent out their own rooms, but the majority

of local family members are directly involved in catering for tourists in one way or another. This situation seems quite unique in the anthropology of tourism studies and points to the great potential for a local community to become involved if the circumstances are suitable. In addition, an in-depth observation of people's involvement in tourism in Sfântu Gheorghe suggests that locals are involved in different ways in tourism: women are the key players in the local economic system in summer as they host and cook for tourists, which allows the conclusion that gender equality exists in the Delta's tourism. Ivan's (2017) study also suggests that globalisation and tourism pressure are not a threat to family ties and traditional practices as may be the case in certain other tourist destinations around the world. On the contrary, tourists' satisfaction acts like a 'glue' for various generations of a household. Currently, no policies (at least not publicly known ones) are related to the social pillar implemented at the destination.

### 8.2.3 Natural Pillar

The Danube Delta boasts the third-greatest biodiversity in the world, with over 5,500 flora and fauna species. It provides a refuge for migratory birds, some of which are protected by law and contains the largest wetlands in Europe, and over 60% of the Danube Delta's area is "unspoiled by the human touch" (Eximturincoming, 2021). There are 24 rural settlements and 1 urban settlement in this region. The adaptation made by humans to an environment perfect for animals, yet less favourable for people, created a particular *modus vivendi* for the inhabitants of the Delta whose existence is closely linked to boating and fishing, entailing the harmonious coexistence between humans and the environment (Tatar et al., 2017). Nevertheless, some authors argue that particular environmental areas are affected by agriculture (Ianos et al., 2012). The Delta's international importance led to it becoming included in the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Programme of UNESCO in 1990, while it was recognised as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention in 1991 and placed on the World Heritage List under the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention in 1990 (DDBRA, 2017). The biosphere received three Council of Europe awards, two Eurosit awards, the Wetland Network Blue Globe award in 2010 and The Quality Coast GOLD award in 2011 (DDBRA, 2017). Namely, the environment alone is the primary driver of domestic and international tourist arrivals (Ianos et al., 2012). To protect the nature in the Danube Delta from human activity, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Google joined forces to place the Delta on the digital map of the world that is today available on Google Maps to be enjoyed by anyone without having any impact on the destination (WWF, 2018).

## 8.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR THE DANUBE DELTA

Sustainable tourism has three premises or 'enablers': the socio-psychological capacity for destination-based stakeholders (linked to tourism supply), the socio-psychological capacity for visitors (linked to tourism demand) and the socio-political capacity of the destination (linked to sustainability ethics) (Kuscer & Mihalic, 2019). All three represent the implementation part of SRT. These responsibility enablers can reduce the risk of the destination's unsustainable development (Mihalic, 2020) by ensuring the well-being and satisfaction of local residents, other local stakeholders and visitors.

As already stated, management of the nature reserve has changed the priorities over the years: planning measures in Romania's communist era allowed damage to be caused to the natural environment (Gomoiu, 1996; Petrisor et al., 2012). Planning policies implemented across different time periods also created social pressures, leading to demographic changes and emigration (Dumitrescu, 2002). However, the Delta has witnessed changes in management practices in recent years: the DDBRA was founded in 1993 as a legally entity under the Ministry of Environment for the purpose of managing and controlling all scientific, tourism and leisure activities there. As mentioned, in 2018 a new non-governmental association was established as the official DMO of the Danube Delta to promote ecotourism at the destination (AMDTDD, 2021a).

### 8.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

Studies of decision-making by the Delta's management show that years ago local residents held no power, partly due to obstacles like hierarchy, secrecy, corruption, poverty, unstable institutions along with transportation, education and health issues (Tismaneanu, 2003). Nowadays, it appears that the local residents are adapting to the increasing tourist numbers (Ivan, 2017). Yet this also means that they are involved in this relatively new private accommodation market in the Delta to overcome poverty: in 2017, an average of 80% of tourists were hosted by local residents. Barukchieva (2017) notes that high tourism activities can push the locals to renovate their houses in a modern style with building materials that last longer than reed does, thereby making it harder to preserve the traditional architecture. The president of the Danube Delta DMO admits that while the residents are happy when a mass of tourists visits at once due to the cash they bring, in the long run this is not a sustainable practice and they are trying to discuss this with the locals. In support of this, local residents (or at least those willing to do something) are these days integrated into the management and tourism plans, as shown by the average number of overnight stays rising from 3.2 in 2019 to 3.4 in 2020 (AMDTDD President, 2021). In addition, local residents are sometimes approved by the Association of Tourist Guides to help promote ecotourism at the destination. Information also reveals the presence of a large number of employees in the area from Bangladesh and Vietnam, who during the pandemic left the country and were replaced by Romanian nationals who returned home and began working in the industry.

In terms of tourism infrastructure, opinions are split among authors: while Barukchieva (2017) and Ianos et al. (2012) agree that tourism infrastructure is lacking, with much room for improvement in the cycle infrastructure, tourist infrastructure as well as health and education, Vaidianu et al. (2015) and Gastescu and Toma (2019) concluded that accommodation has grown somewhat in past years and there is currently a good system of naval and land transport, with limited access imposed by the special status of the DDBR. Nonetheless, tourists have an opportunity to choose from accommodation in hotels, cabins or the homes of locals, as well as food and beverage from restaurants or cooked by locals for a more authentic experience (Ivan, 2017). The tourism industry gives tourists many options regarding types of tourism; namely, for leisure and recreation, knowledge, specialised-scientific, special programmes for youngsters, rural tourism, sportsmanship and much more (Gastescu & Toma, 2017). Tourist guides are among the most important service providers in the Delta because they can point out restricted areas and present facts about the flora and fauna at the destination. They are also indispensable as a lack of

proper signage at the destination has been reported by many tourists (Vaidianu, 2013). Information available from the DMO president (AMDTDD President, 2021) shows that the supply of tourism is currently focused on tourist packages that promote slow tourism along with sustainable visits in canoes and pedal boats. Moreover, an effort is being made to shape tourism by marketing to responsible tourists.

### 8.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

The Danube Delta visitor profile may be characterised by travellers interested in ecotourism (Dima, Burlacu & Buzoianu, 2020). Around 10,000 tourists arrive in Sfântu Gheorghe every year to see the Delta's natural beauty, eat fresh fish and go to the seaside (Ivan, 2017). The destination has generally become an important tourist destination for Western Europeans, especially after the fall of communism in 1989 (Hall, 2010). According to Teutsch (n.d.), the Delta represents a new attraction for seasoned travellers, for example visitors from Germany. Nevertheless, the same category of tourists usually holds high expectations.

Besides the natural and cultural setting, specific to deltaic units and near the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation also lie important ancient (Thracian, Roman, Byzantine) and medieval (Genovese, Ottoman) historic vestiges (Romanescu, Bounegru & Efros, 2012). Following a survey for tourism assessment, a classification by motivations for visiting saw tourists being split into the following categories of tourists focused on: sport tourism, sport and relaxation, local cultural aspects, biodiversity and cultural assets, local biodiversity, sporting activities and cultural aspects (Pavel-Nedea & Dona, 2017). The same study reveals that tourists are mainly satisfied with the accommodation at the destination (with 70% of interviewees responding positively), followed by satisfaction with the staff and local gastronomy on similar levels. In contrast, only about 68% of participants were satisfied with the water transport services and just 44% with the offering of sport activities. The overall perception of tourists was positive, with over 80% agreeing that their stay was important, that they had new experiences, that the stay "deserved all the money" and that they were satisfied with having chosen the Danube Delta as a tourist destination. About 82% of all respondents indicated they would like to return to the tourist destination. Analysed by category, we note that a stronger desire to return to the area was expressed by: men, persons under 40 years of age, employed persons, and persons with over RON 2,000 (Pavel-Nedea & Dona, 2017). Paradoxically, despite the tourism demand featuring the profile of a tourist who is attracted by nature, the steady rise in visitor numbers over the years poses a threat to the Danube Delta's environment.

### 8.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

The Delta's management before and during the communist era may be attributed to ignorance of the destination's socio-political capacity given that back then a lot of development and exploitation was pursued without having the consequences for the natural environment in mind (Teutsch, n.d.). The awareness stage in the Triple A model (Mihalic, 2016) started at the destination in 1994 when the government appointed the DDBRA as the main authority responsible with the

administration of the DDBR (Barukchieva, 2017). The authority works with other government agencies for intersectional management and planning in order to implement EU directives and agreements such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The agenda stage for tourism at the destination commenced with the DDBR's Management Plan for 2008–2012 that incorporated a special theme for tourism and leisure, whereas a range of projects and studies have been conducted as part of preparing the tourism component. These included many projects and strategies for sustainable tourism development (Ramsar, 2012). Moreover, the agenda continues with the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 released by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA) and the World Bank. The strategy's goal is to transform the region into an "integrated tourism destination with a rich portfolio of sustainable nature and culture-based tourism products and services, along with relevant marketing activities" (MRDPA, 2016).

It is unclear when exactly the action stage began, however a review of the data shows that tourist numbers have risen at the same time as the emergence of the present DMO of the Delta, AMDTDD, in 2018. This could be because it is a platform for public–private partnership that ensures the inclusion of the hospitality industry in the decision-making process, the consultation process on the direct impact on tourism measures, and in economic activities (AMDTDD, 2021c). In the interview communication, the DMO president stated that the DMO is responsible for this and that close communication with the stakeholders is key to managing tourist routes, access, unclogging and constructing canals, and authorising canoe bases. Stakeholders include private organisations, authorities and public institutions. In addition, the organisation promotes the destination in a professional way to assure promotion on the national and international levels and connects the tourism industry to the process of amending legislation in tourism, the environment, pisciculture and naval transport. A good relationship with the media allowed them to have 54 events promoting the Tulcea county as a tourist destination, 57 press releases conveyed in national and regional mass media about the tourist destination, as well as 1,350 appearances in mass media (AMDTDD President, 2021). AMDTDD is also the catalyst organisation for creating an umbrella alliance "because the Romanian legislation is anachronic, outdated and thus the need for legislation modification vis-à-vis DMOs". This shows ethics and awareness are present in the DMO's culture. Some policies currently being worked on are trying to combat seasonal tourism (however for half the year it is too cold for tourists to visit and heating the Delta would be an expensive project) and the tentative of operating with electric engines (investments are needed to launch this project). Policies are already in place for authorised tourist guides to promote sustainability at the destination, such as by informing visitors, speaking foreign languages, making them aware of the consequences of poor behaviour). the DDBRA has for a while also been promoting ecological education for children (Barukchieva, 2017) which, linking back to Petrisor, Petre and Meita's (2016) statement, can prevent certain environmental issues.

## 8.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN THE DANUBE DELTA

As mentioned, the Danube Delta as a destination was not particularly by the pandemic affected in terms of visitor numbers. However, government policies on the national level as well as policies on the regional and local levels were implemented once the pandemic started to ensure safe travel and coordination with the legislation. The following information on policies was all provided by the AMDTDD DMO president during the interview, which was structured to elicit details of policies based on the response-recovery-restart phases.

### **The response stage**

In the first stage, namely the early months of the pandemic, while most destinations were closed for visitors the Delta remained open given that it is a natural reserve. Yet, the fact that movement was restricted between localities meant that visits were impossible for a short time period. On the national level, the first policy was a furlough scheme for employees, including tourism employees, along with rescheduling liabilities to the state and the “kurzarbeit” measure (working for 4 hours a day but being paid for 8), while on the local level there was a reduction of tax. According to the DMO president, still as a response action, the organisation held dialogue on the government level with the respective ministry and the president to ensure the sustaining economic measures in a difficult situation.

