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DIVETOUR

Training Kit of the cMOOC of DIVETOUR project

Handbook of MODULE 1

The response of the Tourism sector to the pandemic with specific focus on the inclusion of seniors and persons with disabilities and/or other specific access requirements for the re-opening of the sector

Topic 2

Crises as an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future: designing an inclusive tourism recovery within the framework of equitable and sustainable development

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Edited by

The DIVETOIR project team

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Forest of Hayedo de Montejo, UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Spain

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Index of contents

Crises as an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future: designing an inclusive tourism recovery within the framework of equitable and sustainable development

[2.1. Short-term strategies - Restoring all tourists' confidence and stimulating demand](#)

[2.1.1. Building confidence by developing new skills and know-how in the tourism sector](#)

[2.1.1.1. Introduction](#)

[2.1.1.2. Tourists with disabilities or other specific access requirements: critical issues emerged and new sanitation protocols](#)

[2.1.1.3. Digital innovation in tourism and the new 'low touch' economy](#)

[2.1.1.4. Reinforcing 'traditional' hospitality skills](#)

[2.1.2. Review of marketing and promotion strategies: addressing new markets and universally designed products](#)

[2.1.2.1. Business intelligence for destinations and enterprises: the value of data](#)

[2.1.2.2. Communication on accessibility requirements to reassure customers](#)

[2.1.2.3.](#) Innovation and digital transition: new technologies as a lever for making travel and tourism experiences easier for all

[2.2.](#) Long-term strategies - Inclusive tourism recovery by exploiting emerging trends/challenges in tourism

[2.2.1.](#) Demographic changes and new emerging targets

[2.2.1.1.](#) Gen Z and Millennials

[2.2.1.2.](#) Seniors

[2.2.1.3.](#) Emerging tourism trends

[2.2.2.](#) Sustainability

[2.2.2.1.](#) Sustainability, accessibility and inclusion in tourism

[2.2.2.2.](#) Best Practices

[Glossary](#)

Architecture Venice biennale 2014 | Photo by Bluebook srl



[Return to the index](#)

2.1. Short-term strategies - Restoring all tourists' confidence and stimulating demand

2.1.1. Building confidence by developing new skills and know-how in the tourism sector

2.1.1.1. Introduction

The impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector has been particularly severe, as this sector is characterised by:

- high level of interaction between people (tourists, employees, local community);
- movement of people from one territory to another;
- need to ensure a high level of health and hygienic safety.

Furthermore, the tourism product is one whose purchase is easily deferrable by the consumer, especially under extraordinary circumstances and in the absence of adequate health and safety conditions.

Because of this, travel bookings were cancelled and modified to a high rate and the entire supply system for tourism has undergone long periods of closure and regulation to protect the health of tourists and employees. The consequences of these actions have led to increased costs and limited business volumes, causing the bankruptcy of many enterprises and the consequent loss and/or precarity of millions of job positions.

However, this crisis should be approached as an opportunity for innovation. Destinations and enterprises may take advantage of it by cooperating in organising their production processes, such as planning, production, promotion and sale. This also applies to tourism for all, which can become the model for the personalisation of

[Return to the index](#)

supply as envisaged by the evolution of tourism demand. This consideration is supported by the fact that recent research shows that consumers assess important that travel providers meet the accessibility needs of all tourists in an inclusive way. This means not only reconsidering tourists of all abilities, but also of all backgrounds and identities: inclusion ensures better experiences for tourists and business benefits for tourism enterprises.

"7 out of 10 consumers would choose a more inclusive destination, accommodation or transport for all types of travellers, even if it is more expensive¹."

In the short term, the prerequisite for any restart strategy is to recreate the confidence of potential tourists but also of businesses and employees. Therefore, the strategies of destinations and businesses should focus on:

- ensuring the highest level of health protection for tourists, employees and local communities;
- ensuring employment stability, training and career paths for tourism industry employees, and training new ones with the skills and abilities required by the tourism of the future;
- reducing the impact of tourism on natural resources, landscape, cultural heritage and host communities and reducing the negative effects of [overtourism](#) according

¹ [Expedia Group Media Solution \(2022\), Inclusive Travel Understanding Traveler Values & Opportunities for Marketers](#)

to the principles of sustainability;

- planning the management of tourism destinations and enterprises on the basis of data ([business intelligence](#)) and monitoring of the most significant performance indicators;
- providing markets with a well-structured product portfolio, with products that can ensure recovery in the immediate term but can become the standard in the near future;
- promoting innovation and digitisation of production and communication processes;
- aiming at the qualitative growth of the offer, i.e. the ability to respond to the real needs of the demand targets, by diversifying products and markets;
- building more resilient supply systems in front of the transformations caused by pandemics, wars, terrorism, climate change.

2.1.1.2. Tourists with disabilities or other specific access requirements: critical issues emerged and new sanitation protocols

Strategies for restarting tourism for persons with disabilities or other specific access requirements must consider what has happened in the implementation of the various health and safety protocols that have been in place during the pandemic. In fact COVID-19 has triggered a disruption of pre-pandemic models that have affected the entire tourism chain (hospitality, transportation, management of tourism activities, etc.). Thus, there has been a strong impact on the management of production processes, staff training and technological innovation.

In this context, to plan recovery strategies in the area of tourism for all, the following areas are of particular relevance:

- information management
- health regulations
- air transport
- rail transport and public transport
- hospitality (accommodation and catering services)
- tourist attractions and events
- design of tourism products and production processes

a. Information management

Information is at the heart of accessibility, as it enables tourists to make informed choices when deciding where to go and what to do.

The **quality of the information** and the way it is made available become essential.

COVID-19 highlighted that **the priority for persons with disabilities or other specific access requirements is the planning of the trip**. Planning is based on the availability of verified accessibility information addressing the requirements of the wide range of visitors with access requirements. This applies to information regarding accessibility of accommodation, food and beverage facilities, means of transport, attractions, cultural venues and other tourism services.

Information management is one of the prerequisites to increase direct bookings and counter-balance Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) that are often criticised for reducing the profit margins of small businesses. Direct booking allows guests to enquire about the facilities on-site, health measures, availability of accessible equipment, etc. and get to know destinations and hospitality businesses. When planning information, it should be remembered that what may be accessible to one person might not be accessible to another.

[Return to the index](#)

b. Health regulations

The continuous change in health protection rules and the absence of their coordination at the international level has made it particularly difficult for tourists with specific access requirements to organise trips. The absence of homogeneous and promptly spread information regarding bans and rules in different countries have increased uncertainty and difficulties for these tourists. For example, the perceived risk of not being guaranteed the necessary level of assistance at airports and during the flight, even if requested and booked in advance, has increased. The consequence has been a reduction in the number of people willing to fly and book accommodation and other tourism-related services.

The European Tourism Manifesto Alliance², made up of 70 tourism organisations, has proposed coordinated health guidelines and protocols within the EU and internationally, working on a scientific basis, to avoid unnecessary difficulties for tourists, especially those with specific access requirements: **harmonised rules bring trust**. The goals are to create trust and simplify the organisation of travel experiences for tourists and organised distribution companies (tour operators, online travel agencies, etc.).

One particularly important step in this direction was the establishment of the **EU Digital COVID Certificate** –

² [Position On The European Commission's New Regulation On EU Digital COVID Certificate By European Tourism Manifesto Alliance](#)

EUDCC, valid for travelling between different countries without additional requirements and allowing access to cafés, restaurants, hotels, museums, tourist attractions, etc. The EUDCC is, at the moment of the release of this document, the only COVID-19 certification system that operates globally and is becoming an internationally accepted standard. However, the Tourism Manifesto Alliance has proposed that a uniform duration of the vaccination certificate in all member states must be ensured and the list of vaccines eligible for a EUDCC must be extended to all those that have completed the World Health Organisation listing procedure for emergency use.

Another tool tested in the European Union is the **Passenger Locator Forms (PLFs)** used by public health authorities, particularly in destination countries, to trace tourists exposed to an infectious disease during their journey by plane, ship (cruise/ferry), train or bus. It allows tourists to be contacted quickly, protecting their health and the health of others who they have been in contact with, and preventing further spread of the disease.

An additional problem is caused by the insufficient alignment of health rules for persons with disabilities or other specific access requirements and their accompanying persons. The adoption of a “one-size-fits-all” approach in the drafting of health protocols (physical distancing, use of medical devices and equipment, signposting, etc.) did not take into account the different

[Return to the index](#)

abilities of tourists, creating obstacles to a comfortable travel experience.

At the moment, most tourist facilities **maintain health & cleaning protocols** introduced during the pandemic and communicate them. For example, some restaurants still retain the social distance between tables and prefer individually plated and served meals over buffets. The aim is to meet a demand that is more health-sensitive, but also to encourage staff to return to work in a safe environment.

"Travellers are yearning for enhanced transparency around cleaning, hygiene and sanitisation measures at a property. It will be key for accommodation providers to openly display this information to help set accurate expectations and bring travellers additional reassurance³."

Pepijn Rijvers, senior vice president of accommodation at Booking.com

³ [Ten ways that our hotel stays will be different post-COVID - Lonely Planet](#)

c. Air transport

In air transport, critical issues have emerged in the regulations and in the services of carriers and airport companies. The introduction of new and more complex health safety requirements and the suspension of air traffic for long periods caused a reduction in fleets, flights and routes, resulting in a reduction in personnel, particularly in countries where there is less labour protection. Returning to previous conditions will necessarily be a long and difficult process, which will have to find innovative answers to satisfy the needs of all in terms of quality, security, value for money and reliability.

