

Sustainable Place Marketing and Tourism: Aspects of Public Management in the Light of the First Wave of Covid-19

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<https://doi.org/10.33542/VSS2021-1-05>

Abstract

The present study aims to clarify the general theoretical aspects of place marketing and tourism followed by a presentation of the interlinkages of these 'collocations' as understood in the context of sustainability. Then moving along the historical perspective of changes in the function fulfilled by tourism and arriving at the event-sensitive nature – that entails genuine risks in terms of both safety and trust – of the issue of destination choice, which has gained a high profile economically as well as socially upon the development of modern tourism, this paper looks into the relationship between the Covid-19 pandemic developed in the first half of 2020 and tourism on the one hand while also examining the epidemic-induced measures taken by the central authorities and their effects on tourism on the other hand; in the latter context, the event series related to Hungary will receive particular focus. Methodologically the article is built upon literature analysis, the secondary research of relevant research papers written by academics researching the field of tourism-marketing, pandemic and on the analysis of the statistical data and on descriptive analysis of press products. Findings resulting from the article points to tourism industry's vulnerability, increased security risks and unsustainability of current global system.

Keywords: sustainability, place marketing, travelling, tourism safety, destination choice, coronavirus

Introduction

First of all, worth examining basic considerations of sustainability. Although the issue of sustainability is a 21st-century hot topic, it involves a great many, still controversial, vague details and directives lacking specifics. However, based on the decision taken at the Rio+20 UN Conference held in 2012, the *2030 Sustainable Development Framework* – adopted unanimously by 193 countries in the year 2015 and containing 17 separate goals – indicates an actual intention, some sort of commitment on the part of the ratifying countries, attaching utmost importance to the issue of harmonious social development, sustained economic growth, and environment protection among others. Naturally, all 17 adopted sustainable development goals (Table 1) are closely or loosely related to tourism (considering its global

and local dimensions alike), but goal no. 11 is the most relevant for the topic at hand, i.e.: sustainable cities and communities; designing sustainable, inclusive, safe, and adaptive cities and human settlements.

Table 1: UN sustainable development goals

1. eradication of poverty	2. zero hunger
3. good health	4. high-quality education
5. gender equality	6. clean water and sanitation
7. renewable and affordable energy	8. good job opportunities and economies
9. innovation and good infrastructure	10. reducing inequalities
11. sustainable cities and communities	12. responsible resource management
13. combatting climate change	14. sustainable oceans
15. sustainable land use	16. peace and justice
17. partnership for a sustainable development	

Source: own elaboration based on UN 2030 Sustainable Development Framework

Hypothetically speaking about place marketing and image if we are to determine place-marketing-related activities in connection with sustainability and in accordance with the Tózsza–Piskóti taxonomy and its objectives, we can establish that from a holistic perspective marketing tools are basically used in place marketing with a view to making settlements competitive. One of the focal points of this activity is exploring the comparative and absolute competitive advantages, working out, implementing, and communicating the strategies based on these, while the contribution of these acts to the regional economic and cultural – in overall terms: lifestyle – development is a natural prerequisite.

It is important that David Ricardo, in his book entitled *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* published in 1817, defined comparative advantage as a benefit secured for the nations, which is obtained through specializing in activities where they have the greatest advantage or the slightest disadvantage compared to other nations. A given nation has comparative advantage over another one if it can produce some goods or provide services at a lower opportunity cost. Furthermore we can speak about absolute advantage when the goods and/or services provided by a certain entity stand out in the competition due to their higher value proposition or other benefits provided to the customers – this may include quality, uniqueness, exclusiveness, function, price, location, service, transport, or even the strength of customer relations or the brand in itself. These benefits will either expand the entity’s customer base as compared to other competitors or prompt customers to pay higher prices for the goods/services in question.

Taking a closer look at the issue, it can be concluded that in simplistic terms the institution of place marketing comprises four main areas as follows: audit, segmentation,

image, and communication. The design and implementation of a settlement's image is in effect the adaptation of supplies determined during the audit (with a special focus on exploring comparative and absolute competitive advantages) to the demands determined during the segmentation. Following this line of thought, the subsequent fourth phase, i.e. communication, is essentially nothing more than the visualization of image, its transmission to the potential and selected clientele, the target groups (Tózsza, 2014)(Piskóti, 2012).

In any event, it should be noted that in terms of destination only something that can actually be sold will have a reputation. In this sense, reputation is made up of two components: CI (corporate identity), i.e. image itself, and PR (public relations), which is the appealing reputation, advertisement, and communication of a given settlement's services and values. In concrete terms, these are as follows: the specific services of the city (educational, healthcare, entertainment, commercial, cultural, etc.); the economic and infrastructural characteristics of the city (considering esp. the secondary, tertiary, and quaternary sectors); the rich, interesting history of the city, its monuments; the culture, interesting traditions and events of the city; uncontaminated natural and social environment (clean, well-ordered settlement, business-friendly local society, security and safety of individuals and property, cheap and skilled local labour force); functioning, sustainable human ecological systems of the information society, adapted to urban environment (Ashworth, Voogd, 1997).

