



This collection of papers has been written by an international team of scholars teaching at the Master Course in Planning and Management of Tourism Systems of the University of Bergamo, while the Covid-19 emergency was spreading in all parts of the World and especially in the territory of Bergamo.

The main aim of the work is to face the topic of Tourism in the case of exogenous shocks, like the Covid-19 pandemic, reflecting on their impacts on territories, communities and heritage both during and after the crisis. The papers adopt different disciplinary approaches and methods, trying to give a multi-focused gaze to the complexity of a global phenomenon and to possible forms of recovery.

This collection is addressed to students and researchers studying in the tourism sector, who are in search of answers in this time of change and crisis. We believe that after reading this volume they won't have all the answers to their dilemmas, but they will reflect about them, they will receive proposals for specific approaches, methodologies, sources, references, examples, useful for the future of their own research.

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TOURISM FACING A PANDEMIC: FROM CRISIS TO RECOVERY



edited by Federica Burini



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TOURISM FACING A PANDEMIC: from crisis to recovery



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*To our students of the Master Course
in Planning and Management of Tourism Systems
of the University of Bergamo*

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Gastronomy tourism and Covid-19: technologies for overcoming current and future restrictions

Roberta Garibaldi and Andrea Pozzi*

Abstract:

With the Covid-19 pandemic that is limiting current travels and obliged individuals to maintaining social distancing, tourism industry is struggling with the need of remaining attractive to their current and potential customer. Technology certainly provides new opportunities, not only in facilitating tourists to access information but also in creating new home-based experiences. This chapter attempts to provide evidence of technological applications in the current scenario, paying attention to the gastronomy tourism experience. While the use of technology has been widely used in food sector and sites of production, there is a growing evidence of innovative concepts during the Covid-19 pandemic. Online cooking sessions and tutorials, live guided tastings, virtual reality tours, remote social eating and drinking are current and viable applications that have succeeded in supporting and temporarily replacing the traditional gastronomy tourism experience.

Keywords: gastronomy tourism, technology, Covid-19.

Travel and tourism are among the most affected sectors by the Covid-19 pandemic. In May 2020 all worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions in response to the pandemic event, closing their borders for travellers and suspending totally or partially international flights (UNWTO, 2020). Although the situation is positively changing in many countries, the unknown duration of such restrictions along with the need of maintaining social distancing certainly contribute to put tourism activities at risk. New challenges are arising: how to continue with promoting own offering in the current scenario? How to engage potential tourists while maintaining social distancing?

Technology certainly provides facilitations and new opportunities to effectively operate in such different context. Since the 1980s, it has started to support functions, to improve service quality and cost control in tourism activities (Buhalis & Law, 2008). In the last few decades, it has become more sophisticated and pervasive, supporting consumers in the purchasing process as well as in the creation and consumption of tourism experience (Navío-Marco et al. 2018). Today, during the Covid-19 pandemic, technology has the essential function of maintaining relationships, engaging current and potential customers, assuring the sales and the delivery of products and services.

This chapter attempts to provide evidence of technological applications in the current scenario, paying attention to the gastronomy tourism experience. Actually, above-mentioned issues are particularly relevant for an experience where hedonism, learning and interaction represent essential elements.

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1. Technology as a facilitator of the gastronomy tourism experience

The gastronomic tourism experience is both physical and emotional, it includes tasting of local food and recipes as well as involvement in wider food-related activities such as visitation to sites of food and wine production, cooking classes or food-theme events (Che, 2006; Presenza, Chiappa, 2013). It is constituted by hedonism, learning and interaction with 'foodscape' (Abdelhamied, 2011; Albrecht, 2011; Alonso, O'Neill, 2012; Cohen, Avieli, 2004; Ellis et al., 2018; Everett, 2009; Hashimoto, Telfer, 2006; Quan, Wang, 2004). Technology has been widely used to exploit tourist experience, from touch screens and multitouch tables in restaurants (Neuhofer et al. 2014) to Virtual and Augmented Reality in wineries (Garibaldi & Sfodera, 2020). Such innovations both enhance pre- and on-site visit, making it distinct and valuable, and enable dynamic co-creation processes.

The temporarily closure of restaurants, bars, cafes, sites of production, ... due to the COVID-19 pandemic is putting these activities at risk. Suppliers are struggling to maintain relationships with their current and potential customers and to grant revenues from sales of food and wine. Along with online platform solutions for delivery, innovative and technology-based concepts are emerging in this current scenario such as:

- remote social dining and partying
- online cooking classes and courses
- augmented and virtual reality experiences for e-food and e-wine destinations
- agri-crowdsourcing
- supportive e-experiences
- E-WOM

These ideas are being exploited in several destinations all around the world, with the purpose of creating home-based experiences, virtually engaging with their customers, inspiring travellers for future visits. Additionally, they allow suppliers to improve revenues during their temporarily closure to public. The following section shows how the technology can be practically applied to different sectors of gastronomy tourism, such as foodservice activities, sites of production and gastronomic events.