A first goal is **to maintain high levels of care** through all stages of the customer's journey⁴. The main area for improvement relates to the way information is transmitted to all parties involved. Information technology solutions are the basis of quality service by allowing access to timely information and informed decision-making (e.g., monitoring data on tourists with specific access requirements, services booked and those really consumed, scheduling of staff engaged in care services, etc.).

Another key point is **to ensure adequate and uniform levels of safety** for flight and airport personnel and for passengers. [ICAO](#) has activated the **Council Aviation**

⁴ Regulation (EC) 1107/2006 of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air.

Recovery Task Force (CART) to harmonise and align the many approaches to health and safety in air transport implemented worldwide. The aim is to provide practical and shared guidelines for governments and industry stakeholders to restart the international air transport industry in a globally coordinated manner. Specifically, the document outlines key principles for a harmonised approach to aviation restart and recovery and a set of risk mitigation measures related to aviation safety and public health⁵.

d. Rail transport and public transport

In rail transport⁶, tourist road transport⁷ and public transport, especially at the destination level, similar problems can be found as in air transport, albeit to a lesser degree. The most critical issues concern the level of information on health aspects (documentation, rules of conduct, etc.) and the effective availability of assistance services.

⁵ All documents (reports, guidelines, etc.) produced by the Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce are available at icao.int

⁶ Regulation (EC) 1371/2007 of 23/10/2007 on rail passengers' rights and obligations

⁷ Regulation (EU) 181/2011 of 16/2/2011 concerning the rights of passengers in bus and coach transport and amending Regulation (EC) 2006/2004

e. Hospitality (hotels, restaurants bars and cafés)

As in the aviation sector, COVID-19 contributed to the **significant shortage of personnel in hospitality companies**, as already highlighted above. This led, in some cases, to a reduction in services to assist tourists with disabilities or special access requirements.

Another problem is the **rigidity of the processes for modification/cancellation of reservations** in the case of COVID-19, determined impediments and associated costs. The aim is to provide flexibility in case of change/cancellation of reservations (e.g. by offering the customer adequate insurance protection).

More generally, frequent tourists, business travellers and younger generations are driving the demand for more autonomy and flexibility in virtual travel planning and in managing a range of services (e.g. check-in) through contactless technology and show decreasing interest in traditional accommodation services (e.g. room service, reception staff and bellboys, swimming pools and gyms). As a further consequence of COVID-19, companies in the hospitality industry have been forced to accelerate the **introduction of new technologies to reduce contact between staff and customers** without creating a deterioration in the perceived quality of services.

Lavazza Museum - Torino | Photo by Bluebook srl



[Return to the index](#)



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f. Tourist attractions and events

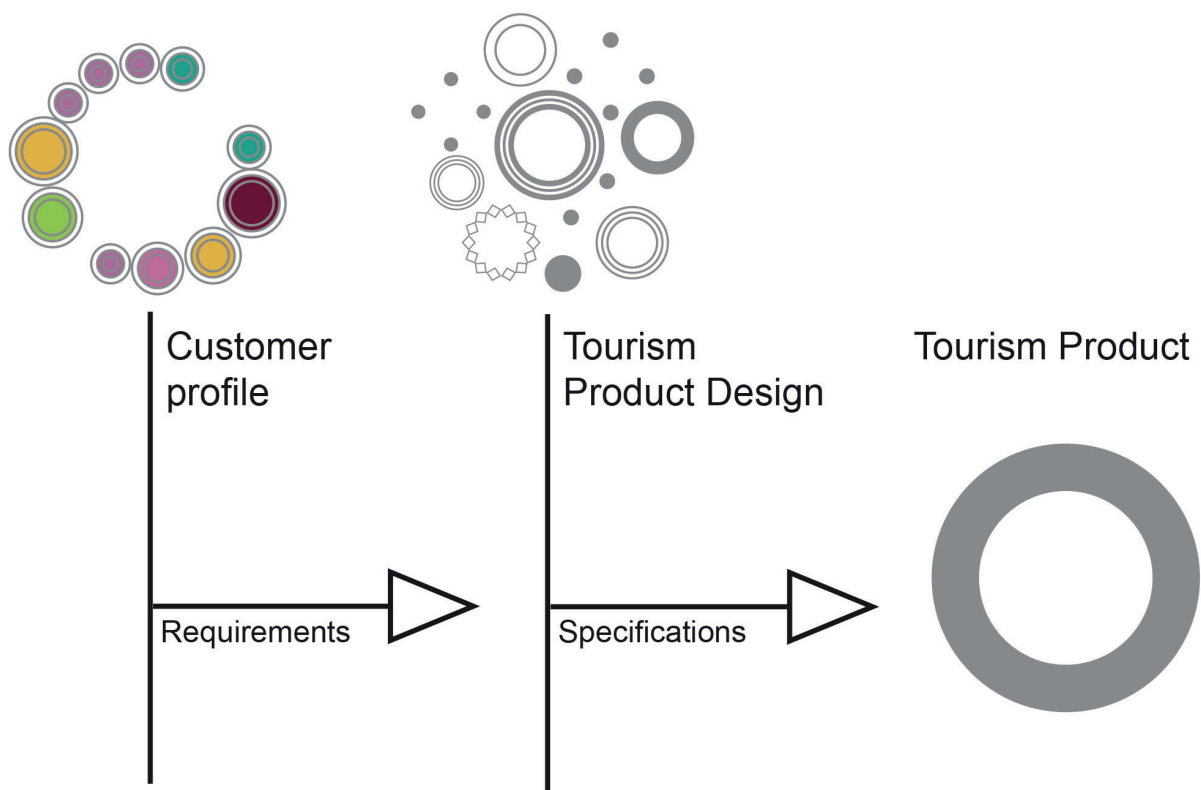
Museums and other tourist attractions have had to adapt to anti-COVID-19 regulations and suffered long periods of closure. This has meant a re-engineering of access management processes (compulsory bookings, entrance quotas, increasing sanitation costs, etc.), but also a rethinking of the visitor experience with significant investments in digital technologies to maintain and increase the connection with potential audiences.

[Return to the index](#)

■ g. Designing tourism products and services for tourism for all

In designing a tourism product, it is essential **to start from the real needs and motivations of the desired target tourists and to embrace a logic of customization and continuous innovation in order to follow their evolution.**

Tourism product design process



Tourism product design must focus on the tourist experience as a whole, starting from offering suggestions, to booking, to travel experience and to post consumption phase. By enhancing accessibility, the quality of offerings aimed at all types of customers. An effective method is to actively involve the tourist in the creation of accessible products and services and evaluating their feedback.

Design must also ensure the necessary levels of flexibility of offers and must dedicate attention to the real accessibility of communication channels.

To facilitate the design of tourism products for tourists with disabilities or specific access requirements, during the pandemic, several initiatives were taken by public and private organisations, also with a view to a gradual return to normality.

■ In 2021, the [World Travel & Tourism Council](#) published guidelines on the experience of tourists with disabilities⁸. The aim was to meet the accessibility needs of tourists or, alternatively, to provide accurate and reliable information on barriers and limitations to accessibility to enable them to make their self-determined decisions. This means developing a system for inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring detailed and comprehensive information, developing effective marketing and communication actions, and training company employees on inclusivity issues.

⁸ WTTC (May 2021), [Inclusive & Accessible Travel Guide Lines](#)

The guidelines focus on:

Systemic interventions

- Development of a long-term vision of accessibility and short-term goals;
- access to accurate and detailed information on accessibility;
- financial and human resources adequate to achieve the objectives;
- collaboration with companies and public institutions involved in tourism for all.

Interventions on tourism infrastructure, accomodation facilities, products and customer service

- Designing safe and welcoming spaces for persons with disabilities and others with specific access requirements that ensure the quality of their consumer experience with solutions that are also acceptable to the ordinary customer.
- Provision of signage that takes into account different physical, cognitive, intellectual and sensory abilities (texts also in Braille, photos and audio, etc.).
- Attention to psychological safety, with due staff training. Staff, especially those in contact with customers, should be made aware of the importance of their behaviour and trained to solve any potential problems at any time during the tourist's experience (disability terminology, knowledge of the accessibility features of

the facility, destination and attractions, etc.).

- Adoption of a continuous improvement approach, based on “gap analysis”, feedback from users, implementation of acknowledged best practices and accessibility marketing.

Moreover, [UNWTO](#), with **ENAT** and **ONCE Foundation**, has published a guide for destinations and companies to establish new protocols to ensure that tourists with disabilities can travel⁹. It consists of basic recommendations addressed to different actors operating in the tourism value system to help them adapt to new health requirements, maintaining the focus on the accessibility of territories, attractions and accommodation facilities. The guide highlights the opportunities for destinations that take measures to meet the needs of people with specific access requirements. The intention is to preserve the progress made in accessibility and create the conditions for a broader emphasis on customization and product quality.

The document focuses on a few key aspects:

- (a) travel planning and information on new travel protocols
- (b) transport
- (c) activities at the tourist destination

UNWTO also published a set of recommendations to

⁹ UNWTO, ENAT and Fundacion ONCE (December 2020), [Reopening tourism for travellers with disabilities: how to provide safety without imposing unnecessary obstacles](#). Travel planning and information on new travel protocols

address the recovery phase of tourism flows, dedicating one of them to persons with disabilities¹⁰. The document is based on two assumptions:

- measures to improve accessibility and safety are appreciated by all tourists and tourists with disabilities;
- the elderly and families with children as important targets for post-COVID-19 restart.

