

Anna Alvado

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2440-853X>

GREPAT – Tourism Research Group – EUFB – UdG
Escola Universitària Formatic Barcelona – Universitat de Girona
annaalvado@formaticbarcelona.com

Joan Sorribes

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1074-0734>

GREPAT – Tourism Research Group – EUFB – UdG
Escola Universitària Formatic Barcelona – Universitat de Girona
jsorribes@formaticbarcelona.com

Josep Boyra

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2924-4901>



GREPAT – Tourism Research Group – EUFB – UdG
Escola Universitària Formatic Barcelona – Universitat de Girona
josepboyra@formaticbarcelona.com
DOI: 10.35765/pk.2021.3201.12

The Tourist Destination Management and Its Dynamism: The Case of Barcelona Versus Catalonia

ABSTRACT

The present article tries to evaluate, from the analysis of different managerial components and factors, the degree of competitiveness and dynamism of a tourist destination. To carry out this analysis, the city of Barcelona and its role as the capital of Catalonia have been chosen. At a time of deep worldwide economic crisis due to Covid-19 pandemic tourism has declining by 70% worldwide during 2020. Nevertheless, tourism has demonstrated its great resilience and strength as a global engine for economic activities development generating jobs and wealth over the last decades. It is in this context, where the article analyzes the behavior of Barcelona, as a reference for the destination Catalonia, in front the pandemic crisis and the strength of new emerging tourism competitors. Indeed, the reorganization of the pattern of distribution of tourist flows in the global tourism market due to health restrictions and the pace of economic emitting powers recovery generates a significant number of new opportunities. Tourist flows are posing new challenges in terms of their reception, the management of their stay and the fulfillment of a high degree of satisfaction in relation to their tourist experience. This article analyses a series of strategies promoted by different agents and managers in the field of tourism to subsequently present a set of recommendations to help assist decision-making in a tourism sector that is going through difficult times.

KEYWORDS: management, tourism competitiveness, quality of experience

Suggested citation: Alvado, A., Sorribes, J., & Boyra, J. (2021). The Tourist Destination Management and Its Dynamism: The Case of Barcelona Versus Catalonia.   *Perspectives on Culture*, 1(32), pp. 171–187. DOI: 10.35765/pk.2021.3201.12.

Submitted: 02.01.2021

Accepted: 31.03.2021

STRESZCZENIE

Zarządzanie destynacją turystyczną i jego dynamika: przypadek Barcelony na tle Katalonii

Niniejszy artykuł stara się ocenić stopień konkurencyjności i dynamiki destynacji turystycznej na podstawie analizy różnych elementów i czynników zarządczych. Do przeprowadzenia analizy wybrano miasto Barcelonę i rolę jej stolicy Katalonii. W czasach głębokiego światowego kryzysu ekonomicznego z powodu pandemii Covid-19 w roku 2020 ruch turystyczny na całym świecie spadł o 70%. Niemniej, branża turystyczna wykazała wielką odporność i wytrzymałość jako globalny generator zatrudnienia i rozwoju działalności gospodarczej oraz bogactwa w ciągu ostatnich dziesięcioleci. To właśnie w tym kontekście artykuł analizuje zachowanie Barcelony jako punktu odniesienia dla destynacji, jaką jest Katalonia, w obliczu kryzysu pandemicznego i siły nowych, wschodzących konkurentów w turystyce. Reorganizacja struktury rozkładu ruchu turystycznego na światowym rynku turystycznym, spowodowana ograniczeniami zdrowotnymi i tempem odbudowy potęg gospodarczych, generuje bowiem znaczną liczbę nowych możliwości. Przepływy turystów tworzą nowe wyzwania w zakresie ich przyjmowania, zarządzania ich pobytom i zapewnienia wysokiego stopnia zadowolenia z doświadczenia turystycznego. Artykuł analizuje wiele strategii promowanych przez różnych agentów i menedżerów w dziedzinie turystyki, aby następnie przedstawić zbiór zaleceń, który wspomaga podejmowanie decyzji w sektorze turystycznym w trudnych czasach.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: zarządzanie, konkurencyjność w turystyce, jakość doświadczenia

Introduction

While international tourism is immersed in a severe economic crisis due to the pandemic of Covid-19 new adapted forms of tourism development must be put in place. Travel restrictions will change the pattern of distribution of tourist flows within the global tourism market. Countries all over the world will have to adapt to the new reality to position themselves in a new emerging tourism market with great growth potential.

