

Public strategies to rescue the hospitality industry following the impact of COVID-19: A case study of the European Union

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a “zero tourism” situation throughout the world with unpredictable consequences. Several authors analyzed the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic during the second trimester of 2020, but none of them have specifically examined European Union countries and the joint actions taken to fight the pandemic. Using a case study methodology, this paper presents a literature review of the most up-to-date studies on the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Secondly, we specify the different public intervention measures implemented by the European Union in accordance with supranational governance theory and stakeholder theory. Finally, we set out the different COVID-19-related public rescue strategies for the tourism and hospitality sector at the individual level (for tourists), at the business level (for touristic companies) and at the destination level (for the European Union countries), from the perspective of stakeholders. The main contribution of our research is therefore to explore the public strategies to rescue the tourism and hospitality sector in the context of the European Union.

1. Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global pandemic as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, which has led to an unprecedented situation across the planet that not even the two World Wars created. This global pandemic has affected all sectors and countries and also the lives of all citizens. International travelers were among those primarily affected in the early stages of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus infection, and, since tourism is one of the largest growing industries globally, it is ironically expected to play a significant role in the socio-economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2005, Osterholm warned that in a pandemic, the global economy would grind to a halt and, since appropriate vaccines would not be available for a long time and given the limited stocks of antiviral drugs, the scenario would be similar to that of 1918 (the Spanish Flu). This would lead to the closure of borders to prevent the spread and even restrictions on foreign travel and commercial activity.

Related to that, at the end of March 2020 almost three billion people were in some form of lockdown. In the period from March 24 to April 20, 2020, 100% of the world's destinations (217) imposed different travel restrictions and even in April 2020 there were 180 destinations that had

travel limitations in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, of which 107 destinations had closed their borders or had suspended flights (UNWTO, 2020a, 2020b). In light of this, the hospitality industry is perhaps the sector to be most affected by the globally accepted measures to combat the virus, which include confinement and border closures.

Different scenarios have been predicted for the strongest economies worldwide. In that respect, very recently, Zhang (2020), and Li and Zhang (2020) estimated that China's GDP growth would be 5.0% (with a reduction of 5.6% compared to 2019). Other analysts' estimates ranged from a reduction of 0.8% of real GDP if the epidemic were to be controlled within three months, to a 1.9% cost to GDP if the COVID-19 epidemic were to last for nine months (McCloskey and Heymann, 2020). In March 2020, Fernandes (2020) also described various different potential scenarios with GDP losses ranging from 3% to 6%, to 10% or more than 15%, depending on the country, and McKibbin and Fernando (2020) estimated the total loss of GDP for 24 industrial nations under seven different scenarios depending on the severity of the pandemic, as between \$283 billion and \$9.2 trillion.

During this period, the Deutsche Bank report "Impact of COVID-19 on the global economy: beyond the abyss" (2020), determined two different scenarios, forecasting an 11.4% decrease in GDP for the Eurozone but also a 14.7% decrease in the Eurozone in a prolonged

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scenario. It also estimate that public debt in France could increase by between 15% and 25% points, while Spain's public debt could rise to approximately 120% of GDP and Italy's to 160% of GDP. In 2021, unemployment rates would peak at around 12% in the USA and 11% in the EU, although that figure would be more than double in Spain.

However, although several authors recently analyzed the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (Beyer et al., 2021; McCloskey and Heymann, 2020; Fernandes, 2020; McKibbin and Fernando, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020), only a few of them have studied public strategies to rescue the tourism and hospitality industry within different countries (Androniceanu, 2020; McCartney, 2020). The main contribution of our research is therefore to explore the public intervention measures implemented for the tourism and hospitality sector and the local regional responses to this global pandemic crisis in the context of the European Union. Also, to the best of our knowledge, ours is the first study to establish useful rescue strategies for the tourism and hospitality sector that specifically address the case of Europe.

First we present a literature review with definitions of key concepts such as crisis and disaster in order to understand the COVID-19 characterization. In this section, we review the most up-to-date studies on the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which examine ways to manage uncertainty and analyze the different consequences arising from this global health disaster and its resulting economic crisis. Through the framework of supranational governance theory and stakeholder theory, we go on to explain the conceptual relationship between national and supranational decision-making processes. Through the triangulation model we obtained contextual and comparative data in our case-based research. Our review of the EU strategies for reactivating tourism in member states highlights the similarities between the stakeholders of the various EU countries and the existence of convergent interests within them, even though the effects of the pandemic are asymmetrical. Finally, we examine some of the theoretical and practical implications of our study as well as limitations and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature review

In this section, we first explore definitions of concepts such as crisis and disaster, in order to be able to answer the question of whether we could prevent a similar crisis in the future. Secondly, we review multidisciplinary studies recently published by tourism and public health academics in different countries to examine how uncertainty can be successfully managed in the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirdly, we set out theories regarding the governance of EU member states to better explain the conceptual relationship between national and supranational decision making and to answer the question of whether homogeneous public policy measures can be applied. Also, with reference to stakeholder theory, we explore planning and development issues and the various stakeholders with either a high or low degree of involvement. Finally, an analysis of the European Union COVID-19 responses allows us to confirm that the majority of the stakeholders involved have been taken into account.

2.1. Can we prevent a similar crisis in the future? Conceptualization of disasters and crises and the COVID-19 characterization

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction defines a disaster as a serious disruption of the functioning of society at any scale due to dangerous events that interact with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following effects: human, material, economic and/or environmental losses and impacts. Authors like Blaikie (1996), Blaikie et al. (2014), Calderón Aragón (2001) and Maskrey (1993) define the result of uncontrolled risks as a disaster, and Juárez Villanueva (2019) defines it as a package of elements such as risks, threats, vulnerabilities, resilience and degrees of exposure. Also, Prideaux et al. (2003) suggest that a disaster can be described as an unpredictable catastrophic change that can

normally only be responded to after the event by implementing contingency plans or through reactive responses. Others consider issues such as the unforeseen nature of disasters, governments' failure to properly prepare for such disasters, and social or political losses (Cuny, 1983).

Furthermore, a crisis is defined as a low probability, high impact event that threatens the viability of an organization and is characterized by the ambiguity of the cause, effect and means of resolution, as well as the belief that decisions must be taken quickly (Pearson and Clair, 1998; Mair et al., 2016). Previously, Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) considered a crisis to be an interruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic structures, while Barton (1993) suggests that a crisis is a major and unpredictable event that has potentially negative results. In addition, Fearn-Banks (1996) refers to a crisis as an important event with a potentially negative outcome that affects an organization, company or industry, as well as its audiences, products, services or reputation.

In the tourism sector, a crisis is any event, caused by internal and external factors (see Table 1), that brings or has the potential to bring an organization into disrepute and imperils its future long-term profitability (Lerbing, 1997; Stafford et al., 2006).

