COVID-19 and Its Potential Impact on Stages of Tourist Destination Development.

Richard Butler

University of Strathclyde

Abstract

A review of the relevant literature on the impacts of COVID 19 reveals that one area which has not been studied is how the effects of the pandemic may be experienced at destinations in different stages of their development. This paper interprets the literature to discuss the impact of a break in tourism visitation to destinations caused by COVID 19 and uses the Tourism Area Life Cycle model (Butler 1980) as a framework from which to argue that the scale and importance of the impacts on destinations will vary depending on the stage of the development cycle reached by any specific destination. It is proposed that such impacts may range from a short term and temporary loss of tourists to a permanent departure of the destination from tourism. It is argued that the nature and degree of recovery of the tourism market at any specific destination will vary in speed and level of recovery, the degree of permanence of impacts, and the likelihood of destinations retaining their character and overall appeal after the pandemic has ended depending on their stage of development. The paper concludes with a discussion of the possibility of destinations using the pandemic to reposition themselves in terms of their markets, and factors that may come into play that attempt to modify the tourism industry itself at the global scale.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19, pandemic, impacts, destinations, life-cycle stages, future.

Introduction

The future shape of tourism has fascinated scholars since the subject was first studied but generally, as with most predictions, reality does not always match theory. Over the past half century alone, the face of tourism has been altered massively by technological developments, political change, conflict and changes in human attitudes and preferences, but it behoves academics to attempt to predict future developments in order to be able to help those whose responsibility it is to plan and manage the dynamic world about them. The COVID 19 pandemic appears to have the potential to radically change the nature and extent of tourism, not just in the short term as it currently doing, but also in the long term with respect to attitudes towards tourism and travel and the survivability of some destinations. This paper represents an interpretation of that future with respect to tourist destinations, in the context of the current (2021) situation, based on a reading of the current literature on the relationship between COVID 19 and tourism, in the context of a long-established model of destination development and change.

As Scott and Gossling (2015) note “The future of tourism is set in motion by the past, and retrospective is helpful …. to understand how far the sector has developed and to comprehend the scale of changes that could occur over the next 40 years” (op cit p. 269). They go on to discuss past changes in the context of STEEP, namely Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental and Political factors, an approach similar to that used by Buckley et al (2015) in their article on tourism megatrends. Not surprisingly, the intervention and impacts of a global pandemic did not feature specifically in either of those papers dealing with past and future trends in tourism, nor did such a subject appear in Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2020), who dealt with perceived future evolutions based on historical perspectives. Perhaps of more relevance, the subject of pandemics was absent also from books and guides to mitigating or avoiding disasters in tourist areas (for example APEC 2006; PATA 2011: Ritchie and Campiranon 2015), as these were primarily concerned with natural disasters rather than medical or economic ones (Karl 2018). The important feature of COVID 19 is the scale of the pandemic, which makes it unique and without precedent, as Gossling et al (2020 p.2,3) argue , " COVID-19 will be different and transformative for the tourism sector. …..there is much evidence that the impact and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will be unprecedented". The example of Spanish Flu, the most similar previous pandemic, generally has been ignored in the tourism literature, both in papers looking back and those looking forward. One reason for this is partly because tourism has changed dramatically, as noted above, from the beginning of the 20th Century, when Spanish Flu was a world-wide problem, to the present, making direct comparisons difficult. More significantly, the overall effects of Spanish Flu on tourism were much smaller than those of COVID 19 because there was not the level of interconnectedness between countries then compared to the present day. Transportation links and international travel were much less developed a century ago, so the spread of the earlier virus was much slower and more limited at the global level. However, Spanish Flu remains the only world-wide pandemic that has had similar negative effects on travel and belatedly, restrictions on movement of people, comparable to the COVID 19 pandemic. Undoubtedly modern media has exaggerated and heightened fears about the current pandemic to a scale unseen at the time of Spanish Flu, but the fact remains that there has not been any event since the Second World War which has had anything like the effects of COVID-19 on tourism (UNWTO 2020c). Even in the 1940s tourism on a limited scale did continue, and some countries, Switzerland being one example (Muller and Hoppler 2013), managed to keep their tourism industry functioning effectively and successfully.