2. Digital home-based gastronomy tourism experience during COVID-19 pandemic

Food service sectors

Foodservice sector provides a number of examples of the technology as a mean to create home-based experiences. Online cooking sessions and tutorials, digital home-dining experiences, ... have been recently implemented due to temporarily closure of restaurants and bars. For instance, 'Vitique' restaurant (Greti, Italy) created the digital dining concept 'Chef Tabl-e' along with traditional food delivery service. Its customers are allowed to virtually interact with the chef, being introduced to his recipes and then completing food preparation at their home; restaurant's staff accompany them in digital wine tastings and pairings (Winenews, 2020). A more dynamic and engaging dining experience is now offered in Memphis (US). The travel company 'City tasting tours' has created virtual food tours: along with delivering food

from three restaurants at home, it allows customers to watch and listen to the stories of local owners, to learn about city gastronomic traditions and recipes comfortably at home. The travel company also offer the opportunity to get gift certificates; in doing so, this digital dining experience aims at providing inspiration for future visits (City Tasting Tours, 2020).

Sites of productions

Technology is currently used also in sites of food and wine production, as to offer new and distinctive home-based experiences. As it happens in the foodservice sector, wineries are now promoting digital wine tastings as to overcome social distancing. 'Ciacci Piccolomini d'Aragona' winery (Tuscany, Italy) has recently set up a collaboration with Microsoft and Si-Net as to organize digital wine tastings. To introduce wine lovers to its new vintages, owners have organized an online event and have accompanied the audience during the tastings, e.g. by explaining organoleptic characteristics of each wine, ... (Microsoft.com, 2020). From this perspective, technology has helped to create a new way for engaging current and prospective customers. Even some of initiatives developed in previous years have turned into success due to social restrictions. 'Tarpon Cellars' (Napa Valley, US) established a collaboration with the media services provide Spotify in 2019 to create playlists of the music that inspired the wine and its flavours. Music accompany people during their tastings of its vintages at home, virtually bringing them together (Tarpon Cellars, 2020). Similarly, the renovation of the 'Vintage Ranch' (Paso Robles, US) was transformed into a Netflix show. Users can watch 'Stay here' – episode 5 and follow along this ranch to see real weddings, tour vineyard farm life, and discover the hot spots across the Paso Robles Wine Country. This show has certainly contributed to boost the popularity of this place (The Vintage Ranch, 2018). Wineries from all over the world are now exploiting also digital home-based tours, creating a pre-experience of a place that can be visited afterwards. 'Castello di Amorosa' (Napa Valley, US) is a medieval-inspired Tuscan castle and winery that has developed remote digital tours, allowing web users to take a virtual walk through its courtyard, chapel, barrel room, ... (Castello di Amorosa, 2020). Similarly, Familiares Matarromera, Llopart, Barbadillo and Marqués de Murrieta (various region, Spain) have developed '360 degrees' videos and virtual reality tours inside the winery and through the vineyards, as to overcome their temporarily closure to visitors (Sumiller Campo, 2020).

Gastronomic events

Events are certainly the most affected sector by the Covid-19 pandemic, as individuals cannot gather together in one physical place but must preserve social distancing. Food and wine festivals organizers are currently rethinking their formats with the use of technology. The 2020 edition of 'Gourmet Weekend Event', a popular gastronomic festival in Australia, has been moved from physical to virtual spaces. Organizers have worked with food and wine producers to allow participants to celebrate this edition from the comfort of their home. The owner and the chief winemaker of 'Kirrihill wine', for instance, have organized a Facebook live tasting with participants that can pre-order a limited-release pack of their vintages at special rates. The staff of 'Pikes Beer Company' and the head chef of 'Slate Restaurant' has

set up a live cooking demonstration and wine pairing; the menu and the ingredients are posted on social media before the event (Clare Valley, 2020). Similarly, the popular wine festival 'Cantine Aperte' will bring people to discover Italian wineries and wines safely at home. Participants can pre-order vintages directly from *iorestoacasa.delivery*, an online platform for selling food and wine products that has been set up during the Covid-19 pandemic; the two-day festival will be entirely online, with people that can attend at live tasting, online masterclasses, remote social drinking (Movimento Turismo del Vino, 2020).

3. A new way for overcoming current and future restrictions?

The use of the technology in the gastronomy tourism experience certainly provides new opportunities, especially in the current scenario characterized by travel restrictions and the need of maintaining social distancing. Gastronomy tourism suppliers (e.g. restaurants, farms, wineries, event organizers ...) are struggling to develop new home-based experiences with the twofold purpose of maintaining relationships with their customers and stimulating them for future onsite visits. Online cooking sessions and tutorials, live guided tastings, virtual reality tours, remote social eating and drinking, ... are examples of how gastronomy tourism suppliers can overcome these unexpected constraints. These all testify a prompt response and an inclination towards innovation from the industry.

It can be argued that some might also have a permanent impact on gastronomy tourism. This suggests a number of implications. First, it implies a shift in thinking away from the product or service towards a more holistic approach to the entire experience that also consider how technology can transform tourism service ecosystems. Secondly, with the technology that has the potential to enable dynamic real and virtual co-creation process, gastronomy tourism suppliers should be stimulated to include travellers into the process of experience design and development.

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