Therefore, based on these definitions of a disaster, it may not be possible to prevent a health disaster like COVID-19 in the future. This extraordinary situation, which has seen the closure of tourism markets and destinations and the collapse of customer demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, could only be compared with the consequences

Table 1
Categorization and examples of crises.

| Major factors | Specific environment | Type of Crisis | Example of Crisis |
|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---|
| External factors | Physical environment | Natural disaster | Earthquake and tsunami damage coastal resort property; volcano eruption scares away tourists |
| | | Technology failure | Oil spill contaminates a resort beach and prevents tourists from visiting resort |
| | Human/Social environment | Confrontation | Hotel union strike disrupts normal operations; special interest group boycotts fast food |
| | | Epidemic | Mad cow disease and foot and mouth disease raise concerns about food safety and health problems; SARS epidemic spreads through human contact |
| | | Malevolence | September 11 attack on NY and Washington DC; product tampering by poisoning food; extortion by threatening to introduce a virus into computer reservation systems |
| | | War/Political conflict | Second Gulf War keeps many international tourists from Middle East region; recent political upheaval reduces tourism to Haiti, Venezuela and some African countries |
| Internal factors | Management failures | Skewed values | Cruise ships dump waste oil into ocean, placing economic value over concern for the environment |
| | | Deception | Knowing the food item is contaminated, the restaurant continues to serve it to the customers |
| | | Misconduct | Corporate CFO embezzles funds and receives kickbacks |

Source: Stafford et al. (2006) adapted from Lerbing (1997). The Crisis Manager: Facing Risk and Responsibility. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; pp 10–14

generated by the two World Wars and biological catastrophes that have occurred throughout different moments in world history, in terms of the impact on mobility and social interaction (Gössling et al., 2020; Ozili and Arun, 2020).

Given their random nature, in order to measure the economic effects of previous pandemics and other global events, it is necessary to use extensive time series data and consistent measurement variables in most of the affected countries (Barro, 2006). In that regard, and based on a loss to GDP of up to 15% per capita being an economic disaster, there have been at least 60 world events with adverse economic effects (Barro and Ursua, 2008).

Most relevant economic effects were compounded by: (a) time overlap with the First World War; (b) a poor health system; (c) the absence of treatments for pneumonia as an influenza complication; and (d) the non-existence of virology, which began with the appearance of the electron microscope in the 1930s (Tomasí, 2020), and led to a 6% decrease in GDP in the affected countries and an 8% decline in private consumption (Barro et al., 2020). In November 2002, SARS spread very quickly from China to Southeast Asia and other parts of the world (Alan et al., 2006). In April 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Guangzhou and Hong Kong to be high-risk destinations and began restricting the entry of Chinese citizens in many countries. Images of many people on the streets, in hospitals and at airports wearing face masks were distributed around the world. The consequence was a decrease in international tourist arrivals of between 25% and 70%, and a decrease in domestic tourists of between 50% and 90%. The recovery time was estimated to be between three and seven months (Zeng et al., 2005), depending on the nature and severity of the event (see Table 2).

Accordingly, the most recent information available from an analysis by the Asian Development Bank on 96 economies affected by outbreaks with more than 4 million cases of COVID-19, predicts that the global economy could suffer losses of between \$5.8 trillion and \$8.8 trillion, equivalent to 6.4–9.7% of global GDP (Park et al., 2020). This report includes possible changes to tourism, consumption, investment, commercial and production links, transmission channels and supply interruptions that negatively affect production and investment, as well as the effects that would result from the responses of different governments to mitigate the global economic impact of COVID-19.

2.2. How can we manage uncertainty in the COVID-19 global pandemic?

As COVID-19 spreads across the world, researchers in the medical, health and social sciences continue to share multidisciplinary insights in order to shed some light on how to manage uncertainty in this pandemic. In this sense, Wen et al. (2020) recently launched a call for a cross-disciplinary team of tourism and public health academics to cooperate as part of a collaborative, interdisciplinary research project on COVID-19 (within and outside tourism) as a way to enhance social welfare. In an attempt to answer this call, the study by Gössling et al. (2020) discusses how the pandemic may change society, the economy and tourism, and the need to question the volume growth tourism model.

First, within the international context, Ranasinghe et al. (2020) recently studied the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic and how the tourism, hotel and MICE industry in Sri Lanka can recover. Muzakki (2020) explores the impact of COVID-19 on the global political economy in Indonesia, while McCartney (2020) explains how the government has implemented corporate social responsibility actions in Macao, including financial support for the local community. In the Philippines, Mendoza (2020) outlines a framework to better understand the different phases of the COVID-19 crisis response, spanning relief, recovery and the possible “new normal”. He addresses the delicate balancing act between economic and health policies, and contributes to the crisis response literature by advocating for the development of a more inclusive healthcare system in the Philippines in order to ensure a more stable economic recovery. In addition, Mendoza (2020) suggests that countries with

Table 2
Categorization of crises and recovery time.

| Nature of crisis | Effect | Recovery time |
|---|--|--|
| Human epidemic | Rapid decline in arrivals. Significant media interest. Reduction in consumer confidence in health infrastructure. | Rapid after media stories cease and health organizations announce the crisis is over. Continuation of precautionary action by tourists. Dependent on perception of risk. 3–7 months |
| Example 1: 2003 SARS epidemic, China | Rapid 25–70% decline in international tourist arrivals and 50–90% decline in domestic tourists | |
| Animal epidemic | Reduction in arrivals, increases if link to human health confirmed. Indirect media interest | Rapid once epidemic is controlled. Some sustained consumer behavior changes (a precautionary action). Dependent on perception of risk. |
| Example 2: 2001 foot-and-mouth outbreak, UK | 9% decline in overseas arrivals | 1–2 years, although terrorism threat may be slowing complete recovery (source: Frisby, 2003) |
| Destructive weather conditions and other natural disasters | Severely damaged tourism infrastructure. Rapid decline in arrivals. Transitory media interest. | Dependent on infrastructure destruction, especially public services (e.g. power and potable water). Slow but responsive to reconstruction rate. Enhanced by marketing 2 years plus (SPTO, 2003; Mimura, 2008) |
| Example 3: 2001 cyclone, Vanuatu Example 4: 1999 earthquake, Taiwan | 7.3–13.8% decline in tourist arrivals 15% decline in tourist arrivals | 11 months (source:) |
| Civil strife/violence | Decline dependent on level, location and extent of strife. The longer the strife continues, the greater the effect. Sporadic media interest. | Dependent on extent of infrastructure destruction and length of time the strife continues. Delayed, dependent on perceived level of risk. Responsive to media images/reports of civil harmony. |
| Example 5: 2000 Fiji coup Example 6: 1998–2000 civil conflict, Solomon Islands Example 7: 2000 civil turbulence, Papua New Guinea | 28.3% decline in tourist arrivals 67.0% decline in tourist arrivals 13.4% decline in tourist arrivals | 2–3 years (SPTO, 2003; Mimura, 2008) 3 years plus (SPTO, 2003; Mimura, 2008) 3 years plus (SPTO, 2003; Mimura, 2008) |
| War or terrorism | Severely damaged tourism infrastructure. Rapid decline in arrivals. Reduction in consumer confidence in security. Continuing media interest. | Dependent on: Extent of infrastructure destruction, length of time the war or terrorism continues Rate of infrastructure re-establishment. Slow but responsive to governmental endeavors to rebuild consumer confidence in security. 2 years plus (source: ITA, 2003) |
| Example 8: September 11, 2001 terrorism, USA | 32.56% decline in non-resident arrivals | |

Source: Zeng et al. (2005).

more inclusive healthcare and social protection systems did not need to resort to containment measures.