Making its observations from the perspective of tourism, the description formulated by the *Association of Hungarian Settlements' and Regions' Developers* tangentially reflects on the phenomenon of place marketing, in a slightly different aspect. It demonstrates that this implies by no means activities that can be treated in isolation, separated from one another and performed independently but much rather a series of phases that are built on each other, embedded in a system, necessarily hierarchical, and functioning synergistically. They take the view that settlement development, settlement planning, and tourism are interacting, tightly connected, and quasi interrelated. Their definition is simple and easy to understand, and an illustrative example makes it all clear for laypersons too: there are no uninhabited high grounds or coasts. Here tourism takes place in the Hungarian population's living environment. The goal is sustainable tourism and the marketable, smart development of tourism destinations. Therefore, settlement development and planning is tourism development at the same time.

1 The Nature of Tourism Destination Choice

It needs to be viewed trust and safety of tourism in the light of functional changes from past forms of travel to the present habits. By its very nature, tourism is in essence a trust-based industry, safety being the main foundation of its complex system. The issue of safety is extremely diverse, starting from the natural and political environment through the financial processes and terrorism all the way to accommodation services, food and road safety, and

health security (Figure 1). Factors influencing safety within the system of tourism act synergistically upon each other, and the projection of their overall picture impacts travel decisions and destination selection. The most defining elements of destination choice are preconception and experience (Wilk, 2017).

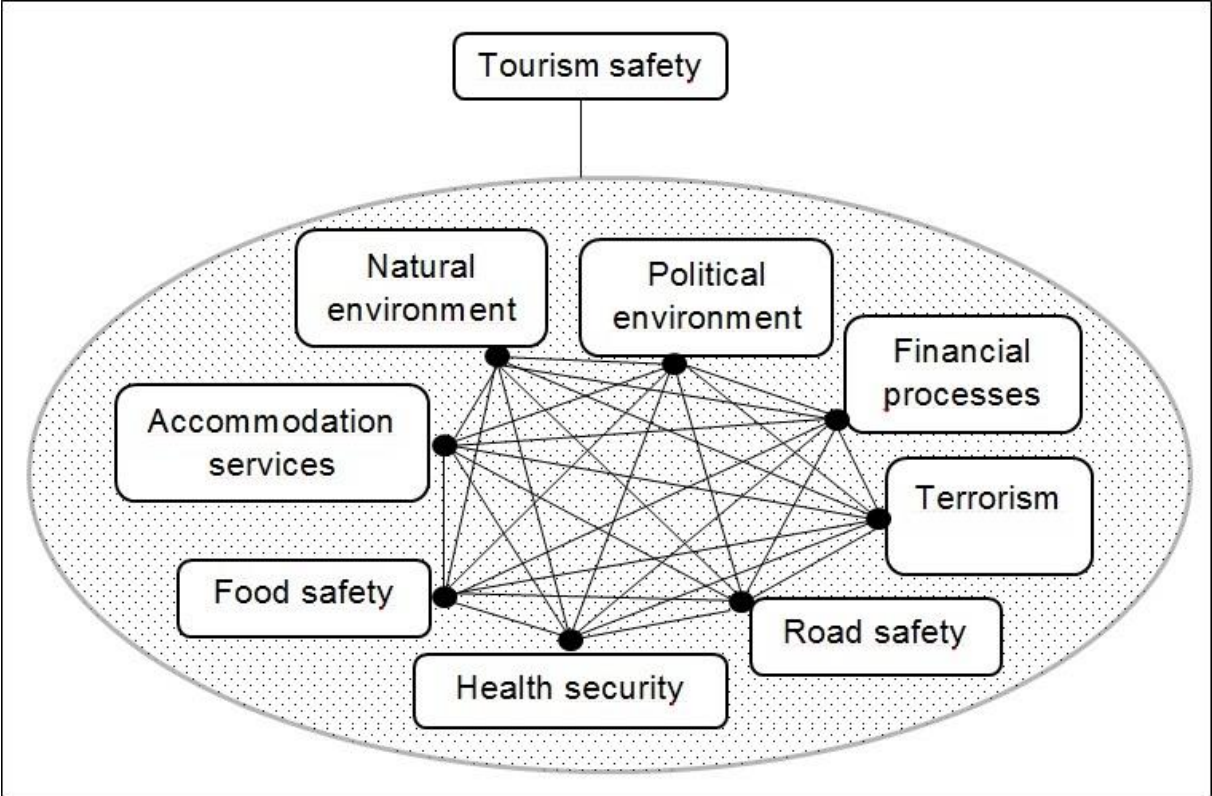


Figure 1: Main elements of tourism safety

Source: own elaboration

The former can be deliberately shaped with the help of PR as well as online/offline media content, arbitrarily, in a positive or negative direction – or even considerably distorted by creating impressions that are by no means consistent with the objective reality –, whereas the latter can be acquired solely and exclusively as an inherent part of first-hand experience, through physical presence (In terms of knowledge management, a generally accepted view is that knowledge can be acquired, of course, in a number of other ways, some methods can even be claimed to be more efficient in fact, but the integration of personal experience certainly takes place at the deepest level, and its benefits are the most guaranteed.). Their common feature is that both aspects create at some level a certain highly subjective emotional state of excitement even in the cognitive structure of individuals with the most rational personality traits. To explore the underlying factors, one probably needs to delve into our culture and our learned behaviour patterns. Let us consider, for instance, the connotations of travel or, if you like, wandering (See: *Odyssey by Homer*), adventuring (*Besides the fact that history is written by*

