

Trends in Medical Tourism During Post Pandemic

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 epidemic had a huge effect on tourism around the world, changing how people travel, how the business works, and how destinations are managed. The tourism industry is going through big changes as the world moves into a post-pandemic phase. This article looks at new trends that are changing the face of tourism. These include more people travelling within their own country or region, a greater need for eco-friendly and nature-based experiences, the use of digital technology, and higher standards for health and safety. Using recent data, industry reports, and case studies, the paper looks at how these factors are affecting the resurgence of tourism and its long-term strength. It also looks at how stakeholders, like governments, corporations, and communities, will have to change to fit in with a travel environment that is more aware and adaptable. The results show that there are still problems to solve, but the time after the pandemic is a chance to rethink tourism in ways that are more inclusive, sustainable, and strong.

Key words:

- Tourism that is good for the environment
- How people travel
- Recovery of tourism

Digital Change

- Rules for Health and Safety

Beginning

The COVID-19 epidemic caused the most damage to the worldwide tourism industry ever. It stopped international travel, closed borders, and hurt economies that relied on tourism earnings. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) says that more than 70% fewer international tourists came to the US in 2020. This was the biggest crisis in the history of contemporary tourism. The business started to slowly recover as travel restrictions were lifted and vaccination drives continued, but the world has changed in deep and lasting ways.

People are travelling differently now that the pandemic is over. This is because they are more worried about their health, safety, and the environment. Travellers are looking for places that aren't as crowded, activities that are outside and in

nature, and ways to organise and manage their trips that are easier to use. Meanwhile, tourism businesses and governments are implementing new methods, from touchless technologies to flexible booking procedures, to re-establish confidence and adapt to altering customer expectations.

This article looks at the most important changes that have happened since the pandemic, including as the return of domestic tourism, the speed-up of digital transformation, the increased focus on sustainability, and the new definition of what makes a "safe" and desirable location. The article seeks to elucidate the evolution of the tourism business and guide stakeholders in efficiently navigating the post-pandemic landscape through the analysis of these trends.

Objectives

The main goals of this article are to:

Find and look at the most important developments that are changing the tourism sector after the epidemic.

Look at how the COVID-19 pandemic changed how people travel and what they like.

Look into how technology and digital transformation may help tourism get better and come up with new ideas.

Look at the increased focus on travel experiences that are good for the environment and health.

Give tourism stakeholders strategic advice on how to adapt and do well in a changed global travel market.

Questions for Research

What are the most important changes that have happened in the tourism business since the COVID-19 pandemic?

What changes have there been in how travellers act and make decisions since the pandemic?

How has digital technology changed the way tourism is recovering and growing?

How are health and sustainability concerns affecting the decisions people make about where to go and the services they use when travelling?

What solutions can tourism stakeholders implement to enhance resilience and adjust to the new normal in global travel?

Review of the Literature

The COVID-19 pandemic caused one of the biggest problems in the history of tourism, with effects that were felt all over the world in terms of the economy, society, and the environment. Since then, scholars and industry analysts have been trying to figure out what its short- and long-term effects will be and what new trends will influence the future of travel.

A significant corpus of literature underscores the first shock of the pandemic, with Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2020) accentuating its unparalleled effect on international mobility and the vulnerabilities it revealed within the tourism sector. Early research indicated a significant decrease in international travel and a corresponding increase in domestic and regional tourism (UNWTO, 2021), influenced by border limitations, safety apprehensions, and evolving traveler preferences.

Numerous researchers have observed a substantial transformation in consumer behaviour, as travellers now emphasise health, hygiene, flexibility, and safety (Zenker & Kock, 2020). This has caused more people to want to go to nature-

based, rural, and less congested places (Li et al., 2021), which shows that more people are interested in slow and sustainable travel. The epidemic has also sped up the use of digital technologies like contactless payments, virtual tours, and mobile-based travel services (Sigala, 2020). These technologies are now essential to restoring travellers' trust.

The idea of resilience has also become quite important in tourism literature since the pandemic. Research has examined how destinations and enterprises may create more flexible and crisis-resistant frameworks (Hall et al., 2021), with sustainability being a focal point in policy discussions and strategic planning.

Even while there is more study, we still don't know how different areas and types of tourism are adjusting to these changes or how long some of these patterns will last. The goal of this post is to add to what we already know by putting together current patterns and giving useful tips for future recovery and growth.

References for context only

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Real-World Data

This study utilises empirical data from international tourism organisations, government tourism boards, and contemporary peer-reviewed research to comprehend the changing dynamics of tourism in the post-pandemic age. The data mainly covers the years 2021 to 2024 and looks at how tourists act, market trends, and how the business is getting back on its feet.

1. **Tourism Recovery Rates:** The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) says that by the end of 2023, international visitor arrivals had returned to 88% of what they were before the pandemic. Some areas, like Europe and the Middle East, even had more tourists than they did in 2019. Domestic tourism was even more resilient, with many countries saying they were fully back to normal by mid-2022.