The recommendations cover the following topics:

1. assistance during the pandemic (repatriation procedures and provision of courtesy accommodation in line with accessibility principles);
2. adaptation of healthcare protocols to the needs of tourists with different abilities;
3. development of inclusive policies in post-COVID-19 tourism based on specific and comparable data on the behavioural profile of tourists with specific access needs;
4. inclusion of accessibility in the corporate strategy, as a source of competitive advantage: designing inclusive experiences helps to develop the ability to propose customised services for any type of guest and to improve customer service;
5. application of international accessibility standards;
6. training of employees on health safety and accessibility issues;

¹⁰ World Tourism Organization (2020), [Inclusive Recovery Guide – Sociocultural Impacts of Covid-19, Issue I: Persons with Disabilities, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI](#)

7. introduction of innovative technologies to improve accessibility.

The Working group on accessible tourism of the [International Social Tourism Organisation \(ISTO\)](#) also indicated measures to be taken to ensure the protection of persons with disabilities in health emergencies, in particular during COVID-19¹¹.

In the long term, the dissemination of standards for supporting the development of accessible buildings and environments, including those for touristic use, is also important.

The [CEN \(European Committee for Standardisation\)](#) recently produced the New European Standard - EN 17210:2021, Accessibility and usability of the built environment - Functional requirements. The standard describes the minimum functional requirements and recommendations for an accessible and usable built environment.

In 2021, the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) published the world's first standard on accessible tourism, ISO 21902 Tourism and related services - Accessible tourism for all - Requirements and recommendations. This is an international standard offering guidelines to ensure access and enjoyment of tourism for all on an equal basis.

¹¹ Isto (2021), [Recommendations to help tourism providers in welcoming people with disabilities during a health crisis such as COVID-19](#)

A detailed description of these two standards will be provided in Module 2.

Finally, demand shows an increasing interest in local culture: there is a growing demand for greater involvement with the local community and for authentic experiences. Destinations must provide more information on these aspects, especially for tourists with specific access needs¹². The need to focus on the guest experience forces the hospitality industry to take a holistic, data-driven approach to building better guest connections at each touchpoint along the guest journey. To this end, the hospitality industry is implementing the latest digital technologies to meet the needs of all types of tourists, today and in the future¹³.

12 Expedia Group Media Solution (2022), [Inclusive Travel Understanding Traveler Values & Opportunities for Marketers](#)

13 Shiji Group and Aws (2022), [Personalized Guest Experiences Will Define the New Era of Travel](#)

2.1.1.3.

Digital innovation in tourism and the new 'low touch' economy

Many of the critical issues that emerged during the pandemic can find immediate answers in digital innovation. Some of these innovations mark the beginning or accelerate processes of structural change in the tourism industry.

A first area of innovation has developed in response to the **demand for social distancing imposed by health and safety regulations**. For example, hoteliers have been forced by COVID-19 to re-envision the many touch points with the guest (primarily those related to the welcoming phase) and move them as far as possible to a digital environment. This **digital transformation** represents an incredible opportunity to learn about the guests, by collecting data on their preferences and starting to offer them a better experience, but it requires time and investment to upgrade existing systems¹⁴.

Tourism went from 'high-tech' and 'high-touch' to 'high-tech' and 'low-touch'¹⁵.

14 Shiji Group and AWS (2022)

15 Hao F. (2021), Acceptance of contactless technology in the hospitality industry: extending the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology 2, in Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 26 (12), 1386-1401

■ The pandemic has generated the concept of [low-touch economy](#), also called the contactless economy, to define the set of actions that companies have been forced to activate to prevent germs spreading through touching different surfaces or being in close and direct proximity of other people in business environments

The introduction of digital technologies for contactless service delivery has become an opportunity if not a necessity for tourism businesses.

By using low contact technologies, it is possible to reduce physical contact to the minimum and create value for customers who are particularly sensitive to health security, but also for those who would prefer to simplify interaction with the company and have direct control of operations such as booking, check-in and check-out and payments.

A contactless service in hospitality can be defined as a production process and service delivery environment in which contact between customer and business staff has been eliminated or minimised. This is done through the combined use of digital applications for self-service management of services previously manned by staff (e.g., mobile apps to manage check in, contactless payments, voice control, robotic services for in-room food delivery, biometrics and facial recognition to enhance security and enable self-service services, and other Internet of Things based technology applications)¹⁶.

¹⁶ Hao F. (2021)

The most prevalent types of contactless technology

| Type of technology | Field of application |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mobile apps | To interact with accommodation facilities, restaurants, transport companies, etc. before, during and after the travel experience, obtaining information about the destination and accommodation facilities, self-service check-in and check-out operations, payments, etc. |
| Digital kiosk | Check-in at airports, stations and hotels, to consult information on what to do or see at the destination or to book services |
| Digital concierge | To provide personal assistance to accommodation guests |
| Chatbots | To respond more quickly to tourists' and guests' most frequent questions and reduce the workload of reception staff called to handle only complex requests |
| Non-touch control panels and voice commands | To allow the use of lifts or other devices through voice commands, without the need to touch any control buttons |
| Keyless entry | To allow guests to access their room using a key on smartphone |
| Digital messaging | Including SMS and instant messaging services such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram Direct, WhatsApp and Telegram |
| Contactless payment systems | Including touch-free, tap-and-go or proximity payments: goods or services are purchased via a contactless payment. The related process can therefore be qualified as 'frictionless' |

[Return to the index](#)

“Apps are increasingly important for airlines, hoteliers, and virtually any other part of the Travel & Hospitality sector to manage experiences and services across the entire lifecycle of traveler experience¹⁷.”

Many of these innovations were already being tested before the pandemic, which only accelerated investment and stimulated customer interest.

“More than half (53.6 percent) of travellers said that they’d most like to see contactless check-in and check-out remain a constant feature at hotels¹⁸.”

Some studies tend to view the contactless economy as a structural and permanent change, characterised by low-touch relationships, health protection measures, new social behaviour and lifestyles, and radical innovation in the production models of various sectors, tourism being at the forefront.

17 Contents Square (2022), [The Unknown Traveler](#). How the best travel and hospitality companies use data to deliver more human digital experiences in times of change

18 Skift and Oracle Hospitality (2022), [Hospitality in 2025: automated, intelligent... and more personal](#), p. 11

However, **the level of acceptance of these technologies by different demand targets in terms of ease of use, expectation of better performance, facilitating conditions, hedonistic motivation and social influence still needs to be carefully assessed.**

While the business traveller tends to accept these innovations and acquired the necessary competence to use them, other target demand groups still prefer human warmth and personal assistance when staying in a hotel: they are reluctant to pay the extra cost of such technologies and tend to evaluate it as a complication compared to the service provided by people.

2.1.1.4 Reinforcing ‘traditional’ hospitality skills

While the pandemic has accelerated the introduction of new business models and digital technologies, it is also true that there is an **increasing demand for customised services** that are characterised by a **strong relational involvement between the customer and the employees of accommodations, restaurants, tourist guides and other providers of tourist activities and experiences**. Therefore, tourism enterprises will have to invest in re-engineering their service delivery systems to meet customer expectations and needs. This is especially true for tourism for all.

This also means **staff selection and training** consistent with medium to long-term objectives that go beyond anti-COVID-19 health competencies to include knowledge and skills required by tourism for all, but also by the new tourism. The training does not only concern professionals in direct contact with customers, but also back office workers and managers. It should consist of actions aimed to:

- create the skills to interact with customers respecting their particular needs, and to work effectively in a team.
- Develop business intelligence skills ([open data](#), [big data](#), etc.) for effective profile analysis of desired demand targets. Collect and analyse customer information, acquired at the different touchpoints of

- the service delivery process by means of [Customer Relationship Management](#) applications, makes it possible to reduce interaction and, at the same time, offer more personalised services.
- Create skills for a more in-depth use of already available digital technologies such as [Property management systems \(PMS\)](#) for accommodation facilities. These systems have evolved from platforms for managing front desk activities (reservations, check-in and check-out, etc.) to systems for globally managing key operational activities (housekeeping, food & beverage, multi-channel distribution, etc.) and offering customers a more accessible and efficient experience.
-

In Module 2 ample space will be devoted to staff training as a key factor to address the challenges of the tourism sector.

2.1.2 Review of marketing and promotion strategies: addressing new markets and universally designed product

People with disabilities or other specific access requirements demand that destinations and businesses are organised to ensure personalised treatment.

Providing inclusive and accessible solutions enables travel and tourism businesses to reach a more lucrative, traditionally underserved, market. **Personalization and customer experience** are the most important aspects of a successful destination or tourism enterprise.

The pandemic has influenced travel behaviour, changed how tourists dream, plan and book their trips, but most importantly it has pushed tourists to prioritise their passions. In light of these changes, the tourism industry must be able to address the needs of everyone, in all its nuances, and offer a service that is able to differentiate itself from the rest of the market.

For example, the hospitality industry has found ways to respond to new needs by offering "experiences."