Given these changes in the volume and origin of international tourist flows, to Europe in general, and to Catalonia in particular, it is necessary to undertake a series of actions to ensure the proper functioning of the entire Catalan tourism system and at the same time ensure its long-term viability and competitiveness. It is equally important to identify the needs, motivations and expectations of the new tourism market in order to

properly meet safety and quality requirements. Indeed, if the set of tourist services provided are consumed satisfactorily by the tourist flows that visit us, the destination Catalonia will have a very competitive advantage to position its image as a preferred tourist destination in the context of a new tourism emerging market.

There are, therefore, two fundamental variables that must consolidate and enhance the dynamism and competitiveness of Catalonia as a tourist destination. On the one hand, the capture of these new emerging emitting markets in origin, favoring the growth of the tourist flows towards the country, and on the other hand the development and integration of the set of the tourist services present in our territory in a save and sustainable form. Given the new both offer and demand future tourism requirements and expectations is essential to promote a strategy based on the redistribution of flows in the territory and the conditions and characteristics of their stay.

The tourist destination and its dynamism: the case of Barcelona

Barcelona, as the capital of Catalonia, has always played a polarity role with regard to the arrival of tourists, whether international or from the rest of Spain. As cities are characterized by urban growth as well as by the concentration of people, goods and services Barcelona is the result of a long historical process that attributes to the city a rich and valuable cultural heritage. Therefore, architectural and monumental urban heritage is the result of the exercise of Barcelona as the capital of Catalonia over the centuries. Indeed, the function of capital also implies the concentration of political power that determines the form of social and economic organization of the whole territory. In the case of Catalonia, the configuration of its territorial limits has evolved according to the role of capital that Barcelona has played, with greater or lesser intensity, over time. It is a fact that, despite the current political and economic situation, Barcelona has always shown a certain resilience and ability to overcome difficulties. This capacity is the result of a Catalan society that, despite its shortcomings and disagreements, has always culturally defended its national identity and independence.

Barcelona is, and has been over the years, an important port in the Mediterranean and currently has a good communications network not only by sea but also by air and land. This network is the result of an intense and constant effort to adapt infrastructures that are absolutely essential and necessary to guarantee the arrival of tourist flows in the best possible

conditions of security and comfort. Thus, the city of Barcelona is the main Catalonia's gateway for international tourists who come from abroad arriving by plane, train, cruise, bus or private car to do business as well as to discover and enjoy its attractions. Most foreign tourists are unaware of the role that Barcelona plays as the capital of Catalonia. The improvement of communication in terms of an effective transmission of the exclusive character of the Catalan culture is a key component to strengthen the Catalan tourism product identity enabling to catch the attention and the interest of international tourists. In this sense, a specific powerful strategic management based in a unique cultural environment experience along with safety travel protocols is a first step to rebuild the motivation to travel again in a post Covid-19 stage.

Tourist destinations have to adopt therefore new development patterns based on safety, quality and exclusivity of the tourist experience with the aim to capture the attention of potential foreign tourist arrivals through a consistent cultural identity communication strategy and the upgrade of hospitality industry assets and services. Safety and exclusivity arise nowadays as renewed paradigms for the tourism industry development along with its sustainability. Only destinations providing this type of managerial components will be able to attract tourists flows from now on as well as to generate repeaters satisfied by successful experiences based in fulfilling expectations; thus, a new discovering of old marketed destinations through the enhancement of a distinctive human geography and natural environment along with a specific set of managerial components can offer tourists the needed boost to restart their will and motivation towards the discovery of new tangible and intangible tourist horizons.