Secondly, from an economic perspective, this pandemic has revealed the vulnerability of countries with deeply service-based economies (Dinarto et al., 2020; Kumar, 2020; Fernandes, 2020), such as Spain,

Italy, Greece and Portugal, with forecasted losses of up to 10% of GDP growth (Dolnicar and Zare, 2020; Fernandes, 2020). This reflects the negative relationship between an epidemic disease (health sector) and the tourism sector (Pforr and Hosie, 2008; Kongoley-MIH, 2015; Karim et al., 2020), since in these countries, the impacts on tourism demand and travel suppliers have been significant (Nicola et al., 2020) and the sector's recovery will be slower than for other business (Cassedy, 1992). Within this context, public strategies to help the hospitality industry recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are needed. In Europe, Bénassy-Quéré et al. (2020) recently pointed out that Europe needs a catastrophe relief plan. They discuss the importance of policy responses such as: (a) existing EU funds, including the European Solidarity Fund and the European Globalization Adjustment Fund; (b) reallocations within the EU budget, specifically through the mobilization of budgetary credits earmarked for the structural funds in the 2020 budget; and (c) cooperation among member states outside the framework of the EU budget. These authors believed that the EU had been initially slow to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, but things have changed more recently with restructuring in some sectors and the introduction of an equity fund to help SMEs survive the crisis.

Also, with regard to different public policies applied after the COVID-19 crisis, we have noted certain differences in the literature depending on the country analyzed. For example, in Greece, some authors like Papadimitriou et al. (2020) predicted a 90% drop in the number of tourists visiting Greece in the first three quarters of 2020, a moderate increase in the government's expenditure on goods and services and an increase of about €600 million in social benefits. Thus, they anticipated that the payment of direct taxes and social contributions would be postponed until 2021, that public debt would increase to 207% of GDP, and that governmental measures would be introduced to increase public consumption and investment through EU grants and loans over a four-year period.

With respect to other tourist destinations, authors like Nientied and Shutina (2020) developed a case study for Western Balkan tourism involving a post-COVID-19 transition towards a new tourism (based on developing policies and practices for sustainable tourism). Elsewhere, Harba et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study to assess the current situation in Romania, and discussed a set of recommendations for the restart of tourism post COVID-19. In addition, Androniceanu (2020) performed a comparative analysis of the measures that the governments of the European Union member states have taken to manage the COVID-19 disaster. His study contains recommendations for the governments of the member states to help solve the problems facing their health systems and to relaunch their economies. These recommendations could help the EU institutions to develop a coherent strategy for a rapid social and economic recovery.

However, in the context of the European Union, our study is the first one to explore the public intervention measures and local regional responses to this global pandemic crisis, and also, to the best of our knowledge, the first one to establish useful rescue strategies for the tourism and hospitality sector that specifically address the case of Europe.

As we have mentioned, hospitality is one of the world's largest industries. However, it is also highly vulnerable to major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the hotel industry has been among the hardest hit (UNWTO, 2020a, 2020b), perhaps due in part to a loss of confidence in an activity that relies heavily on human contact. Current scenarios point to declines of 58–78% in international tourist arrivals for the year, depending on the speed of the containment and the duration of travel restrictions and border closures (UNWTO, 2020a, 2020b). Consequently, since the public health crisis began, hotels have already lost more than \$46 billion in room revenue in the US, and are on track to lose up to \$400 million in room revenue per day based on current occupancy rates and revenue trends (American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2020). In Europe, revenue per available room (RevPAR) fell by over 66.2% in March as the virus began to spread, dropping to 95% by April (Luty,

2020). In France, the hotel occupancy rate was as low as 3.3% on March 17 (compared to 65.3% on February 26). That month saw restaurants and bars temporarily closing in almost all EU member states, with the exception of Sweden. Many hotels, restaurants and bars have laid off thousands of workers permanently or temporarily and some hotels and Airbnb hosts offered medical workers free accommodation. Some hotels are also being turned into temporary hospitals (Niestadt, 2020a, 2020b). In Germany, since March 2020, hotel occupancy has decreased by more than 36% compared to the previous year (Fairmas GmbH, 2020) and in Spain the tourism industry continues to feel the impact of the pandemic, with a fall of 71.7% in visitor numbers in the first semester of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.

However, some preliminary findings suggest that customers will not immediately return as soon as hotels reopen (Gursoy et al., 2020). Some authors believe that a recovery to pre-COVID-19 levels could take until 2023 or later (Krishnan et al., 2020).

2.3. Conceptual relationship between national and supranational decision making: supranational governance and stakeholder theory in the EU public responses to COVID-19

Some authors agree with Monnet's theory that 'the EU will be forged in crises and will be the sum of the solutions in those crises', which appears to endorse further EU integration (Matthijs, 2017, 2020; Schelkle, 2017), involving the transfer of powers from the member states to supranational institutions.

The two most widely held theories that attempt to explain the governance of EU member states are: (1) intergovernmentalism, according to which member states are the ones controlling the policy decision-making, its processes and its outcomes (Garrett, 1992; Hoffmann, 1982; Moravcsik, 1993; Schimmelfennig, 2003; Bickerton et al., 2015a, 2015b), and (2) supranationalism, which revolves around political decision-making by organizations that go beyond the national sphere (Volodin et al., 2011; Niemann and Ioannou, 2015; Börzel and Risse, 2018; Thaler, 2020; Matthijs, 2020). If these policies are implemented by the EU's own institutions, then it is supranational decision making (Büthe, 2016). Other authors such as Grande (1996) add a third level, the regional level, which refers to the ability of European regions to make decisions within the scope of their responsibilities (Reigner, 2001; Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Blatter et al., 2008; Jeffery, 2015).

