

NEWSLETTER

SOUTHERN CATALONIA: KNOWLEDGE REGION

TOURISM IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

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Tourism in times of pandemic: challenges and opportunities

Editorial



MANEL VALLÈS RASQUERA

Tourism has been and is one of the most important sectors in our region in terms of wealth creation and workplaces. The Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre with their numerous and diverse assets have revitalized the economic, social and cultural activity of the region in recent decades.

The history of recent crises has shown that the tourism sector is one of the most resilient sectors. Nevertheless, the coronavirus pandemic has especially affected tourism. In fact, this is tourism's most disruptive crisis in its history, not only because of economic indicators but also because of consumption and marketing.

The current statistics provide a horrifying scenario far from the successful figures of previous years. Now more than ever solutions and strategies are needed to revive the pleasure of travelling and to create economic wealth. It is necessary to define the tourism of the future and, by doing so, we should think about digitalization and sustainability as paradigms to take into account. Coordinated governance should be defined in order to ensure the correct application of new policies. In this edition, you will find an article signed by Octavi Bono, general director of Tourism of the Generalitat of Catalonia, which reflects on the strategies and policies to be applied in this new scenario. In addition, Josep Francesc Valls, Professor of the Department of Marketing at ESADE, Itziar Labairu, MsC ESADE and Mara Franco, Assistant Professor Higher School of Technology and Management at the University of Madeira, propose a revision of the strategic planning of post-COVID destinations.

In addition, the interview with Francesc Pintado, president of the Association of Hotel and Catering Businesses of Tarragona gives us the keys to the future of tourism in the post-pandemic era. In the section of tourism best practices, you will find a selection of examples of European regions and cities. To end, Marta Farrero, technical director of the Tourist Board of the Tarragona Provincial Council, presents in the section Discovering Southern Catalonia the situation of tourism marketing and, more specifically, the management of the brands of the Tourist Board of the Tarragona Provincial Council in times of COVID-19.

In a situation like the current one, we would like to invite you to participate with your opinions and comments so that we can continue working for the Southern Catalonia and to meet the challenges of the future.



Review of the strategy and policies to be applied in the Catalan tourist industry to face a new scenario



OCTAVI BONO I GISPERT

The pandemic has placed our society in a situation that we would have hardly imagined a few months ago. The effect has been felt intensely in all areas of health, society and the economy. The tourism sector has not been exempted from these effects, in fact, it suffers more intensely than other economic areas because for some months it has been in complete paralysis which has given way more recently to a partial, weak and intermittent restart of trade. The new context has especially surprised public and private actors, on the one hand because of the positive dynamics that the industry has historically had, and on the other hand, because of its capacity of resistance even in contexts of crisis. It is worth remembering that since 1950, tourism worldwide has seen how the indicators of income and arrivals from international tourism have grown continuously with only three slight inflections in 1982, 2003 and 2009. These last two years were due to the effect of the SARS and Influenza A pandemics.

Challenges to be faced

Until March of this year, we had two solid tools to guide the management of tourism in our country: the strategic plan and the tourism marketing plan of Catalonia. These two instruments had been configured to respond to the challenges that our industry was facing, both nationally and globally. We identified challenges such as security, growth, increasing competition, sociodemographic changes, innovation and technology, sustainability, knowledge, the role of the public sector and governance. The indicators for monitoring showed us that the strategy was achieving its goals.

The extent of the pandemic changes the scenario. The sector is facing an uncertain environment in which management becomes particularly difficult since it is not only a question of facing difficulties but precisely of managing uncertainty. This scenario calls for a review of the challenges, most of which will have an even greater dimension and demand to be interpreted with new nuances, given that some activities will see a decline whereas other new ones will start to play a key role.

Adapting to the new scenario

Until now we have seen that the analysis made in professional, technical and academic circles did not entirely coincide. We have seen approaches that draw future paradigms which are diametrically opposed to the current ones, with a sector being transformed in an absolute way by the new patterns of demand. In the same way, other hypotheses propose continuous scenarios in which the pandemic is under control, with containment during the immediately subsequent phases, but returning to already established patterns of activity. In both approaches, the most important element to be taken into account is the economic impact.