War, as Butler and Suntikul (2013) demonstrated, can be beneficial as well as negative for tourism, at least in its aftermath, increasing the demand for travel and creating many opportunities and attractions for tourism development. An examination of world international travel shows a pattern of continuous growth since 1950 (UNWTO 2018, WTTC 2018)) with only slight checks corresponding to the energy price rises of the 1970s, the depression of 2008, the terrorist activities of 2011, and conflict in the Middle East in the 1970s and 2010s. Even in those troubled periods, normally domestic tourism would compensate for any declines in international tourism overall, as people could travel within their home country in relative safety and without restrictions. However, the COVID 19 pandemic and the virtual halting or drastic reduction in all forms of tourism, international and domestic, represents a unique situation for tourism and there are no precedents to fall back on for indications of how tourism will emerge when the pandemic is over. In all countries that have been infected by COVID 19, there have been restrictions imposed on domestic internal travel, as well as bans on travel abroad in order to slow or prevent the spread of the virus. This has meant that tourist and recreation destinations have received few or no visitors at all during the pandemic, in some cases for over a year in those cases where countries have imposed complete lockdowns on what has been defined as non-essential travel. Thus, the usual ability to holiday within one's own country in lieu of in another country during disasters and conflicts has disappeared in many areas, with severe impacts being felt in destinations from the lack of visitors (UNWTO 2020a).

Context

This paper does not attempt to predict in what form or at what level tourism will resume its growth, although this writer is confident that tourism will resume its growth extremely rapidly in many destinations once travel is released from the current restrictions. Such optimism is based primarily on non-academic sources (for example, Paton 2021), namely those in the tourism and travel industries, who (UNWTO, WTTC), are almost unanimous in anticipating a rapid rise in numbers travelling to pre-Covid 19 levels following the ending of restrictions. Paton (p.9) noted that "Holiday companies are reporting a threefold rise in booking for this summer driven by a demand from older travellers…sales are up by 85% compared to the same period in 2020". Such anticipation mirrors the general pattern of the resumption of tourism in areas hit by terrorism or natural disasters such as Egypt (Tomazos 2017) or Sri Lanka (Buultjens et al 2017). Those academic papers which have attempted to predict future tourist numbers have done so with caveats and noted that the dynamic and unprecedented nature of COVID 19 has meant that conventional assumptions and models do not fit well with current reality. Kourentzes et al (2021, n.p.) are typical when they note "No other tourism forecasting research study has attempted to forecast tourism demand during a pandemic, (and) Given the immense uncertainty during times of pandemics and the failure of model-based forecasts to deliver accurate forecasts in such circumstances, this research offers an alternative view' All studies, however, anticipate recovery of tourism once the pandemic has ended or is under control, but none predict actual numbers to specific locations (Assaf and Scuderi 2020; Sigala, 2020).

It is reasonable to assume, however, that the anticipated recovery of tourism will not take place evenly or equally, and that while some destinations will emerge little changed by the sudden temporary disappearance of tourists, others may be affected so severely that they may disappear as tourist destinations on a permanent basis. There are a number of reasons for taking this viewpoint, reflecting almost certain political, economic, technological and motivational changes in different countries that will emerge as a result of the pandemic. Some countries will be perceived as 'not safe' or not COVID 19-free when the pandemic is formally declared over, and some may face lingering hostility or doubts (China, USA , India, for example) over the way they handled and responded to the pandemic (Baniamin et al 2020). Other countries, particularly those in the South Pacific, which have gained the perception of having handled the crisis extremely well, for example New Zealand, or which have never had a case of COVID 19 (Tonga, Tuvalo, and Samoa for example) may see a larger than expected rise in visitation because of a positive image when they re-open to tourism.