*the victors, as the popular saying goes, there is a controversial, much-disputed question among some historians that has not yet been agreed upon to this day: Why does contemporary historiography define with absolute confidence the series of campaigns – that made the Hungarians' potential westward expansion permanently impossible and that ended in the disastrous 955 defeat suffered on the Lechfeld Plain, near to Augsburg [see: Battle of Lechfeld] – as adventuring [in the literal sense of the Hungarian word; actually: invasions] (the more permissive sources mentioning it as forays) despite the fact that these events, although initiated from within the fold of a loose state formation, as a confederation of tribes, took place involving mobilizations across large geographical distances exceeding half a thousand kilometres, spanning several decades, and probably backed up by considerable, well-organized logistics, with all necessary provisions and supplies made readily available?) that have been around for thousands of years as topoi in our literary works, etiological tales (See: *The Legend of the Miraculous Hind.*), and belief system: the cycle of event series made up of preparations, departure, movement – as the symbol of eternal changes taking place in time and space –, and arrival, resembling a repetitive process.*

The prominent leading figures of the great geographical discoveries starting from the 15th century embarked on month-long journeys into the unknown, practically without any reliable point of reference, putting their trust essentially in sheer luck besides divine providence serving as a basis of their religious convictions. Due to the high risk factor these journeys involved and the remote probability of expected benefits (*Flemish engraver Theodor de Bry's 1596 map of the New World, America sive Novus Orbis respectu Europaeorum inferior globi terrestris pars, is bordered in the four corners by the full-length portraits of Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan, and Pizarro. The pictorial representation of activities linked to certain persons is a clear recognition of their achievements and merits.*) (Picture 1), human curiosity can be mentioned as the key driving force (*A consideration we must not ignore is the fact that among these explorers there was a high incidence rate of the disease that we would call today psychopathic personality disorder. There are various signs indicating that Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama may have been one of them, a reasoning supported by his peculiar cruelty. It is known that during his second journey to India he intercepted a Muslim pilgrim ship that was on her way from Calcutta to Mecca. He chained the approx. 400 passengers, among them women and children, to the deck, set the ship on fire, and watched them burn to death. What is more, his bizarre acts of mutilation serving selfish purposes were virtually the order of the day. These events are known from written historical sources, testified by witnesses.*).



Picture 1: America or the New World map by Theodor de Bry

Source: *Document Bank of Virginia*, accessed March 29, 2021, <https://edu.lva.virginia.gov/dbva/items/show/55>.

In the following period, since the publishing of Diderot's *Encyclopaedia (... or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts)* and the subsequent Age of Enlightenment – i.e. from the mid-/late 18th century –, in the course of the expeditions now relying more largely on the modern, ever-expanding scientific knowledge, travelling became noticeably safer, allowing for the setting of more specific goals (*Disguised as scientific expeditions, Captain James Cook would accept several missions of conquest, specifically serving purposes of exploration and naval reconnaissance carried out in the South Pacific on behalf of the king of England in the period between 1768 and 1779. The secret order dated 1768 was first made public in the year 1928.*). With the rise of individualism, a certain kind of ethical superiority and the manifestation of intellectual supremacy appear as goals, beyond the satisfaction of curiosity – to demonstrate and prove that man can defy the forces of nature by making use of the available sets of instruments, and, triumphing over it, leading by example, he dedicates the benefits of his travels to prosperity in individual as well as social dimensions. This is a partly instinctual, partly conscious, direct, realistic activity also bearing the marks of

autotelicity (*An autotelic activity is when our action does not primarily serve external purposes (as the case of an exotelic activity would be), but it is taken for the sheer enjoyment of the activity itself in order to get immersed in the moment without expecting any compensation, experiencing it in its fullness; nevertheless, the production of a result is not necessarily a cause for exclusion in terms of the concept.*), where man, through his intentional or unintentional performance, puts his own person on a pedestal before the society (*German mountaineer Anderl Heckmair climbed the Swiss Eiger's north face together with an Austrian and two German fellow climbers in 1938. This mountain face was well known for its bizarre weather patterns, and with its height of nearly 2,000 metres it was one of the last great unclimbed faces of alpine climbing. There was such a strong public opinion backing up the idea that the face was unscalable that Swiss authorities – urged by the series of fatalities – banned the climbing of the north face, and local mountain guides declared they would not take part in rescue missions. Therefore, the mountaineers had to carry their equipment and reach the north face of Eiger in complete secrecy. Following the three-and-a-half-month-long ascent of the summit, Hitler sent them a congratulatory telegram and sent for the mountain climbers to have a group photo taken together. Their climbing performance landed them – against their will – in the pages of the history of Nazi propaganda, as the Nazis wanted to make use of this tremendous accomplishment as a proof of German supremacy.*).