Probably there will be a greater emphasis on safety, an aspect that often was not at the forefront of thinking when tourist destinations were created. It is possible to foresee a containment of the industry in coming years, while the search for an effective treatment for the disease is conducted, but it is also true that other phenomena (SARS, influenza A, MERS) had a limited impact in time. The containment of demand will accentuate competition and may put downward pressure on prices for a period of time. The demand will initially react by seeking a guarantee of security, demanding flexible proposals, less dense and more open spaces, reducing the duration of stays, limiting mobility, demanding reward mechanisms and with greater sensitivity also for the price. Innovation will have to be more present throughout the value chain of products and services both in the visible and the perceived. Digitalization will increase and technological solutions will have to respond to new scenarios. We must also be aware that not all the information necessary for decision-making will be available, nor will it arrive through the usual sources. That is the reason why knowledge will be even more valuable. In relation to governance, we will see how the role of the public sector must be strengthened in order to accompany and try to mitigate the effects generated, favoring participation even more and creating spaces to promote greater levels of cooperation among stakeholders.

Finally, special mention must be made of sustainability. Unfortunately, this is probably a concept that has become banal because of overuse of the term. COVID-19 gives us the opportunity to retrieve its meaning and apply it clearly in the definition of future policies. We must therefore pursue social sustainability, adjusting the balance between the needs of tourists and residents. We must also pursue cultural sustainability, with a tourism that helps to energize our own culture. Likewise, environmental sustainability must be pursued, minimizing the effects of the sector with an industry that can contribute to making the preservation of natural spaces economically sustainable. Economic sustainability must be pursued with tourism that, thanks to its cross-cutting and unifying effect, energizes trade, the agri-food sector and the cultural industries.

The road ahead will be difficult for the sector but it is worthwhile to take advantage of current experience to better readjust the strategy.

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Strategic planning review of post-COVID destinations



JOSEP-FRANCESC VALLS GIMÉNEZ
ITZIAR LABAIRU TRENCHS
MARA FRANCO

Since the origins of mass tourism in the 1950s-1960s, travel has become the engine of regional development in most areas of the world, especially on the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts. The tourist phenomenon has occurred due to the increase in international demand. Also, endogenous factors have largely been ignored, such as carrying capacity, the enjoyment of residents and nationals, social profitability, the creation of quality workplaces, cultural survival, territorial balance, the ratio of residents, second homes, national and foreign tourists and others. In most cases, strategic planning has been a result of growth in terms of number of tourists (López Olivares, 2002).

COVID-19 has drastically paralyzed the arrival of principal clients, i.e. international tourists. This factor will have medium and long-term consequences. It calls for a radical change in the destination-planning model and forces a profound revision. The category of the tourism and travel product has been modified: less demand, forced downsizing of the offer, a move away from massification towards more intimate experiences, greater interest in residents and local and national tourists, rethinking of the business models, offering higher salaries and radically applying sustainable criteria in the territory. We are in a period of rebuilding tourism (Blanco, 2020).

1. Scenario. Rather than seeking to implement a sustainable and innovative tourism model, the role of planning in the last 60 years has been mostly to set objectives for GDP growth, to organize Another aim was to modulate seasonality as much as possible and attract them, if conditions were right, to provide higher quality products. This tourism model has led to a steady increase in the overall number of international tourists (in Catalonia, from 17.9 million to 19.3 million between 2016 and 2019) and local tourists (from 17.2 million to 20.3 million). Average spending has risen from 960 euros per person to 1023 euros for international tourists; despite the drop in Spanish tourists, spending by Spaniards also increased from 253 to 269 euros (Idescat, 2020; INE, 2020). This success in the number of clients and in turnover, which has translated into an excellent GDP, does not hide two facts. The first is the low profitability of the tourism sector. Catalonia is the second European region in terms of the number of tourists (Eurostat, 2019); however, the hotel RevPar, for example, despite the fact that it has increased for this period, is 55.32 euros, an extremely low ratio if we compare it with other European tourist countries. In addition, it is even worse if we refer to bars and restaurants or other tourist services. The second fact is that the coastal destinations have been extremely slow to transform culture, work and leisure where tourism is a factor of transformation (Vera, López Palomeque, Marchena, Antón, 2011).