Some locations will have suffered such economic losses during the pandemic that they will be unable to be 'open for business' immediately at the end of the crisis, with many key elements of their economy not functioning at a sufficient level to absorb tourism. Some locations will suffer because transportation links and services are slower to be resumed than in more accessible parts of the world, aircraft and ships may be in the 'wrong' locations and take months being relocated. In some of the Pacific Islands, people who normally work in hospitality and tourism have left the islands to seek other employment elsewhere and may not be able to return in time when tourism resumes. A lack of suitable experienced staff is already proving a problem in some areas such as New Zealand (Sievers personal communication). Places highly dependent on cruise traffic may suffer most, partly because of a lingering distrust of cruise ships based on other virus-related outbreaks before COVID 19, and because many ships are moored far from their normal operating routes and their staff have returned to their home countries. Finally, the influences, positive or negative, of social media are yet to be determined, and this recent technology with its influencers and created news can direct or misdirect tourists depending on who or what is supplying information. The future is, as ever, therefore, uncertain, but some general trends, including resumed growth are likely (Sigala 2020). Against that background, the paper now focuses on what types of destinations are likely to experience positive or negative results when the pandemic is over.

Breaks in Destination Development Cycles

The original TALC model did not include any discussion on breaks in the cycle of development but assumed a continuous unbroken pattern of development and change. The idea of breaks in other life cycles is noted by Zimmermann (1997), who illustrated the effect of the First and Second World Wars on forms of tourism activities in his chapter in Oppermann (1997) and portrayed the immediate resumption of those life cycles essentially at the pre-war level on the renewal of tourism. Clearly breaks in participation in different forms of tourism are not the same as breaks in visitation to destinations as access, and availability of facilities and services are key elements that need to be available to allow visitors to reach and stay at specific destinations, while participants in a form of tourism will have a number of locations in which to engage in their chosen activities, often available immediately hostilities have ended. Examples of similar impacts on tourist destinations to those caused by the COVID 19 pandemic are rare, principally because the effects of the pandemic have been global. One example that has documented a sudden loss of visitation is the paper by Liu et al (2016), which described the occurrence of an earthquake that halted visitation to a nature reserve in China. In that case a rapid reconstruction (4 years) of facilities and services meant that numbers were likely to recover quickly to pre-earthquake levels once rebuilding had been completed and access fully restored. In such a situation, of course, there were no direct restrictions on travel or tourism itself, but rather the loss of the opportunity to reach and stay at the specific destination until facilities had been replaced. Competing destinations did not suffer the same problem, unlike the case of COVID 19, where almost all destinations have suffered at least some, if not a near total, downturn in tourist visitation.