### **The recovery stage**

This stage commenced with the DMO detecting “an opportunity for implementing responsible tourism even more than before” and “to define the ‘deltaic’ tourism as a distinct tourism form”, which involves green energy, canoes, pedal bicycles, traditions, local gastronomy and slow tourism. This answers sub-research questions 3, 7 and partly 1 since it can be argued that this is one of the approaches to rethinking the sustainability pillar of the environment. In this stage, visitors were allowed to dine and drink on terraces while complying with social distancing, a measure imposed on the national level. On the local level, while tour guides were never banned, there were some sanitary measures in place, as well as social distancing, providing an answer to sub-research question 8 concerned with the actions taken in line with national policies and regulations. This explains why the organisation saw this as an opportunity to “promote the pedal boat and canoe renting due to the fact that it is easy to maintain distancing with this kind of transportation through the Delta” and also an opportunity to create the promotional campaign “Delta, the safest destination in the pandemic context”. Therefore, one of the policies that came to life in this stage was the promotion of sustainable and safe tourism, which answers sub-research question 2 and relates to the OECD’s (2020b) recommendations to restart tourism on a sustainable path. Further, promotion targeting nationals was undertaken because “foreigners were not allowed to enter the country”, which is in harmony with the OECD (2020b) and Woyo (2021) statements about the importance of domestic tourism promotion during the pandemic. These promotional policies may be seen as an answer to sub-research question 4.

### The restart stage

The last stage largely corresponds to the organisation's future plans for the Delta. The idea is to "further promote the Delta as a secure and safe destination and to avoid the phenomenon of overtourism, by developing accommodation buildings in the areas that are not necessarily preferred by tourists". The idea is to create support destinations in order to avoid overcrowding in one area that the most visited in the Delta region. Moreover, the organisation is set on avoiding the promotion of fast tourism and eager to promote pesca-tourism and slow tourism. An effort is being made to define the deltaic tourism and the destination's brand, with eco-tourism being the main priority through tourist education (AMDTDD, 2021d). On the national level, the implementation of tourist testing upon arrival at their accommodation for an easier experience for visitors is now being considered. In conclusion, a summary of the restart policies reveals policies for avoiding overtourism through building new accommodation and starting to promote new localities and areas as destinations, as well as further safety measures, which answers another part of sub-research question 1 regarding policies for the social pillar. When asked which stakeholders are responsible for implementing these policies, the DMO president declared that there is a constant collaboration between all stakeholders since they are communicating with the government and the ministry as well as the local communities represented by the city halls: "us as a DMO and through us the city councils and the city halls. Being members of the organisation, naturally, they assumed what they decided on the board of directors". This statement answers research question 6.

The primary research question **What are the sustainable tourism policies during the response, recovery and restart phases of the COVID-19 pandemic?** was answered in the interview. The organisation especially focused on promoting the destination through a new lens following the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be concluded regarding the economic pillar of sustainability that not many policies were implemented on the organisation's level, only on the national level. Although sub-research question 5 was not directly answered in the interview, it seems the policies coming from the government (external influences) have dictated the safety and health policies put in place in the Delta. The internal influences on policymaking reflected the need to protect the destination even more for future generations. There was also no mention of any policies for the large number of foreign workers, who were later replaced by national workers during the pandemic. As concerns the residents, there is no plan for policies to support residents in times of overtourism, particularly to make them understand that overtourism is unsustainable in the long run, despite it bringing some economic improvements in the short run, which could improve the residents' strong response to tourism demand, as described by Barukchieva (2017).

Table 14: Sustainable Tourism Policies for the Danube Delta

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: national/ regional/ local
Furlough schemes for employees	yes	Economic sustainability	Romanian government	National
Rescheduling liabilities to the state	yes	Economic sustainability	Romanian government	national
Kurzarbeit measure	yes	Economic and social sustainability	Romanian government	national
Close collaboration and dialogue with the government	yes	Ensure the sustaining economic measures in a difficult situation	AMDTDD	National, on the initiative of the AMDTDD
Promotion of the 'deltaic' tourism	yes	Environmental sustainability	AMDTDD	Regional
Health and safety measures: terraces, masks, social distancing + promotion of pedal boats and canoes + the "Delta, the safest destination in the pandemic context" campaign	yes	All three pillars of sustainability: avoiding overtourism, economic resilience, visitor safety, environmental protection	AMDTDD	National, regional
Promotion for domestic tourism	yes	Strategy for building the destination's resilience	AMDTDD	Regional
Developing accommodation in other areas and localities	no	Avoiding overtourism	AMDTDD + stakeholders	Regional
Implementation of on-site testing comfort of tourists	no	Visitors' and residents' safety, safe and resilient tourism	Romanian government, AMDTDD, accommodation and restaurants stakeholders and local residents	National

## 8.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DANUBE DELTA

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic will bring long-lasting effects for the tourism industry and has influenced tourism policies, including those on sustainable development, because this period of time gave organisations and destinations a chance to re-think their approach to tourism.

The Danube Delta was not exempted from these and certain other forced policy changes for safety and security. AMDTDD, the Delta's official DMO, managed to respond to the pandemic effects and maintain high visitor numbers. Still, the organisation acknowledges that high numbers are not always good in tourism and is now focused on avoiding overtourism and fast tourism since COVID-19 provided a good opportunity for it to analyse and detect some areas to improve the destination's tourism.

A recommendation for the AMDTDD is to create, in close collaboration with the government, a policy for employing only a small share of foreign citizens in the Delta given that emergency cases like the pandemic prove that they can be unreliable. This step has to be taken carefully so as to not breach basic human rights legislation. A second recommendation is to support the local residents and continue collaborating with the government to take measures to discourage residents from 'desiring' overtourism and educate them concerning overtourism's long-lasting effects on destinations like the Danube Delta. The final recommendation is to continue looking for investors for electric engines and greater collaboration with the government or seeking financial aid for green energy such as solar panels. The search for funding or increasing the entry prices for visitors could also help the organisation in this sense, albeit this would only be feasible, ethical and sustainable if the organisation offers something more to visitors in exchange like products/services/experiences that would not raise costs.

In conclusion, while the Danube Delta's tourism policies were affected by the pandemic, the relevant DMO took this as an opportunity to direct the tourism sector towards more sustainable and responsible growth, as UNWTO (2020b, p. 33) recommends.

## 9 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN LAKE ATITLAN, GUATEMALA

**Paula Rabanales Lau**

### ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the tourism policies implemented by Lake Atitlán's DMO in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, while describing the response, recovery and restart stages. The Responsustainable Model (SRT) is used to assess the policies' sustainability. Primary and secondary qualitative data are used to describe the sustainability pillars and carrying capacities of supply and demand at the destination. The article also provides recommendations for the Guatemalan government and the INGUAT delegation.

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in Guatemala on 13 March 2020 and 4 days later President Giammattei announced the closure of aerial and land borders, which lasted until mid-September 2020 (Bolaños, 2021). This caused the temporary closure of 82% of tourism enterprises and the definitive closure of 5% of them by May 2020 (Juárez, 2020a). The outlook for the tourism sector was accordingly grim.

On the national level, the government and the Guatemalan Tourism Board (INGUAT) introduced policies to minimise the effects of the pandemic. A deferment was offered on tax payments for accommodation and airline tickets and also promoted domestic tourism (UNWTO, 2021c). Nonetheless, these efforts to alleviate the crisis had a smaller impact than expected, with the tourism entrepreneurs revealing that, by September, they had cut their workforce by 53% (Juárez, 2020b). Guatemala's connectivity was also significantly affected, La Aurora International Airport went from 44 daily flights pre-pandemic to just 5 flights a day 1 year later (Bolaños, 2021).

In 2019, the country registered 1.8 million international tourist arrivals, dramatically contrasting with only 0.4 million arrivals in 2020 (UNWTO, 2021a). Before the pandemic, the average tourist stay was 8.96 days (INGUAT, 2018), an estimate that is likely to change given the current state of the region. The information available about trends is summarised in Table 19.

Table 15: Basic Indicators for Guatemala

Indicator	Guatemala
Area in km <sup>2</sup>	108,889
Population	14,901,286
Registered unemployment rate in tourism 2020 (%)	Not available
Unemployment rate change in tourism 2020/2019	Not available
Tourism arrivals in 2020	0.4 million
Tourism arrivals change 2020/2019 (%)	-77
Nights spent in 2020	Not available
Nights spent change 2020/2019 (%)	Not available

Sources: INE, 2018; UNWTO, 2021a

## 9.2 SUSTAINABILITY PILLARS FOR LAKE ATITLÁN, GUATEMALA

### 9.2.1 Economic Pillar

Between 2006 and 2014, Sololá Department recorded total poverty increasing by 6.3%. Namely, the indicator rose from 74.6% of the population living in poverty to 80.9% in the latest survey (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2015). It also faces a significant level of illiteracy since around 41,000 people over 15 years of age do not know how to read or write (Domínguez Velasco, 2017). Among the Sololá Department's main economic activities, tourism is the biggest sector, followed by agriculture and livestock farming (Neher, Soupir & Kanwar, 2021). The municipalities surrounding the lake, which form part of the lake's watershed, depend on agriculture to survive, ranging from small corn, broccoli and snow pea farmers to the north through to big coffee farms and landowners (Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, 2018).

### 9.2.2 Socio-Cultural Pillar

The area surrounding Lake Atitlán is primarily inhabited by the Tz'utujil, Kaqchikel and K'iche' ethnic groups. Historically, the indigenous communities that originally lived in the central and coastal lowlands were pushed out to the Highlands during the Spanish conquest in the 1500s (Harbor & Hunt, 2021). There have also been different social and cultural relations between the towns surrounding the lake, along with land conflicts between the San Juan La Laguna and San Pedro La Laguna municipalities (Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, 2018).

The religious composition of this region varies greatly. Historical processes like colonisation have led to the syncretism of Catholicism with Mayan cosmovision, for example, the cult to a Maximon deity located in the Santiago Atitlán municipality that spread through the Guatemalan highlands (Stanzione, 2005). However, the Mayan spirituality, principally based on nature, is still practised by the residents. Within the lake's watershed area lie approximately 42 sacred places or ceremonial

places, 77 archaeological sites and, more specifically, there is evidence of Mayan preclassic to postclassic human settlements on the south side of Lake Atitlán; unfortunately, archaeological studies of this region are scarce (Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, 2018).

### 9.2.3 Natural Pillar

Lake Atitlán is a body of water used for activities like water skiing, diving, kayaking, boat rides, fishing and visits to hot springs. Lake Atitlán is part of an endorheic watershed, meaning there is no primary discharge outlet, causing a hydraulic retention of approximately 80 years and a small diversity of fish species. In response, in 1958 the black bass was introduced to the lake by the municipality in an attempt to increase fishing tourism at the lake, yet as an exotic species this fish has had a negative impact on the native species. Nevertheless, there is a diversity of flora and other fauna, registering approximately 798 plant species and 141 different mammal species (Neher, Soupír & Kanwar, 2021). This biodiversity is an advantage of the destination since around the lake lie nine private nature reserves that offer horse rides, birdwatching, trekking and other nature activities (Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, 2018).

However, Lake Atitlán has also been threatened by cyanobacterial blooms since 2008. Over the last few decades, agricultural runoff, erosion and the inflow of untreated wastewater containing high phosphorus levels, within this endorheic watershed and into the lake, promoted cyanobacterial growth. The unplanned development and insufficient waste management of the municipalities around the lake, mainly Panajachel, are among factors that have had a substantial impact on the environmental crisis (Rejmánková et al., 2011). Another relevant factor detrimental to the lake's health is the level of contamination by microplastics measured at 70% in 2018, namely 128,763 particles per km<sup>2</sup> (Guatevision, 2018). If this crisis is not addressed, the quality of the water and its use for residents and tourism will be compromised and the attractive landscape will change from blue water to green water (Rejmánková et al., 2011).