2. Revaluation of the national clientele. The international clientele has become the *raison d'être* of tourism since its origins. The flow of foreign currency has been the main attraction and the reason for the low productivity of tourism. But tourism must be refocused to take into account aspects such as the role of residents, the important impact of local and national clientele during and after the pandemic, second homes average destination expenditure, number of overnight stays, cultural and social sensitivity.

3. Key success factors. The key success factors for the management of tourism businesses are permanent innovation, training of talent, sustainability and comprehensive quality management (Valls, Neve, 2014; Valls, 2013). Permanent innovation not only embraces digitalization but also the creation and improvement of products and services and the entire value chain. If we compare tourism with the manufacturing industry, for example, it turns out that while spending on R+D+I for all services in Spain, including tourism, accounts for 49.1% of the total (compared to 45.6% for the manufacturing industry), the intensity of innovation is only one fifth (0.91% compared to 4.5%).

With respects to training, there are lower students in both secondary and vocational education (CES, 2016).

As for sustainability, two key elements for the viability and competitiveness of tourism are usually overlooked. The first is the economic and social element, that is, the capacity to create sustainable private business models in the long term; the sufficient size of the company for the market, the ratio of working capital to total income, the capacity to adequately remunerate all aspects, especially labor, and the social wealth of the environment, among others.

These months of pandemic, we have seen the extreme weakness of a sector that has not been able to survive without income. In addition, the second is the cultural sector. The overcrowding of tourists since the origins of mass tourism has led to the depersonalization of the territory and the resented loss of differential elements of cultural identity, language, traditions and roots, gastronomy and way of life (Risteski, Kocevski, Arnaudov, 2012).

Quality, in which all the actors of the destination must be involved, is no longer about organizing the processes well, reducing the holes and obtaining 0 defects (Parasuraman, Zeithalm, Berry, 1985) but also about managing the experience integrally, understood as hospitality, satisfaction, commitment to consumers, trust and the construction of common values (Gallarza, Arteaga, del Chiappa, 2015; Treisder, 2015; Valls, 2013; Yeksel, Yuksel, Bilim, 2010).

4. Relationship between industry and tourism. In those post-pandemic days, the historical controversy surrounding the industry/tourism duality is reappearing in advertising, blaming the tourism sector for making society into a tourist attraction and becoming bloated. Although these are not incompatible sectors, far from it, as shown in the Tarragona-Salou area, competitiveness depends exclusively on each cluster and not on the GDP it contributes. The lack of competitiveness is a consequence of the tourism model applied.

5. Dimension of the companies. As an example, three ratios will allow us to know how the excessively small size of Spanish tourism companies undermines competitiveness. A) The level of debt in the Spanish hotel and catering industry in the short term is 13 points below the average for Spanish SMEs. B) The rotation of the working capital is negative with respect to the overall of the SMEs. C) Costs and returns in relation to sales volume are 10 points above the overall figure because of the intensive use of the labor factor (Blanco, Cuello, Ferrando, Fernández, 2020).

6. Public-private relationship. This relationship is widely known as the cornerstone of all planning, but mutual distrust remains. This relationship can only be understood if it is definitely strengthened through initiatives such as Business Improvement Districts, based on the collaboration between both. This is one of the most interesting fields of experimentation applied to tourism.

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Interview with Francesc Pintado, President of the Association of Hotel and Catering Businesses of the Province of Tarragona



How is tourism now after the coronavirus pandemic?

The statistics speak clearly: the destinations and accommodations in which we have the perception that we will find less massification and agglomeration, and therefore less concentration of people, have been the destinations that have benefited the most. We have seen how areas such as Terres de l'Ebre or Conca de Barberà have worked better than historically opposed destinations in terms of volume of visitors such as Salou or La Pineda. These destinations with high a volume of overnight visitors also have a significant gastronomic offering to make, but the non-arrival of the "tour-operation" has made this season the worst in the recent history. Cities such as Tarragona have functioned below the radar but the rise of local tourism has meant that that people have reduced what they offer because of the lack of foreign clients. Reus stands out particularly and they are going through a very complicated moment. There is no provincial pattern, but, as I said, the destinations that normally have fewer visitors are the ones that have come out stronger.