Breaking with these traditions, the modern, so-called convenience tourism developed by the second half of the 20th century has completely different functions. It has become a prominent form of spending leisure time, the never before experienced considerable amount of time that has become available due to the restructuring of work, and this function has significantly contributed to the spread and increasing popularity of this type of tourism.

Coming back to the current situation shaped by the combination of preconception and experience, adapted to the 21st century and with a vital influence on destination, the following can be established: in a decision-theory situation, narrowed down to these two primary influencing factors and being rational to a limited extent, fear and propensity to travel are not coincident concepts. The security of one's own person and property has been one of the core needs of man since Maslow, and, of course, tourists are no exception to this despite their specialized function.

2 Practical Example of Event Sensitivity

It is true to say that tourists spend an average of 1.4 trillion US dollars abroad annually worldwide, which makes them responsible for 7% of the global service sector. In the year 2018, 10.5% (8.8 trillion US dollars) of the GWP could be linked to tourism, and approx. 10% of the jobs (319 million) were also associated with this industry. The contribution tourism makes to the global expansion of labour market is far more significant than indicated by its current

weight. Before 2020 the past five years saw every fifth job to be created in this sector, revealing an increased importance of tourism in the field of employment. The economic weight of the sector in Hungary roughly corresponds to the global average: its contribution to the GDP, including the direct (6.8%) as well as indirect impacts, totals 10.7%, while the cumulative data on both these types of impacts suggests 13.2% of the whole-economy employment (UNWTO, 2020).

Concerning Hungary – apart from the series of troubles generating minor lapses of a few months in the period of August–September 2015 due to the migration crisis (which had no negative outcomes except for the slight decline in booking rates, cancelling the already active group reservations, and dealing with the transport issues of the guests already on their way),¹ the tourism and hospitality industry has shown in fact an upward trend in the past decade, the country having been rated as a highly safe and attractive destination.

In March 2020, the tourism and hospitality industry had shocking empirical experiences at a crash-course pace as to the practical materialization of the extremely event-sensitive nature of destination choice, which had been previously known in domestic circles solely from the purely abstract textbook definitions (MTÜ, 2017)². Essentially, besides international air services, this sector was among the first to suffer the consequences of the effects generated by the resulting living conditions, which – in a similar fashion to most of the foreign markets – led to the shutdown of the entire industry in Hungary in less than a month. At first, foreign visitors stopped coming, and then, as a further step, domestic tourists started to drop away too, producing such a contraction in demand that adventitiously and instantly generated problems on the labour market at the same time.

First of all, let us take a brief review of the presumed underlying reasons and the series of associated events in chronological order.

Detected in December 2019 and derived from the Chinese city of Wuhan, the emergence of Covid-19 – better known as the new type of coronavirus – was a constantly newsworthy subject in the worldwide headlines. However, from the perspective of Hungary, this meant nothing more than some sort of another, so to speak, ‘usual’ Asian disease towards which a certain healthy reserve and distance should be maintained, being an incident that keeps emerging from time to time and that falls outside of our immediate purview, but it is only provisional and reassuringly distant in geographical terms – rather than a phenomenon bearing the features of a real geopolitical threat and having the potential to bring the entire global

¹ Experiences of the Association of Hungarian Travel Agencies during the events and afterwards. The report of the prominent professional board was drawn up based on the communication and evaluations of inbound travel agencies.

² The survey was commissioned by the Hungarian Tourism Agency and conducted by Kantar Millward Brown in eight countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Poland, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) in the year 2017.

capitalist system to its knees in no time, which, paralysing the supply chains, would spread like wildfire and become the key driving force with the rapidity of lightning.

In the light of the present circumstances, it can be stated with absolute certainty that the Stockholm-based competent authority, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) – which is also in charge of the early detection and analysis of the newly emerging dangers (e.g. viruses, epidemics) posing a threat to the functions performed by the European Union and which provides professional and scientific advice for EU institutions and Member State governments on matters related to epidemic preparedness – has greatly underestimated Covid-19 on several occasions. The first two risk assessment reports (ECDC, 2020a)(ECDC, 2020b) made public on 9 and 17 January 2020 assigned a very low risk level to the virus threat, while the third report (ECDC, 2020c) issued on the 22nd of the same month categorized it merely as a moderate threat.

Two days after the third report, the virus emerged in France as the first European country to experience its presence. The first three infected persons identified as such in the two distant French cities were confirmed to have arrived in the EU from the Wuhan area (WHO, 2020). The first patient was a 48-year-old French citizen coming back from his business trip, who, besides Wuhan, flew to Bordeaux via Shanghai, Qingdao, and Paris. The second and third cases can be linked to two Chinese tourists, a 31-year-old man and a 30-year-old woman, coming directly from Wuhan to Paris (US NLMNIH, 2020). Following France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and then the much closer Italy were the next to be hit by the virus – on the same day: 31 January. The first two confirmed cases in Italy were recorded when two vacationers arrived in Rome on the fifth day of their holiday after visiting the cities of Milano, Verona, and Parma. On top of that, they were Chinese tourists both coming from Wuhan (Corriere, 2020). The earliest cases emerging in the United Kingdom were also Chinese citizens travelling for tourism, while the very first case of infection in Spain can be linked to a German tourist.

