

Analysis of Positive Feelings Toward Tourism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the major economic sectors, while it is the most affected sector by the COVID-19 pandemic. The author examines positive human feelings related to tourism and the impact of the pandemic on those feelings and goes on to suggest that such feelings correspond to human happiness and well-being. A key concept is the temporal perspective which a human possesses both on the past and the future. By scrutinizing Twitter data concerning tourism and especially by examining changes in the emotions of tourists and residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, this research verifies that positive emotions in connection with “expectations” for the future lead to human well-being. Furthermore, one’s temporal perspective on the future is the main factor in enhancing one’s sense of well-being.

Keywords: Tourism, COVID-19, Positive Feeling, Time Perspective, Tweets

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the major economic sectors worldwide, the third largest export category after fuels and chemicals, and accounts for 7% of world trade in 2019. In many countries that employ tourism events to accept more visitors, tourism accounts for more than 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP), thus making it the third largest export sector in the world economy. Consequently, tourism was the sector most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of economies, livelihoods, public services, and opportunities across all continents. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO; 2020) reported that the impact spread to all parts of the vast tourism-derived value chain. Economically, export revenues related to tourism may decrease by \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion in 2020 (UNWTO; 2020), thus reducing global GDP by 1.5% to 2.8%. The spread of COVID-19 threatens approximately 100 million direct tourism-related jobs. In addition, 144 million jobs in the accommodation and food service industries worldwide are exposed to risk. Moreover, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute 80% of world travel, and their foundations are fragile. Women, youth, and non-regular workers, who compose 54% of the tourism workforce, also belong to the highest risk categories. Thus, the tourism industry provides livelihood to millions of people in developing and developed countries and especially shares 80% of exports in certain Small Island Developing States. Based on the abovementioned scenarios, the COVID-19 pandemic has a worldwide impact on the national economies of developed and developing countries.

2. Tourism During COVID-19

COVID-19 first occurred in Wuhan, China in 2019, which spread worldwide in 2020. However, scholars predicted that a variant of COVID-19 will break out, which will spread worldwide once again in 2021(CDC; 2021). The situation has reached the pandemic scale and has been the most influential crisis of the 21st century with a significant impact on the tourism industry. Economic activities, including modern tourism, require human interaction at the global scale, which is also a factor in the rapid spread of the infection. The worldwide impacts on tourism are the closure of borders, docked cruise ships, restricted commercial aircraft operation, and discontinued operations of

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hotels, restaurants, and attractions in tourist areas. The research on tourism with a particular focus on COVID-19 is in progress. Crises and disasters have occurred in the past, and their impact on tourism has also been investigated. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is on a much larger scale and thus more influential, such that laying a new theoretical foundation and scrutinizing the existing theories at the same time is necessary. Thus, the current study examines new approaches to tourism and assesses the impact of COVID-19 on tourism simultaneously.

Zenker and Kock (2020) established the distinction between crisis and disaster and considered various research approaches for COVID-19 while understanding the conventional research on tourism. *Crisis* is defined as a “disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core” (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992, p. 15). Conversely, *disaster* pertains to “situations where an enterprise [...] is confronted with a sudden unpredictable catastrophic change over which it has little control” (Scott & Laws, 2005, p. 151). According to Ritchie and Jiang (2019), the main difference both terms can be exemplified by an organization's failure in terms of internal behavior (crisis) or events external to and beyond the organization's control (disaster). Thus, their impacts on tourism are considered by distinguishing whether the cause stems from inside or outside the organization. From another point of view, the terms can be classified according to the environment surrounding human beings. Changes in the natural environment, such as natural disasters (i.e., earthquakes, floods, and infectious diseases) and those in the social and human environments, such as sociopolitical/man-made disasters (i.e., war, terrorist attacks, political crisis, and economic crisis) can impact tourism. These concepts can be understood based on a classification of whether the causative factor is artificial. Although spontaneous factors occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, human economic activities are clearly a major factor in the spread of the infection. Thus, the impact of new complex factors should be considered and based on previous research.

Zeng, Carter, and De Lacy (2005) assessed the impact of crises and disasters on China's tourism industry in connection with the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003. The authors observed that the number of people who contracted the infection spread over the month of April 2003. Thus, the period was regarded as a short-term crisis. Furthermore, the authors analyzed the impact of SARS and explored the possibility of reducing the impact of such a short-term crisis. The results suggested that nature-based tourism and its associated rural communities can reduce the impact of the epidemic. In China, tourism through natural attractions, such as nature reserves, forest parks, and scenic spots has been ceased, although it is an unlikely factor for the spread of infection. Furthermore, the results indicated that the tourism industry suffered great economic losses. The research reported that SMEs are less capable of resisting the effects of the SARS crisis, whereas large companies are better able to adapt to the crisis. Thus, the diversification of the tourism industry may reduce the vulnerability of the industry and contribute to its sustainability especially in local communities, such as rural areas. Other scholars discussed a varied of infectious diseases, such as Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty (2009; bird flu), Cahyanto, Wiblishauser, Pennington-Gray, and Schroeder (2016) and Novelli, Burgess, Jones, and Ritchie (2018; for Ebola), and Page, Yeoman, Munro, Connell, and Walker (2006; influenza pandemics).