We cannot forget other sub-sectors such as events/banquets and nightlife. The first one is working at a bare minimum after canceling all communions, weddings and company events of the first semester. The second is still closed. We must not forget that behind the companies there are families and the consequences are very high.

Now with the end of summer we must focus on urban hotels, on the movement of business customers, meetings, conventions that until now gave a good income stream to hotels and generated volume of consumption and expenditure in the winter months. The forecast for the following quarters is terrible and will go hand in hand with a reduction in consumption in restaurants, but also in gas stations and stores.

After a situation as disruptive as the one we have experienced, do you think we need to rethink the tourism model?

We must be critical and look for opportunities to improve, now and always, but we cannot ignore that we are a world tourist reference point and we have a leading hotel industry and a model that has worked and evolved for 60 years. We have to adapt. Visitors will return, we will see the streets full again, the terraces, the restaurants and, in short, we will be the destination that millions of tourists choose to spend their well-deserved summer rest.

Traditionally, tourism has been a resilient sector that has been able to adapt to different crises. What value proposition or niches should be exploited after the pandemic?

This season looked very good. The forecasts predicted a better season than 2019 which would have been excellent. The year 2020 predicted a societal awareness on sustainability: reducing plastic consumption, cleaning seas and oceans...and, indeed, we work to replace plastics with recyclable or biodegradable materials. Now with COVID, however we stopped talking and the feeling is that we have packed and generated more plastic than ever.

Digitalization was already a reality in the sector, and I think it is a priority objective for companies in the next decade. There is much to optimize so that the sector becomes more competitive. Tourism, as I said, is a world leader and therefore should be sensitive to continuous improvement.

What short-term actions do you propose to address the immediate future challenges to reverse the tourism situation and return to the levels of previous years?

Health guarantees. When we regain confidence (and this will undoubtedly be with a health solution) we will return. The sector urgently needs the vaccine to arrive in the next 6 months.

The Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre have become first class tourist destinations. How do you evaluate the impact of tourism in the region?

Without the Employment Regulation Files it would have been a real disaster. The number of families that directly and indirectly depend on the sector is incalculable. It is quantified at 25% but unemployment in our sector affects consumption in general and is touching other sectors, also powerful in our territory. The State is maintaining the income of the families, but we don't have a machine to create money. As we cannot make a normal season in 2021 we will have a very bad time and end up wondering where the millions of euros that Europe gave us went.

Do you think it is necessary to promote a plan for the diversification of the region's assets beyond "sun and beach" tourism to reduce seasonality?

My entire professional career has been linked to the sector and I have been involved in different parts of the state opening hotels of different types. I can say that the entire Spanish coast needs to be des-seasonalised and that it has been possible to extend the months of the season with a lot of ingenuity. It has a very important merit, but there is no demand outside the vacation periods and the climate is what it is. I believe that the change in companies' habits, with a clear commitment to teleworking and a reduction in spending on travel, diets, etc., will further highlight the seasonality of visits.

In this line, what role does interior or rural tourism have in the region? What synergies could be established between interior and beach tourism?

We have been doing this for years; we talk about it but do little. We understand that we have to sell and promote the whole territory, not only the tourist heart of the Costa Dorada like Salou, Cambrils and La Pineda. The County Council with its Tourist Board should really promote the interior of the region: the Conca de Barberà or the Priorat, the Baix Penedès or the Alt Camp. And really, means really. The Association of Hotel and Tourism Businesses of the Province of Tarragona represents hotels throughout the province except for those in Salou, Cambrils and La Pineda. We feel responsible about this point and we continue to be committed to the economy of these territories.

What examples of good practices in the field of tourism could be highlighted in our region?

In these intense months, with so many regulatory and health changes, all who have accompanied the hotel and catering industry, both restaurateurs and hoteliers, have shown concern for compliance with protocols or legislative changes that have been daily and continuous. We have a resilient hospitality industry that adapts flexibly to change.

The Region of Knowledge wants to contribute to the establishment of a governance system that facilitates cooperation between the different actors for decision-making. Do you think that a solid governance system would be necessary to define the tourism roadmap for the region?

Obviously, it would contribute, and we would be more efficient. Political decisions are made without listening to the professionals of the sector concerned, not only in tourism but in all sectors. I believe that policy must be sensitive: listening, analyzing and assessing in order to make good and joint decisions.