In order to examine if homogeneous public policy measures can be applied within the framework of the European Union, we have to consider the main economic recovery program developed by the EU, the Next Generation EU plan, as evidence that homogeneous public policy measures can be applied in Europe. However, the development of these measures is left to each member state. Accordingly, under the framework of this homogenous policy, it is decentralized in each member state. Related to this, Warntjen (2004), pointed out that the supranational institutions (the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice) were set up to ensure compliance with the common regulations of EU member states and to promote the implementation of future policies in different areas. These institutions develop their own initiatives and an increasing number of powers are delegated at the supranational level in a "loop of institutionalization" (Sweet and Sandholtz, 1998). Currently, in an international pandemic situation, only public European institutions have the capacity to make final binding decisions as far as the European Union is concerned, and they can therefore be seen as the main decision makers. To ensure an effective EU response to the COVID-19 crisis, the European Commission is mobilizing a number of instruments through its Next Generation EU program to address three different matters: a) supporting member states and helping them to recover, repair and emerge stronger from the crisis; b) kick-starting the economy and helping private investment, and c) learning the lessons of the crisis and addressing Europe's strategic challenges.

In the tourism sector, there is a specific need for planning measures

to build confidence in order to enable the hospitality industry to recover (Rivera, 2020). Therefore, we have identified the needs of different stakeholders (enterprises, customers and tourist destinations) in order to find innovative solutions for the current situation caused by the pandemic (Williams et al., 2021). The European Commission has recommended that all relevant stakeholders be taken into account when designing actions to help the tourism industry recover over the next few years.

Stakeholder theory in tourism research was developed to better understand aspects of planning and development, and interactional and relational effects in inclusion and participation (Bricker and Donohoe, 2015; Canhoto and Wei, 2021). However, in a context of crisis like the current pandemic, the overall effects on the different stakeholders (which include businesses that cater for tourists, chambers of commerce, local government officials and landowners) should be managed in an efficient way by the regional governments (Sonmez and Backman, 1992; Birkland, 2006; Wankmüller, 2020) through a strong coordination between all the institutions, efficient management of resources, a sense of political responsibility and educational initiatives (Goniewicz et al., 2020). Related to that, most of the studies on destination stakeholders are focused on stakeholder identification, collaboration and modes of cooperation to reach development goals at the destination level (Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2013). Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) classify stakeholders according to whether they have a high or low degree of involvement.

These frameworks are useful for defining stakeholders in tourism planning and development. Stakeholders are classified according to whether they benefit from the positive outcomes of tourism development, or experience problems (as the majority did following the COVID-19 pandemic). After the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a pandemic, the European Union decided to activate its Integrated Political Response to Crises (IPRC) mechanism, and mobilized all resources available to help member states coordinate their national responses, including providing objective information about the spread of the virus and effective actions to contain it. Subsequently, EU health ministers asked the European Commission to: (a) coordinate the risk assessment and guidelines on travel recommendations; (b) prepare in case the outbreak moved to another phase; (c) activate the existing financing mechanisms to support the preparation of the EU member states; and, (d) strengthen support for the Health Security Committee. Leaders of the Group of Seven committed to acting in a coordinated way and the Eurogroup issued a statement related to economic policy measures to mitigate the virus's effects. On March 17, the European Council agreed to reinforce the external borders by applying a coordinated temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU for a period of 30 days with protection for priority traffic. From then on, different budgetary initiatives were adopted with regards to public health, travel and transportation, research and innovation, the fight against disinformation, employment and the economy, crisis management and solidarity, digital technology and urgent assistance. In this sense, all the stakeholders involved were taken into account in the European Union's responses, as shown in Table 3 where we attempt to differentiate the EU public responses to COVID-19 by determining the objectives, mechanisms and measures that have been adopted.

Related to these recovery plans, during the COVID-19 crisis, EU leaders agreed to a recovery package of €1.8 trillion that combines the EU budget for 2021–27 and the Next Generation EU plan. In addition, taking into account the similarity of the different EU countries' main stakeholders and their convergent interests, the European Commission adopted other measures, such as: a) economic measures that complement the European Central Bank's €1350 billion Pandemic Emergency Purchase Program, in addition to the €120 billion program decided earlier; b) temporary state aid rules so governments can provide liquidity to the economy to support citizens and save jobs in the EU; c) triggering the 'escape clause' that allows maximum flexibility to the budgetary rules, with a view to helping EU countries support healthcare systems and businesses, and securing people's jobs during the crisis; and,

Table 3
EU COVID-19 responses.

| Objectives | Mechanism | Measure |
|--|---|---|
| Slowing the spread of the virus | Closure of external borders and Schengen | More than 419 million affected citizens, as well as visitors |
| Providing medical equipment | resCEU Program | Support national health systems with access to reserve supplies. It has mobilized €3.08 billion in EU aid to purchase more tests and help medical staff care for patients |
| Promoting research | Horizon 2020 Research Program | Program is funding 18 research projects and 151 teams across Europe to help find a vaccine against COVID-19. It has mobilized €1.4 billion |
| Boosting European solidarity | EU Solidarity Fund | To cover health emergencies. Up to €800 million will be made available for member states |
| Assuring the EU's social and economic recovery | Next Generation Plan ^a | Stimulus package for people and business. Fund of €750 billion (€500 billion direct support and €250 billion in loans) |
| Supporting the economy | European Central Bank | €37 billion to provide liquidity to small businesses and the healthcare sector and €540 billion package ECB has provided €750 billion to relieve public debt Financial package to support 100,000 small businesses worth up to €8 billion and aid of up to €100 billion |
| Protecting jobs | Support to short time work. SURE Program | European Commission has unlocked €1 billion from the European Fund for Strategic Investments in guarantees to encourage banks and other lenders to provide up to €8 billion of liquidity in support of around 100,000 European businesses |
| Repatriating EU citizens | EU Civil Protection mechanism. | The Commission can co-finance up to 75% of the transport costs. Non-EU citizens can benefit from this assistance |
| Helping developing countries face the pandemic | Package for a coordinated global response | The Commission has unlocked €20 billion to help non-EU countries fight the crisis to tackle the spread of COVID-19. |
| Ensuring accurate information | European Information Source | To ensure access to accurate and verified information, and issued a request to social media companies to tackle disinformation and hate speech. |

^a Unanimous approval of all member states is required

Source: Own elaboration (2020).

finally, d) screening of foreign direct investment.

3. Methodology based on the study of cases in Europe

For this paper, we adopted a case study approach, as it better answers the questions of *what* and *which* (Thomas, 2016; Yin, 2018). Case studies are defined as an empirical research method that studies a contemporary phenomenon within its real context, where different sources of evidence are used for their confection (Yin, 1994). Consequently, methodologically we have followed a triangulation of sources and, specifically, the so-called triangulation of data from different sources at the same time or at different times (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991).