By way of a brief digression, it is worth pointing out that, incidentally, the city of Wuhan had direct and regular air service connections with numerous much-visited major European cities considered as popular tourist destination choices. There were six flights to Paris and three to both London and Rome on a weekly basis. Their passenger volume was mostly made up of Chinese tourists (Sonbhadra, Agarwal et al., 2020). According to the 2018 report of Eurostat, it can be ascertained that among the then (*This was the situation in 2017, but as of 1 February 2020 – i.e. since Brexit took effect – the United Kingdom is no longer a Member State of the European Union.*) 28 EU Member States, Spain (with its 306 million overnight stays), the United Kingdom (213 million overnight stays), Italy (211 million overnight stays), and France (133 million overnight stays) were considered the top four popular destinations for foreign tourists, who had generated over half (57.6%) of their overnight stays in these four countries. It should be noted here that the above statistics make mention of only guests

travelling outside their own countries, thus excluding domestic tourism. Further illustrative data reveal that nearly one third (32%) of the active tourist accommodation establishments are concentrated in France and Italy followed by the United Kingdom and Spain (Eurostat, 2018).

Overshadowing the current priorities, such as migration or efforts made towards climate neutrality, the penetration of the virus into Europe – although with some latency – took over the political agenda and, setting the tone of the public morale, forecast an uncertain future full of concerns. The shocking effect on the public caused by the mortality pattern – significantly increasing on a daily basis since mid-February – prevailing in Italy as the ‘spearhead’ country in Europe in this respect put European leaders under considerable social and political pressure, which naturally drove them towards an expeditious and efficient epidemic preparedness. Due to time constraints and in the absence of available and commonly agreed operational protocols for action - *In the course of the eight days passed since the first death registered on 21 February, the number of deaths among those infected with Covid-19 rose to 29* (DPC, 2020). - , the Member States started the implementation of protective measures at the level of each nation-state separately – as a matter of fact, this is still the situation on the ground today (EC, 2020). It must be concluded that due to the actual lack of the EU’s quick, competent, and efficient central problem-solving procedures and beyond the articulation of concerns, the above-outlined phenomenon could lead to a severe legitimacy deficit from the perspective of political science, and there is a good chance to impair citizens’ willingness to stand up for common European values as well as to damage their trust in EU institutions.

Putting Hungarian measures under close scrutiny, we can state that Hungary realized the gravity of the situation and responded in a timely manner. One of the first symbolic steps taken in this regard was the government’s effort to establish the Operational Staff for Combatting Coronavirus (*Koronavírus-Járvány Elleni Védekezésért Felelős Operatív Törzs*) on 31 January 2020 (1012/2020 (I. 31) Gov. Decree). On 25 February, our western neighbours also registered their first confirmed cases of infection, thus affecting the popular Austrian holiday resorts – highly visited in that period of the year by Hungarian ski resort tourists as well – and our citizens travelling back from these destinations. Just a week later, on 4 March, the Prime Minister announced the first diagnosed case of infection on domestic soil (Table 2).