## 9.3 RESPONSIBILITY ENABLERS FOR LAKE ATITLAN, GUATEMALA

### 9.3.1 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Supply

It is notable that the Guatemalan community collectively conceives tourism as a way to become familiar with the culture and traditions in order to get the foreigners acquainted with the local mechanism, welcoming outsiders rather than shocking them away (Bastos, 2021). The Tz'utujil Maya community in Santiago Atitlán is actively contributing to tourism development in the area, according to a study by Harbor and Hunt (2021). These authors argue that the participation fosters key principles within the community like reciprocity, self-determination and autonomy. Further, the community is contributing to the protection of cultural heritage. Although there is evidence of the tourism sector's cultural appropriation of the Tz'utujil culture, the Tz'utujil themselves are often negotiating tourism and practising commodification in ways that more accurately represent and benefit them (Harbor & Hunt, 2021).

A comparative ethnographic study in the municipalities of San Juan La Laguna and San Pedro La Laguna describes how residents view tourism. According to LaPan et al. (2016), tourism in San Pedro developed in response to the demand of young backpackers and has a free-market model, whereas in San Juan tourism developed in the last decade assisted by NGO planning and using a cooperative model. The authors explain the residents of both municipalities perceive positive impacts of tourism. However, one difference is the collective power of the communitarian model in San Juan that shields them from negative impacts like the rise in illegal drug use that is persistent in San Pedro.

### 9.3.2 Socio-Psychological Capacity for Tourism Demand

Tourist activity is concentrated in the Panajachel Municipality as it has gradually positioned itself as the most important population in the region due to the boost provided by tourism over the last 40 years. Accommodation, tour operators and restaurants are gathered in Panajachel, Santiago Atitlán and San Pedro la Laguna, just 3 of the 10 municipalities surrounding the lake. They are followed by Santiago Atitlán and San Pedro la Laguna, which are also visited by tourists (Grupo GDT et al., 2007). The Panajachel Municipality and INGUAT's Sololá Delegation conducted a survey of 350 people during the Holy Week to learn about tourists' perception of Panajachel in the COVID pandemic. The majority of interviewed tourists rated the implementation of the protocols in Panajachel from 6 to 10. When asked about recommending the destination to other people, 95% of the participants said they would recommend it to friends and family (Oficina Municipal de Turismo Panajachel & Solola Subregional Delegation, 2021).

### 9.3.3 Socio-Political Capacity

First, it is important to understand that the awareness stage refers to when the interest of society in environmental issues increases and becomes part of the political agenda (Mihalič, 2021). According to Neher, Soupir and Kanwar (2021), the residents, municipal governments and departmental government of Lake Atitlán are aware of the sustainability challenges of food security, energy consumption and water management and wish to address it with scientific knowledge. When willingness exists to discuss a tourism policy instrument to solve the environmental issue, the Agenda stage has been reached (Mihalič, 2021). Concerning this, the authorities of San Pedro la Laguna, San Lucas Tolimán, Panajachel and Sololá launched different programmes to address the environmental issues raised, such as dependency on single-use plastic and waste management. In 2017, they implemented the ban on plastic bags, Styrofoam and straws along with the campaign "I am clean, very good" ("*Yo Soy Limpio, Puro Utz*") (Felipe & Julajuj, 2017).

Subsequently, implementation of an ecological policy driven by environmental responsibility and social-environmental ethics is the Action stage (Mihalič, 2021). Even though Lake Atitlán is still facing an ecological crisis, it is noted that a governmental institution was created in 1996 to look after its conservation, preservation and protection. The Authority for the Sustainable Management

of Lake Atitlan and its Environment (AMSCLAE being the acronym in Spanish), must promote the participation and organisation of the communities as well as the private and public sector to safeguard the lake (AMSCLAE, 2013).

#### **9.4 INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POLICIES IN LAKE ATITLÁN, GUATEMALA**

Following the aforementioned methodology, a semi-structured interview was conducted via zoom with the Sub-regional Delegate of INGUAT for the Sololá Department. The interview was transcribed and the findings are presented in this section.

The National Policy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Guatemala 2012–2022 acknowledges the potential held by tourism for the sustainable development of the nation. Still, this document is more concerned with legislation than planning and operationalisation. When asked about sustainable tourism policies, the interviewee referred to the Master Plan of Sustainable Tourism, Guatemala 2015–2025 because this guides the sustainable tourism development of many attractions in the country, including Lake Atitlán. The master plan details the institutional framework, which “comprehends the acknowledgement of every municipality as the principal actor in charge of its touristic development. We believe that every municipality must ensure the tourist development”. The delegate stated that a departmental tourism plan for the Sololá Department together with municipal tourism plans in Panajachel, Santa Catarina Palopó and San Antonio Palopó were created.

The interviewee mentioned the Committees of Touristic Self-management (CAT being the acronym in Spanish) while referring to the ways the public sector engages stakeholders in the destinations’ planning process. Although the INGUAT promotes the organisation and establishment of a directive board of these committees, these are self-managed and not funded by INGUAT. The delegate stated that their importance is that “in government, the officials change every 4 years, but the private sector and community leaders persist over the years so they are able to monitor the progress of these projects”. Currently, there is a CAT consolidated in just two municipalities: Panajachel and Santiago Atitlán.

The country went into lockdown and closed its borders in May 2020, thereby directly impacting the tourism industry. The response of INGUAT at the beginning of the crisis was to implement fiscal policy like tax deferments for some services, as well as enforcing biosafety protocols. As the new prevention measures were implemented, the needs of tourists changed and to respond to these needs INGUAT developed for the tourism sector the Guidelines for Best Health Practices for preventing COVID-19 and other infections. A guide was created for each sub sector: meetings industry, handicrafts, touristic marinas, natural and adventure attractions, archaeological sites, museums, Spanish schools, natural protected areas, travel agencies, tour operators, restaurants and accommodation. The Touristic Biosafety label was launched and began to be granted to enterprises committed to complying with the guidelines and proper implementation of the protocols. The Safe Travels stamp from the World Tourism & Travel Council was also promoted

by tourism providers. The interviewee stated that “the idea behind these was to prepare them for the reopening of the country and restart of tourism and also to let them know which were the necessary resources every business needed to have to protect the employees and tourists”.

As the Lake Atitlán destination was facing the initial crisis brought by COVID-19, the Sololá Delegation of INGUAT responded by summoning public and private stakeholders and set up a Crisis Committee to develop and realise the Tourism Activation Strategy of Lake Atitlán. The pilot test of this strategy was first implemented in Panajachel because of its tourist relevance, launching the recovery stage. Initially, a “biosafety promoters” programme was established to hand masks and hand sanitiser out to tourists and locals not following this recommendation. Second, they also took the initiative to develop a local label called Atitlán Distinctive (“*Distintivo Atitlán*”) as a marketing approach to the national media. This label is granted to tourism providers of the municipalities surrounding the lake that are committed to follow the safety protocols stated in the Guidelines for Best Health Practices for preventing COVID-19 and other Infections. The delegation also arranged the homologation of this label with the Biosafety Label already mentioned and the Safe Travels label from the World Travel & Tourism Council. According to the interviewee, 90% of businesses participated in training and they had hitherto certified around 30% to 40% of them.

The interviewee mentioned that an important factor for the success of the national policy promoted by INGUAT in its local context was territorialisation. Lake Atitlán has tourism characteristics different to urban ones and more established destinations for which the guidelines were developed. The key differences are the large number of SMEs and informal workers as well as the dependency on lake transportation. Relating to the socio-cultural pillar, the interviewee also noted that “another important adaptation of these guidelines was to synthesise them and the translation to the 3 Mayan languages spoken in the region, which was a collaboration with the Cultural Identity office of the Ministry of Culture and Sports”.

The third component of the recovery plan is the organisation of events. For example, job fairs to allow the many residents who lost their job to go back to work in the tourism industry. Cultural festivals are also intended to attract more domestic and international tourism to return.

The delegate expressed that the restart stage will require an evaluation and update of the three current municipal policies and tourism strategies given that “the needs of every territory are different than before” and also create the plans for the Santiago Atitlán and San Pedro la Laguna municipalities. Since the number of tourist arrivals has dropped, the stakeholders have finally perceived and lived the importance of a sustainable tourism policy:

I believe it was the ideal moment because people started to notice what the tourism sector represents. Tourism has not been prioritised by the government nor the municipal authorities but with this crisis the mayors realised how much it moves the economy, because tourism creates many direct and indirect jobs (Sololá Subregional Delegate, personal communication, 29 April 2021).

Nonetheless, the delegate also recognises the influence of the national budget and private-public sector relationships in the policymaking process. The Lake Atitlán destination is far from executing the project portfolio according to plan: “The barrier to accomplishing this has always been the lack of funding. The Atitlán destination is far from reaching these objectives because of the lack of funding and management, maybe it is necessary to start working with more private funding and not just public”.

It is not possible to affirm that the perception of sustainability changed during the COVID-19 pandemic from awareness to actions at the Lake Atitlán destination. However, one can assert that the Sololá Delegation is aware of the ecological threats to the lake and tourism and is part of its agenda:

This reactivation strategy also includes waste and wastewater management. We are a destination that exists and survives thanks to Lake Atitlán, that is why it is important to continue our efforts to preserve it (Sololá Subregional Delegate, personal communication, 29 April 2021).

As noted, the destination of Lake Atitlán developed sustainable tourism policies that address the three sustainability pillars during the COVID-19 crisis. The adaptation of the Guidelines for Best Health Practices for the Tourism Sector to the local context and its translation relates to the socio-cultural pillar. The creation of a local label for marketing purposes addresses the economic pillar because it tries to capture the demand for safe experiences. The environmental pillar is addressed in the waste and wastewater management section of the Tourism Reactivation Strategy. The delegate asserts that the participation of all stakeholders is vital for these policies:

I think all the stakeholders need to work together. It is not only in the hands of INGUAT, but also the stakeholders of the territory, so we can work towards sustainable tourism (Sololá Subregional Delegate, personal communication, 29 April 2021).

Table 20 summarises the different Sustainable Tourism Policies that according to the interviewee directly affect the Lake Atitlán destination.

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: national/ regional/ local
National Policy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Guatemala 2012–2022	Yes	Establish sustainable tourism as the motor of the social and economic development of the nation	Government and Guatemala Tourism Board (INGUAT)	National
Master Plan of Sustainable Tourism, Guatemala 2015–2025	Yes	Enhance the tourist offer and raise the competitiveness of the country. Also, to organise, plan and market tourism destinations, following the Global Criteria for Tourism Sustainability.	Guatemala Tourism Board (INGUAT)	National

Policy	Policy already implemented? (Yes/No)	Strategic action (goal)	Responsible institution	Level: national/ regional/ local
Guidelines for Best Health Practices for the Tourism Sector	Yes	Establish biosafety protocols for the protection of tourism providers and tourists. Also encourage businesses to adhere to them through the Touristic Biosafety label.	Guatemala Tourism Board (INGUAT)	National
Atitlán's Tourism Reactivation Strategy	Yes	Plan and prepare the Atitlán destination for the reopening and the 'new normal' after the pandemic	INGUAT's Sololá Delegation	Regional
Municipal Tourism Development Plan	No	Improve tourism infrastructure, enhance wastewater and waste management facilities	Panajachel Municipality, Santa Catarina Palopó Municipality and San Antonio Palopó Municipality	Local

*Table 16: Sustainable Tourism Policies for Lake Atitlán, Guatemala*

## 9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LAKE ATITLÁN, GUATEMALA

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is continuing and its impacts on the tourism sector are still being analysed. This paper concentrates on the sustainable tourism policies implemented at the Lake Atitlán destination in the response, recovery and restart stages to the pandemic following the Responsustainable Model, adapted from Mihalic (2020). Analysis of the economic, socio-cultural and natural pillars and responsibility enablers reveals that the majority of tourism activity is concentrated in the Panajachel Municipality; a situation that could create even more economic disparities between the municipalities, erode the social relationships and add to the current conflicts. Another point of tension between the private sector, public sector and civil society is contamination of the lake, a process in which all sectors, including tourism, have contributed. All sectors have launched different awareness initiatives to include this topic on the political agenda yet, in spite of these actions, the situation of the lake remains critical.