This methodology focuses on the use of multiple sources, both primary and secondary, which makes it possible to contrast all the data collected and, consequently, establish convergence between them. In

this way, the use of numerous sources and data, and the combination of all the evidence found, allowed us to provide greater rigor to a research study that was based on the collection of individual data (Woodside, 2010).

The starting point in this methodological process consists of determining the key topics with regards to public strategies for destinations (Europe) and tourism company management (hospitality industry) following the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the topics proposed, the next step was to define the unit of analysis, which in this case was the European Union member states. To do so, it was necessary to determine which companies, and, in some cases, social phenomena related to the sector, would be under review and why, which individuals would be considered decision makers, participants or otherwise involved in the sector, and the time period under review. These aspects played a key role in determining both the selection of the cases and the design of the protocols for collecting the data. In this regard, our work was carried out in accordance with the recommendations established by experts in case methodology, in that we aimed to focus the study on cases within a specific activity sector (the hospitality industry).

Once the cases were selected, we had to collect secondary information from the different entities, including data from the official documents of the European Parliament, and from the Ministries of Health and Tourism of the different member states in order to obtain contextual and comparative data (Gibbert and Ruigrok, 2010). Similarly, we analyzed different documentation, reports and declarations from certain stakeholders (EU, member states and regions) as they have a high degree of influence on the other groups of stakeholders (destination tourism boards, private tourist companies and customers).

This research study adopts a case study approach and uses the triangulation model, which enhances its credibility. Therefore, data triangulation plays a key role as the purpose of this study is to provide a rich and contextual description through data from varied sources (Yin, 2018). For the case study, the reference variables that we addressed were public policies for tourism across the EU and particularly in each EU country where tourism is an important economic activity (most notably Italy, France, Portugal, Germany and Spain). The selected cases are relevant not only because they allow us to examine different policies implemented in the European Union, but also because they enable a comparison between its member states and help us to develop action-oriented recommendations for future pandemics.

4. Analysis of results

Our results, based on a review of the EU strategies for reactivating tourism in the member states, highlight the similarities between the stakeholders of the various EU countries and the existence of convergent interests within them, even though the effects of the pandemic are asymmetrical. We therefore explore this idea further, by first explaining the importance of considering a multilevel governance approach to determine the EU's strategies for supporting the recovery of the tourism and hospitality industry. Secondly, we explore the different regional responses to the global crisis in the EU, as the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and hospitality industry vary from country to country.

4.1. EU strategies for reactivating the tourism and hospitality industry following the COVID-19 pandemic based on the multilevel governance approach

The EU, as a consequence of the sudden spread of the health crisis, had to approach the pandemic with a "neo-Keynesian" spirit (Ladi and Tsarouhas, 2020) and take into account the lessons learned from the 2008 economic and financial crisis, which could help shape the decisions to be taken in the later phases of the crisis (Gocaj and Meunier, 2013). In the field of travel and tourism, regions, states and tourist destinations took swift action from the first moment, developing

different policies that offer us a practical example of what has been called multilevel governance (Marks, 1993; Sbragia, 2010), by vertically integrating the different levels of government within the EU and horizontally integrating the multiple governmental and non-governmental organizations and actors (Hooghe and Marks, 2003; Jessop, 2004).

The multilevel governance approach seems appropriate given the huge number of agents involved and their different vertical and horizontal interactions. This makes their actions compatible, as has been observed in previous literature, taking into consideration that some states will be more affected than others (Ladi et al., 2020). Perhaps for this reason, it is the member states that have assumed responsibility for leadership, governance and the design of public policies during this time (Moravcsik, 2005). Multilevel governance supposes a change in the collective form of decision-making, in which transnational institutions are formed as mediators and states as subjects of internal and international politics (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). The new governance framework favors the participation of actors with diverse characterizations (Peters and Pierre, 2001; Torfing et al., 2012; Maggetti and Trein, 2019) and this serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the measures adopted, and encourage individuals to accept them and obey them.

With the pandemic still ongoing, and all the various stakeholders within the EU trying to ensure that both the actions implemented by the European Union itself and those implemented by the individual member states remain effective (Schmidt, 2020), there is now also a need to avoid a return to the situation in the early stages of the pandemic which saw a lack of coordination and even a failure to share procedures and protocols (Jordana and Triviño-Salazar, 2020), as this could be crucial to moving forward (Paces and Weimer, 2020). The characterization of the COVID-19 pandemic, its rapid and extensive geographical spread, the importance of limiting social contact and mobility, and the need to coordinate the closure of borders and international trade, invite us to consider the large number of agents and stakeholders involved, including public and private, national and international. In this scenario, multilevel governance not only seems advisable but also necessary in order to tackle the health crisis and establish common objectives for all actors (Piattoni, 2010; Piattoni, 2015).

Based on the above review, we have developed a schema (Fig. 1) that sets out both the stakeholders that have implemented policies in response to COVID-19 in the tourism field (the EU, member states, regional and local governments), and the stakeholders that represent the target subjects of such policies (companies, tourists and destinations). We identify the public authorities as the critical stakeholders with a high level of power and involvement on three specific target groups or stakeholders (tourists, the tourism and hospitality companies and tourist destinations).

This schema would be valid for other decentralized states, in which powers are distributed in relation to the territory they occupy and in which plural decision-making can be advantageous (Aubrecht et al., 2020). Furthermore, the schema allows us to quickly and clearly see the different actions taken and the public authorities, and to understand the different interactions that can occur between all the agents involved. The policies studied could be replicated for other similar crises where social contact and travel act as vectors of contagion, leading to the paralysis of the international tourism sector.

Given the special significance of tourism for all the EU member states and the containment measures implemented in the Schengen zone (9.5% of the EU's gross domestic products, provides 11.2% of employment in the EU and is composed of nearly three million businesses, 90% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises), the European Commission has promoted measures which are based on the idea that the stakeholders of different EU countries are similar and which take into account all of the convergent interests between the stakeholders (tourists, hospitality companies and member state destinations). The analysis of the reactivation strategies is related to the need to solve the problems generated by the closure of borders and transport restrictions, including guaranteeing the health and safety of customers in an environment that has