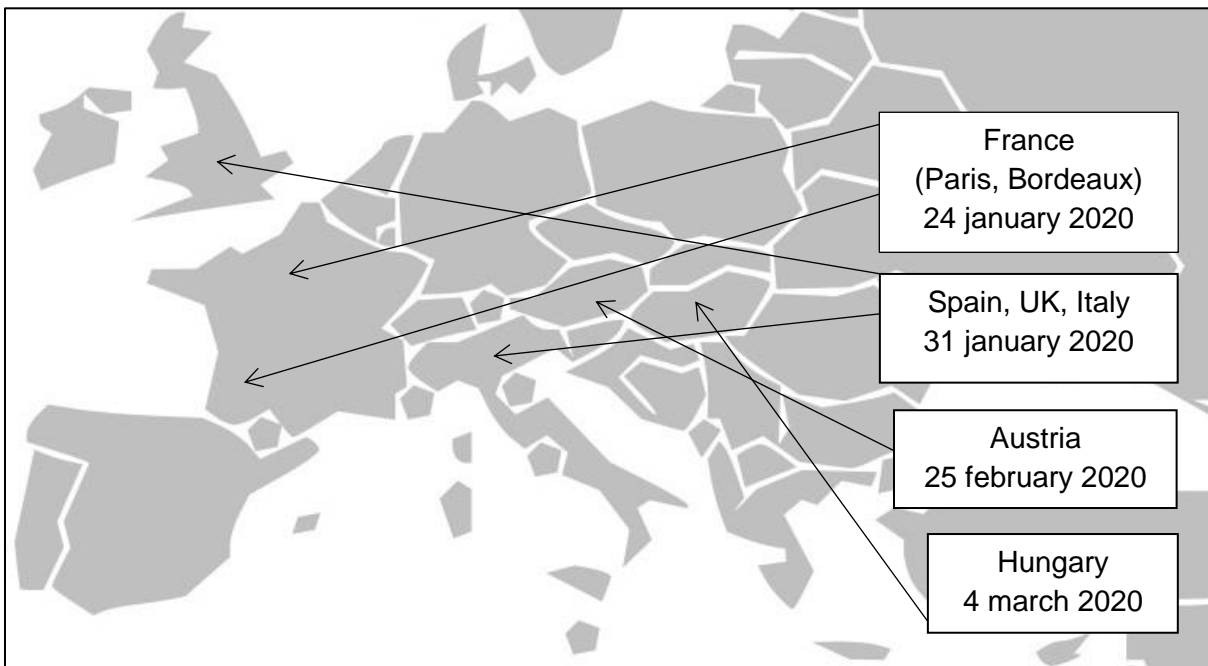
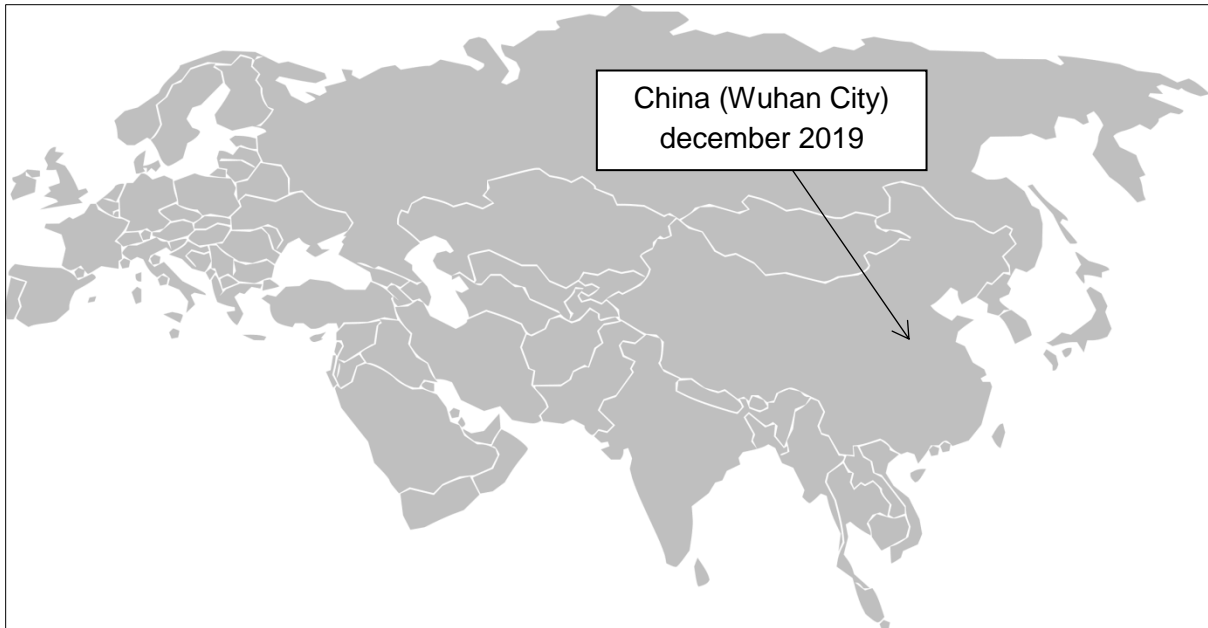


Table 2: First diagnosed Covid-19 cases by county/time

Source: own elaboration

In the wake of the escalation of the situation on the ground on a pan-European and Hungarian level – almost at the same time when Director General of the World Health Organization Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared a pandemic³ and following the cabinet meeting held on 11 March –, having regard to the proposal made by the Operational Staff, the government introduced a special legal order and declared a state of emergency

³ 'We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.'

across the entire country (40/2020 (III. 11) Gov. Decree). These measures based on constitutional grounds, unprecedented since the regime change, provided government authorities with the most extensive powers possible to make sure protection remains the top priority, the detailed rules of this manoeuvre being included in the Disaster Management Act. The key elements of these measures in terms of the present topic are as follows: entry ban for non-Hungarian citizens coming from Italy, China, South Korea, and Iran; temporary border control restored on the borders with Slovenia and Austria (41/2020 (III. 11) Gov. Decree); prohibition of indoor events with over 100 and of outdoor events with over 500 participants, sports events, theatres, cinemas, and concert halls alike falling within the scope of this regulation.

