

# REBUILDING TOURISM POST PANDEMIC – POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GLOBAL CASE STUDIES



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## Executive Summary

As the world continues to navigate between the 'new normal' and the 'next normal' of an ongoing pandemic, the recovery plans of several tourism destinations are still not bringing desired results. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed long standing structural weaknesses and gaps in tourism policies worldwide. The formulation of tourism policies based on the pandemic context is, therefore, a need of the hour. However, due to lockdown and physical distancing measures, data collection for the development of research-based tourism policies has not been possible. In this case, evidence-based policies stand as a workable option.

Drawing from the book *Tourism Destination Management in a Post-Pandemic Context*, this policy document proposes a synthesis of tourism policies embraced by destinations struggling in the pandemic context. Lessons show that rebuilding tourism requires policies that address structural weaknesses, advance key priorities, foster global solidarity and take advantage of new opportunities. This piece of study comes to the conclusion that tourism policies post pandemic need to be based on seven pillars; namely mitigation, vaccination, collaboration, information, promotion, education, and investigation.

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## Introduction

Destinations and segments of the tourism sector are reopening and recovering from the global pandemic at different speeds. Ongoing challenges for the industry are likely to have consequences on the global economy, as tourism is a multi-sectoral business. We urgently need new tourism policy approaches. Figure 1 illustrates the seven pillars that must underpin post-pandemic tourism policy.



## Findings

### Mitigation

Flexible policy is required to cope with the changing nature of the pandemic. Destinations have to develop realistic strategies in order to revive their economies, restore travelers' confidence, sustain domestic tourism, save jobs and support business survival, while ensuring the health and safety of visitors, workers and locals. Case studies from India, Africa and Europe show that fiscal and monetary policies were important mitigation strategies as a starting point. In Uganda and Kenya, mitigation strategies were mainly based on the informal tourism economy and small entrepreneurs; cash and wage subsidies, loans to small entrepreneurs, loan settlement support, and incentives to embrace new technologies are some of mitigation strategies adopted by those countries. In Turkey and Latvian countries, mitigation strategies were developed using a sustainability approach. For instance, policy guidelines on tourism resilience took into account not only tourism businesses, but also community well-being and enhanced opportunities for the locals. Likewise, in India, financial incentives, grants to women entrepreneurs, and a one-year free visa to attract international tourists guided policy decisions for the tourism sector.

### Vaccination

Case studies from African countries show that vaccination has become a mandatory condition for conducting businesses and for family gathering. In the

case of Mauritius for example, COVID-19 pandemic policy urges all citizens to be vaccinated in order to get access to public places such as hospitals, schools, supermarkets, and government offices, among others. Likewise, travelling to other countries requires an international vaccination card. Case studies from Uganda, Kenya and South Africa clearly demonstrate that vaccination is a compelling factor to re-launch domestic tourism.

### Collaboration

To relaunch and accelerate the revival of the tourism sector, public and private actors need to collaborate at national, regional, sectoral and global levels. For instance, in Uganda, a link between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities was established to manage preparedness, response and recovery of tourism. In the Baltic States, collaboration was key to the survival and revival of the tourism industry. Since the COVID-19 pandemic seriously affected Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, collaborative strategies such as opening of borders among the three countries, and collective solutions for transformation such as common understanding between tourism traders and service providers were seen as key to tourism revival. Despite being a fragmented sector with divergent interests and competing demands, tourism stakeholders had to engage in collaborations to re-start the industry.

## Information

Media role in rebuilding confidence and countering misinformation is also key while thinking tourism policies post pandemic. In Argentina, tourism sector preparedness involved addressing political differences, anti-tourism fears, lockdown deprivations, and inter-class rivalries, as well as the narratives that largely swayed public opinion on the pandemic. There was a need to address the infodemic in policy decisions. European destinations such as UK and Turkey made effective use of social media platforms to disseminate information and share statistics. Digital technologies were also helpful to provide information on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world.

## Education

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), workforces need to be trained and re-skilled to be able to cope with the emerging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Mauritius, a suite of training and advisory support guided hotels and tourism businesses in the re-education of their workforce. In India, free capacity building and skill training programmes were developed as part of the recovery policy. Skill development has been highlighted as a crucial factor in the new tourism policy 2021-2025 in India. Enhancing digital skills has also been a key area in policy decisions in countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Latvia. In Kenya, the Ministry of Tourism has been operating a programme of professional webinars and web-based courses in order to educate hoteliers, travel agents, tour operators, tour guides and other travel professionals on customer service post pandemic.

## Promotion

The COVID-19 Pandemic presents as an opportunity to rethink the tourism system. For instance, responsible tourism combined with creative marketing needs to be integrated into tourism policies. In the case of Egypt, the pandemic created a good opportunity for Egyptian stakeholders to evaluate the traditional tourism strategies used for years. In Andalusia, the use of technology and social networks were helpful in promoting the tourism sector. The strategic role of the community in activating positive word of mouth showed that the residents of Andalusia played an important role in the promotion of tourists' attraction to the area. Best practices from Kenya and Bali showed that promotion of culture and heritage as unique selling points were helpful to revive domestic tourism.

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## Investigation

Continued investigation on the COVID-19 pandemic and its evolution (including the mutations) is important to guide policymakers in their decisions. It is important to investigate the situation to better understand from which angle to address the pandemic and restore tourists' confidence and bring back tourism businesses. As tourism is multifaceted and a joint activity offered by different service providers, there is a need to investigate the types of strategies to include in tourism policies post pandemic. For instance, in the United Kingdom, research on the COVID-19 pandemic was helpful in detecting impacts across the travel supply chain. Likewise, in Bangladesh, an integrated framework comprising key stakeholders was designed to investigate the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Implications and Recommendations

Based on evidence from global case studies, it becomes evident that tourism policies post pandemic need to be planned in a systematic manner so that the global tourism industry is collectively prepared at all levels in order to re-start the business. This implies that development of tourism policy post pandemic needs to be based on: local, regional and international collaborations; inter-sectoral co-operation; sustainable and adaptive strategies (driven by SDGs); guidelines by international leading organizations such as the UNWTO and WHO; and consultation with key stakeholders and evidence-based information from field research. The first phase needs to include strategies for survival of the economy, revival of existing businesses and renewal of the distribution chain. Once the initial measures are enabled, the second phase needs to imperatively include safety measures, effective use of technology, and marketing of a corona-free destination while assuring visibility of safe tourism products. Policy measures under the first and second phase automatically lead to the third phase, which is profitability and sustainability. Rebuilding tourism requires global solidarity, collective effort and more importantly, tourism policies that address structural weaknesses, advance key priorities and take advantage of new opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly offered an opportunity to re-invent tourism, and destination marketers will now rethink destination management solutions based on a 'next normal' and sustainable practices.

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## Further Reading

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