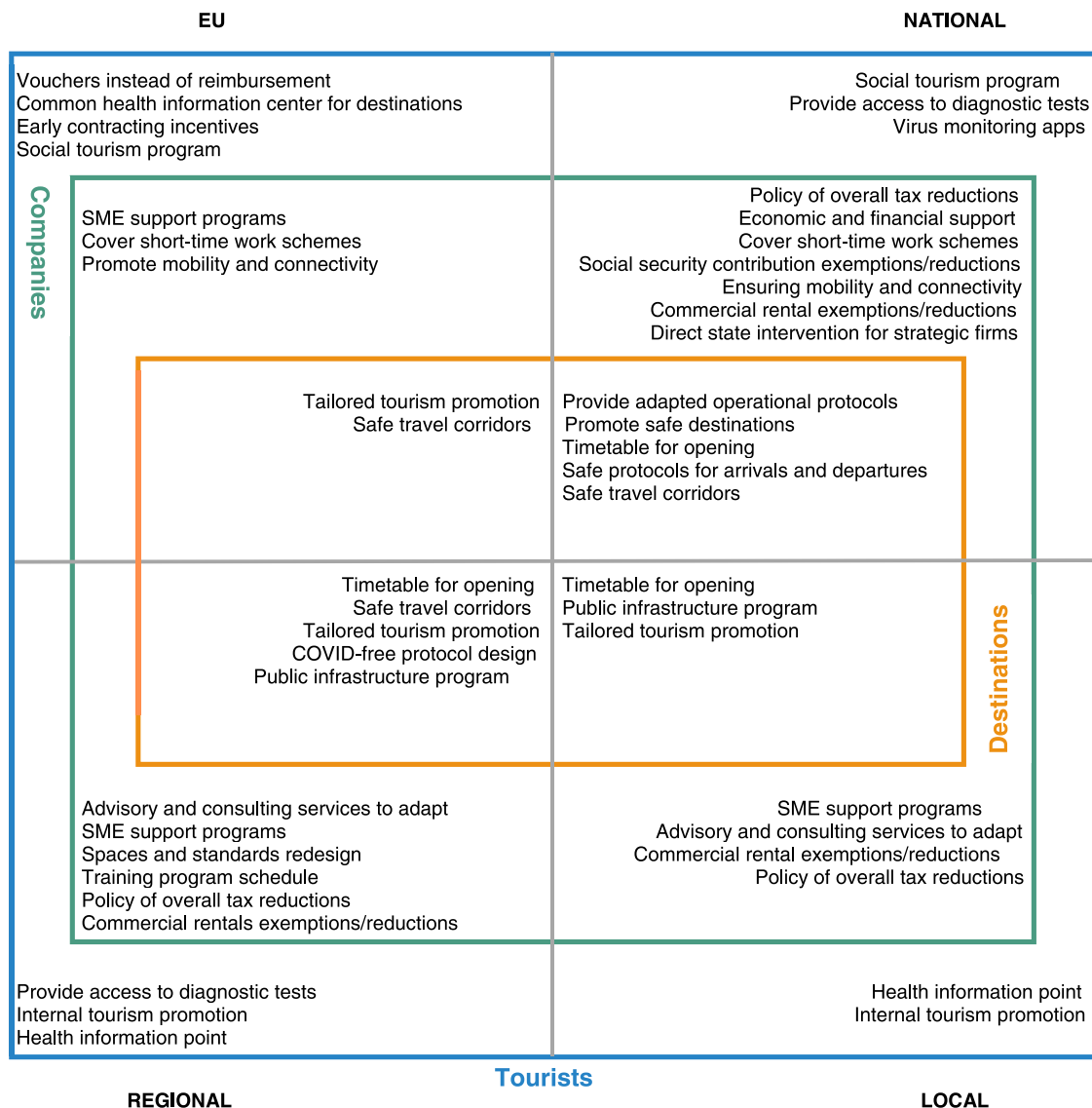


Fig. 1. European Union policies and public strategies for reactivating the tourism and hospitality industry in response to COVID-19.
Source: Own elaboration (2020)

caused anxiety among tourists with regards to social interaction and mobility. The key challenges for the EU are reorganizing tourism products and destinations based on an adaptation strategy that complies with the new hygienic-sanitary requirements, the promotion of public-private collaboration (Butler, 1980) and the promotion of public policies designed to support an economic recovery.

In addition, in Table 4 we present the objectives and measures adopted by the EU, which has focused its efforts on reviving tourism activities (movement, transport and services), boosting employment and providing liquidity to SMEs, including tourism products and service purchasing processes. We take account of the epidemiological factor in tourism, which represents a new challenge for tour operators, who must see it as a way to create added value to achieve a competitive advantage. In short, the EU has opted for direct intervention in markets, with direct support for companies and the self-employed as well as measures regarding markets, borders, connectivity and services in an unprecedented worldwide situation (Fakhrudin et al., 2020).

4.2. The economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry: regional responses to the global crisis in the EU

The effects of the pandemic crisis are asymmetric, impacting some member states much more than others (Ladi et al., 2020). Consequently, European Union countries have developed different governmental initiatives in parallel with those adopted by the EU, following a multilevel governance approach. Once the EU decided to focus its strategy for the tourism sector on three specific priority groups, namely tourists, companies and destinations or countries, and created a financial structure to support the policies designed to assist them, the member countries developed national policies that covered such lines of support. Then, the member states adopted the Next Generation EU plan in order to develop national programs to help their tourism sectors to weather the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, specially tailored in accordance with the size of their country's service sector. Below we set out the regional responses to the crisis in several different EU countries.

Greece has reduced VAT from 24% to 13% and 40% on commercial rents in sectors affected by the crisis. The government has granted aid to help cover wages and social security costs for nearly 120,000 workers in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Table 4
EU Strategies to revive the tourism sector following the COVID-19 pandemic.

| Target groups | Objectives | Measures |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Tourists and travelers | Safely restoring freedom of movement and lifting internal border controls | Member states should act on the basis of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epidemiological; using regional maps made by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) • Implementation of recommended containment measures throughout the trip • Economic and social considerations |
| | Restoring transport services across the EU, protecting transport workers and passengers' health | Communication from the Commission Guidelines on the progressive restoration of transport services and connectivity (13/05/2020) |
| | Safely resuming tourism services | Common framework which provides criteria for a safe and gradual restoration of tourism activities and the development of health protocols for hotels and other forms of accommodation to protect the health of guests and employees |
| | Ensuring cross-border interoperability of tracing apps | Protocol to ensure cross-border interoperability of voluntary contact tracing apps throughout the trip |
| | Making vouchers more attractive for customers | Tourism and transport in 2020 and beyond. 13/05/2020. Recommendation on vouchers offered to passengers and travelers as an alternative to reimbursement for canceled travel and transport services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic |
| Tourism companies | Ensure liquidity of businesses and SMEs in particular | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility under the state aid rules, to improve bonus guarantees, increasing of liquidity • EU funding providing liquidity in response to COVID-19, where management is shared with the member states • Financial package to support 10,000 small businesses worth up to €8 billion from the European Investment Fund |
| | Save jobs | Instrument for temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency (SURE) adopted to support member states in covering short-time work schemes and similar measures to protect jobs and thus employees and the self-employed against the risk of unemployment and loss of income |
| | Connect citizens with the local tourism industry, promoting local attractions and Europe as a safe tourist destination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission recommended patronage voucher schemes to encourage people to support their favorite hotels or restaurants • European communication campaign to promote Europe as a leading tourist destination • Promote digital solutions for planning purposes and managing the flow of tourists |

Source: Own elaboration (2020).