On top of this complicated outlook, there is the response to the health threat of the coronavirus pandemic. The findings of this qualitative research indicate that the Lake Atitlán destination implemented sustainable tourism policies that addressed the three pillars of sustainability and the participation of stakeholders. The most notable policy was Atitlán's Tourism Reactivation Strategy, based on the Guidelines for Best Health Practices for the Tourism Sector but territorialised to tackle the region's specific needs.

Even though these policies were directed at sustainable tourism, there is insufficient evidence to describe the destination as sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, or overtourism; following the Responsustable Model adapted by Mihalic (2020). One reason for this is the absence of official statistical data about tourism on the national level and for the destination to compare the supply and demand. Recommendations for the Guatemalan Government include the creation of a Tourism Satellite Account that could be used to measure economic impacts and to guide the policy measures for the 'new normal'. The fiscal policies adopted by the government to help the tourism sector were not fruitful in Lake Atitlán since many tourism providers closed their business because no subsidies were available for the sector. It is recommended that the Guatemalan government support SMEs through coordinated policy action (OECD, 2020a), a process in which the destination's and stakeholders' needs are prioritised and listened to.

The recommendations for INGUAT's Sololá sub-delegation are to extend the process of municipal tourism planning and the creation of CATs so that more municipalities can develop or enhance their infrastructure and tourism products. It is also recommended to diversify the supply chain by integrating more sectors like manufacturing or agriculture (Gounder, 2020), to develop tourism products adapted to the new demands not only of sustainability but biosafety as well. It is also recommended to work on the branding of "Lake Atitlán" to position it on the international level, but in a way that ensures all interested municipalities are marketed equally and their culture and traditions are represented accurately. Similarly, it is recommended to work with the other public institutions and stakeholders to conduct tourism diagnostics in every municipality and research the destination's carrying capacities to prevent overtourism. Finally, it is recommended to step up the efforts to clean the lake and preserve it through planning and marketing, but also pushing this climate crisis into the action stage.

## REFERENCES

- Alen, B. (2017, February 27). Foreign Tourists in Cologne Decreased in Numbers. *Tourism Review*. <https://www.tourism-review.com/foreign-tourists-in-cologne-dropped-in-numbers-news5304> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- AMSCLAE (2013, August 28). ¿Quiénes somos? AMSCLAE. <https://www.amsclae.gob.gt/quienes-somos/>
- Andrei, M.T., Lianu, C. & Gudei, C.S. (2016). The DANUBE DELTA Brand in the new bio economy paradigm. In *3rd International Conference-Water resources and wetlands*, pp. 8-10. Retrieved from <http://www.limnology.ro/wr2016/proceedings.html>
- Banco Central de Costa Rica (2017). *Cuenta Satélite de Turismo y la Matriz de Insumo Producto 2012 - 2016*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/es/documentos-institucionales/estad%C3%ADsticas/cifrasecon%C3%B3micas/1211-resumen/file.html>
- Barukchieva, E. (2017). The Relationship Between Tourism and the Biosphere Reserve Status: The Danube Delta – If the Danube is ‘the sustainable highway’ of Europe, then the Danube Delta should be the sustainable gate to the Black Sea. *International Journal of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves*, 1 (2), 21-55. Retrieved from <http://biospherejournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-Second-Issue-of-the-International-Journal-of-UNESCO-Biosphere-Reserves.pdf#page=22>
- Bastos, S. (2021). Community, dispossession, and ethnic rearticulation in Mexico and Guatemala. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 16(2), 109–129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17442222.2020.1839222>
- Baum, T. & Hai, N.T.T. (2020). Hospitality, tourism, human rights and the impact of COVID-19. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*. Retrieved from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCHM-03-2020-0242/full/html>
- Berentsen, W.H., Kohl, M., Stehkämper, H. & McIntosh, C.A. (2020, November 12). Cologne. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cologne-Germany> (accessed May 5, 2021).
- Bernard, H.R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.).
- Bezzola, A. (1975). Problems of the suitability and bearing capacity of the tourist mountain regions in Switzerland. *Problems of the suitability and bearing capacity of the tourist mountain regions in Switzerland*.
- Bhuiyan, M.A.H., Hassan, S., Darda, M.A. & Habib, M.W. (2020). Aspects of Sustainable Tourism Development and COVID-19 Pandemic. *Preprints 2020*, 2020080418. Retrieved from <https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202008.0418/v1>
- Biz (2020). *Cum a pus coronavirusul la pământ turismul și cum reacționează marii jucători în domeniu*. Retrieved April 19, 2021, from <https://www.revistabiz.ro/impactulcovid-19-in-turism/>
- Bolaños, R. (2021, March 11). 1 año de coronavirus: Abrió el aeropuerto, pero la conectividad aérea sigue rota. *Prensa Libre*. <https://www.prensalibre.com/economia/1-ano-de-coronavirus-abrio-el-aeropuerto-pero-la-conectividad-aerea-sigue-rota-covidgt/>
- Boukas, N. & Ziakas, V. (2016). Tourism policy and residents' well-being in Cyprus: Opportunities and challenges for developing an inside-out destination management approach. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5(1), 44-54.
- Boukas, N., Boustras, G. & Sinka, A. (2011). Golf tourism development in Cyprus: Opportunities and challenge. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Tourism (ICOT 2011)*. Tourism in an Era of Uncertainty. Rhodes Island, Greece (pp. 27-30)
- Brasack, S. (2018, November 24). „Focus”-Ranking Köln bei Sicherheitsstudie weit abgeschlagen. *Kölner Stadt Anzeiger*. <https://www.ksta.de/koeln/-focus--ranking-koeln-bei-sicherheitsstudie-weit-abgeschlagen-31639654> (accessed May 8, 2021).

## REFERENCES

- Brouder, P. (2020). Reset redux: possible evolutionary pathways towards the transformation of tourism in a COVID-19 world. *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 484–490. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1760928>
- Bundesregierung (n.d.). Germany's National Sustainable Development Strategy. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/issues/sustainability/germany-s-national-sustainable-development-strategy-354566> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Butler, R. W. (1980). The concept of the tourism area cycle of evolution: Implications for management of resources. *Canadian Geographer*, 24(1), 5–12.
- Carlsen, J. & Butler, R. (2011). Introducing sustainable perspectives of island tourism. *Island Tourism. Sustainable Perspectives*, CABI, *Ecotourism Series*, 8(1), 1–7.
- Carvache-Franco, M., Perez-Orozco, A., Carvache-Franco, O., Viquez-Paniagua, A. & Carvache-Franco, W. (2020). The perceived value in ecotourism related to satisfaction and loyalty: A study from Costa Rica. *Geographica Pannonica*, 24(3), 229–243. <https://doi.org/10.5937/gp24-25082>
- Chen, M.H., Demir, E., García-Gómez, C.D. & Zaremba, A. (2020). The impact of policy responses to COVID-19 on US travel and leisure companies. *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*, 1(1), 100003.
- City of Ljubljana (2016). Ljubljana For You. Five-year project report Ljubljana – European Green Capital 2016. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreen-capital/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Ljubljana\\_For-you\\_EN.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreen-capital/wpcontent/uploads/2021/03/Ljubljana_For-you_EN.pdf)
- City of Ljubljana (2021). City of Ljubljana. <https://www.ljubljana.si/en/> (accessed May 12, 2021).
- Clerides, S. & Pashourtidou, N. (2007). Tourism in Cyprus: recent trends and lessons from the tourist satisfaction survey. *Cyprus Economic Policy Review*, 1(2), 51–72.
- Cohen, M.J. (2020). Does the COVID-19 outbreak mark the onset of a sustainable consumption transition? *Sustainability: Science Practice and Policy* 16(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15487733.2020.1740472>
- Collins-Kreiner, N. & Ram, Y. (2020). National tourism strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 103076.
- Coleman, J.S. (1994). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard university press.
- Cologne.de (n.d.a). Transportation. <https://www.cologne.de/transportation.html> (accessed May 2, 2021).
- Cologne.de (n.d.b). Christmas markets. <https://www.cologne.de/events/christmas-markets> (accessed May 2, 2021).
- Cologne Tourism (n.d.). Cologne – metropolis of arts & culture. <https://www.cologne-tourism.com/see-experience/culture-museums/> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Crapmania (2021). *Permisele de Pescuit și Acces în Delta Dunării de la ARBDD - Preț și cum se obțin în 2021*. Retrieved April 25, 2021, from <https://www.crapmania.ro/articole/legislatie-pescuit/permis-pescuit-delta-dunarii-arbddd-2>
- Creswell, J.W. & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Cyprus Profile (2020). *The new age of tourism*. <https://www.cyprusprofile.com/sectors/tourism> (accessed May 2, 2021)
- Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve Authority [DDBRA] (2017). GREEN DANUBE - Integrated transnational policies and practical solutions for an environmentally-friendly. Inland Water Transport system in the Danube region. [PowerPoint Presentation]. Retrieved from [http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved\\_project\\_public/0001/03/1d5217d5f5370b09b84c3db320c5bbfoa58a9afi.pdf](http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_public/0001/03/1d5217d5f5370b09b84c3db320c5bbfoa58a9afi.pdf)
- Danube Delta Tourist Destination Management Association [AMDTDD] (2021a). *AMDTDD | Asociația de Management al Destinației Turistice Delta Dunării*. Retrieved from <https://amd-deltadunarii.ro/>