The celebration of the Olympic Games in Barcelona

The celebration of the Barcelona Olympic Games almost 30 years ago meant a milestone marking a turning point in the city's position within the international tourism market. The 1992 Games were perhaps the most-successful modern Olympics. More than 9,300 athletes representing 169 countries participated. For the first time in three decades, there was no boycott. The dramatic political changes that had swept across eastern Europe had a tremendous effect on the Olympics. Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia competed as independent countries. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the German team was again united. Although the truncated nation of Yugoslavia was banned, athletes from Serbia and Montenegro were allowed to compete as individuals. Athletes from the former Soviet republics competed for the

last time as a team. Known as the Unified Team, its members were saluted with their individual national anthems and flags at medal ceremonies. South Africa, which had abandoned its policy of apartheid, returned to the Olympics with its first racially integrated team (Britannica, 2021).

Indeed, the success of the event, thanks to the international geopolitical scenario and a coordinated and efficient organization and management, resulted in the take-off of Barcelona as an international tourist destination of reference and prestige. The growth of international tourist flows to the city of Barcelona increased since then consistently (Boyra, 2015). The creation of the Barcelona Tourism Consortium was a real revolution in tourism management terms for the city, and over the years it has become an international benchmark. At the same time, the General Directorate of Tourism of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* (autonomous government) has been promoting since then a series of strategies to boost tourism from Barcelona throughout the country. As a result of this intense work of promotion, creation and product management, both at public and private level, the Catalunya brand now occupies a place of preference as a tourist destination both from a holiday and business point of view. Indeed, there are many different motivations that have been pushing a growing number of tourists to visit Barcelona and Catalonia over the last decades.

In this sense, the city of Barcelona, and in particular its commercial, industrial, artistic and cultural trajectory have played a key role in making it a pole of attraction for tourist flows attracted by the city's ability to organize successfully a large number of events such as congresses and international fairs of great prestige like the World Mobile Congress. This position of Barcelona equates it as one of the main European capitals in terms of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events (MICE). This upward trend as a hub for MICE tourism is what should help Barcelona to better assume the consequences of the pandemic once it is overcome.

Likewise, it is necessary to keep taking advantage of the prestigious image of Barcelona as international tourist destination to continue to expand tourism flows from the capital to the rest of Catalonia. This tourism spreading strategy must be reflected into spatial dispersion and consumption diversification of tourism services and products favoring the social and economic development of inland and mountain areas.

New emerging opportunities for tourism

The socio-economic growth in recent years of the so-called emerging countries has led their societies to incorporate the tourism phenomenon into their social agenda. Of course, it is the most favored demographic

contingents of these societies, which are first and foremost have begun to practice tourism. However, as a result of the global impact of Covid-19 pandemic this trend of a limited share of travelling population is going to move to the rest of the countries reducing the total number of international tourist arrivals and at the same time characterizing the travelers remained by having a greater purchasing power. In front of this predictable phenomena of reduction of tourist demand but simultaneously of increasing tourist expenditure per capita a major degree of competitiveness and efficiency in terms of quality delivery of tourist products and services is expected. Consequently, deep changes and restructuration at all scales within the tourism productive system will occur due to the declining volume in terms of quantity of the tourism business. From that point on a strong confidence in the future recovery of socio-economic growth will drive again both inland and outland increasing tourist arrivals figures.

The future travel scenario will be characterized therefore, at least for a while, by high income levels tourists with a strong and high purchasing power. It is a general cause and effect relationship that people with more financial support and academic training have access to higher income levels. Given this consequent relationship, it can be stated that most of the next tourists who will visit Barcelona either domestic or from abroad will have, as a tourist contingent, a broader interest for all forms of culture and a stronger capacity to interact culturally with locals. It is at this point where Barcelona and Catalonia have much to offer as the Catalan tourist product is a very rich and heterogeneous one.