Short periods of cessation of tourist visitation to specific destinations have shown similar patterns of relatively rapid recovery and resumption of tourism, for example post-tsunami in Thailand and Sri Lanka, and in the case of the latter, also following civil war (Buultjens et al 2017), where markets appear to have been satisfied that it was safe to return to those destinations. In most cases the loss of tourist visitors following a disaster has been short lived and did not threaten the long-term economic viability of the destinations concerned nor their ability to continue to develop their tourist product. In places that experienced longer shutdowns of tourism, the evolution of the product appears to have been negatively affected with more serious results, particularly so in well-established destinations in the middle to later stages of their life cycle. A closer comparison to the COVID 19 shut down in recent times can be seen in tourist destinations in the Balkan countries such as Croatia, where the conflicts of the 1990s brought about a reduction in tourist visits on a comparable scale, and during which all destinations in the surrounding area were affected. Jordan (2000 p.528) summarized the effects “Political insecurity and conflict in and around Croatia lasted from 1990 to 1995. During this sixyear period a total reduction of 252 million overnight stays was experienced when compared to projected 1989 figures ….It destroyed or closed down tourism facilities and delayed a transformation of the Croatian tourism industry by half a decade. However, recovery was anticipated to be rapid…. Extrapolations for the year 2000, based on real data for the first nine months promise a significant growth, i.e., results at the level of 87% of 1988.” He went on to argue that the resumption of tourism followed the previous model and “Croatia’s tourism is moving towards ‘normalisation’. So far this has largely meant a return to the type of tourism characteristic of the 1980s" (Jordan 2000 p.537). His comments are significant as they suggest both a rapid recovery but with tourism remaining relatively unchanged in form since the hiatus, thus the affected destinations not only suffered from a loss of traffic but also lost the opportunity to continue to develop their product in order to keep pace with changes in the market. That pattern of decline and recovery was supported by Arnaud (2016), who quoted figures showing that in Croatia peak numbers (10.1 million) of all tourists were reached in 1985, the lowest level in 1995 (2.4 million) and had reached 1985 levels again by 2005 (9.99 Million), with the upturn beginning immediately following the end of hostilities in 1996. Other studies of the effect of the loss of tourism due to the Balkan conflicts show that the halting of the evolution of destinations that would normally continue through their life cycles can be almost as negative as the loss in numbers of visitors. In the case of Kocula Island "The first cycle was based on the classical tourist product, Sun and Sea, and caused the take-over of the whole island by tourism and ended with decline, due to loss of attractiveness and competitiveness of the classical tourist product in the late 1980s and the Homeland War…. The present cycle was initiated by rejuvenation of coastal tourism after the war, but the island entered into a stagnation phase again in the mid-2000s" (Sulc 2016: 61). Similarly, in the case of Pula, Voinovic (2012: 121) argued that "The most intensive tourism development had been recorded from 1981 to 1990, and was interrupted by the Homeland War and post-war reconstruction. ….. Pula is not a typical example of a destination going through a stagnation stage, as its stagnation had not been caused by surpassing the capacity of the attraction basis or accommodation facilities. The most important causes of stagnation have been the decrease in the number of tourists from states created after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the development of neighbouring destinations".

Finally, in looking at the rejuvenation of the Opatija Riviera following the Balkan conflicts, Corak (2006: 284) noted that

"After the War of independence….it went through initial and development phases…It also entered a phase of consolidation and partly stagnation….Although tourism continued to grow, because of several problems with infrastructure and an aging product, the decline stage began to emerge slowly. Thus if an area fails to increase investments and does not apply appropriate strategic measures that would enable it to enter the rejuvenation phase, decline is inevitable".

The effects of the break in tourism activity meant a cessation of investment in the Opatija region, as elsewhere in the Balkans, making long term rejuvenation much more difficult and less likely of long-term success and stability or continued growth. The implications of these findings provide a background for the discussion of the anticipated impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on destinations in different stages of development which follows below.

Destination Development Stages

The unique nature (immediate reduction or cessation of visitation, the disappearance of both domestic and international tourism, and the global scale) of the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic on tourist destinations is therefor likely to have equally unique effects on the future development pattern of most destinations, and those effects will be tempered by several factors specific to each destination. These include location, climate, attractions and facilities, characteristics of the pre-COVID 19 market, the rate and scale of resumption of means of access by markets, government policies on restrictions and on level of support of given to tourism. The degree of importance of tourism and the scale of its contributions to national and regional economies also mean that responses to COVID 19 will vary significantly from country to country (UNWTO 2020b). Developed countries are better able to support tourism (and other industries) financially and logistically if they chose to do so, and maintenance and revitalisation of critical services such as transportation are more likely to be given high priority in such countries, which will obviously affect the ability of destinations to recover from the effects COVID 19. National and regional policies with respect to priorities for redevelopment and support once COVID 19 has ended will also vary between countries depending on their overall level of development, their political ideologies, their geographic characteristics, and their links with other countries (Baniamin et al 2020). Another factor influencing recovery of tourist destinations, as discussed below, is the stage of development of a destination in the context of the TALC model (Butler 1980).