## REFERENCES

- Danube Delta Tourist Destination Management Association [AMDTDD] (2021b). *Statistici 2020 - an pandemic*. Retrieved from personal communication via e-mail.
- Danube Delta Tourist Destination Management Association [AMDTDD] (2021c). *Analiza SWOT privind funcționarea Organizațiilor de Management a Destinatiei*. Retrieved from personal communication via e-mail.
- Danube Delta Tourist Destination Management Association [AMDTDD] (2021d). *Raport de activitate Asociația de Management al Destinatiei Turistice Delta Dunării 2018-2021*. Retrieved from personal communication via e-mail.
- DeCarlo, M.D. (2018). Sampling in qualitative research. In *Scientific inquiry in social work* (pp. 271-278). Retrieved April 21, 2021 from [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1deYq3Oosw9qKZTTUksC6PpCQDXKs\\_5Cb/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1deYq3Oosw9qKZTTUksC6PpCQDXKs_5Cb/view)
- Deltaica (2021). *Produse traditionale din peste specifice zonei Delta Dunării*. Retrieved April 25, 2021, from <https://deltaica.ro/>
- Deputy Ministry of Tourism (2013). Guidelines for meeting the Cyprus Tourism Organization minimum standards for sustainability in hotel establishments. [http://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/7E7B9422DA909918C22584B10037D90E/\\$file/Guidelines\\_Sustainability\\_hotels\\_EN.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/7E7B9422DA909918C22584B10037D90E/$file/Guidelines_Sustainability_hotels_EN.pdf?OpenElement) (Accessed April 30, 2021)
- Deputy Ministry of Tourism (2020a). Accommodation statistics.
- Deputy Ministry of Tourism. (2020b). National Tourism Strategy 2030. [http://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/BAD4CBFDCC897B5C225850D0028487B/\\$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword\\_En.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.tourism.gov.cy/tourism/tourism.nsf/All/BAD4CBFDCC897B5C225850D0028487B/$file/Cyprus%20Tourism%20Strategy%202030%20-%20Foreword_En.pdf?OpenElement) (Accessed April 29, 2021)
- DesJardins, J. (2018). Review of Technology, Society and Sustainability edited by Lech W. Zacher. *Journal of Business Ethics* 150, 597-598. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-018-3875-5.
- Dima, C., Burlacu, S. & Buzoianu, O.A.C. (2020). Strategic Options for the Development of Ecotourism in the Danube Delta in the Context of Globalization. In *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 74, p. 04005). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20207404005>
- Dolnicar, S. & Zare, S. (2020). COVID19 and Airbnb: Disrupting the disruptor. *Annals of Tourism Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102961>
- Domínguez Velasco, M.A. (2017, March 6). 41 mil personas son analfabetas en Sololá. *Guatlevision*. <https://www.guatlevision.com/historico/41-mil-personas-son-analfabetas-en-solola>
- Doxey, G. (1975). A causation theory of visitor-resident irritants: Methodology and research inferences. The impact of tourism. In *the sixth annual TTRA conference proceedings* (pp. 195-198). San Diego: The Travel Research Association.
- DRV (2021, March). Der Deutsche Reisemarkt - Zahlen und Fakten 2020. [https://www.driv.de/public/Downloads\\_2021/21-03-08\\_DRV\\_ZahlenFakten\\_Digital\\_2020.pdf](https://www.driv.de/public/Downloads_2021/21-03-08_DRV_ZahlenFakten_Digital_2020.pdf) (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Dumitrescu, A. (2002). The impact of the social and economic policies on the local people of the Danube Delta and the necessary measures. *Scientific Annals of the Danube Delta Institute for Research & Development*, 9, 75-83.
- Durbarray, R. (2004). Tourism and economic growth: the case of Mauritius. *Tourism Economics*, 10(4), 389-401.
- Dyer, P., Gursoy, D., Sharma, B. & Carter, J. (2007). Structural modeling of resident perceptions of tourism and associated development on the Sunshine Coast, Australia. *Tourism management*, 28(2), 409-422.
- DZT (n.d.). Köln: Oder wie man Lebensfreude buchstabiert. <https://www.germany.travel/de/staedte-kultur/koeln.html> (accessed May 2, 2021).
- Eisenlohr, P. (2007). Creole publics: Language, cultural citizenship, and the spread of the nation in Mauritius. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 49(4), 968-996.

## REFERENCES

- ETC (2020, March 17). European Tourism Sector Demands Urgent Supportive Measures to Reduce Devastating Impact of COVID-19. <https://etc-corporate.org/news/european-tourism-sector-demands-urgent-supportive-measures-to-reduce-devastating-impact-of-covid-19/> (accessed April 24, 2021).
- Euromonitor International (2021). *Top Countries for Sustainable Tourism: Embracing a Green Transformation for Travel Recovery*. [https://go.euromonitor.com/white-paper\\_Traveland-Tourism-21-03-12\\_Top-Countries-for-Sustainable-Tourism.html](https://go.euromonitor.com/white-paper_Traveland-Tourism-21-03-12_Top-Countries-for-Sustainable-Tourism.html)
- European Commission (2021). Environment. Ecosystem Services and Green Infrastructure. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/index_en.htm)
- Eximturincomig (2021). *Danube Delta: did you know?*. Retrieved April 25, 2021, from <http://www.romaniaforall.com/nature-landscapes-people/about-danube-delta/#:~:text=The%20Danube%20Delta%20is%20the,geese%2C%20cormorants%2C%20wild%20ducks%20>
- FAO (2016). *Costa Rica*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index/en/?iso3=CRI>
- Farmaki, A., Altinay, L., Botterill, D. & Hilke, S. (2015). Politics and sustainable tourism: The case of Cyprus. *Tourism management*, 47, 178-190.
- Felipe, O. & Julajuj, Á. (2017, March 19). Quedan seis años para salvar el Lago de Atitlán. *Prensa Libre*. <https://www.prensalibre.com/ciudades/solola/quedan-seis-anos-para-salvar-el-lago-de-atitlan-panajachel/>
- Gastescu, P. & Toma, E. (2019). Danube Delta Bipshpere Reserve. Tourist potential, turning to good account. *Riscuri si Catastrofe*, 25(2). Retrieved from <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=813689>
- Geissdoerfer, M., Savaget, P., Bocken, N.M. & Hultink, E.J. (2017). The Circular Economy–A new sustainability paradigm?. *Journal of cleaner production*, 143, 757-768.
- Given, M.G. (2008). Nonprobability sampling. In *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research* (1st vol., pp. 562–563). SAGE Publications.
- Gomoiu, M.T. (1996). Facts and remarks on the Danube Delta. *Geo-Eco-Marina*, 1(1996), pp. 99-113.
- Gössling, S., Scott, D. & Hall, C.M. (2020). Pandemics, tourism, and global change: A rapid assessment of Covid-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. <https://doi:10.1080/09669582.2020.1758708>
- Gössling, S., McCabe, S. & Chen, N.C. (2020). A socio-psychological conceptualisation of overtourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 84, 102976.
- Gotlands Besöksnäring AB (GFB) (2020). Verksamhetsplan. Visby: Gotlands Besöksnäring. Retrieved May 6th, 2021 from <https://gotlandsbesoksnaring.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Verksamhetsplan.pdf>
- GotlandsBesöksnäringAB(GFB)(n.d.). Omföreningen. Retrieved May 6th, 2021 from <https://gotlandsbesoksnaring.se/>
- Gounder, R. (2020). Economic Vulnerabilities and Livelihoods: Impact of COVID-19 in Fiji and Vanuatu. *Oceania*, 90, 107–113. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ocea.5273>
- Grupo GDT, INGUAT & IADB (2007). *Plan Estratégico de Dinamización Turística para el Lago de Atitlán*. INGUAT. <http://biblioteca.inguat.gob.gt/Digital/PDTat.pdf>
- Guatlevision (2018, June 6). *Lago de Atitlán contaminado con microplástico en un 70%*. <https://www.guatlevision.com/noticias/nacional/lago-atitlan-contaminado-microplastico>
- Hall, C.M., Scott, D. & Gössling, S. (2020). Pandemics, transformations, and tourism: Be careful what you wish for. *Tourism Geographies* 22(3), 577-598. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1759131.
- Hall, M. (2010). Power in tourism. Tourism in power. In D. Macleod & J. G. Carrier (Eds.), *Tourism, power and culture: Anthropological insights*, pp. 199–213. Bristol: Channel View. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com>

## REFERENCES

- Harbor, L.C. & Hunt, C.A. (2021). Indigenous tourism and cultural justice in a Tz'utujil Maya community, Guatemala. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(2-3), 214-233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1770771>
- Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. Verso books.
- Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2020). The “war over tourism”: challenges to sustainable tourism in the tourism academy after COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(4), 551-569. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1803334>
- Holden, A. (2000). *Environment and tourism* (pp. 1-2). London: Routledge.
- Ianos, I., Stoica, I., Talanga, C. & Vaidianu, N. (2012). Politics Of Tourism Development In Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve. *Surveying Geology & Mining Ecology Management (SGEM)*, Sofia. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1444052833?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=w=true>
- ICT (2017). *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Turístico de Costa Rica 2017 - 2021*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/en/documents/plan-nacional-y-planessgenerales/plan-nacional-de-desarrollo/1071-plan-nacional-de-desarrollo-turistico-2017-2021/file.html>
- ICT (2019a). *Estimación de la oferta total de hospedaje*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/es/documentos-institucionales/estad%C3%ADsticas/cifrastur%C3%ADsticas/oferta-de-hospedaje/1391-cuadros-oferta-de-hospedaje-2018/file.html>
- ICT (2019b). *Principales actividades realizadas por los turistas*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/es/documentos-institucionales/estad%C3%ADsticas/cifrastur%C3%ADsticas/actividades-realizadas/1404-principales-actividades/file.html>
- ICT (2021a). *Anuario Estadístico de Turismo 2020*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/es/documentos-institucionales/estad%C3%ADsticas/informesestad%C3%ADsticas/anuarios/2005-2015/1900-2020-1/file.html>
- ICT (2021b). *Llegadas de cruceros y cruceristas a Costa Rica*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/en/documents/estad%C3%ADsticas/cifrastur%C3%ADsticas/cruceros/1845-2019-2020/file.html>
- ICT (2021c, March 3). *Costa Rica aboga por reactivación económica del turismo enfocado en la protección de la fauna silvestre*. Instituto Costarricense de Turismo. <https://www.ict.go.cr/es/noticias-destacadas/1864-costa-rica-aboga-por-reactivaci%C3%B3necon%C3%B3mica-del-turismo-enfocado-en-la-protecci%C3%B3n-de-la-faunasilvestre.html>
- ICT (n.d.). *Costa Rica Tourism Official website*. Visit Costa Rica. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://www.visitcostarica.com/en>
- Incoming Romania (2020). *Solutii de Organizare si Sustinere a Turismului Romanesc – Alianta Pentru Turism*. Retrieved April 19, 2021, from <https://incomingromania.org/industry/solutii-organizare-sustinere-turismuluiromanesc-alianta-pentru-turism/>
- INEC (2020, April-June). *Encuesta Continua de Empleo [Dataset]*. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos. <https://www.inec.cr/empleo>
- INGUAT (2018). Perfil del visitante de Sacatepéquez 2018. <https://inguat.gob.gt/informacion-estadistica/estadisticas/category/78-2018?download=401:perfil-del-visitante-del-departamento-de-sacatepequez>
- INE (2018). Infografías. Portal de Resultados Del Censo 2018. <https://www.censopoblacion.gt/cuantosomos>
- Iniesta-Bonillo, M.A., Sánchez-Fernández, R. & Jiménez-Castillo, D. (2016). Sustainability, value, and satisfaction: Model testing and cross-validation in tourist destinations. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), 5002-5007.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2015). *República de Guatemala: Encuesta Nacional de Condiciones de Vida 2014*. <https://www.ine.gov.gt/sistema/uploads/2015/12/11/vjNVdb4lZswOjoZtuivPlcaAXet8LZqZ.pdf>
- Ioannides, D. & Gyimóthy, S. (2020). The COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for escaping the unsustainable global tourism path. *Tourism Geographies*, 1-9.