Destination management and product diversification

The tourist Barcelona brand is internationally well known as it register the highest number of overnight stays in Catalonia. Its status as a capital with a strong concentration of goods and services empower its attractiveness far above the Global Catalonia tourist brand itself or other successful Catalan traditional seashore tourist brands. In this sense, it is necessary to point out the product management development effort done by the *Turisme de Barcelona* Consortium during the past decades. Its contribution to the tourist product diversification within the city, throughout the last years, has been crucial indeed to market Barcelona as one of the most popular European tourist urban destination. Its successful model of tourist product management development has promoted, generated and managed with efficiency and profitability a large number of tourist products and services with great added value diversifying and disseminating tourism activities throughout the city.

Likewise, in the current context of a worldwide economic tourist crisis due to Covid-19 mobility restrictions local tourism companies have reacted positively to the new security certification promoted by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) through the *Turisme de Barcelona* Consortium. Almost a hundred companies have already applied the new label since it was announced last November, which recognizes and validates the prevention protocols and hygiene measures against the Covid-19 with the main purpose of sending a security message and international confidence. A month after the agreement between the WTTC and *Turisme de Barcelona* and after the announcement, almost a hundred applications have been received and 50 labels have been proceeded in different establishments which slowly have been added to the initiative. The majority of the companies, about the 60%, have opted for the label through some certification or prevention measures label against the Covid-19 issued by an official certification company and the other 40% have applied directly by the Barcelona Biosphere Commitment recognition. There are different establishments and sectors: the Barcelona International Convention Centre (CCIB) and Fira de Barcelona and a long and extended list of hotels and cultural equipments such as the Zoo, Sant Pau Art Nouveau Site, Casa Vicens, the Aquarium, Tibidabo Amusement Park, Can Calopa, Park Güell or Palau de la Música Catalana but also transportation companies like Julià, Sagalés or Avantgrup. Travel agencies and some shops have been added to the list too.

An extraordinary effort is need to restore the confidence and the security element in the tourism industry. This is why is so important to join this initiative for supporting the Barcelona brand in order to obtain a better international recognition. The Safe Travels, promoted by The World Travel & Tourism Council and managed by the Consortium, is the first international security label that recognizes the international safety travel protocols and it allows travelers to recognize all over the world the companies, entities and destinations which have adopted standardized protocols, security measures and prevention against the COVID-19.

Figure 1. Global Safety Stamp to Recognize Safe Travels Protocols



Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), 2021.

The specially designed stamp will allow travelers to recognize governments and companies around the world which have adopted health and hygiene global standardized protocols – so consumers can experience ‘Safe Travels’. Eligible companies such as hotels, restaurants, airlines, cruise lines, tour operators, attractions, short term rentals, car rentals, outdoor shopping, transportation and airports, will be able to use the stamp once the health and hygiene protocols, outlined by WTTC, have been implemented (WTTC, 2021). With the objective of communicating to the world a security and confidence message, the new badge is an international recognition to the establishments in Barcelona which are offering a security guarantee. *Turisme de Barcelona* has always given support to the standardized universal protocols, processes and extends the WTTC label to the companies and entities operating in Barcelona, and at the same time extends this label for free to those companies which are members of *Turisme de Barcelona*. In order to obtain the badge, the company must provide documented proof of the certification of the anti-Covid-19 measures issued by an official certification company or previously joined the Barcelona Biosphere Commitment to Sustainable Tourism. In this sense, the companies will benefit from an international label recognition according to the protocols and rules guaranteed by the World Health Organization (WHO) who contributes to the visitor’s confidence for safety travel (*Turisme de Barcelona*, 2020).

The concentration of cultural assets like museums in Barcelona offers a wide range of leisure opportunities for tourists that should allow them to get to know and delve into the history and heritage of Catalonia as a distinctive national and cultural identity. It is at this point where Barcelona must strengthen its Global Catalonia tourist brand marketing strategy to contribute to spread international tourist flows particularly towards inland areas that have not still benefited by the arrival and stay of foreign tourists.

