

## COVID-19 recovery strategy for tourism industry

Wadim Strielkowski

Centre for Tourism Studies, Prague Business School, Werichova 29, 15200 Prague, Czech Republic;  
[strielkowski@pbs-education.cz](mailto:strielkowski@pbs-education.cz)

The coronavirus pandemic will deeply affect the tourism and travel sector. It is already clear now that the impact of the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry is going to be devastating and similar (but with a higher magnitude) to what happened in the case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002-2003 (see e.g. Pine and McKercher, 2004; Wilder-Smith, 2006). It is estimated that global airlines would lose \$113 billion in sales, about 15 times more than in the case of SARS (see Riley, 2020).

In general, viral diseases prove to be more dangerous and unpredictable than those caused by the bacteria. Typically, viruses are inert and harmless in isolation but when put in action they react and multiply quickly. There are five thousand types of viruses that are known to science: from flu and cold to smallpox, Ebola, polio and HIV. They prove to be very dangerous human killers: smallpox alone killed 300 million people on Earth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The worst epidemic in history was the "Great Swine Flu" or the "Spanish flu": while WWI killed 21 million people in 4 years, the Spanish flu did the same in 4 months (Oxford et al., 2002).

Although not as deadly as SARS, coronavirus COVID-19 infection has a longer incubation period and leaves about 85% of the infected without any (or with just mild) symptoms which makes it more difficult to track and to contain. Moreover, it appears to be much more contagious than its predecessor.

In spite of all that, one should remember that COVID-19 is not the Black Death Plague. Thanks to the science and progress we have better healthcare and understanding of how to prevent and cure infectious diseases than in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Several weeks after the outbreak of the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus that causes COVID-19 scientists could identify the virus and sequence its genome (Sah et al., 2020). In spite of that, casualties will rise - according to the World Health Organization, the data so far indicate that the crude mortality ratio (the number of reported deaths divided by the reported cases) is between 3-4% (see WHO, 2020).

After the COVID-19 outbreak in China in December 2019, the epicentre of the pandemic has moved to Europe having a devastating impact on such popular tourist destinations as Italy, Spain, and France. The spiking numbers of the infected from the United States also look worrying. And this is not to mention India or the African countries where the COVID-19 has not penetrated so deeply yet. Without any reliable 100% cure, the COVID-19 is treated with antimalarial drugs and even the medicine envisaged to fight the Ebola virus. There is a need for the reliable vaccine, but it is not expected to appear on the market before the end of 2020, or even later.

However, the numbers of cured people are also growing. These people have the immunity against the coronavirus and are unlikely to contract it again (Bacon, 2020). Many scientists believe that blood serum might be made from the cured individuals to help the infected ones (see Rogers, 2020) which supports the theory of getting immunity to COVID-19 after surviving the infection.

One of the effective recovery strategies for tourism organisations in the post-viral world might be allowing the people with antibodies against the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus to travel freely with some form of confirmation of their health status. Airlines, hotels, and spas should be the first to offer them various discounts and packages. However, one important issue would remain: how to tell the cured ones from those posing as having contracted COVID-19 and being immune? Modern technology might help like it is already helping with fighting the coronavirus.

Smart quarantine and tracing are already used in many countries to halt the spread of COVID-19. In Hong Kong, quarantine tracking bracelets are being administered to all new arriving travellers.

Paired with a smartphone app, they monitor the quarantined person's whereabouts and report the violations to authorities.

In China, the tracing technology is inserted into the popular payment apps Alipay and WeChat Pay. The colour coding is used in those app to determine the person's health status and potential risks. In other countries where these technological solutions might prove to be too costly or administratively difficult, cheaper health tracing options might be used. For example, in India quarantine indelible ink hand stamps that bear an "expiry date" are applied.

Overall, smart quarantine tools might be used to mark healthy and risk-free travellers. These technological solutions would help to reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus COVID-19 before the effective vaccine is discovered without compromising international tourism and travel.

## References

- Bacon, J. (2020). 75,000 ill, 2,000 deaths, many thousands recovered: Can you get coronavirus twice? Available at: <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/02/19/coronavirus-after-2000-deaths-can-you-get-virus-again/4804905002/> (accessed on 25.03.2020)
- Oxford, J. S., Sefton, A., Jackson, R., Innes, W., Daniels, R. S., & Johnson, N. P. (2002). World War I may have allowed the emergence of "Spanish" influenza. *The Lancet infectious diseases*, 2(2), 111-114. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099\(02\)00185-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(02)00185-8)
- Pine, R., & McKercher, B. (2004). The impact of SARS on Hong Kong's tourism industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 16(2), 139-143. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09596110410520034>
- Riley, C. (2020). 'This is a crisis.' Airlines face \$113 billion hit from the coronavirus. Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/05/business/airlines-coronavirus-iata-travel/index.html> (accessed 24.03.2020)
- Rogers, A. (2020). Blood From Covid-19 Survivors May Point the Way to a Cure. Available at: <https://www.wired.com/story/an-old-source-for-potential-new-covid-19-drugs-blood-serum/> (accessed on 25.03.2020)
- Sah, R., Rodriguez-Morales, A.J., Jha, R., Chu, D.K.W., Gu, H., Peiris, M., Bastola, A., Lal, B.K., Ojha, H.C., Rabaan, A.A., Zambrano, L.I., Costello, A., Morita, K., Pandey, B.D., Poon, L.L.M. (2020). Complete genome sequence of a 2019 novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) strain isolated in Nepal. *Microbiology Resource Announcements*, 9:e00169-20. <https://doi.org/10.1128/MRA.00169-20>
- WHO. (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Situation Report 46. Available at: [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200306-sitrep-46-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=96b04adf\\_2](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200306-sitrep-46-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=96b04adf_2) (accessed 25.03.2020)
- Wilder-Smith, A. (2006). The severe acute respiratory syndrome: impact on travel and tourism. *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease*, 4(2), 53-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmaid.2005.04.004>