## REFERENCES

- ISO (2021). ISO 14001:2015 Environmental management systems – Requirements with guidance for use. Retrieved from: <https://www.iso.org/standard/60857.html>
- Ivan, O. (2017). We make more money now, but we don't talk to each other anymore: on new tourism and capitalism in the Danube Delta. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 15:2, pp. 122-135, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2016.1260102>
- Juárez, F. (2020a). *El Turismo y el COVID-19 en Guatemala: 19a. Encuesta al Sector de Viajes y Turismo (Primera Parte)*. ASIES. [http://www.asies.org.gt/download.php?get=19\\_e\\_e\\_al\\_sector\\_viajes\\_y\\_turismo\\_parte\\_1.pdf](http://www.asies.org.gt/download.php?get=19_e_e_al_sector_viajes_y_turismo_parte_1.pdf)
- Juárez, F. (2020b). *El Turismo y el COVID-19 en Guatemala: 19a. Encuesta al Sector de Viajes y Turismo (Segunda Parte)*. ASIES. [http://www.asies.org.gt/download.php?get=19a\\_ee\\_al\\_sector\\_viajes\\_y\\_turismo\\_parte\\_2.pdf](http://www.asies.org.gt/download.php?get=19a_ee_al_sector_viajes_y_turismo_parte_2.pdf)
- Kaczmarek, T., Perez, K., Demir, E. & Zaremba, A. (2021). How to survive a pandemic: The corporate resiliency of travel and leisure companies to the COVID-19 outbreak. *Tourism Management*, 84, 104281.
- Kaspar, C. (1991). *Die Tourismuslehre in Grundriss*. Bern: Verlag Paul Haupt
- Kennell, J. (2020). Tourism policy research after the COVID-19 pandemic: reconsidering the role of the state in tourism. *Skyline Business Journal*, 16(1), 68-72.
- Khalid, U., Okafor, L.E. & Burzynska, K. (2021). Does the size of the tourism sector influence the economic policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic?. *Current Issues in Tourism*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2021.1874311>
- Ko, D.-W. & Stewart, W.P. (2002). A structural equation model of residents' attitudes for tourism development. *Tourism Management*, 23(5), 521–530. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(02) 00006-7
- Koelnmesse (n.d.). All Koelnmesse Trade Fairs. <https://www.koelnmesse.com/current-dates/all-trade-fairs/> (accessed May 2, 2021).
- Köln global-nachhaltig (n.d.). SDGs in Köln. <https://www.koelnglobal.de/> (accessed May 6, 2021).
- KölnTourismus (2019). Statistiken 2019 für die Reisedestination Köln. <https://www.koelntourismus.de/planen-informieren/service/trade/statistik/2019/> (accessed April 26, 2021).
- KölnTourismus (2020a). Tourismusentwicklung in Köln – Januar - Dezember 2020. <https://www.koelntourismus.de/fileadmin/Mediendatenbank/PDF/Tourismusentwicklung/Koeln-Dezember-2020.pdf> (accessed April 26, 2021).
- KölnTourismus (2020b). Tourismusentwicklung in Köln – Januar 2020. <https://www.koelntourismus.de/fileadmin/Mediendatenbank/PDF/Tourismusentwicklung/Tourismusentwicklung-in-Koeln-Januar-2020.pdf> (accessed April 28, 2021).
- KölnTourismus (2021). Tourismusentwicklung in Köln – Januar 2021. <https://www.koelntourismus.de/fileadmin/Mediendatenbank/PDF/Tourismusentwicklung/Koeln-Januar-2021.pdf> (accessed April 28, 2021).
- KölnTourismus (n.d.). Gästebefragung KölnTourismus. <https://www.koelntourismus.de/planen-informieren/gaestebefragung/> (accessed May 8, 2021).
- KPMG Cyprus (2017). *Cyprus Tourism Market Report*.
- Krake Köln (n.d.). Home. <https://krake.koeln/> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Kuscer, K. & Mihalic, T. (2019). Residents' Attitudes towards Overtourism from the Perspective of Tourism Impacts and Cooperation—The Case of Ljubljana. *Sustainability*, 11, 1823. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11061823>
- KVB (n.d.a). Umweltpolitik der KVB. <https://www.kvb.koeln/unternehmen/zukunftsfahren/umwelt/umweltpolitik.html> (accessed May 6, 2021).
- KVB (n.d.b). Mobilität in Köln. <https://www.kvb.koeln/unternehmen/zukunftsfahren/umwelt/index.html> (accessed May 6, 2021).

## REFERENCES

- KVB (n.d.c). KölnCard. [https://www.kvb.koeln/tickets/welches\\_ticket/gelegenheitsfahrer/koelncard.html](https://www.kvb.koeln/tickets/welches_ticket/gelegenheitsfahrer/koelncard.html) (accessed May 6, 2021).
- LaPan, C., Morais, D.B., Barbieri, C. & Wallace, T. (2016). Power, altruism and communitarian tourism: A comparative study. *PASOS Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 14(4), 889–906. <https://doi.org/10.25145/j.pasos.2016.14.058>
- Latkova, P. & Vogt, C.A. (2012). Residents' attitudes toward existing and future tourism development in rural communities. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(1), 50–67. doi: 10.1177/0047287510394193
- Lee, T.H. (2013). Influence analysis of community resident support for sustainable tourism development. *Tourism management*, 34, 37–46.
- Mann, A. (2021, March). #SustainableFlying – Just Marketing or a Possible Future Development. ITB NOW. Berlin; Germany. [https://www.itbnow.com/eventdate/Sustainable\\_Flying-Just-Marketing-or-a-Possible-Future-DevelopmentMasterclass-by-Lufthansa--ed\\_142a](https://www.itbnow.com/eventdate/Sustainable_Flying-Just-Marketing-or-a-Possible-Future-DevelopmentMasterclass-by-Lufthansa--ed_142a)
- Mauritius National Statistics (2021). Mauritius. Retrieved on 30th April 2021 from <https://knoema.com/atlas/Mauritius>
- Mauritius Tourism Authority (n.d.). Mauritius Tourism Authority. Retrieved on 30th April 2021 from <http://www.tourismauthority.mu/en/>
- Mbaiwa, J.E. (2005). Enclave tourism and its socio-economic impacts in the Okavango Delta, Botswana. *Tourism management*, 26(2), 157–172.
- Michelin Guide (2021). Slovenia Restaurants. Retrieved from: <https://guide.michelin.com/si/en/restaurants/2-stars-michelin/1-star-michelin>
- Mideplan (2020). *Second Voluntary National Review, Sustainable Development Goals, Costa Rica 2020 “Sustainable Development in Action: The Route to Sustainability.”* [http://ods.cr/sites/default/files/documentos/second\\_voluntary\\_national\\_review\\_sdg\\_costa\\_rica.pdf](http://ods.cr/sites/default/files/documentos/second_voluntary_national_review_sdg_costa_rica.pdf)
- Mihalic, T. (2016). Sustainable-Responsible Tourism Discourse – towards ‘responsustable’ tourism. *Journal of Cleaner Production*. 111, pp. 461–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.12.062>
- Mihalic, T. (2020). Conceptualising overtourism: A sustainability approach. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 84, 103025. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.103025>
- Mihalic, T. (2021, in print). Sustainomics in Tourism: ecological, economic and political sustainability issues. Ljubljana: Ekonomska fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani.
- Mihalic, T. & Kuscer, K. (2021). Can overtourism be managed? Destination management factors affecting residents' irritation and quality of life. *Tourism Review*. 1660–5373.
- Miličević, K. (2021) EMTM 2021 Environmental Management In Tourism; introduction, course goals, and outputs. [Power Point Slides]. University of Ljubljana School of Economics and Business Canvas: <https://felu.instructure.com/courses/1757/files/folder/Lectures?preview=181060>
- MINAE, CONAGEBIO & SINAC (2016). *Estrategia Nacional de Biodiversidad 2016-2025, Costa Rica*. FMAM-PNUD, Fundación de Parques Nacionales-Asociación Costa Rica por Siempre. [https://www.conagebio.go.cr/Conagebio/public/documentos/EstrategiaNacionalBiodiversidad\\_0217.pdf](https://www.conagebio.go.cr/Conagebio/public/documentos/EstrategiaNacionalBiodiversidad_0217.pdf)
- Ministerio de Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (2018). *Plan Maestro Reserva de Uso Múltiple Cuenca del Lago de Atitlán (RUMCLA) 2018–2022*. <https://www.marn.gob.gt/Multimedios/13192.pdf>
- Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration [MRDPA] (2016). Danube Delta Integrated Development Strategy (2030). Retrieved April 25, 2021, from [http://www.mdrap.ro/userfiles/delta\\_dunarii/draft\\_Danube\\_Delta\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.mdrap.ro/userfiles/delta_dunarii/draft_Danube_Delta_Strategy.pdf)

## REFERENCES

- Muganda, M., Sirima, A. & Ezra, P.M. (2013). The role of local communities in tourism development: Grassroots perspectives from Tanzania. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 41(1), 53-66.
- Nagaj, R. & Zuromskaite, B. (2021). Tourism in the Era of Covid-19 and Its Impact on the Environment. *Energies*, 14, 2000. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en14072000>
- Naidoo, P., Ramseook-Munhurrin, P. & Durbarry, R. (2010). Tourists' perspective of the brand image of Mauritius. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, 3(3), 95-106.
- Naidoo, P. & Sharpley, R. (2016). Local perceptions of the relative contributions of enclave tourism and agritourism to community well-being: The case of Mauritius. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5(1), 16-25.
- Nancu, D.V., Guran-Nica, L. & Perşu M. (2010). Demographic ageing in Romania's rural area. *Human Geographies*, 4 (1), pp. 33-42. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/MihaelaPersu/publication/268323815\\_Demographic\\_Ageing\\_in\\_Romania%27s\\_Rural\\_Area/links/557a906308ae752158718982/Demographic-Ageing-in-Romanias-Rural-Area.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/MihaelaPersu/publication/268323815_Demographic_Ageing_in_Romania%27s_Rural_Area/links/557a906308ae752158718982/Demographic-Ageing-in-Romanias-Rural-Area.pdf)
- Neher, T.P., Soupir, M.L. & Kanwar, R.S. (2021). Lake Atitlan: A Review of the Food, Energy, and Water Sustainability of a Mountain Lake in Guatemala. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 515. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020515>
- Nicola, M., Alsafi, Z., Sohrabi, C., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., Agha, M. & Agha, R. (2020). The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review. *International Journal of Surgery* (78), 185-193. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijssu.2020.04.018.
- Niewiadomski, P. (2020). COVID-19: from temporary de-globalisation to a re-discovery of tourism? *Tourism Geographies*, 22(3), 651-656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1757749>
- Nunkoo, R. & Gursoy, D. (2012). Residents' support for tourism: An identity perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(1), 243-268.
- Nunkoo, R. & Ramkissoon, H. (2007). Residents' perceptions of the socio-cultural impact of tourism in Mauritius. *Anatolia*, 18(1), 138-145.
- OECD (2020a). Tourism Policy Responses to the Covid virus (Covid 19). Retrieved from May 5th, 2021 from <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/tourism-policy-responses-to-the-coronavirus-covid-19-6466aa20/>
- OECD (2020b). *Rebuilding tourism for the future: COVID-19 policy responses and recovery*. Retrieved April 20, 2021, from <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/rebuilding-tourism-for-the-future-covid-19-policy-responses-and-recovery-bced9859/>
- OECD (2020c). *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2020*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/6b47b985-en>
- OECD (n.d.). Germany. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9633dbda-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9633dbda-en#:~:text=Tourism%20in%20Germany%20continues%20to,of%20total%20GVA%20in%202015.&text=In%202018%2C%2087.0%20million%20international,increase%20of%204.5%25%20from%202017> (accessed May 5, 2021).
- Oficina Municipal de Turismo Panajachel & Solola Subregional Delegation (2021). *Datos oficiales Semana Santa 2021 Panajachel*.
- Oxenswärdh, A. (2020a). Sustainability Practice at Hotels on the Island of Gotland in Sweden – an exploratory study. *European Journal of Tourism, Recreation, and Hospitality*, 10(3), 203-212. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ejthr-2020-0018>
- Oxenswärdh, A. (2020b). Sustainability Practices at Hotels and BnB Establishments on the Island of Gotland in Sweden. In: Leal Filho W., Tortato U., Frankenberger F. (eds) *Universities and Sustainable Communities: Meeting the Goals of the Agenda 2030*. World Sustainability Series. Cham: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30306-8\\_20](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30306-8_20)
- Pavel-Nedea, A. & Dona, I. (2017). Assessment of the touristic demand in the Danube Delta by profile and motivation of tourists. *Scientific Papers Series-Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture and Rural Development*, 17(3), 283-286. Retrieved from [http://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.17\\_3/Art40.pdf](http://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.17_3/Art40.pdf)