Given the longevity and frequent use of the model it is considered inappropriate and unnecessary to review or modify the model in any detail here, but for the purposes of this discussion, the Exploration and Involvement stages are regarded as Early Cycle, the Development stage as Mid Cycle, with Stagnation and beyond as Late Cycle. This step was taken because, given the lack of detailed information about the impacts of COVID 19 at a destination level, and indeed the lack of any detailed prediction of such effects in the future, it was deemed appropriate to reduce the stages of development to three rather than six as in the original model, to avoid more detailed speculation about results. While the TALC has been used in many different types of locations and communities (Butler 2006a, b), it should be noted that it was initially conceived as applying primarily to previously existing communities which had, over time, become tourist destinations. At the time of the publication of the model (1980), the 'instant' resorts such as Cancun (established in 1974) had only just appeared and these locations, along with others such as Dubai that were not regarded then as tourist destinations, although in many cases they had also entered tourism from small non-tourist focused communities.

In the pre-COVID 19 years, destinations in the early stages of their TALC will have experienced only a small number of visitors in both absolute and relative terms compared to their permanent resident population; the morphology of the community will have been little changed by tourism; and the amount of new tourism-related development will have been small or even non-existent. That small scale of operation and low level of modification will have left those destinations experiencing only minor losses of income and employment as a result of the decline or disappearance of tourism following COVID 19-related restrictions. That is not to say that their other economic activities may have escaped unscathed by the pandemic, as fishing and agriculture, for example, may well have suffered a downturn from decreased sales of produce and labour shortages because of restrictions on imported labour. However, tourism, being of relatively minor importance to a destination at this stage of its TALC, will not have represented a major segment of income generation in these communities. This means that in the post-COVID 19 period, recovery to a pre-COVID 19 level of visitors would not have far to go. The following figures are representations of the potential response and recovery of tourist numbers in hypothetical destinations The figures are illustrative and generalised to portray how destinations in those stages might be expected to respond to the end of the COVID 19 pandemic. Tourist numbers are used as the measure of tourism as this was the statistic used in the original model. No specific time periods are shown as there is no information available to provide a time scale on the recovery cycle from COVID 19. The few discussions of recovery from a sudden break in visitation (e.g., the examples above describing responses in the Balkan region) suggest recovery begins relatively quickly after the cause of the break has ceased, but in the case of COVID 19 induced breaks, other factors such as the image of the country involved, perceptions of safety of visitors, and steps taken by the host country will all influence the length of the recovery period (Gossling et al 2020).

Figure 1 suggests that it would require a relatively short period of time to increase from near zero visitation to the 2018-19 level of visitation, and that progress through the TALC would then resume as if the pandemic had not halted growth. In the early stage of development there would have been little or no imported labour in tourism enterprises, and no major capital investment in tourism services or attractions, making the chances of bankruptcies in tourism enterprises less likely. Transportation links, if they had been curtailed or halted during COVID 19 restrictions, would be restored quickly to communities focused on local economic activities such as agriculture and fishing, and thus be available for tourist travel. To such destinations, barring any specific COVID 19-related incidents or major negative images that appeared during any lockdown, the pandemic will have been a minor blip in the pattern of early development, and if the basic inherent attractions emerge unscathed by the pandemic, movement into the Development stage of the TALC is likely to continue at its previous pace. In other words, progression through a 'normal' life cycle will be resumed after a short time.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE.