The promotion of Catalonia internationally is one of the great challenges that the city of Barcelona must pursue as the country's capital. Indeed, this is one of the primary tasks that any city incorporates in the exercise of its functions as a capital. Therefore, a systematic and permanent reviewed action plan for the dissemination of tourists towards all Catalan attractions both natural and cultural as well as its associated tourist products and services must be defined and put it forward through Barcelona's sponsorships. It is essential, in order to define and to launch this action plan to identify and select those products that can be particularly attractive to tourists in the post pandemic Covid-19 scenario.

Figure 2. Human Towers: A Visual History of a Catalan Tradition



Source: Smithsonian Folklife Festival, 2017.

The Catalan government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*), approved and began to deploy in 2019 the Strategic Tourism Plan for Catalonia along with the National Guidelines and the Marketing Plan make up known as the 2020 Tourism Strategy for Catalonia just some months before the arise of the

Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the negative effects on tourism derived from the Covid-19 health crisis most of the goals included in the Strategic Tourism Plan still valid to position Catalonia as one of the best destinations in the Mediterranean by achieving the following objectives:

1. Increase daily spending per tourist.
2. Reach 37% of tourists who visit us in March, April, May and October.
3. Increase up to 10% of tourists staying in inland destinations.
4. Intelligently manage growth to reach 21 million international tourists.

To achieve these objectives, the Strategic Tourism Plan for Catalonia establishes seven backbones of the actions to be carried out, which are:

1. Offer an exceptional tourist experience: Have a wide menu of experiences with your own personality and a good quality of all the associated services. Offering an extensive range of truly distinctive exceptional experiences with high-quality associated services should be one of the key components of Catalonia's competitive edge.
2. Conquer and retain the right customers: Improve tourism marketing in order to optimize the actions taken. Catalonia needs to be able to greatly improve the performance of its marketing by planning it and managing it more effectively, with a view to optimizing the scant budget available and achieving the new 4D goals.
3. Attract the necessary investments: Mobilize private capital to develop new tourism products and services and improve existing ones. Effective mobilization of private capital to develop new tourism products and services, or improve existing ones. Attracting new investors will not be easy, but failure in this area would mean the failure of a great deal of the strategy.
4. Making smart tourism: Implementing best practices of social and environmental responsibility to ensure that the growth of tourism is compatible with the preservation of the quality of life of the inhabitants and the future capacity to continue creating value. Catalonia must strive to make progress in terms of social and environmental responsibility in order to ensure that tourism growth is compatible with preserving the quality of life of its inhabitants and its ability to continue creating value.
5. Improving the competitive conditions of the destination: Ensuring good conditions for companies, decent infrastructure, positive conditions for demand and favoring the access of the tourism industry to technology and knowledge. The prosperity of the Catalan tourism industry requires good conditions for businesses, proper infrastructure, positive conditions for demand and satisfactory conditions for support administration sectors.

6. To improve the tourist management of the territory and its development: To promote a tourist planning that helps the redistribution of the tourist flows by all the territory beyond Barcelona and the coast. Tourism in Catalonia is essentially concentrated along its coast and in the city of Barcelona. Catalonia suffers from a lack of comprehensive tourism planning that would help it distribute flows throughout the territory.
7. Rethinking organization, management and governance: Develop a new system of governance to manage sectoral issues in cooperation with key players in the industry. Catalonia will develop a new governance system to manage significant sectorial problems of economic, social and political importance, in cooperation with key industry players.

Therefore, the Mission and Vision of the Directorate-General for Tourism of the Catalan government is to contribute to the effort of the Catalan Tourism System to offer an exceptional tourism experience and provide moments of happiness for visitors based on a smart growth model creating competitive conditions to facilitate the achievement of the Strategic Tourism Plan objectives (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2019).