## REFERENCES

- Pearce, P.L. (1995). From culture shock and culture arrogance to culture exchange: Ideas towards sustainable socio-cultural tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 3(3), 143-154.
- Perrottet, J. (2020). *Rebuilding Tourism Competitiveness: Tourism Response, Recovery and Resilience to the COVID-19 Crisis*. World Bank Group. Retrieved April 23rd, 2021 from <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1252825/rebuilding-tourism-competitiveness/>
- Persson-Fischer, U. & Liu, S. (2021). The impact of a global crisis on areas and topics of tourism research. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 906.
- Persson-Fischer, U. (2019). Sustainability in conflict: A study of cruise tourism to Gotland. Presented at the 2019 People and the Sea Conference, 24-28 June, 2019 Amsterdam, Netherlands. Retrieved May 6th, 2021 from <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-387787>
- Petrisor, A.I., Petre, R. & Meita, V. (2016). Difficulties in achieving social sustainability in a biosphere reserve. *International Journal of Conservation Science*, 7(1), pp. 123-136. Retrieved from <https://web.a.ebscohost.com/abstract?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authType=crawler&jrnl=2067533X&AN=113480304&h=TxAl0BV%2fEkLrtivmYZCU7Hs7fbFXP6UQWkbPm mxLTfNZ866Am%2fd%2bSofPi5UzKGq%2fCU7Lz1T9w9qzNs0qihwSoA%3d%3d&crl=c&resultNs=AdminWebAuth&resultLocal=ErrCrlNotAuth&crlhashurl=login.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26profile%3dehost%26scope%3dsite%26authType%3dcrawler%26jrnl%3d2067533X%26AN%3d113480304>
- Petrisor, A.-I., Ianos, I., Iurea, D. & Vaidianu, M.-N. (2012). Applications of Principal Component Analysis integrated with GIS. *Procedia Environmental Sciences*, 14, pp. 247-256. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proenv.2012.03.024>
- Pfarr, C. & Hosie, P.J. (2008). Crisis management in tourism: Preparing for recovery. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 23(2-4), 249-264.
- Phellas, C.N., Bloch, A. & Seale, C. (2011). Structured methods: interviews, questionnaires and observation. In *Researching Society and Culture* (3rd ed.; pp. 181-205). SAGE publication: London.
- Polizeipräsidium Köln (2020). Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik 2020. <https://koeln.polizei.nrw/sites/default/files/2021-03/k-pks2020-koeln.pdf> (accessed May 8, 2021).
- Polukhina, A., Sheresheva, M., Efremova, M., Suranova, O., Agalakova, O. & Antonov-Ovseenko, A. (2021). The Concept of Sustainable Rural Tourism Development in the Face of COVID-19 Crisis: Evidence from Russia. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 14(1), 38.
- Popa, L., Nichersu, I. & Poruncia, A. (2005). Transformation of Cultural Values and Their Valorization by Tourism in the DDBR. *Scientific Annals of the Danube Delta Institute for Research and Development*, Tulcea Romania.
- Popescu, A. (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Romania's Tourist Flows in the Year 2020. *Scientific Papers: Management, Economic Engineering in Agriculture & Rural Development*, 21 (1). Retrieved from [http://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.21\\_1/Art74.pdf](http://managementjournal.usamv.ro/pdf/vol.21_1/Art74.pdf)
- PWC (2021, February 13). Germany - Corporate Taxes on Corporate Income. <https://taxsummaries.pwc.com/germany/corporate/taxes-on-corporate-income#:~:text=Corporation%20tax%20is%20levied%20at,total%20tax%20rate%20of%2015.825%25> (accessed May 5, 2021).
- Ramsar (2012). *Wetland Tourism: Romania - The Danube Delta*. Retrieved from <https://www.ramsar.org/tourism>
- Ranzani, M., Bergmann, F. & Tandrayen-Ragoobur, V.K. (2019). *Job Creation and Labor Productivity in Mauritius* (No. 138222, pp. 1-98). The World Bank.
- Rasoolimanesh, S.M. & Jaafar, M. (2016). Community participation toward tourism development and conservation program in rural world heritage sites. In *Tourism-from empirical research towards practical application*. IntechOpen.
- RegionFakta (2021, January). *Sysselsatta inom turismberoende branscher*. Retrieved May 5th, 2021 from <https://www.regionfakta.com/gotlands-lan/naringsliv/sysselsatta/sysselsatta-inom-turismberoende-branscher/>

## REFERENCES

- Region Gotland (2018). Vårt Gotland 2040 - regional utvecklingsstrategi för Gotland. Antagen av Regionfullmäktige 2021-02-22 § 4. Retrieved May 5th, 2021 from <https://rus.gotland.se>
- Region Gotland (2019a). Underlag till regional besöksnäringstrategi för Gotland. Nuläge för turism till Gotland och besöksnäringen på Gotland. Retrieved May 5th, 2021 from <https://www.gotland.se/102750>
- Region Gotland (2019b). Regional besöksnäringstrategi för Gotland. Fastställd av regionfullmäktige 2019-02-25. Retrieved May 5th, 2021 from <https://www.gotland.se/102749>
- Region Gotland (2021, in print). Handlingsplan för Besöksnäringstrategi för Gotland 2019-2027. Visby: Region Gotland.
- Rejmánková, E., Komárek, J., Dix, M., Komárková, J. & Girón, N. (2011). Cyanobacterial blooms in Lake Atitlan, Guatemala. *Limnologica*, 41(4), 296–302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.limno.2010.12.003>
- RF-SISU (n.d.). Gotland Out: ett projekt för hållbar naturturism på Gotland. Retrieved May 6th, 2021 from <https://experiencegotland.se>
- Ritchie, J.R., Goeldner, C.R. & McIntosh, R.W. (2003). *Tourism: principles, practices, philosophies*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Son.
- Rodríguez-Antón, J.M. & Alonso-Almeida, M.D.M. (2020). COVID-19 Impacts and Recovery Strategies: The Case of the Hospitality Industry in Spain. *Sustainability*, 12(20), 8599.
- Romanescu, G., Bounegru, O. & Efros, V. (2012). From Greek antiquity to the middle ages: a possible incursion and special interest tourism in the Danube delta. In Pineda, F.D. and Brebbia, C.A. *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, pp. 355-367. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com>
- Romania Libera (2018). *Polițiștii au confiscat 200 kg de somn pescuit ilegal în Delta Dunării*. Retrieved April 25, 2021, from <https://romanalibera.ro/social/politistii-au-confiscat-200-kg-de-somn-pescuit-ilegal-in-delta-dunarii-732745>
- Santana, G. (2004). Crisis management and tourism: Beyond the rhetoric. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 15(4), 299-321.
- Scott, N. (2011). *Tourism Policy: A Strategic Review*. In *Contemporary Tourism Reviews*. Oxford: Goodfellow Publishers Ltd.
- Seshaiyer, P. & McNeely, C. L. (2020). Challenges and Opportunities from COVID-19 for Global Sustainable Development. *World Medical & Health Policy*, 12(4), 443-453. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.380>
- Sharma, G.D., Thomas, A. & Paul, J. (2021). Reviving tourism industry post-COVID-19: A resilience-based framework. *Tourism management perspectives*, 37, 100786.
- Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research. *Journal of business research*, 117, pp. 312-321. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.015>
- Sinus Institut (n.d.). Sinus-Milieus® Deutschland. <https://www.sinus-institut.de/sinus-loesungen/sinus-milieus-deutschland/> (accessed May 8, 2021).
- SmartCity Cologne (n.d.). Die Zukunft gestalten: SmartCity Cologne. <https://www.smartcity-cologne.de/index.php/zukunft-gestalten.html> (accessed May 6, 2021).
- Sobaih, A.E.E., Elshaer, I., Hasanein, A.M. & Abdelaziz, A.S. (2021). Responses to COVID-19: The role of performance in the relationship between small hospitality enterprises' resilience and sustainable tourism development. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 102824.
- Stadt Köln (2016). "Leben in Köln" - Umfrage 2016. [https://www.stadt-koeln.de/mediaasset/content/pdf15/statistik-umfragen/zufriedenheite\\_mit\\_k%C3%B6ln\\_und\\_dem\\_wohnumfeld.pdf](https://www.stadt-koeln.de/mediaasset/content/pdf15/statistik-umfragen/zufriedenheite_mit_k%C3%B6ln_und_dem_wohnumfeld.pdf) (accessed May 8, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (2019). Statistisches Jahrbuch Köln 2019. [https://www.stadt-koeln.de/mediaasset/content/pdf15/statistik-jahrbuch/15\\_statistisches\\_jahrbuch\\_2019\\_bfrei.pdf](https://www.stadt-koeln.de/mediaasset/content/pdf15/statistik-jahrbuch/15_statistisches_jahrbuch_2019_bfrei.pdf) (accessed April 28, 2021).

## REFERENCES

- Stadt Köln (2020, December 16). Airbnb und Co: Immer mehr Angebote zur Kurzzeitvermietung in Köln. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/politik-und-verwaltung/presse/mitteilungen/22774/index.html> (accessed May 5, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (n.d.a). Politik für Menschen mit Behinderung. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/soziales/behinderung/politik-fuer-menschen-mit-behinderung-1> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (n.d.b). Luft und Umweltzone. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/klima-umwelt-tiere/luft-umweltzone> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (n.d.c). Luftreinhalteplan für Köln. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/klima-umwelt-tiere/luft-umweltzone/luftreinhalteplan-fuer-koeln> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (n.d.d). Luftqualität in Köln. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/klima-umwelt-tiere/luft-umweltzone/luftqualitaet-koeln> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (n.d.e). Klimaziele für Köln. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/klima-umwelt-tiere/klima/klimaziele-fuer-koeln> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Stadt Köln (n.d.f). Umweltbildung. <https://www.stadt-koeln.de/leben-in-koeln/klima-umwelt-tiere/umweltbildung> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Stanzione, V. (2005). Maximón. In L. Jones (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2nd ed., Vol. 9, p. 10735). Macmillan Reference USA. [https://go-gale-com.proxy1-bib.sdu.dk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=To03&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=1&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCX3424501995&docType=Character+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=GVRL&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCX3424501995&searchId=R1&userGroupName=syduni&inPS=true](https://go-gale-com.proxy1-bib.sdu.dk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=To03&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&hitCount=1&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CCX3424501995&docType=Character+overview&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=&prodId=GVRL&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCX3424501995&searchId=R1&userGroupName=syduni&inPS=true)
- Statista (2021). Anzahl der Inserate von Airbnb-Unterkünften in ausgewählten Städten in Deutschland. <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/506272/umfrage/anzahl-der-inserate-von-airbnb-unterkuenften-in-deutschland-nach-staedte/> (accessed May 7, 2021).
- Statistical Service of Cyprus [CYSTAT] (2021a). Labor Force Survey. [https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/labour\\_31main\\_en/labour\\_31main\\_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/labour_31main_en/labour_31main_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2) (accessed April 27, 2021)
- Statistical Service of Cyprus [CYSTAT] (2021b). Tourism Arrivals, December 2020. [https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/services\\_71main\\_en/services\\_71main\\_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=1](https://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/services_71main_en/services_71main_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=1) (accessed April 27, 2021)
- Statistisches Landesamt NRW (2021). Köln. [https://www.landesdatenbank.nrw.de/ldbnrw/online?operation=find&suchanweisung\\_language=de&query=k%C3%B6ln#abreadcrumb](https://www.landesdatenbank.nrw.de/ldbnrw/online?operation=find&suchanweisung_language=de&query=k%C3%B6ln#abreadcrumb) (accessed April 26, 2021).
- Sundkvist, Å., Jansson, A. & Larsson, P. (2001). Strengths and limitations of localizing food production as a sustainability-building strategy—an analysis of bread production on the island of Gotland, Sweden. *Ecological economics*, 37(2), 217-227.
- Sustain Europe (2019, October 25). Meet in Green Cologne. <https://www.sustaineurope.com/meet-in-green-cologne-20191025.html> (accessed May 6, 2021).
- Sustainable Tourism Mauritius (2018). Making Mauritius a leading and sustainable island destination.
- Svirčić Gotovac, A. & Kerbler, B. (2019). From post-socialist to sustainable: the city of Ljubljana. *Sustainability*, 11(24), 7126. Retrieved from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/24/7126/pdf>
- Szpilko, D. (2017). Tourism Supply Chain – overview of selected literature. *Procedia Engineering*, 182, 687-693.
- Tatar, C.F., Herman, G.V., Dehoorne, O. & Zarrilli, L. (2017). Ecotourism in the Danube Delta. *Analele Universității din Oradea, Seria Geografie*, 27(1), pp. 122-132.
- Teleport (n.d.). Quality of Life in Cologne. <https://teleport.org/cities/cologne/> (accessed May 5, 2021).