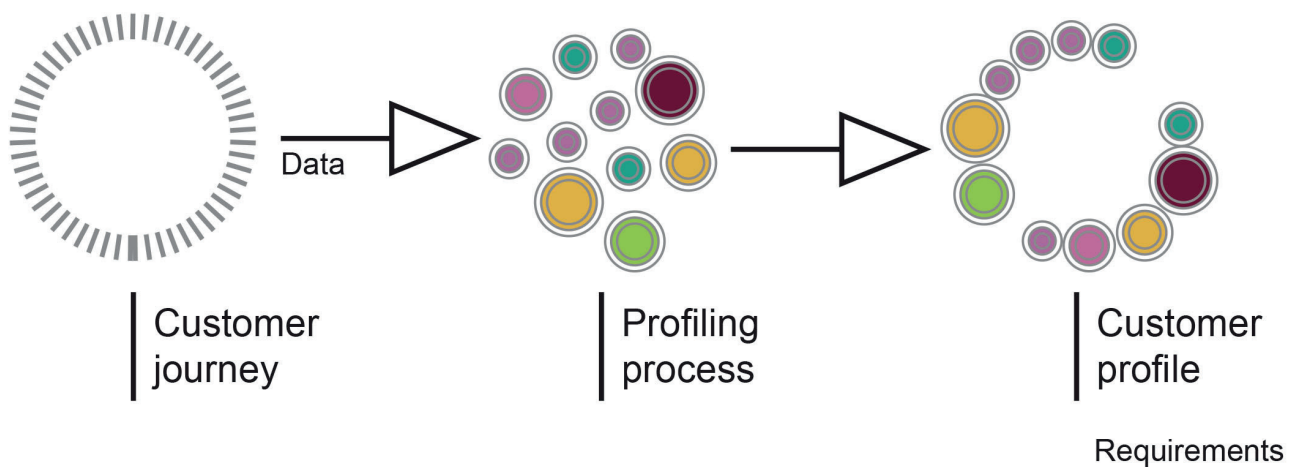
The difference in added value is based on the feelings and sense of belonging that an experience is able to convey.

[Return to the index](#)



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From Customer data to Customer requirements



The increasing use of data-driven travel management systems allows to profile customers on the basis of their behaviours and design a unique experience that meets their needs and expectations.

“The future of travel, simply, comes down to personalization: knowing the customer and providing what they want¹⁹.”

This requires destinations and businesses to re-examine their traditional marketing and promotion strategies in order to address the “tourism for all” with a diversified range of products. In effect, the hospitality industry can at present count on a demand that is just waiting to be enabled to travel. Numerous international studies

¹⁹ Insight Worldwide Business Research and Digital travel (2022), [An expanded view of travel in 2022](#)

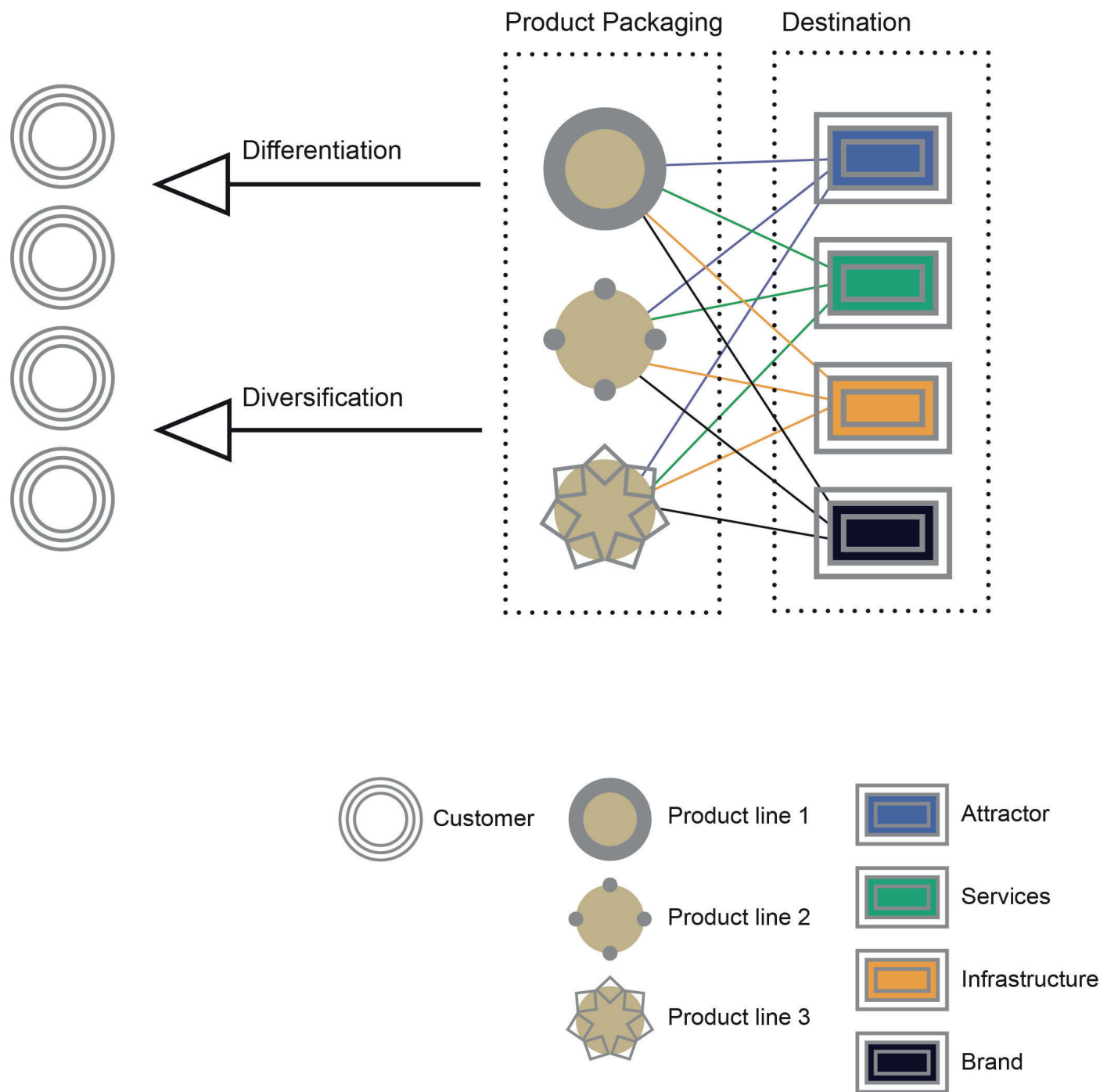
describe tourists with disabilities and specific access requirement (with largely valid results for other types of tourists as well) as:

- conscious about health security issues and the needful for protective measures;
- wishing to travel, even abroad, when regulations, protective measures and companies are able to meet their needs;
- responsive to the offer of support services with trained staff who are aware of what disability and accessibility mean;
- sensitive to emotional and experiential drivers.

These characteristics must be used as a starting point for setting strategies of:

- **differentiation** by introducing variants to existing products to meet specific user requirements, where necessary: increasing or shortening the **length** (number of products) and/or **depth** (number of versions and varieties).
- **Diversification** by modifying existing products, creating new, universally-designed products or by dismissing products or product lines, in order to meet the requirements of the widest range of customers.

Destination production system



Villa Pansa - Varese, Italy | Photo by Bluebook srl



[Return to the index](#)



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2.1.2.1 Business intelligence for destinations and enterprises: the value of data

Any product and process innovation must be based on the analysis of data and text, images, sounds, etc. relating to the profile of strategic demand targets.

This is all the more so if we wish to address the market according to the logic of tourism for all and the customisation of offers. We are in the field of business intelligence aimed at increasing knowledge of tourism businesses through systematic data analysis to assist decision support processes ([Decision Support System - DSS](#)) and improve business planning, execution and control.

Business intelligence is the main tool of [performance management](#), which is based on the identification of key factors in the management of a business and the

determination of effective performance indicators ([Key Performance Indicator - KPI](#)) to be monitored to check their alignment with objectives.

Business intelligence in tourism should be applied both to destination processes, i.e. to the territorial production system, and to the business processes of tourism enterprises and attractions: from pre-booking (the research phase) all the way through the on-property experience and including post-stay follow-

[Return to the index](#)

up²⁰. Today, the increasing digitisation of these processes makes it easier to acquire data that can be used to gain a better understanding of the performance of the tourism business. Particularly useful are the sources related to the ordinary processes of business execution where hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, car park operators, museums, etc. produce data that, when collected and properly processed, help to manage strategies and operational activities more effectively.

The business intelligence system should be designed and used according to specific business and target situations and should focus on product line performance to be truly effective.

The availability of data regarding the destination as a complex system (roads, mobility, parking, environmental quality, accessibility of accommodation and tourist attractions, etc.) is particularly necessary for tourism for all.

20 Shiji Group and AWS (2022), [Personalized Guest Experiences Will Define the New Era of Travel](#)

2.1.2.2 Communication on accessibility requirements to reassure customers

With the return to normality, the focus should be on the presence of businesses and destinations on the web (websites, social media, etc.) to restart communication and promotion activities especially directed at the demand targets that the pandemic had most excluded. The objective is to communicate the proposal of low contact processes and the specific care for the different needs of tourism for all, through all available channels.

■ [Content management](#) is crucial to engage potential customers through the production and publication of content (texts, photos, videos, podcasts, etc.) providing reliable accessibility information to potential customers. All communication and promotion actions should be planned as part of a communication plan implementing the company/destination marketing plan.

2.1.2.3 Innovation and digital transition: new technologies as a lever for making travel and tourism experiences easier for all

The pandemic has accelerated some of the processes of change already underway in tourist demand behaviour.