In the case of destinations in their MID CYCLE phase the situation will be somewhat different. Destinations in such a phase can be expected to have been experiencing a rapid annual growth in tourist numbers when hit by the pandemic, which will have meant that they would also be undergoing considerable physical development of facilities such as accommodation and attractions, expansion of transport services, improvement and expansion of public services (e.g. water supply, sewage and waste treatment, parking), and general growth in population, including imported labour to work in tourism-related enterprises. The sudden curtailment of tourism will have meant an almost total halting of such developments except where funds and labour forces were guaranteed, and even then, such guarantees might be overridden by more senior levels of government-imposed restrictions and closures. The results can be expected to have long term as well as immediate effects. Transient labour, faced with unemployment, would normally move on to other sources of work, but with lockdowns and movement restrictions, as well as stoppages of work in other areas, this may not have proved possible. The speed of both the spread of the pandemic and then the imposition of restrictions on movement may have caused many tourism employees to be stuck in destinations (and particularly on cruise liners) throughout the pandemic, posing problems for local services and assistance. Projects under development may have been halted mid-stream, a lack of completion meaning a lack of income to fund that development or redevelopment and to pay back loans taken out to cover the development costs. Hotels and other accommodation units face closure or operation with few if any customers, and have either to terminate or put on furlough, the majority of their employees with inevitably financial impacts throughout the destinations. To expect destinations at this stage of development to recover to pre-COVID 19 levels of business in a short time is unrealistic, and as Figure 2 illustrates, the time to reach the resumption of traditional levels of visitation is likely to be considerably longer than for destinations experiencing low levels of tourist numbers. The provision of transport services to move the considerable numbers of tourists to Mid Cycle destinations will have been reduced significantly in short order by private operators such as low-cost airlines, and even destinations relying on public rail or marine services will have found the levels of service cut back significantly. Restoring services when the pandemic is over will be focused on serving the needs of permanent populations over tourists, and with planes, ships and sometimes labour in the 'wrong' locations, it may be many months before the pre-Covid level and scale of access are resumed, delaying the recovery of numbers still further. Some airlines and other transport services may not be restored at all until high numbers of passengers are assured, which creates a “chicken and egg” situation, again possibly delaying restoration of tourism. If destinations have services resume operation quickly and are given government support for project completion and access restoration, then the break may simply prove a bad memory for such resorts and business may continue as it would have been without the COVID 19 pandemic, and the cycle resumed rapidly. Where some projects are lost, labour dispersed and reluctant to return, businesses having to scale back operations, and the full range of means of access not restored, the cycle may be reduced or even thrown off-course and development not proceed much beyond the level at which they were at before Covid intervened.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

The most serious impacts of COVID 19 are likely to be felt by those destinations in the LATE CYCLE stages of development. Such destinations are the most vulnerable to a decline in numbers and resulting loss of income and employment. Those destinations in the Stagnation stage will already be facing problems of diminishing growth in tourist numbers, if any growth at all was occurring before COVID 19, and new developments or redevelopments will have been few and far between. Their morphology is likely to traditional in the manner described by Stansfield and Rickert (1978) and not be particularly attractive to a post-COVID 19 market in which competition from new destinations will be even more fierce than before. The destinations at this stage are reliant on an established market, albeit one that may already be limited as far as further expansion is concerned and will have been facing competition from newer and better equipped destinations in newer high image locations. As LATE CYCLE destinations are already at or close to their maximum number of visitors, they will have had further to fall in terms of visitor numbers than other destinations in earlier stages of development and thus will have further to recover, which will inevitably take longer than those destinations experiencing fewer visitors (Figure 3). Some attractions, which may have been marginal even at peak numbers will become highly vulnerable to a decline or halt in visitation and may not recover when tourism is resumed. Those needing redevelopment will be unlikely to obtain the funds necessary for renovation and rejuvenation of the destination may be impossible (Forbes 2020). Few destinations which have entered decline have successfully rejuvenated on a long-term or permanent basis. Stansfield’s discussion on the rejuvenation of Atlantic City (2006) has proved over-optimistic, for while Atlantic City did indeed boom following the legalization of gambling in 1976, by the early 2000s decline was occurring again and some of the casinos were failing and visitor numbers declining. The TALC of Atlantic City in 2020 resembled the figure produced by Agarwal (2006) with the rejuvenation being more of a re-orientation (Agarwal 2002) than a rejuvenation in hindsight. Agarwal’s (2006) concluding comments on the often failing of redevelopment because of perceptions by local governments of the marginal nature of tourism do not suggest a bright future for marginal tourist destinations in the post-COVID 19 era. What is perhaps more likely for some LATE CYCLE destinations is a disappearance from tourism completely. Baum (1998) raised this possibility as one of two possible further stages of the TALC, abandonment of tourism, or a complete beginning again with different products. He noted later (2006.: p.223-4) “An exit strategy may be forced on a community as a result of natural or human induced change or catastrophe….tourism may be marginalized or impossible to sustain”. Destinations that have existed for many years will, in many cases, find it difficult to maintain, let alone increase, visitor numbers as both their infrastructure and attractions will have become dated and their image and reputation possible already beginning to decline in popularity. In the current age of vulnerability to social media influencers and rapidly changing tastes and preferences, the loss of business and ‘disappearance’ from media attention, even for a year, may prove fatal to the task of restoring a relatively weak and perhaps already outdated tourism image. Such destinations would face a difficult task to restore their tourist numbers at the best of times, going from near zero back to their peak, and the length of time it would take, even it was possible, will be considerable. What is more likely is that their TALC will be reduced to a new level when tourism is resumed, and they will never go back to their pre-COVID 19 levels but continue a life cycle at a lower maximum level. Their future may lie in a refocus or reorientation of their product (Sigala 2020) but could also quite possibly move into decline and even exit from tourism at an earlier stage than would have been expected without the pandemic (Cooper 2006: 184). It is possible to draw some comparisons to destinations such as the small lakeside resorts north of Toronto that have left tourism as transportation innovations resulted in former patrons travelling further (in the same time) to other destinations (Hall 2006), or other destinations converting from tourism to retirement communities as conditions change (Strapp 1998).