The gap from planning to execution

Research on the impacts of COVID-19 and recovery on tourism is under construction. The vast majority of contributions, conceptual or critical reflections are still incipient and there is very little empirical research (Göösling et al., 2020; Gursoy & Chi, 2020; Hao et al., 2020). Previous research has shown that there is little preparation for a crisis situation in the tourism sector, mainly due to a lack of dedicated resources and a lack of knowledge and experience on how to act (Bremser et al., 2018; Ghaderi et al., 2014; Okumus & Karamustafa, 2005).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, based on the research and analysis carried out by the academy in previous periods of crisis in the tourism sector, it is concluded that the responses and strategies applied in the past do not seem to be useful on this occasion either. Reactive medical measures, the added value of the customer, flexibility, proactive strategies, customer loyalty and price reduction strategies are not the most appropriate to overcome this crisis. However, some academic studies analyze other measures that can help, such as the proposals made to get out of the crisis in Hong Kong, Singapore and Toronto after the SARS pandemic in 2003 (Chien & Law; Henderson & Ng 2004; Tewet et al., 2008). At that time, cost savings, promotional packages for residents, new operating measures,

temporary closures, salary cuts, unpaid leave, active collaboration with industry associations and Governments, the use of rooms for purposes other than accommodation and preventive sanitary measures were useful to improve the situation of the sector at that time.

Some countries and their respective tourist destinations have re-established the measures that were implemented in the past, but it will be necessary to add others that were not even contemplated fifteen years ago. The recovery of the sector will not be effective and complete without strong and courageous leadership that can take on all the challenges that the sector faces.

One of the fundamental aspects in the recovery process of the tourism sector is leadership. The amalgamation of public and private entities with different proposals and trends, together with the difficulty of achieving a broad vision free of particular interests, makes it difficult to implement the aforementioned plans and strategies. One of the key aspects of recovery that avoids differences of opinion, interpretation and interests is leadership. Leadership is the art of influencing others, of mobilizing others to achieve a common purpose. In this case, the purpose is one of recovery of the tourism sector and transformation of the tourism model, which had already shown signs of saturation, anomalies and imperfections. Disfunctions

But there are more and more voices, from local administrations, NGOs, and some highly responsible companies, that try to combine the generation of economic value with the generation of social and environmental value and that show their disagreement with the strategic plans of recovery of the sector in the image and likeness of what it was before the pandemic. This aspect is linked to action number 4 of the Strategic Tourism Plan for Catalonia. Therefore, the question is whether recovering the same level of activity under the same parameters prior to the pandemic is the best solution. Perhaps the tourism sector should take advantage of this unique moment to introduce real reforms in the tourism model of the city of Barcelona and Catalonia as an integrated and innovative destination.

Another fundamental aspect is the budget. If the public budget is scarce and the viability of the strategic plan is contingent on the mobilization of private capital that is difficult to attract, it seems that the plan is doomed to failure before its implementation. A strategic plan without a sufficient public budget will not allow the tourism sector to take off. And even more so when the post-pandemic tourism model must be based on sustainability advances in terms of environmental protection through tourist destinations carrying capacities monitoring, the preservation and improving of local population living conditions as the quality of the tourist experience itself. Along with it, more friendly circular economic patterns of production

and consumption must contribute to create more value in order to overcome conditioning factors that can affect performance, return on investment and short-term vision. Entrepreneur leadership is a key component to energize and drive change in the business sector to attract and to provide investors. Travel restrictions and legal limitations seem to be directly counterproductive for short-term private interests. However, it must be more than an option for the public authorities to preserve and guarantee the use and enjoyment of resources to future generations in the same or better conditions than the current ones and therefore a balance between private initiatives and a strengthened sustainable legal framework is required.