Francesc Pintado is the president of the Association of Hotel and Catering Businesses of the Province of Tarragona and consultant for hotel services. Pintado's career has always been linked to the tourism sector and he has extensive experience as a hotel manager, director of operations and auditor of quality management systems. He is also an associate professor at the Universitat Rovira i Virgili.

by Marina Vives Blanco

Technical staff of the URV's Chair for University and Knowledge Region.

Good practices in european regions and local areas



JOSEP MARIA PIÑOL ALABART
TONI CALERO LÓPEZ

This section presents specific and varied examples of the contribution of a knowledge-based economy and society. It should be remembered that identifying and analyzing good practices by specific areas or by region helps guide the design of strategies and policies.

Knowledge and innovation have a direct impact in all global productive areas, whether traditional sectors or emerging areas. In this issue we choose to analyze how knowledge and innovation affect one of the most important sectors of our territory, tourism, from the presentation of diverse geographical contexts. Cases are grouped thematically, although innovation can be considered to be applied in a cross-cutting manner.

IMPROVING THE TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

The application of knowledge and innovation are also necessary in improving the territorial framework for adaptation to tourism trends and sustainability. This orientation highlights, for example, the restoration of the Cap de Creus, where the operation carried out included the dismantling of an old holiday resort to contribute to the restoration of the environment. Also noteworthy is the Parc dels Estanys de la Platja d'Aro, where a new environmental quality is introduced into its environment and urban cohesion is favored. Other similar references are the remodeling of the coastal front to Altea or the renovation strategies on the beach of Palma (including the creation of several distinct and complementary "village cores" between them).

WELCOME OFFER

The improvements implemented by certain tourist establishments are another element that directly affects the quality of the offer and that guides the visitor profile, so its economic impact is noticeable. First of all, TwentyTú Hi-Tech is presented, a new concept in new generation economic urban accommodation, in Barcelona, and the first hostel to be certified "Biosphere Responsible Tourism" where socialization among users is encouraged and ICT is used. You can also highlight l'Avenc de Tavertet, where family management and inclusion of the local economy go hand in hand or Mas Salagros EcoResort, the first 100% sustainable resort in Spain and linked to the slow trend. The European panorama presents examples such as the Whitepod in Switzerland, which has capsules with minimal environmental impact, Novotel of Paris with all its rooms built with ecological materials or the Ville Sull'Arno in Italy.

SPECIALIZATION BY MODALITIES

Another set of cases is based on the strategic segmentation of the offer by specific modalities. An example is the Hotel Corona Tortosa, a remodeled establishment with partial orientation to sports tourism (cycling) taking advantage of the situation in the road network, the Tortosa velodrome and the proximity to the Ports and the Ebro Delta. The merger between urban tourism and nature tourism in Vitoria-Gasteiz is also a benchmark, for the promotional use of the European green capital, the network of parks, the green ring and environmental centers. In a similar line of specialization is the offer of tourism by museums in Sitges, with a local promotion strategy that takes into account the link with other powerful brands (such as Barcelona) and the Costa Blanca as an active and sports tourism destination in markets such as Norway (taking advantage of air connectivity).

ARTICULATION OF THE OFFER

Joining up the different types of tourism on offer also adds value to the product and territorial promotion. Of particular note is the Circular crossing through the Parc Nacional d'Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici, which is 56 kilometres long and has 9,000 m of accumulated elevation, combining nine shelters (in several itineraries) and Oleoturisme Garrigues, as a strategy of linking with the most representative quality product around small and medium-sized companies. In this area another leading initiative is the Rioja Alavesa Wine Route, which has helped to create a unique offer of quality accommodation and other resources in relation to a recognized wine name (whilst differentiating the destination from the brand and community of Rioja).

BRAND MANAGEMENT AND PROMOTION

Brand management is an element that has already appeared in previous issues of this newsletter and also plays a prominent role in the tourism sector. One of the closest examples territorially in South Catalonia is the brand strategy 100% Olot, which brings together local offers and combines them with the context of Garrotxa, creating a joint space identified with nature, gastronomy, sport, culture and other complementary areas. On the other hand, territorial branding is under great development in France. Diversity of brands of cities and departments have emerged, with a multiple orientation of exterior projection. From a tourism point of view, it is worth highlighting the new communication campaign Metz (northeastern France).