3. Time Perspective

The time perspective denotes a view of the future, which influences the behavior of people in the present. For example, exercising regularly and undergoing a medical examination are actions that consider one's perspective of the future. Although the time perspective is traditionally a viewpoint on the future, a consideration of the past perspective is also one of main viewpoints of the present, which leads to a balanced time perspective. Webster (2011) proposed that

individuals who exceeded the median in the past and future perspectives could form a time extension and a balanced personality and gain high scores in happiness and self-esteem. The manner in which a person recognizes psychological time is considered to influence physical and psychological well-being. Thus, evidence shows that the time perspective enhances the overall sense of well-being. In the same manner, the tourism industry is evaluated economically and policy-wise in terms of time transition. A strong sense of affirmation of the past and future during the transition of the temporal outlook may be deemed as elements that enhance the well-being of tourists and residents. Thus, the study examines whether positive feelings about the past and future lead to happiness. Especially in the case of COVID-19, the study focuses on the relationship between tourism and positive feelings, including expectations of the future.

4. Varied Feelings Among Tourists and Residents During COVID-19

COVID-19 fails to enter a downward trend in 2020 even one year after its discovery. In addition, viral mutations increase the threat to humans and are expected to continue worldwide. Thus, the study analyzes the psychological factors of tourists and residents based on previous studies on the development of tourism under the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a change in behavior due to the psychological influences of COVID-19 on tourists, the study puts forward the following emotions, which may appear in the future.

1) Actions with positive emotions: the political and economic efforts against COVID-19 were implemented at the national scale, and economic exhaustion was repeatedly reported across countries. Thus, tourists may opt to travel to support the tourism industry more at the domestic than the international level. This behavior will support the reconstruction of the domestic tourism industry. 2) Behavioral suppression of negative emotions: the threat of pathogens has repeatedly emphasized the maintenance of social distancing, which may be advantageous for tourists, such that they can avoid congestion during travel to less populated destinations. 3) Behaviors with positive emotions: natural environments with abundant scenic nature and less crowds are likely to be the target of tourist destinations. 4) Behavioral suppression of negative emotions: seemingly, the tendency to travel overseas is suppressed as the COVID-19 infection was derived overseas, and the outbreak of heterogeneous viruses is spreading overseas.

In addition, as a change in behavior due to psychological influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on residents, the study expects that the following emotions will surface.

1) Behavior based on negative emotions: residents may display more negative emotions toward foreigners in line with the overseas origin of COVID-19. Such a situation seems to include factors similar to the exclusion of foreigners during overtourism.

The study then considers the forms of activities that will contribute to the development of tourism and the tourism industry in response to such changes in the emotions of tourists and residents.

1) Redefining the management method for tourism events is necessary. In particular, the development of conventional tourism should be considered by utilizing the importance of social distancing during tourism events. 2) Cooperative activities between tourists and residents and the establishment of mutual social cooperation are expected to contribute to the development of tourism.

5. Experiments and Results

An information extraction system from Twitter written with the Python Programming Language is set up. The system

can automatically collect Twitter data using an application programming interface and a filter that duplicates the posting at the first stage. Morphological analysis is conducted via natural language analysis using Mecab. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are extracted as part of speech. Two datasets are extracted. The first was extracted using the keyword “tourism” and designated as T-data, whereas the second is extracted using two keywords, namely, “tourism” and “corona,” and called T&C-data. The first dataset was gathered from January 11 to November 21, 2020 and consists of 17,709 tweets with 510,201 keywords. The second dataset was collected from August 8 to November 21, 2020 and consists of 6,638 tweets with 204,497 keywords. The study aims to collect positive feelings from the datasets; thus, they were screened using a dictionary with 100 positive keywords. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the collected tweets were issued by domestic tourists or residents and those who want to travel for sightseeing after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the sizes of the datasets differed, the percentage of the frequency of appearance of keywords in one tweet (the metric PF/Tweet) was set. Afterward, the PF/T for positive keywords was compared between the datasets. The study obtained the following results.

- 1) Popular positive keywords, such as “happy”: PF/T values for T-data and T&C-data are 1.90% and 1.27%, respectively.
- 2) Popular positive keywords before the pandemic, such as “sights”: PF/T values for T-data and T&C-data are 2.18% and 0.69%, respectively.
- 3) Positive keywords with intended actions, such as “support”: PF/T values for the T-data and T&C-data are 1.28% and 2.00%, respectively.
- 4) Positive keywords related to the time perspective, such as “expectation”: PF/T values for the T-data and T&C-data are 0.55% and 1.18%, respectively.

The results indicate that keywords with a positive time perspective will appear during the COVID-19 pandemic with expectations for the future.

6. Conclusion

The study examined changes in the emotions of tourists and residents during the COVID-19 pandemic and experimentally verified that “expectations” of the future with positive emotions lead to the well-being of residents. This result may thus be interpreted that a temporal perspective of the future is the main factor that enhances one’s sense of well-being. Thus, future studies should consider the negative factors of COVID-19, especially the conscious exclusion of foreigners and tourists that originated from areas with widespread infection, which is similar to psychological factors, such as conscious exclusion, that have been considered factors that contribute to overtourism.

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