The need to distribute tourist flows towards Catalan inner areas depends mostly with the type of tourism that is attracted to Barcelona capital in the first place. Tourist flow transition from sun and beach tourism destinations or from tourism that flocks directly to Barcelona city for business purposes to the inland counties seems a difficult matter to solve due tourist time availability and spending capacity. A strong and consistent strategy based on inland tourism resources communication and promotion can, in the best of cases, achieve a considerable tourist flow transition in the long-term. The work of public administrations, at different level, and their role in doing business with tour operators are therefore key components to impel flows spreading and redistribution everywhere throughout the country making inland tourism assets more visible to potential tourists. Furthermore, the tourism business sector as well as public administrations must adapt to the 4.0 industrial revolution characterized by the rise of artificial intelligence as a central element of this transformation. Indeed, the growing accumulation of large amounts of data, big data, the use of algorithms to process them, and the massive interconnection of digital systems and devices tend to organize the means and processes of production and consumption of goods and services more efficiently preserving, a priori, more and better natural and manmade resources. Likewise, these technological advances must allow to develop a series of specific and selective promotional campaigns to facilitate the redistribution of tourist flows throughout the territory in order to boost tourism in areas that do not yet directly benefit from it.

Another fundamental aspect is the promotion by public bodies and other private entities managing inland tourism resources and assets to make known all that has been invisible to tourists until now. The location, planning, creation of value and organization of the offer will be decisive in the coming years as a renewed paradigm for a new beginning of a more sustainable development of tourism.

Conclusion

A year after the start of the pandemic, it is necessary to mitigate its effects, while it is not yet over. It is clear that collaboration between the public and private sectors is now essential to decide on the post-covid tourism model and to reach a consensus on strategic plans.

The objectives and actions that make up the strategic plans must, as a *sine qua non* condition, be accompanied by a budget that translates into direct aid, not only to large companies, but also to small and micro-enterprises, which are the majority of the tourism sector in Catalonia. Appropriate and transparent use of the various tourist taxes can help to make up this much-needed budget. Tourist municipalities must also be provided with resources so that they can maintain and improve the natural and heritage resources they possess, which often form the basis of the tourist product.

Collaboration between the different administrations is more necessary than ever so that, once and for all, they can add up and take advantage of synergies instead of subtracting and overlapping. These administrations have the duty to amplify the promotion of the territory, both in traditional markets and in newly created markets.

At the same time, the administrations must put forward much more ambitious plans that are firmly and reliably committed to quality, environmental and economic sustainability. Public management becomes the key element for the new tourism model to be based on respect for the territory, cultural and monumental heritage, as well as the environment. For its part, the private sector must be committed to sustainability, to the professional management of tourism companies, to energy efficiency, to improve the hiring conditions and to enhance the professional careers development opportunities of its employees.

It is necessary to develop renewed tourism products as hiking or sailing, as well as all those that can be classified as inland and mountain tourism, but mainly based on outdoor and healthy activities. These products must be designed, created, promoted and marketed jointly by the public and private sectors. At the same time, a series of connectivity plans need to be put in place to facilitate travel and exchanges between the coast and the inland and mountain areas contributing to intensify the distribution of tourist flows throughout the territory. Therefore, the territory should be approached from the perspective of managing the destination Catalonia as a whole, without regional or provincial borders.

The digitalisation of the sector, as well as the improvement of information systems, is seen as a pillar to adjust supply to demand and to know the satisfaction of tourists. The effective creation of data collection and analysis centres can help to gain in-depth knowledge of the data provided

by tourism stakeholders. Companies in the sector should be more involved in collecting data and providing it to these tourism intelligence centres. The use of big data is therefore unavoidable to update communication strategies that will help for sure a more quick and successful recovery of tourism companies and destinations.

Finally, breaking seasonality is one of the sector's pending issues. On the one hand, the administration must extend the high season by means of public policies that force this shorter concentration of the holiday period in a few months of the year. Beyond climatic and geopolitical factors, public authorities should consider finding a solution not only within the tourism sector, which has been trying for years to escape from seasonality without success. It seems more than likely that the solution to the seasonality of the tourism sector is outside the sector itself, only through complementarity and complicity with the rest of economic sectors and other organizational and social improvements does it seem reasonable to reduce it.