## REFERENCES

- Teutsch, E. (n.d.). Construction of a sustainable tourism destination: the Danube region. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.com>
- The World Bank (2015). *REPORT 2.2 Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy*. Retrieved May, 3 2021, from [https://www.mdpa.ro/userfiles/delta\\_dunarii/rezultate\\_proiecte/4\\_Raport\\_Strategie\\_en.pdf](https://www.mdpa.ro/userfiles/delta_dunarii/rezultate_proiecte/4_Raport_Strategie_en.pdf)
- The World Bank (2021, March 19). *World Development Indicators - People*. <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-developmentindicators/themes/people.html#population>
- Tillvaxtverket (2021). Short-time work allowance 2021. Retrieved May 8, 2021 from <https://tillvaxtverket.se/english.html>
- Tismaneanu, V. (2003). *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*. Retrieved from <https://www.books.google.com>
- Tourism Analytics (n.d.). Mauritius. Retrieved 2 May 2021 from <https://tourismanalytics.com/mauritius.html>
- Travelmag (2018). *The most and least visited countries per capita in the world*. <https://www.travelmag.com/articles/most-and-least-visited-countries-in-the-world/> (accessed May 3, 2021)
- UKdiss.com (2019). Environmental impacts in tourism on Mauritius. Retrieved on 3rd May 2021 from <https://ukdiss.com/examples/environmental-impacts-of-tourism-inmauritius.php>
- UN (2020). The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020. Retrieved May 21, 2021, from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/>
- UNESCO (n.d.). *Cyprus*. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/CY> (accessed May 4, 2021)
- UNESCO (n.d.). *Precolumbian Chiefdom Settlements with Stone Spheres of the Diquis*. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Retrieved May 3, 2021, from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1453/>
- UNESCO (2015). UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Ljubljana. Retrieved from: <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/ljubljana>
- University of Gävle (2018). Economic sustainability. Retrieved May 22, 2021, from <https://www.hig.se/Ext/En/University-of-Gavle/About-the-University/Environmental-Work/What-is-sustainable-development-at-HiG/Economic-sustainability.html>
- UNWTO (1981). *Saturation of Tourist Destinations: Report of the Secretary General*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.
- UNWTO (2019). *Impact assessment of the Covid-19 outbreak on international tourism*. Retrieved February 11, 2021 <https://www.unwto.org/impact-assessment-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-on-international-tourism>
- UNWTO (2020a). *UNWTO World Tourism Barometer (Vol. 18, Issue 2, May 2020)*. Madrid, Spain. <https://doi.org/10.18111/wtobarometereng>
- UNWTO (2020b). *Supporting jobs and economies through travel & tourism: A call for action to mitigate the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 and accelerate recovery*, UNWTO, Madrid. <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284421633>
- UNWTO (2021a). *Country Profile - Inbound Tourism*. <https://www.unwto.org/country-profile-inbound-tourism>
- UNWTO (2021b). *2020: Worst Year in Tourism History with 1 Billion Fewer International Arrivals*. Retrieved from: <https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2021-01/210128-barometer-en.pdf?Gal1QTYG.Ky9LDZ2tIDKc.iRZkinJeuH>
- UNWTO (2021c). *COVID-19: Measures to Support Travel and Tourism*. Retrieved April 20, 2021, from <https://www.unwto.org/covid-19-measures-to-support-travel-tourism>
- UNWTO (n.d.a). *Sustainable development*. <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development> (accessed April 28, 2021)

- UNWTO (n.d.b). COVID-19: Measures to Support Travel and Tourism. <https://www.unwto.org/covid-19-measures-to-support-travel-tourism> (accessed April 26, 2021).
- Uppsala University (n.d.). Tourism History of Gotland. Destination Development - Case Gotland. Retrieved May 6th, 2021 from <https://www.campusgotland.uu.se/sustainvisits/research/tourismhistory/#anchor-649004>
- Vaidianu, M.N. (2013). Fuzzy cognitive maps: diagnosis and scenarios for a better management process of visitors flows in Romanian Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, *Journal of Coastal Research*, Special Issue, nr.65.
- Vaidianu, N., Paraschiv, M., Saghin, I. & Braghina, C. (2015). Social-ecological consequences of planning and development policies in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, Romania. *Carpathian Journal of Earth and Environmental Sciences*, 10(3), pp. 113-124. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mirela-Paraschiv/publication/285219454\\_Social-ecological\\_consequences\\_of\\_planning\\_and\\_development\\_policies\\_in\\_the\\_Danube\\_Delta\\_biosphere\\_reserve\\_Romania/links/56dd952508aed4e2a99c5127/Social-ecological-consequences-of-planning-and-development-policies-in-the-Danube-Delta-biosphere-reserve-Romania.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mirela-Paraschiv/publication/285219454_Social-ecological_consequences_of_planning_and_development_policies_in_the_Danube_Delta_biosphere_reserve_Romania/links/56dd952508aed4e2a99c5127/Social-ecological-consequences-of-planning-and-development-policies-in-the-Danube-Delta-biosphere-reserve-Romania.pdf)
- Vargas-Sánchez, A., de los Ángeles Plaza-Mejía, M. & Porrás-Bueno, N. (2009). MODELLING RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. *Tourism Destination Development and Branding*, 36.
- Velasco, M. (2016). Tourism policy. Farazmand, A. *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*, Springer International Publishing.
- Vellas, F. (2011, October). The indirect impact of tourism: an economic analysis. In *Third Meeting of T20 Tourism Ministers*. Paris, France.
- Verksamst (2021, March). Important information for businesses. Retrieved May 4th, 2021 from <https://www.verksamst.se/en/web/international/running/important-information-to-entrepreneurs-due-to-the-corona-virus>
- VisitCyprus. (n.d.). *About Cyprus*. [https://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/practical\\_information/about-cyprus](https://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/practical_information/about-cyprus) (accessed April 25, 2021)
- Visit Gotland (n.d.). Top 10 attractions. From medieval walls to Eksta coast. Retrieved May 6th, 2021 from <https://gotland.com/en/visit/articles-guides/top-ten-attractions/>
- VisitLjubljana (2021a). Statistical Data. Tourist arrivals and overnight stays in previous years Retrieved from: <https://www.visitljubljana.com/en/media/press-resources/ljubljana-tourismstatistics/tourist-arrivals-and-overnight-stays-in-previous-years/>
- VisitLjubljana (2021b). About Gourmet Ljubljana. Retrieved from: <https://gourmetlj.si/en/info/about-gourmet-ljubljana>
- Voica, M. & Sbarcea, M. (2018). Fishermen's Shelters Heritage in the Danube Delta; Alternatives to Continue a Tradition. In *Proceedings of the 4th Biennial of Architectural and Urban Restoration. Host of the Itinerant Congress Hidden Cultural Heritage: Under Water, Under Ground and Within Buildings*, pp. 317. CICOP Italia. Retrieved from <https://www.books.google.com>
- Volkman, C., Tokarski, K.O., Dinca, V.M. & Bogdan, A. (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 on Romanian Tourism. An Explorative Case Study on Prahova County, Romania. *Amfiteatru Economic*, 23(56), pp. 196-205. Retrieved from <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=931538>
- Whitford, M. & Ruhanen, L. (2013). Indigenous festivals and community development: A sociocultural analysis of an Australian indigenous festival. *Event Management*, 17(1), 49-61.
- William, A. (2015). Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. In J. Wholey, H. Hatry & K. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation* (pp.492-505). Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301738442\\_Conducting\\_Semi-Structured\\_Interviews](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301738442_Conducting_Semi-Structured_Interviews)
- Worldometer (2020). *Cyprus Demographics*. <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/cyprus-demographics/> (accessed April 25, 2021)

## REFERENCES

- World Wildlife Fund [WWF] (2018). *WWF and Google join forces to place the Danube Delta on the digital map of the world*. Retrieved April 24, 2021, from [https://wwf.panda.org/wwf\\_offices/wwf\\_in\\_europe/?330497/WWF-and-Google-join-forces-to-place-the-Danube-Delta-on-the-digital-map-of-the-world](https://wwf.panda.org/wwf_offices/wwf_in_europe/?330497/WWF-and-Google-join-forces-to-place-the-Danube-Delta-on-the-digital-map-of-the-world)
- Wortman, T., Donaldson, R. & van Westen, G. (2016). 'They are stealing my island': Residents' opinions on foreign investment in the residential tourism industry in Tamarin, Mauritius. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 37(2), 139-157.
- Woyo, E. (2021). The Sustainability of Using Domestic Tourism as a Post-COVID-19 Recovery Strategy in a Distressed Destination. In *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2021*, pp. 476-489. Retrieved from [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-65785-7\\_46](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-65785-7_46)
- WTTC (2019). Slovenia. 2019 Annual Research: Key Highlights. Retrieved from: <https://www.slovenia.info/uploads/dokumenti/raziskave/raziskave/slovenia2019.pdf>
- WTTC (n.d.a). *Safe Travels: Global Protocols & Stamp for the New Normal*. #SafeTravels. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <https://wttc.org/COVID-19/Safe-Travels-Global-Protocols-Stamp>
- WTTC (n.d.b). Economic Impact Reports. Retrieved May 20, 2021, from <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>
- Zero Waste Köln (n.d.). Home. <https://zerowastekoeln.de/> (accessed May 6, 2021).
- Zhang, X., Song, H. & Huang, G.Q. (2009). Tourism supply chain management: A new research agenda. *Tourism Management* 2009;30(3):345-358. Song H. *Tourism supply chain management*. London: Routledge; 2011.
- Zhang, H., Song, H., Wen, L. & Liu, C. (2021). Forecasting tourism recovery amid COVID-19. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 87, 103149.