Some of the **drivers of change** are:

- search for new models of work-life integration, which is driving more and more people to work remotely and to use facilities providing a global hospitality service;
- attention to the environmental and social sustainability of tourism activities;
- focus on customer care at all stages of the consumer's journey by integrating low human contact systems with staffed services.

The application of business models typical of low-touch economy is just one of the fields in which COVID-19 has driven research and the application of innovations. In the medium and long term, the development of the broad category of tools that can be classified within the [Internet of Things](#) will be of great importance:

- accommodations, rooms, fitness centres and wellness will also become increasingly smart to follow trends in the reduction of environmental impacts (energy saving,

- reduction of waste production, etc.);
- high customisation of the guest experience in accommodation and destination;
- use of smart watches and other similar technologies by the staff to enable faster and more timely communication in responding to customer requests;
- optimisation of supply chain and warehouse management;
- enhancing the level of security (e.g. use of smart keys and biometric scanners).

The introduction of new digital technologies is also imposed by the advent of new segments of tourists such as the **Millennials and Generation Z** (see the next paragraph to know about them and their travel behaviours), who demand to be able to use their mobile devices to organise their trips, to book services and to obtain information before and during travel.

Consequently, **destinations and companies need to identify the key customer contact points (information and booking phase, check-in and check-out) and incorporate the technologies that the diverse target groups prefer.**

In conclusion, the post-COVID-19 tourism industry will inevitably be shaped by the digital transition and, in particular, by:

- increasing focus on understanding and monitoring tourists' needs and trends in order to create and market

[Return to the index](#)

innovative experiences.

- New production processes based on the reduction of direct interaction between tourists and personnel of tourism enterprises as structural change and not as a response to an emergency phase. This development may present new barriers for customers who need or like personal contact in customer service. This could even change the quality of hospitality itself, if it is not managed appropriately.

“The hotel of the future will be automated, intelligent, and deeply personal, all at the same time²¹.”

■ ■ Speaking of new technologies, it's important to mention also [Augmented Reality \(AR\)](#) and [Virtual Reality \(VR\)](#) which represent the new frontiers in the construction of contents for communication and the development of attraction factors, offering the potential to create experiences that may be particularly beneficial for people with specific access needs.

■ AR and VR are the technologies most commonly associated with the [Metaverse](#). Metaverse hospitality refers to various hospitality offerings made available through the Metaverse, including virtual entertainment, VR experiences, and more²².

For instance, hotels in the Metaverse can provide virtual

21 Skift and Oracle Hospitality, [Hospitality in 2025: automated, intelligent ... and more personal, 2022](#)

22 [Metaverse Opportunities for the Hospitality Industry \(revfine.com\)](#)

reality tours, or options to explore their hotel with an avatar during the booking process including to answer specific questions from guests with specific access needs. This allows guests to get a clear sense of what to expect before they commit to booking a hotel room. Through the use of virtual reality technology, cutting edge restaurants can provide the tools necessary for customers to fully explore their menu prior to booking, including options to see how a meal is prepared, or to check out the facilities.

To go beyond: listen to [HOTREC podcast #4](#) to learn about digital solutions for hospitality businesses and the need to shift business owners' mindset regarding data and the potential of data analytics.

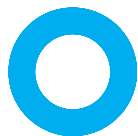
[Return to the index](#)

Key trends in the metaverse - Source Early Metrics

Trends



\$ 800bn | Estimated revenue opportunity of the metaverse by 2024



32.8m | Estimated shipments of AR and VR devices by 2024



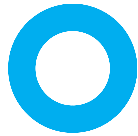
60% of Gen Zers would like to explore virtual worlds created by their favourite brands.



\$ 25bn in NFT sales were generated worldwide in 2021.



27.7m unique players participated in Fortnite and Travis Scott's virtual in-game concert in 2020.



30% of the organisations in the world will have products and services in the metaverse by 2026.

Challenges



User safety | Questions remains about the management of cyberbullying



Data protection | VR/AR hardware track a significant amount of user data



Intellectual property | copyright violations have already become rife in the NFT world

2.2. Long-term strategies - Inclusive tourism recovery by exploiting emerging trends/challenges in tourism

"Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future!"

Niels Bohr

[Return to the index](#)

Talking about long term strategies in business is always difficult and today it is even more so. In the last two decades many shocks affected the world and each time they have completely unsettled the global economy and its perspectives. Making a reliable forecast is very difficult in the short term and even more so in the long term.

In this difficult context it's necessary to pay attention to the main trends that are likely to have significant impacts and relevance for tourism, shaping its future. Among them, we will focus on the following two, which could have a significant influence also on accessible tourism for all.

- **Demographic changes** Markets are ever changing but demographic profiles present some stability in the mid term. They are associated with culture, values, and lifestyles that are not so easy to change.
- **Sustainability** By now the need for sustainable orientation in our life, both individual and social, is acknowledged. This is a long term orientation that will characterise demand and supply of future markets.

2.2.1. Demographic changes and new emerging targets

One of the most relevant demographic trends impacting tourism is the ageing of the population. At present (2022), there are 771 million people aged 65 or over in the world, comprising around 10% of the global population. Their number is projected to more than double in 30 years, representing around 16% percent of the total world population by 2050²³. Even more relevant is the weight of senior citizens in the European Union where they represent almost 21% of the total population and are estimated to reach 29,5% in 2050²⁴. Consequently, seniors' consumptions, including tourism, are likely to grow substantially. In order for tourism to benefit from this, infrastructure and support services will have to be tailored to accommodate both the increasing demand of older tourists and their needs and preferences, among which accessibility being an area of particular concern for them²⁵.

Besides Seniors, 'Generation Z' and 'Millennials' (or Generation Y) are also of great interest to the tourism

23 United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2022), [“World Population Prospects 2022”](#)

24 [Eurostat Database](#)

25 OECD (2018), [“Analysing Megatrends to Better Shape the Future of Tourism”](#), OECD Tourism Papers, No. 2018/02, OECD Publishing, Paris

industry as they move towards becoming key market segments and playing a prominent role in revitalising the travel and hospitality industry post-pandemic. They express travel patterns and preferences that will require new responses from policy-makers and the tourism industry. Although access challenges are perhaps less relevant to them than to seniors, it must be considered that temporary or permanent impairments also affect younger age groups and therefore they must also be guaranteed services adapted to their access requirements.

The following pages provide a brief description of the travel patterns of these important generations of tourists, with a focus on seniors for whom accessibility is most relevant and who most benefit from universally designed tourism services.

Nationalmuseet - Copenhagen | Photo by Bluebook srl



[Return to the index](#)

2.2.1.1 Gen Z and Millennials

The so-called Gen Z encompasses people born between mid 90s (XX century) and the first decade of XXI century, while Millennials (or Y generation) encompass people born between early 80s and mid 90s of XX century.

| | Baby boomer 1940-1959 | Gen X 1960-79 | Gen Y 1980-94 | Gen Z 1995-2010 |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Context | Postwar Cold war | Political transition Capitalism and meritocracy dominate | Globalization Economic stability Emergence of internet | Mobility and multiple realities Social networks Digital natives |
| Behaviour | Idealism Revolutionary Collectivist | Materialistic Competitive Individualistic | Globalist Questioning Oriented to self | Undefined ID "Communaholic" "Dialoguer" Realistic |
| Consumption | Ideology Vinyl and movies | Status Brands and cars Luxury articles | Experience Festivals and travel Flagships | Uniqueness Unlimited Ethical |

Table Source²⁶

Millennials and Gen Z share some travel behaviours, among which the following ones are the most relevant:

- intensive use of digital services and devices. Being “digital natives”, the use of technology is widespread among Gen Z and Y. OTAs are favourite channels for reservation of travel arrangements (transport, accommodation, local mobility etc.). Smartphone is

²⁶ European Travel Commission (2020), [Study on Generation Z Travellers. Brussels.](#)

best-loved device (mostly during travel for changes and cancellations), but PC continue largely to be used in pre-trip phase (typically for product comparison before buying).

- Attention for the environment and for ethical consumption. Both generations show high attention for environmental issues. They live an authentic feeling for climate change and correct sustainable behaviours.

There are instead travel behaviours that specifically characterise the two generations. With regard to Generation Z, their main travel trends are the following:

- vacation as purpose of travel. Most Zers travel for vacation. The Chinese, in particular, choose to travel in the EU to participate in leisure events (festivals, concerts and so on).
- Costs and safety as primary travel requirements. Gen Z prefers low cost suppliers (understandably, given they are just entering the global workforce and, therefore, are likely to still have limited spending capacity) anyway without renouncing basic safety requirements.
- [Word of Mouth](#) and online reviews as information basis for travelling. Word of Mouth (WOM) of friends and relatives represents a fundamental information basis for choosing travels, likewise online reviews.
- Hotel as favourite accommodation. This generation prefers hotels as travel accommodation though short term rentals play a not negligible role.

[Return to the index](#)

- Strong interest in local culture. Zers like to experience local culture in its different aspects. They consume local foods and beverages, visit museums, participate in local events, attend stores and malls and so on. Generally speaking, they travel continuing to live their passions.

With regard to Millennials, some of their main travel trends are the following:

- high frequency of trips. Millennials consider travel more important than other priorities and take more trips annually compared to other generations. However, trips tend to be shorter in duration compared to other demographic groups.
- Willingness to pay. Gen Y shows a good level of willingness to pay. They are attracted by luxury goods and this attitude reflects also on tourist consumptions (included food and beverage, shopping, hospitality, entertainment and so on).
- Preference for alternative accommodation. As a key market segment and supporter of the sharing economy, Millennials gave rise to peer-to-peer/ sharing economy accommodation, instead of booking a traditional hotel.
- Strong interests to live experiences. Millennials like to live experiences at different levels. Active vacations (i.e. biking, trekking...), but also relaxing ones (i.e. yoga meditation, wellness...) are very appreciated.