APPLICATION OF TOURIST INTELLIGENCE

Among the cases highlighted in this area we find the use of big data in Benidorm, to find out the traveler's satisfaction index, mobility flows, median prices and numbers of visitors. Also the use of tourist intelligence in Malaga, with the aim of redirecting the flows that are concentrated to the historical core (from heat maps) and creating new routes ("Discover Malaga"). Also noteworthy is the intelligent signage in Conil de la Frontera (Cadiz), using beacons and NFC cards, as well as initiatives to create a smart destination in Finestrat (Alicante) based on smartoffice, public wifi on the beaches, 4G in rural areas, and use of drones and buses on demand (energy efficiency).

IMPROVED MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The management of public administrations also plays a key role in the stimulation and dynamization of tourism. Cases such as Gijón, sustainable tourism destination and city certified by Biosphere World Urban Destination, show how environmental and social commitment can become a tool for differentiation. It is also part of management trends at Aramón, the first state business group of snow and mountain tourism with a 50% participation by the Aragonese government and Ibercaja, which operates as a holding company that integrates and manages five seasons. Its purpose is the development of the respective counties. Finally, we would also highlight joint management between public and private areas in el Ejido (Almeria) to create a sustainable destination.

EUROPEAN NETWORK COLLABORATION PROJECTS

Inter-territory collaboration is an established and necessary practice in Europe. Networking enables the exchange of knowledge and experiences between territories, with the aim of implementing improvement actions. In the context of tourism there are countless representative examples, such as the DIGITOURISM, where digital technology is introduced to tourism, the ECO-CICLE network, which promotes cycling in natural areas or STAR Cities, which promotes sustainable river tourism. The consortium figure, on the other hand, is led by projects such as CHRISTA, which is based on using culture and heritage as instruments to promote responsible, innovative and sustainable tourism and RAMSAT, which seeks the revitalization of remote and mountainous areas through sustainable alternative tourism.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF INTEREST

- Shock initiatives against the effects of coronavirus. It includes measures proposed by agencies such as the department of Nièvre (France).
- Authentic tourism project based on local cultural flavors (Local Flavours).
- Sustainability of the land-sea system for ecotourism strategies (Land-Sea).
- Strategic Plan of Provincial Tourism of Castellón. Defined by experts, the provincial sector and municipalities.
- Atlas of Tourism of the Costa del Sol. It includes a description of sun and beach tourist activity in the whole of Spain.

Antonio Calero López and Josep Maria Piñol Alabart

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The management of brands by tourism board of Tarragona Provincial Council: Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre during COVID-19



MARTA FARRERO MUÑOZ

Tourism is a source of income and occupation and not only in regions with few economic alternatives but has also been a factor in diversification in the richest regions. Urban tourism has often made it possible to regenerate and activate degraded historical districts, as well as to compensate for crises arising from declining agricultural and industrial activities or traditional services.

However, we are immersed in a crisis that directly affects tourism. No other economic activity has been as affected as tourism, which is necessarily linked to international traffic and human relations. How do we manage this situation?

We must bear in mind that we cannot foresee when and how this pandemic will end. The impact on tourist activity will depend, to a large extent, on the dimension of the crisis in terms of the duration and consequences of the health crisis; the restriction of the mobility of people between destinations which may be different according to the different destinations; the economic impact and the changes in the behavior of tourists.

During this tourist year we have had to adapt as destinations to the regulation of the capacity on the beaches and in tourist facilities; to the modification of services in the lodgings in relation to entrances and exits; to the adaptation of protocols to the hotel industry, the use of swimming pools, or to the constant cleaning and disinfection of the common spaces. The tourism sector has had to face new and complicated circumstances unimaginable a few months ago such as the closing of borders, the cessation of activity at airports, changes in mobility where private vehicles are favored over public and shared transport.

As tourist destinations, the Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre have taken advantage of the European project we are developing, the PECT TurisTIC in family, in order to reformulate what we were working on to prepare ourselves to face new scenarios and contingencies that we had not foreseen. We detected changes in the trends of tourists and the population in general which we do not know if they will persist over time, but we must bear them in mind when designing our tourism products.