2. **Changing Traveler Preferences:** According to a Statista survey from 2023:

72% of travellers from around the world put safety and health first when choosing where to go.

58% of people said they would rather go to a rural or nature-based place than a city.

67% said that flexible cancellation procedures were an important part of making a reservation.

3. Increase in Digital and Contactless Technologies According to industry statistics from McKinsey & Company (2022), more than 80% of tourism enterprises added some kind of digital service after the pandemic, such as mobile check-ins, contactless payments, and AI-powered customer service tools. Virtual tours and online experience platforms also became popular under travel limitations and have stayed that way as marketing tools.

4. Sustainability Focus According to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the number of people who wanted eco-certified hotels and other places to stay went up by 34% from 2021 to 2023. Also, Google Trends shows that searches for "sustainable travel" rose by more than 150% over the world between 2020 and 2024.

5. Regional Case Study: Southeast Asia In Southeast Asia, the ways people got better were very different. The ASEAN Tourism Report (2023) says that

Thailand and Vietnam reported a quick rise in tourism arrivals after they reopened their borders early.

Indonesia and the Philippines pushed digital nomad visas to get long-term travellers to come, which changed the types of tourists who came.

Sources of Data:

UNWTO Tracker for the Recovery of Tourism

Statista's Global Consumer Survey for 2023–2024

McKinsey & Company: Travel and Tourism Insights (2022)

Reports from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (2023)

Tourism Report for ASEAN (2023)

Analysis

The statistics and literature examined indicate a multi-faceted shift in the tourism sector subsequent to the COVID-19 epidemic. These changes aren't just short-term reactions; they show that travellers, businesses, and destination management will all change over time. Below is an analysis of the main trends:

1. Change from international to domestic and regional tourism

During the pandemic, there was a big drop in international travel, thus both travellers and destinations had to focus on domestic and regional tourism. International tourism is on the mend (88% of pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2023, according to the UNWTO), but domestic tourism has become a solid and strong part of the industry. This has caused more money to be put into local infrastructure, regional marketing efforts, and tourism models that are based in the community.

Implication: Destinations that offer a wider range of services to both local and international visitors are more likely to be able to persist over time.

2. Changing Traveler Preferences

People who travel have changed a lot. Tourists today care most about safety, flexibility, and room. The growing interest in rural, nature-based, and less congested places (Statista, 2023) shows that people are moving away from traditional mass tourism. Also, travellers are more health-conscious and aware of risks, and they prefer places that have strong hygiene and safety rules.

This means that destinations and service providers need to change the way they offer value to match these new expectations, especially when it comes to designing experiences and communicating.

3. Speeding up the digital transformation

The pandemic sped up the use of digital tools in the tourism industry. It is now common to offer things like contactless check-ins, smartphone booking apps, AI-powered service platforms, and virtual experiences. Companies that went through digital transformation were more flexible throughout the crisis and are now better set up for future success (McKinsey, 2022).

Continued investment in technology is important for more than just convenience; it's also important for creating consumer trust and making the business run more smoothly.

4. Travelling in a way that is good for the environment and people

The pandemic made more people conscious of their social and environmental responsibilities. Travellers are choosing solutions that have less of an impact on the environment more and more. For example, there has been a 34% growth in demand for eco-certified accommodations (GSTC, 2023). Governments and tourism boards are also adding sustainability indicators to their strategies for recovery.

This means that sustainability is no longer a fringe issue; it is now a mainstream requirement. Destinations that don't use sustainable methods could lose their edge.

5. The Growth of Niche Tourism and Market Segmentation

There are now new types of travellers, such as digital nomads, long-term travellers, and health-focused tourists. Countries in Southeast Asia, for example, started offering digital nomad visas and running targeted ads to persuade remote workers to move there. This shows that the types of tourism products and the people who use them are becoming more varied.

Implication: People who work in tourism need to use market segmentation tactics and make sure their services satisfy the needs of new types of travellers.

In general,

The tourism industry after the pandemic is a mix of caution, awareness, and new ideas. The industry has shown that it can bounce back, but its recovery depends a lot on how well stakeholders can adapt to new traveler needs, invest in technology, and stick to their commitments to sustainability. The crisis has not only shown weaknesses, but it has also sped up adjustments that were needed and could make the tourism industry more balanced and ready for the future.

Results

The results of this analysis show that there are various evident and connected patterns that have come up in the worldwide tourism business since the COVID-19 epidemic. These trends show both short-term changes that happened during the crisis and longer-term developments that will shape the industry's future.

1. Strong recovery in tourism in the US and Canada

Domestic tourism bounced back faster than international travel. By 2022–2023, many countries said they were back to pre-pandemic levels.

Regional travel corridors, like those in the EU and ASEAN, grew popular thanks to easier visa requirements and campaigns to promote travel in those areas.