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE.

Conclusions

Despite drawing on past experiences and current literature, this paper inevitably has been interpretive and speculative because the COVID 19 pandemic is still expanding in many areas and tourism has barely begun to resume in much of the world. Those few places which remain unaffected by COVID 19, or which have managed to halt its progress, have wisely not reopened their countries to visitors from abroad and it is unclear when large-scale international pleasure travel will resume. In many affected countries domestic tourism is still prohibited or severely restricted and thus destinations are not obtaining customers from that market, as has been normal on occasions when international travel has been prohibited or too dangerous, e.g. In times of war. As noted above, the lack of precedent in scale and speed of this event and its impact on tourism have made specific comparisons with past events impossible, although the examples discussed from the Balkan region allow some anticipation of what effects might be. What remains is to interpret and anticipate likely developments. While the TALC model was not intended as a predictive model, it has been used as such (Berry 2006, Manente and Pechlaner 2006) and anticipating how the life cycle of destinations in different stages of the cycle might be impacted by COVID 19 is reasonable in that context.

Even when the pandemic is officially over, one can anticipate some delay in many people returning to tourism, because despite media evidence of a burgeoning latent demand for travel, Uğur et al (2020) note it takes a considerable time for people to return to previous levels of mobility, even though decisions to travel may be taken at short notice. The many powerful exogenous forces, such as prohibition of foreign and domestic tourist travel, acting on each destination mean that individual responses and reactions to the pandemic will vary enormously, even within the different stages of development. Those destinations which are in countries that lift restrictions on incoming tourists and on domestic travel first will most likely recover more quickly than those in less fortunate positions. Consistency and adoption of some kind of COVID 19 passport, confirming vaccination, along with much more rapid and cheaper tests for the virus, will be needed before widespread international travel resumes outside specific regional ‘bubbles’, as in the case of New Zealand-Australia. Restoration of access modes, availability of financial support, elimination of the virus supported by clinical evidence, and removal of quarantine restrictions faced by tourists returning home will determine the markets that will visit specific locations. There will be countries that will receive a clean bill of health at the international level and welcome and receive visitors quickly, while other countries may suffer from a negative image, possibly over the origin of the virus (China), on the way it was handled (USA, India) or lack of acceptance of national statistics on infection rates (USSR, India). There is little in such circumstances that any individual destination can do except wait until their national image becomes more positive. Other countries, particularly New Zealand, along with Australia, and South Korea to a lesser extent, will very likely benefit from a positive perception of their handling of the pandemic, while many of the smaller South Pacific island nations such as Tonga, Tuvalu and Nauru, which escaped the virus by refusing to accept visitors during the pandemic, will be highly attractive to tourists once they open their borders and may receive record numbers of visitors as a result.