2.2.1.2. Seniors

Global demographic changes and the increasing participation of senior citizens in leisure tourism activities have prompted governments and tourism providers in many developed regions to identify seniors as a priority market²⁷.

Seniors (defined as those aged 65+ or 60+ as definitions vary²⁸) are considered as a demographic driver for medium-long term tourism. While showing many differences, this cohort, including baby boomers and previous generations, presents some common features that allow us to describe them together, as a whole group. The following list summarises these features.

- Mass tourism starters. Historically, these generations started the mass tourism phenomenon. This phenomenon began after the Second World War, mostly with industrial tour operators; then, it continued branching out in multiple vacation formats, both traditional (hotel/resort staying or short term rental) and more innovative (second home or time-sharing at best-loved destination).
- Economically safe. These generations grew up during

27 [Understanding tourist behaviour of senior citizens: lifecycle theory, continuity theory and a generational approach | Ageing & Society | Cambridge Core](#)

28 The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines 65 as the age of transition to 'senior' status, while the United Nations (UN) puts it at 60, considering geographic areas disadvantaged by low life expectancy at birth (even if in many occasions it is defined as 65+).

post war reconstruction, in a period of sustained economic growth. They enjoyed economic incomes, some higher, some lower, however guaranteed and exactly for this reason they were able to devote part of their income to tourism.

- Parents and grandparents. These generations have children and grandchildren. This status influences, at least in part, their behaviours and choices about travels and vacations, with 3-generation tourism being a growing market phenomenon.
- Glocalist mindset. These generations have matured, for education and life experience, a strong bond with their own national culture: in this sense they can be qualified as “local”. On the other hand, they are also those who lived the end of Cold War and the birth of globalisation. From this point of view they can be defined as “global”.
- Standard users of digital technologies. These generations became familiar with IT in adult or mature age at work. They use a smartphone to access simple services and, more frequently, a tablet and desktop computers preferably at home.

Seniors' Travel trends

On the basis of the brief profile sketched above it is possible to identify some of the seniors tourists' trends.

- Increasing age brings increasing access requirements due to age-related illnesses and impairments. There is a close correlation between increasing age and reduced abilities. Nevertheless, many seniors wish to maintain their travel habits as long as possible and will therefore seek accessible offers and services. Even those among them who are fitter and healthier thanks to the improved quality of life (active seniors) and may not require accessibility measures still benefit from them.
- Health safety requirements. Seniors, for age reasons, pay attention to health assistance during their journeys both for transfers and for staying at destinations. They show a high propensity to buy travel insurance services.
- Searching for relax and tranquillity. Seniors love safe and relaxing vacations. They do not search for adventures and are annoyed by complications.
- Loyalty to destinations and type of vacation. These tourists are loyal not just to destinations but also to type of vacation and related tourist services (hotels, restaurants, entertainment and so on): that is they are classic repeaters (although sometimes they may choose unusual travel).

[Return to the index](#)

- Careful and repeated expenditures. They spend money carefully with high attention but tend to enjoy repeat visits where they have a satisfying experience. In other words, they can guarantee certainty of incomes for destinations and tourist businesses.
- More discretionary income and more time to travel. Seniors in Europe travelled 4-5 times per year, pre-pandemic, and value tourism as an essential part of their lives.
- Partial Digital skills. Seniors use digital technologies primarily to get information on destination and tourist services. They may make less online transactions as they are not so familiar with internet technologies as younger age groups.

[A survey conducted in 2015 by AGE platform Europe](#)²⁹

confirms that while the needs and expectations of seniors vary in relation to age, health conditions, social and familiar constraints (e.g. care duties), there are common patterns and preferences:

- seniors prefer to travel with relatives or in a group;
- seniors travel with a budget of up to 100€ a day for 4-7 nights breaks;
- the preferred touristic themes are nature and culture, whose accessibility and security are rated as very important;
- summer and spring remain the most favoured seasons for travelling.

29 AGE Platform Europe is a European network of non-profit organisations of and for people aged 50+.

Respondents also mentioned the importance of safety in the sense of accessibility and web-accessibility.

The above brief descriptions of the senior demographic and travel trends are important considerations when planning a possible starting point to plan new tourist offers for short and long periods.

AnnaHugosson mediabank.visitstockholm.com



[Return to the index](#)

2.2.1.3 Emerging tourism trends

The COVID-19 pandemic, aspirations to tackle climate change, overtourism, the development of short-term rentals/online platforms³⁰, and their immediate impact, e.g. lack of authenticity at local destinations, explosion of garbage, unaffordable housing for locals, led to a shifting demand and new trends in tourism.

In recent years, many of the mainstream consumer-driven trends that have emerged in travel and tourism have demonstrated consumers' increasing interest to embrace sustainable tourism practices, such as off season, eco-tourism, cyclo-tourism, gastronomic tourism. Tourists are seeking authenticity, valuing nature and outdoor experiences, slow tourism (longer stay at fewer destinations), and often prefer sustainable transport choices. The pandemic has in some ways acted as an accelerator of both supply and demand trends that provide a significant opportunity for the public and private sectors to leave behind unsustainable practices and adopt new approaches as demand recovers.

30 The meteoric growth of online marketing platforms, such as Airbnb, has had a very high social cost for citizens, damaging housing accessibility and, promoting the expulsion of neighbors from the most touristic neighborhoods of the cities and the loss of the essence of these. See more in HOTREC recent paper on STR.

2.2.2. Sustainability

Some general considerations on sustainability in tourism³¹

Sustainability, that is ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care and social well-being in order to fulfil the needs of current generations without compromising those of future generations, has become a worldwide imperative. Most of actual global emergencies are concerned, more or less directly, with the sustainability issue.

With regard to tourism, it is sustainable when it “takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities” (UNWTO³²).

The tourism industry, equal to other industries, is involved in this major issue. It can cause environmental threats (let us think of the phenomenon of overtourism), but it can also be threatened by global environmental decay (i.e. climate change).

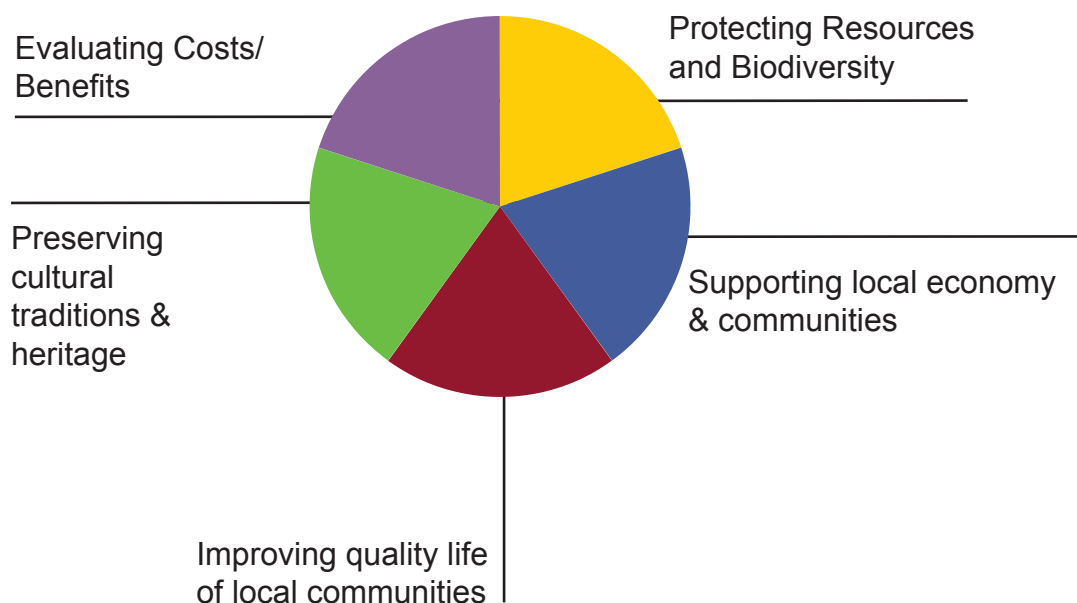
When talking about sustainability of tourism, it is important to think about how to produce sustainable forms of tourism rather than about specific tourism products considered “sustainable”. For example, it is easy to think that practising trekking on hills and mountains is more

31 European Travel Commission (2021), [Encouraging Sustainable Tourism Practices, Brussels](#)

32 UNWTO - [Sustainable development](#)

sustainable (“greener”) than going to crowded beaches of popular sea destinations. But if, to reach the starting point of the excursion, tourists use a high consumption cross-country vehicle, consume food and beverages contained in plastic packaging and so on, it is doubtful that this is green tourism.

Five golden rules for sustainable tourism



All in all, sustainable tourism is not a product line or a market niche but an approach to tourism management that involves policymakers, destination communities, tourism businesses, and including tourists themselves. Sustainable tourism management implies the respect of at least the following requirements:

-
1. Management of possible negative impacts (minimisation) and sharing of benefits for destination and local people (maximisation).
 2. Protection of natural resources and biodiversity.
 3. Respect, preservation and enhancement of cultural traditions and heritage.
 4. Support and strengthening of local economies and communities.
 5. Improvement of quality of life of local communities and their involvement in tourism government.
-

The above listed criteria are essential to develop an authentic sustainable tourism whatever the type of tourism might be: there is no future for tourism without sustainability.