2. Changes in the way travellers act and what they care about

When choosing where to go, 72% of travellers now put health and safety measures first (Statista, 2023).

Nature-based tourism and trips to less congested places have grown a lot, by 58%.

More than two-thirds of travellers said that being able to change their plans (cancellation procedures, refunds) was a major influence in their decision.

3. Quick Use of Digital Technologies

More than 80% of enterprises in the travel industry started offering contactless services (McKinsey, 2022).

More people are using smartphone applications, AI chatbots, and virtual reality (VR) tools to market and connect with customers.

Destinations that built smart tourism infrastructure had happier visitors and better ways to deal with crises.

4. Growing Interest in Eco-Friendly Travel

Between 2021 and 2023, bookings for eco-certified places to stay went up by 34% (GSTC).

More than 150% more people searched for "sustainable travel," which shows that travellers are becoming more aware of environmental issues.

Destinations that promoted low-impact travel, such eco-lodges and bike paths, had better brand recognition and more people coming back.

5. New market segments are starting to appear.

Digital nomads and long-term travellers became an important group after the epidemic, especially in countries that allow remote work permits (like Indonesia and Portugal).

Wellness tourism (centred on mental health, nature treatment, etc.) saw a resurgence in interest, notably in Europe and Asia.

During the early recovery phase, there were trends in "revenge travel" (short-term travel to make up for missed time) and multi-generational travel.

A summary of the main findings

Trend

Important Idea

Travelling in the US or Canada

Quickest to heal; currently a strategic focus for destinations

What Travellers Want

Health, flexibility, and space are the most important things to think about.

Change in the Digital World

Used by many services and places

Sustainability

More people want it and are aware of it

New Groups of Customers

The rise of digital nomads, wellness travellers, and travellers who stay for a long time

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the profound and enduring changes that have occurred in the tourism sector during the COVID-19 epidemic. The pandemic has changed not only the number of tourists but also the way they travel. The sector has proved that it can bounce back, especially in local and regional markets.

1. A Rebalanced Model for Tourism: From Global to Local

The quick return of domestic and regional tourism is in line with what Gössling et al. (2020) and UNWTO (2021) said would happen: that local tourism will be the basis for recovery. This change has made locations provide a wider range of activities, help local companies, and promote cultural and natural heritage that was previously eclipsed by international visitors.

Implication: Even after the full recovery of international travel, tourism boards and operators may still put more emphasis on domestic travel. This would make economies stronger and more based in the local area.

2. Health and safety are important values for travel.

Traveler priorities have evidently transitioned towards safety, hygiene, and flexibility—principles that were previously undervalued in mass tourism frameworks. The results back up what Zenker and Kock (2020) said: that how people see danger will be a big part of their travel plans after the pandemic.

Health practices are now a competitive advantage, and places who don't keep their safety standards up may have a hard time getting travellers to trust them again.

3. 3. Speeding up the Digital Shift

The epidemic sped up the use of digital tools like contactless check-in, AI-powered customer service, and mobile booking systems. This is similar to what Sigala (2020) said: that digital transformation is no longer an option but a need.

Tourism firms need to keep coming up with new ideas and using new technology to suit changing tourist needs, make their operations more efficient, and improve the customer experience.

4. Sustainability: From a Trend to a Need

The rise in interest in eco-certified places to stay and low-impact travel shows a big change towards becoming a more mindful consumer. Before the pandemic, sustainability efforts were often driven by marketing. Now, data shows that both visitor demand and destination management are changing in a more real way.

Implication: Destinations that make sustainability a part of their policies, infrastructure, and marketing are likely to see long-term benefits for their reputation and economy.

5. Emerging Market Segments and Reasons for Travelling

The growth of digital nomads, wellness tourists, and travellers from different generations shows that people's reasons for travelling are becoming more varied. These trends indicate that travellers after the pandemic are looking for experiences that are meaningful and have a purpose, rather than just ordinary leisure travel.

Implication: Stakeholders need to change their products and infrastructure to meet the needs of these groups, such as long-term housing, wellness services, and places that are good for remote work.

Theoretical Consequences

The findings add to the ongoing conversation on resilient tourism by questioning pre-pandemic models that put growth ahead of balance. The pandemic has served as a catalyst for systemic transformation, corroborating ideas that promote more sustainable, adaptive, and inclusive tourism models (Hall et al., 2021).

Limitations

The study utilises substantial secondary data; nevertheless, it is constrained by the absence of primary data (e.g., interviews, surveys) that could yield more profound insights on traveler motivations and corporate responses. Future research ought to investigate region-specific dynamics and the enduring nature of these trends beyond the recovery phase.

The end of the discussion:

The tourism industry after the pandemic has both problems and chances. Even if there is still some ambiguity, it is obvious that the business is moving towards a model that focusses on health, technology, sustainability, and adaptability. This is a rare chance to change the way people travel around the world so that it helps the economy, people, and the planet.

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