Portugal has opened up new lines of credit worth up to €6.2 billion to SMEs, launched economic advisory services (the ADAPTAR program for SMEs) and online consultancy services, as well as providing support to Turismo do Portugal to help cover refunds for postponed holidays. Furthermore, the Portuguese authorities have granted bonuses in respect of the hospitality business quotas for social security and tax deductions and temporary work schemes, provided grants covering up to 70% of workers' salaries, and created Clean & Safe certification for tourism and hospitality companies, which is designed to ensure compliance with COVID-19 hygiene and cleaning requirements. Different applications and solutions have been developed in relation to the COVID-19 crisis through the NEST Tourism Innovation Center non-profit organization. It aims to promote pre-sale loyalty systems, offer information to small hospitality businesses, provide shared employment systems, generate health-hygiene contingency plans and also provide an online trading platform, pre-sale systems for tickets and queue management and electronic payment solutions. This center will additionally provide information and ensure epidemiological monitoring of citizens, broadcast live events, organize interactive virtual and augmented reality visits and 360-degree video technology experiences, and put in place a management panel to monitor beach occupancy rates.

Italy has provided grants worth up to €500 to families with incomes of less than €35,000 per year. This holiday voucher will be equivalent to €300 for couples traveling without children and €150 for those traveling alone. The state has established an aid package worth up to €350 billion and suspended payment of social security liabilities as well as granting unemployment and self-employed benefits, credits to cover commercial rents and reimbursement of trips and tourist packages.

In Spain, the different autonomous regions have used their powers relating to tourism planning, promotion and infrastructure to deploy different actions and measures aimed at alleviating the economic and financial problems faced by companies and the self-employed, tackling unemployment, preparing guides and manuals outlining new best practices, reviving tourist activity and organizing promotional activities adapted to the new circumstances and sanitary requirements. The autonomous regions represented here hosted more than 90% of the tourists that arrived in Spain in 2019.

France has designed a specific rescue plan worth up to €300 billion, of which €1.3 billion is for direct aid and the rest to help cover the payment of social security liabilities and municipal rate exemptions, commercial rent exemptions and aid for the unemployed and SMEs. In addition, it has introduced vouchers for future trips as an alternative to reimbursement for canceled package holidays and transport services.

Germany has opened border stations with France, Luxembourg and Switzerland, and has created an aid package for companies, a credit line and guarantees worth up to €500 billion, as well as reducing VAT for bars and restaurants from 19% to 7% and paying two thirds of wages on reduced working hours. The termination of rental contracts for non-payment of rent has been made illegal until September 30 and it has been made easier for tour operators to offer travel vouchers instead of refunds for amounts already paid.

With regards to airline companies, the Italian Government nationalized the Alitalia airline, Germany has granted a loan of up to €9 billion to Lufthansa and a loan of up to €1.8 billion to TUI, and France has approved a €7 billion loan to Air France. Spain has provided a cash injection of €1 billion to Iberia and Vueling, while Sweden and Denmark also provided loans to SAS, each worth €140 million. Finally, the Netherlands agreed a €4 billion bailout package for KLM.

Despite the outbreak of the virus, EU destinations have started to lift national confinement and quarantine measures, and most countries are currently reviewing these measures (see Annex I).

In addition, in this study we reviewed EU decisions related to the pandemic and considered the advantages and disadvantages of both centralized and decentralized decision-making processes. Some authors (Aubrecht et al., 2020) recommend a "smart combination" of both, given the mutual dependence between subnational authorities and central

governments (OECD, 2009; Charbit and Michalun, 2009; Charbit, 2011). However, in the field of tourism governance, and despite the fact that there is different literature that discusses the respective benefits of centralization or decentralization in decision-making in this field (Rondinelli et al., 1989; Tosun and Jenkins, 1996; Dredge and Jenkins, 2003; Yüksel et al., 2005; Pforr, 2006), decentralization can be more efficient when regions suffer similar effects in crisis situations such as those produced by COVID-19. This is due to the synergies that can occur between the different regional or local tourist destinations, or due to the multiplier effects likely to be generated by the combination of these decentralized policies (Candela et al., 2015).

Finally, after analyzing the employment measures rolled out at the EU, national and autonomous region level, it can be observed that the strategies have an important financial component focusing on SMEs, the self-employed and employment policies. Government support generally targets tourist and hospitality products or destinations and should be focused on promotional campaigns for the different tourist brands in three specific ways: (a) capturing markets that are close and accessible to the early stimulus measures adopted; (b) providing consumer confidence with new protocols in all operational areas of tourism; and, (c) promoting safe and renewed destinations. Next, in Table 5, we detail all

Table 5
Public strategies for rescuing the tourism industry following COVID-19.

| Target groups | Strategy |
|----------------------|---|
| Tourists | Provide alternatives to change itinerary or journey dates and incentives for early booking while travel restrictions are in place Social tourism program for low-income sectors of the population Common information point to provide customers with up-to-date information about destinations and touristic products Make appropriate technological resources available to customers to keep them informed about the necessary protection and prevention measures during their stay Provide access to COVID-19 diagnostic tests at departure and destination points as expeditiously and efficiently as possible |
| Tourism companies | Cover short-time work schemes and similar measures to protect jobs and thus employees and the self-employed until restrictions have been fully lifted Incentives to retain all staff, such as social security contribution and tax exemptions or reductions Commercial activity tax exemptions or reductions Provide business advisory and consulting services to tourism companies to help them adapt to the new requirements Ensure international mobility of passengers Provide required liquidity and financing to tourism SMEs to ensure the continuation of activities Redesign the establishments' common areas to take account of the social distancing measures and new ways of working Support program comprising grants and financial measures to achieve the necessary improvements and adaptations in a post-COVID-19 environment Provide a training program for hospitality industry staff to make them aware of the new protocols and new working conditions Provide a support program covering technology, day-to-day operations and reducing physical contact Commercial rent exemptions or reductions |
| Tourist destinations | Clear schedule and provide information regarding the opening of destinations, activities and intensive use areas (beaches, shopping centers, etc.) Develop new manuals establishing procedures for the hospitality industry Design a campaign to promote safe destinations, adapting the new messages and the information to current circumstances Design the procedure for awarding "COVID-free Certification" to tourist establishments, services and products Provide new safe arrival and departure protocols at ports and airports Prepare a public infrastructure plan to adapt urban spaces and public services in tourist areas to the post-COVID-19 environment Agreements with source markets that allow the design of safe air corridors and their protocols |

Source: Own analysis (2020).

the public strategies for rescuing the tourism and hospitality industry with regards to the different target groups (tourists, tourism companies and tourism destinations).