A recent report by European Travel Commission dedicated to sustainable tourism presents case studies showing how organisations in both the public and private sectors are working to encourage the implementation of sustainable tourism practices by operators and more responsible choices by tourists³³.

33 European Travel Commission (2021), Encouraging Sustainable Tourism Practices, Brussels. [ETC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM HANDBOOK vs6 FINAL.pdf \(etc-corporate.org\)](https://etc-corporate.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ETC-SUSTAINABLE-TOURISM-HANDBOOK-vs6-FINAL.pdf)

2.2.2.1 Sustainability, accessibility and inclusion in tourism

Sustainable development has impacts on the so-called “Triple Bottom Line” of environmental, social and economic factors. The application of Universal Design (UD) principles³⁴ in the creation of accessible tourism environments, products and services contributes to all these areas of sustainability by saving human, financial and environmental resources³⁵. The UD approach takes into account the requirements of the widest possible range of users of all ages and abilities.

This entails significant benefits for sustainability:

- tourism buildings and environments that are designed to be accessible and usable by everyone (or designed for easy adaptation) do not require expensive or major re-building. This minimises the need for renovations over the lifetime of buildings and facilities³⁶.
- The need for fewer building adaptations reduces the demand for building materials, saving environmental resources, transportation costs and the costs of demolition and recycling.

34 A detailed description of Universal Design will be provided in Module 2

35 See: [Accessible tourism and sustainability: a discussion and case study](#). Simon Darcy, Bruce Cameron and Shane Pegg, (2010). Journal of Sustainable Tourism (18, no. 4, pp.515-537)

36 See: [Joseph Roentree Foundation, Consumer and industry views of Lifetime Homes](#)

- Environmental design, including landscaping, with considerations for accessibility such as step-free access and choice of surface materials for paths, contributes to comfort and safety, reducing accidents.
- The application of UD in service design takes into account the requirements of the widest range of users/ consumers, ensuring that accessibility and inclusion are integral to the service, reducing or removing the need for “additional” services (and therefore additional costs) for persons who may not fit the “average” or norm. This supports inclusive solutions, which in turn promotes social sustainability in communities and destinations.
- The focus on ageing and disability in the context of tourism involves a series of interrelated, overlapping and interdependent business arrangements that extend beyond the business entity through a series of social networks within the destination region. Accessible and inclusive tourism acts as a driver of sustainability across the tourism value chain.

Accessibility and inclusion are represented in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs), in particular in the Goals: 10 Reduced Inequalities, 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities and 12 Responsible Consumption and Production³⁷. Tourism has a key role to play in achieving the global targets that have been set for the year 2030³⁸.

37 See: [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

38 See [UNWTO Sustainable Tourism for Development](#)

Norway | Photo by Michel Afflerbach



[Return to the index](#)



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2.2.2.2 Best Practices

Four city examples are listed below. Two of them represent good practices in combining sustainability and accessibility. The other two holistically addressed sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation and innovative mobility solutions.

Telšiai (Lithuania)³⁹

Telšiai is one of the oldest cities in Lithuania, probably dating earlier than the 14th century. It is one of the seven so called "preserved historical town" and thanks to its historical monuments, its unique architectonic style and its natural context, is considered an important tourist destination in Lithuania.

In 2013 it was awarded as one of the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)⁴⁰ for Sustainability, with a specific focus on Accessibility.

The town won the EDEN award for accessibility as most of its sites, museums, pedestrian and biking paths are easily accessible even for people with physical limitations,

³⁹ [Winning EDEN destinations in Lithuania](#)

⁴⁰ The European Commission introduced EDEN in 2007 as an initiative to reward non-traditional, emerging sustainable tourism destinations in Europe based on national competitions. It addresses smaller tourism destinations, which can showcase their outstanding achievements in sustainability and inspire other tourism destinations in their green transition. Moreover, every year a theme is chosen to showcase Europe's diversity, always related to sustainable tourism development, whether from a cultural, economic, environmental or local involvement point of view. In 2013 the chosen theme was Accessibility.

disabled or elderly. It is comfortable for families with small children to move around.

Moreover, hotels offer accommodation for people with limited mobility and special excursions in sign language are provided for the deaf-mute people.

Photo by [Charlie Phillips on Flickr](#)



Pistoia (Italy)⁴¹

Pistoia is a nice town in Tuscany, situated near Florence. The most famous artistic attractor of the city is the architectural complex around the catholic cathedral but Pistoia offers also a fascinating old town as well as a wonderful natural surroundings embedded by Apennines mountains.

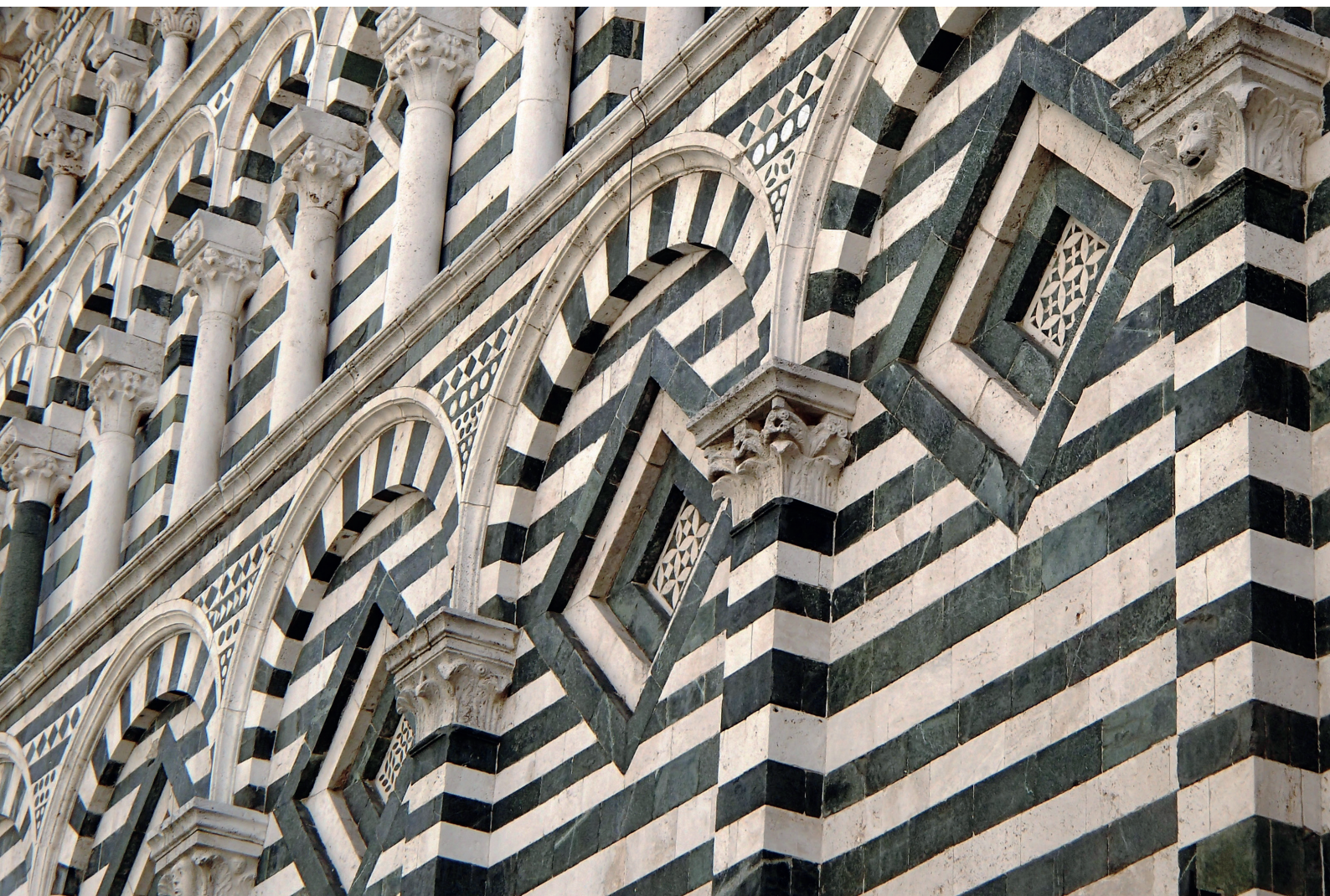
As Telšiai, in 2013 the city won the EDEN award in the Accessible Tourism category, being considered visitor-friendly and easily visited by people with disabilities, families with young children or elderly people.

In fact, thanks to the project '**Pistoia for all**', the local authorities together with associations and operators have improved the accessibility of tourist services. Some examples of this commitment are the following:

- a wheelchair friendly walk in the old city which is closed to traffic in most areas;
- a tactile museum presenting the city to the visually impaired through the sense of touching;
- an underground walk through caverns accessible to people with reduced mobility or visual impairment;
- accessible nature rails.

⁴¹ [Winning EDEN destinations in Italy](#)

Photo by bluefootedbooby on [flickr](#)



[Return to the index](#)



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Ljubljana (Slovenia)⁴²

Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia and eminent Hapsburg City, is a historical crossroads of Slavic, German and Latin culture. The city in recent years has chosen to undertake an innovation path whose key words are sustainability, accessibility, digitisation and innovative mobility solutions, for which it obtained the European Green Capital Award in 2016, won the silver prize at the European Commission competition Access City Award in 2018⁴³, and was shortlisted in the 2022 competition European Capitals of Smart Tourism⁴⁴.