At this point, it should be noted that on 10 March, the day preceding the implementation of the above-described measures, *Dürer Kert*⁴ in Budapest could still hold an indoor pop music concert with over 500 participants that would be the last one of its kind within national borders for a long time, also attracting international interest. The subsequent dates of the headliner tour (11 March: Vienna, 12 March: Munich) of the performing Norwegian band, *Kvelertak*, were postponed due to the prohibition imposed by the authorities, and then all remaining dates of the tour would suffer the same fate. Following some last-minute changes in the venue, the last public event of this kind in Budapest hosting less than 100 participants was organized on 12 March as a final momentum marking the knock-on effect generated by the succession of the 'voluntary' closing of the large downtown restaurants and pubs/clubs. The Budapest concert of the up-and-coming band called *Sáver* – also Norwegian, by the way –, who appeared as the supporting act, was the first and final performance of the tour launched in the capital. The performance of the Polish band considered as the main attraction of this line-up was cancelled for logistical reasons, as they were not allowed to cross the Slovakian–Hungarian border⁵ – presumably as the result of a decision taken by the Slovakian authorities. By courtesy of the local promoter, the Norwegian crew stayed a couple of more days in Budapest following their performance, hoping that the authorities of the neighbouring countries would not ban the relatively smaller-scale events all over the surrounding regions. However, luck did not favour them – events of this type would be banned for the most part. Within a few days, they were on their flight back to Oslo. As yet another iconic event venue of the capital city's music life that had been a decisive feature of the cityscape throughout its 15 years of operation – also winner of the Word's Best Club award according to the 2012 vote of the Lonely Planet travel magazine readers (LP, 2012) –, *Pontoon A38* located in New Buda (*Újbuda*, District XI) was also forced

⁴ One of the medium-sized live music clubs in the capital's downtown (with a capacity to hold from 300 to 1,000 people) and a hot spot in terms of the international club scene as well, the complex has been in operation for almost 15 years as one of the flagships of Budapest's music life.

⁵ On 19 March, Hungary initiated the reopening of the border with Slovakia to the passenger traffic of Hungarian and Slovak nationals. The reopening took place on the 20th the same month.

to cancel all of its programmes, already starting from the day (11 March) when the measures took effect, given that the ship's holding capacity exceeded 500 people. In addition, the official announcement affected both the ship's fine art exhibition space, functioning separately from the concert hall and attracting a completely different target audience, and its restaurant offering a unique view of the River Danube.

As of 15 March, constituting the property of the capital city, *Budapest Gyógyfürdői és Hévízei Zrt.* closed all destinations spas (baths and medical spas) falling within its competence. Some days later, the few remaining spas that were not operated by the capital but were located within its administrative boundaries would also follow suit. A similar tendency could be observed in the provinces, where the situation was even worse since spa and wellness tourism represented almost exclusively the source of tourism revenue for several locations (e.g. Hévíz, Hajdúszoboszló, or Zalakaros). It should be pointed out that the majority of all decisions regarding operation fall within the remit of local authorities.

On 16 March, Hungary seals its borders (46/2020 (III. 16) Gov. Decree) to all non-Hungarian citizens and puts a ban on attending regularly operating music and dance venues in accordance with Gov. Decree no. 23/2011 (III. 8). A further ban also takes effect, this time applying to events including all forms of performing arts regardless of their publicity (theatre, dance, music) and covering cinemas, museums, libraries and public collections, cultural centres, and community spaces alike. It rendered definitively impossible the operation of exhibition industry, business tourism, and other branches of event tourism. Hospitality involving on-site consumption of goods and services has become virtually non-existent. Restaurants and cafés must comply with limited business hours and can do only take-out and delivery orders.

On 27 March, the government enacted a curfew providing that leaving one's place of residence or stay or private home must be duly justified in all cases in accordance with Gov. Decree no. 71/2020 (III. 27). The regulation makes mention of individual leisure sports activities and recreational outdoor walking as well, which may constitute permissible exceptions in terms of leisure activities for relaxation purposes, but the majority of the people would be practically staying at home as a result of the #maradjotthon 'stay at home' campaign overrepresented on all media platforms, the straightforward communication of the daily increasing mortality rate, and the collateral psychological impact of the measures taken by the central authorities (Figure 2).

