

SIMON HUDSON

COVID-19 **& TRAVEL**

Impacts, Responses and Outcomes



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Simon Hudson

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Preface

The travel industry worldwide has been dealt a vicious blow by COVID-19. The industry will recover, but travel will never be the same again, and the year 2020 will be a defining moment in the history of the tourism sector. As COVID-19 has painfully demonstrated, travel can play a critical role in the spread of new infectious diseases. Likewise, the increased globalization of tourism means that the industry is uniquely vulnerable to the disruption these disasters can cause. Despite occasional shocks, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification since the 1950s to become one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economic sectors. Because of this growth, travel and tourism may be the one industry to see the greatest impact from the COVID-19 crisis, and so it is critical that this event be documented.

COVID-19 & Travel: Impacts, Responses and Outcomes is divided into six chapters, with each chapter beginning and ending with a case study that reflects the material covered in the text. The first chapter tracks the period between the first signs of the virus at the end of 2019 to the beginning of April 2020, showing how as COVID-19 spread, so too did its impact on the travel sector around the world. The opening case study highlights how the cruise industry suddenly went from being the golden child of the tourism sector to a sober symbol of the deadly disease, and second case study analyzes the meltdown of ski resorts around the world as the virus tightened its grip on the tourism industry in March 2020.

By mid-April 2020, a third of the global population was under full or partial lockdown, and Chapter 2 documents this period, a time when the travel sector worldwide continued to experience a loss of business. The chapter analyzes the of challenges of leadership during the pandemic, with a case study about Richard Branson epitomizing the pitfalls. How the travel industry adapted to lockdown is discussed in this chapter, with the final case study focusing on hotels that pivoted during lockdown to lend a helping hand.

Chapter 3 discusses communication during the crisis, and how some organizations understood the importance of keeping lines of communication open – and others didn't. The case studies in this chapter profile *Micato Safaris* and *Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development* – two organizations that clearly understood the importance of communicating during a crisis. The chapter analyzes the various communications strategies used by the travel sector during the pandemic, including how some organizations used cause-related marketing to portray an image of corporate responsibility. The final section of the chapter emphasizes the importance of internal communication during a crisis.

The focus of Chapter 4 is the consumer. At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, thousands of travelers had travel plans disrupted, and many were stranded abroad. This chapter looks at the consequences of such disruptions, but

also touches on a certain segment of travelers who were oblivious to the crisis – either due to a lack of knowledge or to a lack of common sense. Consumer behavior during the lockdown period is examined, followed by a synopsis of the research undertaken during this period concerning future travel behavior, as the industry sought to understand who would travel first and when, once lockdown regulations were eased. The opening case study follows the trials and tribulations of two cruise passengers during the outbreak, and the final case describes how VisitBritain maintained a dialogue with consumers during lockdown.

Chapter 5 looks in more detail at the economic, social and environmental impacts of COVID-19. Most of the studies to date about the consequences of the pandemic have emphasized the economic impacts, and a synopsis of those studies are provided. However, there have been significant social and environmental impacts resulting from the crisis that have affected the travel sector, so these are also discussed in this chapter. The opening case study profiles Aruba, a tourism destination extremely dependent on tourism, and the end-of-chapter case study explores the various impacts of the crisis on Italy, one of the worst-affected nations.

Until there is vaccine, COVID-19 will influence nearly every sector of travel industry, so Chapter 6 takes a peek into the future for the different industry sectors, a future that will be heavily influenced by technology and a heightened emphasis on health and safety. A section in this chapter focuses on a theme that has been prevalent in this book – the need for adaptability or ‘COVID-aptability’. Consumer demands and behavior will be permanently altered by the pandemic, and all stakeholders in the travel industry will need to adapt. One part of adaptability is redesigning servicescapes – a necessity for many after the lockdown – and this is the subject of the penultimate section of the chapter. The conclusion looks at the important lessons learned from this crisis for those in the travel sector. Vietnam is the subject of the opening case study, and the final case study looks at how one entrepreneur in Canada is doing his best to survive the ‘new normal’.

I am a big fan of historian, author, and world-traveler Yuval Noah Harari, who wrote *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*. At the end of this book I noted that Harari believes historians in a thousand years will look back at the COVID-19 crisis as a mere bump in the road for the human race. However, those of us involved in the travel industry will see this crisis more as a road block. So this book is intended to provide a few ideas for navigating around this road block, and for being prepared and more resilient when the next one comes along.

Simon Hudson

About the author

Simon Hudson is a part-time professor at the University of South Carolina and a consultant for the travel industry. He has written 10 books, and over 100 research articles and book chapters. With an eclectic background in the ski industry, retail, and academia, Simon is a fount of international experience and comprehensive business information. His cosmopolitan and creative ideas have been influenced by award-winning work at the University of Calgary and the University of Brighton, as well as visiting academic positions he has held in Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Fiji, New Zealand and Australia. Simon has also taught three times on Semester at Sea, a floating university that circumnavigates the world. You can reach Simon at shudson@hrs.sc.edu