The most important initiatives undertaken include the following:

- the city network of cycling paths has steadily increased over time and currently it has over 300km of bike lanes;
- the URBANA smart card / App allows quick and convenient cash-free payment for city passenger transport services;
- emission-free electric vehicles enables the elderly and disabled people to move easily around the city centre;
- an increasing number of cash machines are positioned

42 [European Capitals of Smart Tourism](#)

43 The Access City Award was created by the European Commission in May 2010 to reward cities that have prioritised accessibility for persons with disabilities.

44 The European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative recognises outstanding achievements by European cities as tourism destinations in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation as well as cultural heritage and creativity. This EU initiative aims to promote smart tourism in the EU, network and strengthen destinations, and facilitate the exchange of best practices. [An EU initiative to reward innovative and smart tourism in European Cities! \(europa.eu\)](#)

at lower levels and many are equipped with braille for the visually impaired;

- wheelchair App gives advice on more than 130 wheelchair-accessible locations;
- playgrounds for children with disabilities have been built and many of them also include training stations for the elderly.

Ljubljana view | Photo by Bluebook srl



Valencia (Spain)⁴⁵

Valencia is the third largest city in Spain. Place of important industrial settlements, about 30 years ago it invested in tourism development. Known as a sea and cultural destination, it was able to become also an important fair centre and event venue.

Its tourism sector has developed innovative practices, making it win the award as European Capital of Smart Tourism in 2022. It has several Sustainable Action Plans that aim at reducing CO₂ emission and monitoring the social sustainability of tourism activity.

With regard to accessibility, Valencia's city representatives work closely with **PREDIF - State Representative Platform of People with Physical Disability**, and 52 of Valencia's tourist entities and companies meet the requirements of PREDIF's inclusive tourism programme. Accessible tours are widely available for those with reduced mobility, as well as in several languages. Information offices offer braille translations and pictograms, as well as the 24/7 interactive InfoTourist platform and the Visualfy system: an AI system that sends visual notifications to users' devices.

Moreover, the city is well-connected by over 164 km of cycle lanes, high-speed trains, motorways and its port which all have features for passengers requiring additional assistance.

45 [VALENCIA - European Capital of Smart Tourism 2022 \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/valencia-european-capital-smart-tourism-2022)

Mercado central en Valencia, España | Photo by [freepik](#)



[Return to the index](#)



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the European Union

Glossary

Museo Egizio - Torino | Photo by Bluebook srl



[Return to the index](#)

Augmented reality (AR) [\(return\)](#)

Any technology that 'augments' the user's visual (and in some case auditory) perception of the environment. Typically, digital information is superimposed over an existing environment / real-world objects.

For example, thanks to AR, tourists visiting monuments can use mobile devices to display additional information and overlapping multimedia content (videos and 3D animations), see their evolutions over time, see reconstructions and 3D environments where ruins are present, and so on.

Big Data [\(return\)](#)

Large data sets, structured or unstructured, whose processing requests high performance systems. The phenomenon of big data has emerged in connection with the enormous production of data by a wide variety of digital devices (e.g., web servers, smartphones, video surveillance systems, etc.). Storing and processing this huge amount of data requires much higher performance software and hardware systems than traditional transactional systems (used for example to book hotel rooms, record charges, issue invoices etc.).

Business intelligence (BI) [\(return\)](#)

Searching for business opportunities through data analysis. The execution of business processes produces data. By analysing this data with digital tools (e.g., with statistical software), it is possible to thoroughly

understand the behaviour of tourists and, as a result, design more accurate (even customised) and profitable offers. Or even, analysing business cost data (e.g., electricity costs) makes it possible to generate significant energy savings without impacting service quality.

Content Management [\(return\)](#)

Process aimed to manage various types of contents (texts, audios, graphics, videos) typically in a web environment. It is supported by specific software systems named Content Management Systems (CMS). Typically, a CMS allows a user without specific computer skills to manage (insert, edit, delete) the content of a site web pages.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

[\(return\)](#)

Marketing approach, implemented through specific software, aimed at maintaining long-term relationships with customers. A CRM system collects data on each customer, from various sources (data on consumption, inquiries, reservations, on complaints, payments etc.), and seeks to understand and anticipate their expectations in order to establish and maintain mutually satisfactory relationships over time.

Decision Support System (DSS) [\(return\)](#)

Software system aimed at supporting management in business decisions. A DSS collects data from various sources, internal and external to the company, displays

them in tables, graphs etc., and makes suggestions based on statistical-mathematical models. For example, a DSS can provide analysis on costs and revenues in previous periods and make forecasts of future costs and revenues, etc.

European Committee for Standardisation (CEN)

[\(return\)](#)

Association officially recognized by the European Union and by the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) as being responsible for developing and defining voluntary standards at European level. CEN brings together the National Standardization Bodies of 34 European countries and provides a platform for the development of European Standards and other technical documents in relation to various kinds of products, materials, services and processes, including health and safety, healthcare, services and transport.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI) [\(return\)](#)

Indicator, quantitative or qualitative, representative of a specific business performance. A typical KPI might be the number of product units produced, the percentage level of energy costs rather than human resources employed, and so on.

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

[\(return\)](#)

Specialised agency of the United Nations that coordinates the principles and techniques of international air

navigation, and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth. ICAO adopts standards and recommended practices concerning air navigation, its infrastructure and facilitation of border-crossing procedures for international civil aviation.

International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) [\(return\)](#)

International non-profit organisation established in 1963 under the name of International Bureau of Social Tourism (BITS). Bringing together stakeholders from the social, sustainable and solidarity tourism sectors from all over the world, ISTO promotes accessible and responsible tourism.

Internet of Things (IOT) [\(return\)](#)

Applicative extension of Internet technology supporting interactions between man and physical objects (things) or among physical objects. For this purpose, each object involved must have appropriate data storage, processing and communication capabilities. For example, using the smartphone to interact, remotely, with the home heating system or the home security system. Or a machine can self-diagnose a fault, activate appropriate safety procedures and send the repair request to the technical service centre.

Low-touch economy [\(return\)](#)

Low-touch economy refers to the way businesses across

the globe have been forced to operate as a result of COVID-19. More in general, the low-touch economy, also called the contactless economy, refers to interpersonal and other interactions (for example with surfaces, handles etc.) that consist of no or minimum physical contact. The main goal is to prevent germs spreading through touching different surfaces or being in close and direct proximity of other people in business environments.

Metaverse [\(return\)](#)

Digital virtual space, with some degree of verisimilitude, where humans, as avatars, interact with each other and can work, play, shop, socialise just as they would in real life.

Open Data [\(return\)](#)

Open data are digital datasets, belonging to public or private organisations, that are made public and usable by anyone. For example, a local government may decide to publish data sets about tourism flows related to its area of responsibility. Similarly, the manager of a public parking lot may share data about parked vehicles. Open data are important because they provide insight into the dynamics of a tourism destination.

Overtourism [\(return\)](#)

Overtourism is "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way" (UNWTO). As usual, the

phenomenon of overtourism is caused by an excessive concentration of tourists (geographic and/or time-based) resulting in congestion and overcrowding of the destination and/or tourist attractions. The challenge for the most affected destinations becomes managing tourism rather than increasing the number of tourists.

Performance Management (PM) [\(return\)](#)

Business process designed to monitor the organisation's achievement of specific performance objectives.

Management sets goals (usually represented by ranges of values of specific target KPIs) and monitoring dates.

As the business progresses, the KPIs are calculated and compared with the target KPIs. Based on the comparison, corrective actions are taken.

Property Management Systems (PMS)

[\(return\)](#)

Computer based information systems that facilitate the day-to-day operations of any accommodation business such as reservations, front desk, housekeeping, maintenance, billing and revenue data analytics. They offer managers the possibility to handle the entire property with a unique software system. The main aim of a PMS is to speed up and optimise the existing processes to save hotel managers' time and resources.

Tourism Product [\(return\)](#)

For the purposes of this paper, we can define tourism product as "a combination of tangible and intangible

elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific centre of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle" (UNWTO).

Virtual reality (VR) [\(return\)](#)

Technology that provides a computer-generated 3D environment (including both computer graphics and 360-degree video) that surrounds a user and responds to an individual's actions in a natural way, usually through immersive head-mounted displays. Gesture recognition or handheld controllers provide hand and body tracking, and haptic (or touch-sensitive) feedback may be incorporated. For example, thanks to VR, tourists are able to experience a destination in advance and to preview local attractions. Interactive, realistic, easy and detailed VR navigations help tourists in the trip-planning processes and activity planning.

Word of Mouth [\(return\)](#)

The process of telling people you know about a particular product or service, usually because you think it is good and want to encourage them to try it. Word of mouth is the most successful form of communication in influencing purchase choices. In digital marketing, word of mouth

refers to the dissemination, through social networks, of information, advice, opinions, and evaluations between a person and an audience: there is no longer a personal relationship between storyteller and audience. Word-of-mouth marketing is the result of promotion or other influence from a company.

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

[\(return\)](#)

United Nations agency for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)

[\(return\)](#)

Global authority on the economic and social contribution of Travel & Tourism. WTTC promotes sustainable growth for the Travel & Tourism sector, working with governments and international institutions to create jobs, drive exports and generate prosperity. Council Members are the Chairs, Presidents and Chief Executives of the world's leading private sector Travel & Tourism businesses.



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