Many destinations, particularly those which are in the LATE CYCLE stages may find great difficulty in maintaining their already mature attractions, and failure to do so could hasten their entry into decline and even exit from tourism as discussed above. Some may choose to refocus or re-orient their product, taking advantage of lower numbers to try to attract a different market, one that is less reliant on built attractions, perhaps trying to return to their pre- development phase. Such a step is fraught with difficulties as there is no certainty that markets will be attracted by a mature resort 'putting the clock back' in terms of its product (Okouyama 2020). Some northern European resorts have attempted this with limited and not yet proven permanent success. Even those destinations which have received considerable national support are still struggling to attract staying visitors, for example Margate (a long-established resort in southeast England), despite the establishment of the Turner Contemporary Art Gallery and updating of hotels. Despite optimistic forecasts of rebirth, Margate's future remains uncertain, and Weidenfeld et al (2015, p.54), when discussing the renovation of Dreamland, an old attraction in Margate, conclude "it will prove an interesting test case revealing whether retrofitting and repairing old attractions can be successful in bringing back the 'lost' tourists who used to visit Margate to the town and to the attraction itself. If it is successful, it will identify an alternative approach to attraction regeneration."

Many established destinations may be forced to regroup, downsize, refocus and critically evaluate whether successful restoration of their tourism life cycle is still practical following the COVID 19 pandemic or whether drastic measures are necessary for either survival or major departure from previous approaches (Nepal 2020). The arguments presented above have been made on the assumption that there will be considerable pressure and desire to see tourism resume when the danger and risks from the pandemic have ended and restrictions on travel have been lifted. This may not be the result in all areas, as interest groups desirous of major changes in tourism and travel appear to see the COVID 19 pandemic as an opportunity to bring about such changes There are those who oppose a return to 'normality' in tourism and express desires to see radical changes in tourism, and in other aspects of society (Ateljevic 2020), in the wake of the pandemic and before that, the experience of overtourism. Several such opinions were expressed in a special issues of the journal *Tourism Geographies* (2020) and have been summarized in the introduction to that issue (Lew et al 2020). Some of the viewpoints expressed call for not only a change in tourism but more radical changes to the capitalist system that drives the current growth model of tourism. Others argue that the hiatus in tourism provides an opportunity to make tourism a greener and more sustainable industry, suggesting that "the dominant values of the past will be less supported and ultimately abandoned as new values arising from the Covid-19 experience become more prominent" (p.459). The article introduces the idea of 'Resilience adaptive cycles' (p. 458), and the idea of a 'return to the past' in the short term (2-5 years), possibly followed by a 'Transformational Tourism' (p.461) in the longer term. If such viewpoints prevail, then the impact of COVID 19 will be both long term and revolutionary. It would mean that a reorientation of the focus of many destinations would have to come about to meet the anticipated needs of this new tourism. Such reorientation would present a greater challenge for the more established destinations than those in the early stages of their life cycle. Some destinations may decide that the 'old' market is still strong enough to provide a viable source of visitors and decide to continue to compete, perhaps against a reduced opposition if some of their competitors do decide to alter course or to leave tourism entirely. Arguments supporting a new form of tourism are not new, and there are opponents of such radical viewpoints. Butcher (2020), for example, in referring to suggestions of "reform over recovery", argues that "the claim that tourism reform is an ethical position, or even a realistic one, is false". The discussion of such different views is one which tourism academics may have to debate more publicly in the future, and its final resolution, if followed by the industry, could have major implications for destinations trying to regain their economic and social viability in the post-COVID 19 era. In the meantime, the concept of resilience assumes increasing relevance, not as often discussed in the context of resilience TO tourism, but as Becken and Khazi (2017) have proposed, by using tourism as an agent of resilience to overcome the effects of disasters and catastrophe. It would be ironic if one of the first major examples of such an approach was to support tourist destinations suffering from the catastrophe of the disappearance of tourism itself.

Funding There were no funding sources involved in the production of this paper.

Conflicts of Interest There are no conflicts of interest involved in this paper.

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