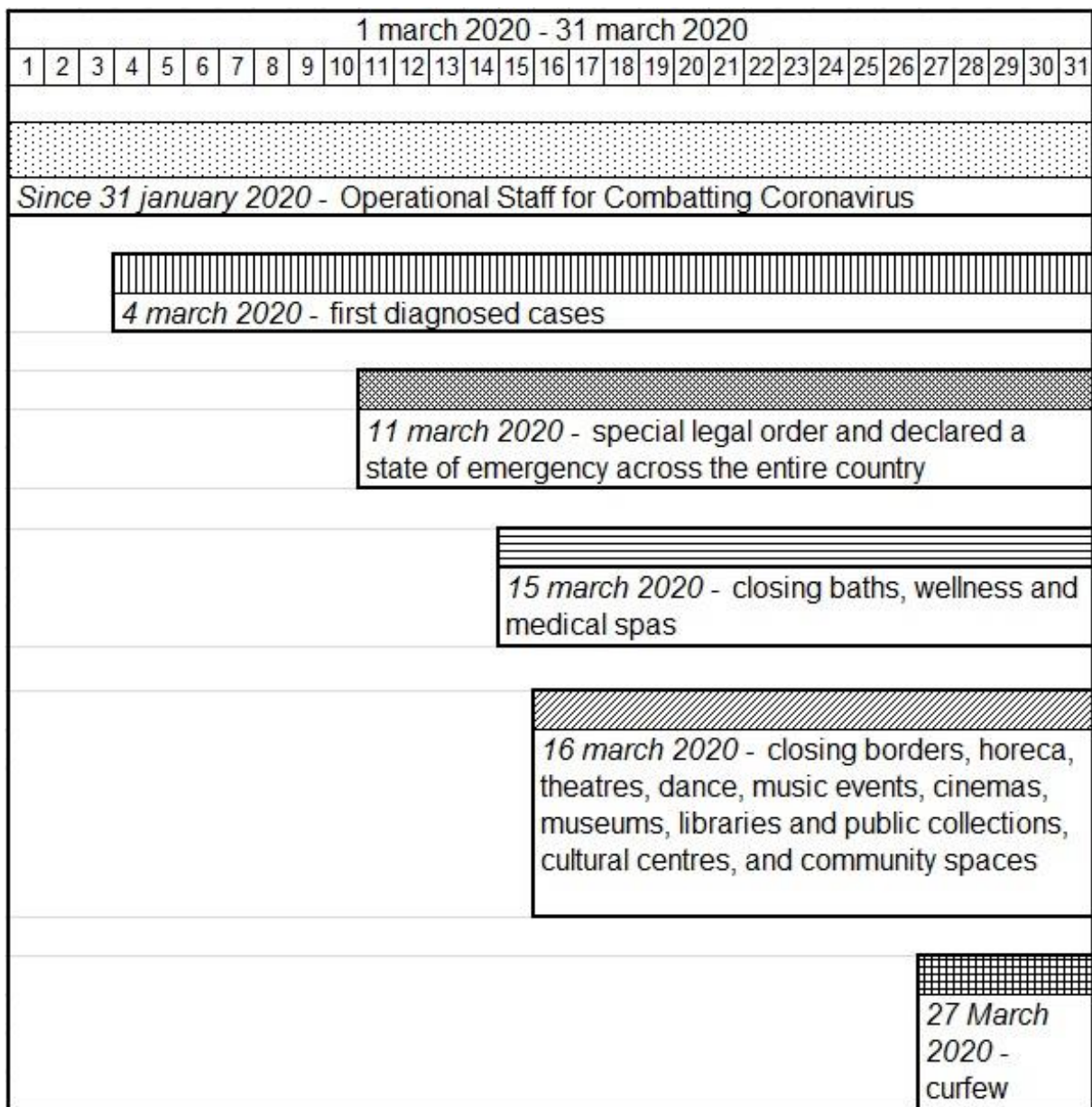


Figure 2: Hungarian epidemic-induced measures during 1st wave

Source: own elaboration

Conclusions

Based on the evaluation of data provided by the National Data Centre for Tourism (Hu: NTAK) and reflecting the situation on 6 March 2020, 16.4% of the reservations made by nationals of the top 10 home countries at hotels in Hungary in the period of January–March 2020 were cancelled. A cancellation rate of 20% could be observed for Budapest alone (12% from the United States, 31% from Italy, 50% from China, and 32% from Israel), while further data on the capital city suggest a 50% decline in the reservations made for the period of March–April as compared to numbers registered for the previous year. In the meantime, there was

only a decline below 10% in reservations made at accommodation establishments located in the provinces, where domestic tourism is the dominant factor (based on the statement made by Zoltán Guller, Managing Director of the Hungarian Tourism [MTÜ]). A similar trend was recorded for *Airbnb* bookings. The 85% decline predicted for the Easter season came to be materialized as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and, implicitly, the complete shutdown of the entire sector had repercussions affecting first of all the associated segment of service and manufacturing industry, given that foreign visitors make up a significant part of the demand side concerning locally produced products (predominantly leatherware and clothes) and catering services; and if they stop coming, the uptake of goods and services will be inevitably much lower than usual.

In less than 4 months, global tourism has proven to be unsustainable in the 21st century. The largest EU host countries, including Hungary after the biggest countries, have fallen from a significant part of their GDP from one moment to the next. It was not clear at the time, but the situation of those working in the industry after more than a year is not very encouraging. In Hungary, just over two weeks was enough to concretely empty the most frequented tourist destinations visited by foreigners too. Many governments have criticized by the need for action by examining their timeliness however, these measures in practice are only a retrospective attenuation of markers of a controversial social disfunction.

Since it has been established that the above-detailed European emergence of Covid-19 can be directly linked to air transport and global tourism, it is imperative that the long-term sustainability of the system's operating mechanisms be placed under revision. A forced break should provide an opportunity for a change of attitude that steers the industry towards safer and more sustainable operations, reducing its vulnerability. The most important question for the future is who should start the reconciliation of interests? Significant reform of national governments, international organizations, industry lobby groups or individual and social thinking would be needed? Nevertheless, the author supports the idea of common thinking about sustainable tourism, do not necessarily supports lack of participatory decision making. However, I believe that once the epidemic is over, we need to assess the market, the opportunities and relaunch tourism.

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