REFERENCES

- Boyra, J. (2015). Tourism destination management: an overview of the advances of Catalonia. *Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Refereed Journal of Tourism*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 185–198.
- Bremser, K., Alonso-Almeida, M.M., & Llach, J. (2018). Strategic alternatives for tourism companies to overcome times of crisis. *Service Business*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 229–251.
- Britannica. (2021). Barcelona 1992 Olympic Games. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Barcelona-1992-Olympic-Games>
- Chien, G.C. & Law, R. (2003). The impact of the severe acute respiratory syndrome on hotels: A case study of Hong Kong. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 327–332.
- Henderson, J.C. & Ng, A. (2004). Responding to crisis: Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and hotels in Singapore. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 6, No. 6, 411–419.
- GeneralitatDeCatalunya. (2019). Directorate General of Tourism. Strategic Plan for Tourism of Catalonia 2018–2022. Retrieved from: http://empresa.gencat.cat/web/.content/20_-_turisme/coneixement_i_planificacio/documents/arxius/Pla-estrategic-de-turisme-de-Catalunya-2018-2022_en.pdf
- Ghaderi, Z., Mat Som, A.P., & Wang, J. (2014). Organizational learning in tourism crisis management: An experience from Malaysia. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 31, No. 5, 627–648.
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C.M. (2020). Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1–20.

- Gursoy, D. & Chi, C.G. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 pandemic on hospitality industry: Review of the current situations and a research agenda. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, Vol. 29, No. 5, 527–529.
- Hao, F., Xiao, Q., & Chon, K. (2020). COVID-19 and China's hotel industry: Impacts, a disaster management framework, and post-pandemic agenda. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 90:102636.
- Okumus, F. & Karamustafa, K. (2005). Impact of an economic crisis evidence from Turkey. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 942–961.
- Smithsonian Folklife Festival. (2017). Human Towers: A Visual History of a Catalan Tradition. Retrieved from: <https://festival.si.edu/blog/human-towers-a-visual-history-of-a-catalan-tradition>
- Tew, P.J., Lu, Z., Tolomiczenko, G., & Gellatly, J. (2008). SARS: Lessons in strategic planning for hoteliers and destination marketers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 332–346.
- Turisme De Barcelona. (2020). More than fifty tourism companies have obtained the Safe Travels label by the WTTC. Barcelona, 29th December 2020. Retrieved from: <https://professional.barcelonaturisme.com/storage/medias/files/dJVsOVRrL6aLG2bFS6l04WTIEII2KjF903c0iUoh.pdf>
- WTTC. (2021). Global Safety Stamp to Recognize Safe Travels Protocols. Retrieved from: <https://wttc.org/COVID-19/Safe-Travels-Global-Protocols-Stamp>

Anna Alvaro Teixido – Official Master's Degree in Information and Knowledge Society (Open University of Catalonia). Postgraduate in Corporate Communication and Service Quality from Blanquerna Faculty of Communication Sciences (Ramon Llull University). Degree in Communication Sciences from Blanquerna Faculty of Communication Sciences (Ramon Llull University). Head of Studies and Head of the Department of Marketing and Communication at Formatic Barcelona University School (University of Girona).

Josep Boyra – PhD in Geography, Mention of European Doctor and Master in Cartographic Production and Geographic Information Systems by the University of Barcelona. Deputy Director and Head of Research at the Escola Universitària Formatic Barcelona attached to the University of Girona. Lecturer at the University of Barcelona and Ramon Llull University. Doctor accredited by the National Agency for Quality Evaluation and Accreditation of Spain. Scientific interests: Geography, Financial Economics and Public Economics. Current research project: Analysis and Sustainable Planning of Tourism.

Joan Sorribes – PhD in Economics in the discipline of Applied Economics by the University of Girona. Member of the INSETUR research group. Member of the GREPAT research group at the Formatic Barcelona University School. Member of the competitive consolidated research

group SGR „TRIP” at University of Girona. Head of Quality and Head of the Department of Economic and Legal Sciences at the Formatic Barcelona University School. Associate Professor at Applied Economics Department of the Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences at the University of Girona. Associate Professor at the School of Social and Business Sciences (Pompeu Fabra University). Scientific interests: Economic crisis, Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Resource Management, Sustainable Tourism and E-learning.