The population is more aware of the impact that their activity produces on the environment, also in relation to tourism. The trips to discover the natural environment near home are perceived in a more positive and sustainable way. In the collective imagination arises the need to revive vacations from "childhood", as before, a desire to recover the comfort and security, which are a priority for citizens in terms of free time.

These new priorities are reflected in what determines the decision-making process when it comes to organizing a holiday trip. Beaches, for example, remain attractive to visitors, but tourists value much more some aspects such as access, surveillance, capacity control, safety distance ... elements that once were secondary are now decisive when planning and designing the vacation.

The technological component is here to stay. Technology and electronic devices have been a key instrument in overcoming the difficulties imposed by the necessary social distancing during tourist activity in these times of coronavirus. What was once an option is now a prominent tool to make a safe and complete experience for tourists viable. For example, QR codes were not successful and now they re-emerging as a safe alternative to physical menus in restaurants. Moreover, visitors have access to audio guides from their personal cell phones during a cultural visit; online check-in is performed in hotels and updated information is available thanks to the different applications. Payments with the cell phone, sensors that turn on and close lights in common spaces, temperature controls and others, are just some examples of how technology has adopted an important, often key, role in the relationship between customers and the different tourist services.

Internet connectivity is another essential factor in this new scenario in which present activity is conditioned according to the evolution of the health crisis. Teleworking, and consequently having a good Internet connection that allows work or classes without interruption, may mean that the population not only moves during vacation periods, but also during other times of the year. This new way of working, in which no physical presence is required in the office, facilitates the possibility of approaching a natural environment and adopting a calmer rhythm of life without failing to comply with the respective obligations.

This has led us to rethink our projects. Within one of the operations of the PECT TurisTIC, specifically within the operation Playa Innovadora (Innovator Beach), we are testing different sensors and cameras on different beaches of the Costa Dorada and Terres de l'Ebre, which allow us to meet these new needs of tourists and the local population, while collecting information to better manage the beaches, respecting them as the natural spaces they are. In addition, we are working to create products and services on the beaches that have a use beyond the "summer season", even thinking that these new uses can be given throughout the year.

We also work on the digitalization of the wine tourism product of our territory, which includes practically all of our interior region. It is a challenge to improve the online presence of this offer that can generate many different and authentic experiences of being in contact with nature for our families.

In relation to the cultural heritage, we are rethinking and taking into account that we have worked for many years to convince the cultural public to come to our facilities and interact during their visit, also in a tactile way. Now we face the challenge of reorienting this aspect and achieving a complete, interactive and enriching experience for visitors that complies, at the same time, with the safety and hygiene protocols that the current circumstances require to be established, also in the equipment and cultural resources.

In the field of use of technology and in combination with data analysis applied to tourism, our commitment has a long history and also faces new challenges and projects ahead. Until now we had a tourism management platform for destinations that obtains accurate and updated information on activity, as well as on the nature of demand. Currently, we are working with Eurecat, the Technological Center of Catalonia, on the development of a new technological platform that will gather new and more information about tourist resources and equipment, their uses and visitor behavior. New sources of information, in which technology is fundamental, will help us not only to manage these spaces in a sustainable way, but also to make better decisions regarding the management of the Costa Daurada and Terres de l'Ebre as tourist destinations.

We have an opportunity to reorganize and adapt our tourist spaces towards a new way of doing tourism, without forgetting our essence, a new safer way with limited capacity that will surely be closer to what the environment is capable of withstanding. We will not let this opportunity pass us by and, as always, we will take on new challenges from entrepreneurs, the local population, our visitors, the University and the research centers.

Tourism is an industry in continuous movement that depends on collaboration to achieve success. It is an activity for people, made for people and aimed at people's well-being. An activity like this calls on us to overcome difficulties, adapt and improve.

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Publications



- DDAA, *La agenda de investigación para el turismo en la etapa Post-Covid. Respuesta a una crisis sin precedentes, 2020.*
- United Nations, *Covid-19 and Transforming Tourism, 2020.*

Agenda



VI Jornades Catalunya Futura. La crisi de la Covid-19: una oportunitat per accelerar la implementació de l'Agenda 2030

29/10/2020, Barcelona

European Conference on Financing

11/11/2020 - 13/11/2020, València

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