5. Conclusions and discussion

Every country in the world has now been affected to a greater or lesser extent by the COVID-19 pandemic, and globalization has become one of the determining factors in the spread of the disease (Jordá et al., 2020; Sheresheva, 2020). The virus has been a challenge for all governments, for policies and for the economic and social structures of the world. The rights gained through the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation in 1944 that protected the so-called "Freedoms of the Air", open borders and the easing of restrictions on entry requirements, the democratization of travel and the continuous increase in international connectivity have managed to raise the standard of living in many cities and destinations around the world, but those rights were immediately suspended as a strategy to fight the global pandemic.

The UNWTO already foresees a reduction in arrivals in 2020, with three potential scenarios depending on when international borders are gradually reopened and travel restrictions are eased: (a) scenario one (−58%) based on early July; (b) scenario two (−70%) based on early September; and, (c) scenario three (−78%) based on early December.

Furthermore, the negative consequences of epidemiological crises are often felt in destinations far away from where the outbreak has initiated (Pforr and Hosie, 2008) and the recovery must be sustained through planning and prevention strategies (Ritchie, 2008), involving taking quick action to facilitate the recovery process (Mao et al., 2010; Mair et al., 2016) and implementing different measures that contribute to generating aggressive marketing initiatives which present an image of "business as usual" (Zeng et al., 2005). In addition, neighboring countries initiated different measures aimed at restarting business activity and markets, confirming the need to implement public policies of an expansionary nature (Byrialsen et al., 2020).

Stakeholders are broadly defined as anyone that has direct interest or involvement in an issue (Decker et al., 1996). They are also categorized according to their power and legitimacy to influence other stakeholders. Therefore, our main theoretical contribution lies in the analysis of the different initiatives undertaken by several stakeholders depending on their level of power and involvement. We identify the public authorities as being the critical stakeholders with a high level of power and involvement on three specific target groups or stakeholders, namely tourists, the tourism and hospitality companies and tourist destinations (see Fig. 1). The outcome achieved will enable us to implement more agile, coordinated and efficient public policies in the event of future crises and disasters that moderate the negative effects of a global economic collapse. This contribution is important in order to categorize public policies that could also be developed in other regions.

Moreover, our research also has important practical managerial implications, with proposals for strategies to help the hospitality industry recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, with regards to tourists, actions must be implemented to facilitate travel, encourage purchases and lower prices, and secondly, to give confidence to consumers, provide hygiene and sanitary information and provide the right medical solutions. Destinations and companies should allow customers to change their itineraries or journey dates, and provide incentives for early booking while travel restrictions are in place. In order to give confidence to consumers, companies should provide them with appropriate technological resources to keep them informed about the necessary protection and prevention measures during their stay, and provide access to COVID-19 diagnostic tests at departure points. These measures should be flexible, be in alignment with the local health situation, and allow the gradual reopening of tourism segments. The current situation clearly demonstrates the need to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements and highlights the importance of providing up-to-date and easily accessible information to

travelers.

As the survival of small and medium-sized enterprises is essential for national economies across the EU, supporting them is part of a comprehensive package provided by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank Group. In addition, the European Commission proposed a series of measures that would allow for a gradual and coordinated reopening of tourism services and facilities, as well as specific support for tourism businesses that included liquidity for small businesses. These recovery actions incorporate direct aid packages, tax reductions, deductions and guarantees, as well as subsidies to enable tourism and hospitality companies to rapidly relaunch, with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises, job retention schemes and grants to cover business adaptation measures regarding staff, infrastructure and technological or operational protocols (Rosemberg, 2020). Transport companies must also enjoy special treatment given their high strategic value, especially in medium and long-haul destinations, in order to enable them to resume operations and to ensure the flow of people and preserve the mobility of passengers. In addition, most EU countries have introduced measures to cover short-time work schemes and similar initiatives to protect employees and the self-employed until restrictions have been fully lifted.

Thus, in order to restart their activities, we recommend that tourist destinations should have a clear and official schedule of the tourism and hospitality products and services opening, and provide standardized action protocols for future COVID-free certification procedures and the adaptation of public and private infrastructure. Related to this, ports and airports are lifelines and their arrival and departure procedures require specific analysis and restructuring so that the planned safe travel corridors operate effectively. In this regard, Spain recently negotiated with the UK, Germany and Scandinavian countries to open up travel corridors to the Spanish islands (the Balearics and the Canaries). Also, the Czech Republic is considering plans to create a corridor with Slovakia and Croatia, and countries like Malta also back the idea of "*safe corridors between territories and regions*" which have successfully managed the virus. These safe corridors could include "*clear new protocols on flights, accommodation, interaction, meals and visits*", and would thereby exempt visitors from the need to self-isolate upon their return. Specifically, tailored promotional campaigns could be used to revitalize the outbound markets' interest in tourist destinations. In addition, the European Commission is currently working to promote sustainable tourism in line with the European Green Deal and to encourage the digital transformation of tourism services in order to protect tourists and destinations, connect citizens to local offers, and promote Europe as a safe tourist destination.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic raises questions about vulnerability, as the impact on tourism will be much more significant in poor countries, and low-paid jobs in the hospitality industry have been affected by the crisis. Finally, the COVID-19 tragedy provides lessons for the tourism industry, policy makers and tourism researchers about global strategies and tactics to mitigate the effects in the social and economic environment.

6. Limitations and recommendations for future research

Undoubtedly, the uncertainty created by the pandemic is conditioned by the development and rollout of vaccines, which can provide a solution to the different outbreaks of the virus. The rate of incidence in each country determines the level of government intervention (such as stay-at-home orders, closures of restaurants, travel restrictions shut-down of borders, etc.) and, therefore, the rapidly changing legal procedures become a restricting factor of this paper.

Secondly, another limitation of this research relates to the fact that there is still no medical solution to fight the pandemic. Consequently, there is no literature related to this topic that allows us to analyze the impact of public policies implemented during this period for the different stakeholders. Other pandemics have not had the global impact

of COVID-19, and its health, economic and social effects are also different.

Therefore, one line of future research is to study the overall assessment of public policies once the pandemic has been controlled or, even better, resolved. As with previous pandemics, the different waves of activity spread over months are forcing decisions made in the tourism sector to be modified on an almost monthly basis, and any immediate relaxation of measures may consequently be premature. For example, we should analyze whether using mobile data to track COVID-19 cases is an effective way to manage the outbreak within the tourism industry. Finally, we could study if decisions taken by European, national, regional or local authorities to fight the pandemic have been more successful as a result of their enhanced understanding of their specific area and circumstances. In this way, future studies could aim to identify the best recovery strategies for the tourism sector, design future containment measures, and even develop public policy review, monitoring and evaluation tools.

Declarations of interest

None.

Data availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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