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## **Futures Perspectives for the Sustainable Tourism**

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Tarja Meristö & Jukka Laitinen

FuturesLab CoFi, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Lohja, Finland

[tarja.meristo@laurea.fi](mailto:tarja.meristo@laurea.fi)

[jukka.laitinen@laurea.fi](mailto:jukka.laitinen@laurea.fi)

**Abstract:** The world will face the challenges of sustainable development in the terms of social, environmental and economic sustainability in all sectors (e.g. Bruntland, 1987). In these days of Covid19 tourism will be in focus because of the restrictions in mobility and traveling. Already before Covid the responsible tourism was arising and the negative consequences of global tourism got attention. This paper presents the results of the web survey consisting of political, economic, social, technological and ecological factors affecting the future of tourism in European context. We received altogether 46 replies to the survey. We have used methods from futures studies (see Bell, 1997; Masini, 1993). According to the results, sustainability concerning tourism is not only environmental issues, but also health and safety dimensions. Virtual reality offers opportunities in the time of uncertainties. It will also create new challenges and threats. In the worst case scenario people travel and cause overtourism and damages to the nature and to the culture. In the best case scenario tourists find a sustainable way of living, staying longer and respecting people living there.

**Keywords:** Future; sustainable development; tourism; scenario

### **1. Introduction**

Globalization has opened the world. Tourism is one of the most popular ways of spending leisure time. How far are the limits of growth? Are actors in the tourism capable of developing products and services towards sustainable business concepts? Does Covid19 have a significant role in changing travel habits? (e.g. Shamshiripour et al. 2020)

Tourism has been defined as an activity to move people from their everyday life or working environment to a new place. Mass tourism has grown during the last decades and lead to overtourism in some areas. The expression 'responsible tourism' has become common in media since late 1990's. The term responsible tourism has its roots in Switzerland based on the writings of the economist Jost Krippendorf (1986). Responsibility in tourism means many things varying from fighting against climate change to taking care of cultural heritage (Kalmari & Kelola, 2009).

The world faces the challenges of sustainable development socially, environmentally and economically (Bruntland, 1987). The mission of Motion project is to raise awareness of overtourism and to increase people's understanding about the sustainable tourism. The need for raising awareness about sustainability in a holistic way has been recognized e.g. in UNESCO's report (2017). The project is financed by Erasmus+ from 2020 to 2023. MOTION solves problems related to sustainable tourism in Fehmarn, Germany, Granada, Spain, Klaipeda, Lithuania, Rovaniemi, Finland and Toruń, Poland. The project is coordinated by Laurea UAS, Finland and the partners are Nicolaus Copernicus University, Poland, Klaipėda University, Lithuania, Kiel UAS, Germany, University of Granada, Spain and Municipality of Monachil, Spain.

This paper presents the results of the survey consisting of political, economic, social, technological and ecological factors, i.e. PESTE factors, affecting the future of tourism. We received 46 replies during December 2020 and January 2021. Thirteen respondents were Motion project participants, presenting actors in the travel field from business, research and government sector. 33 respondents were from Finland presenting different business industries in public and private sectors, participating in the project as master students and collecting and analyzing data for the future of tourism. Respondents estimated 20 future propositions according to their probability to occur and to their importance for tourism.

## 2. Surveys results

The important factors influencing on tourism seem to come from the economic sector, but technology will have a significant influence on the future, too. Values and life styles will change the views to the future. More attention to the leisure and more individualism in the society will add the pressure to reorganize tourism. Sustainability is not only environmental but it includes health and safety as well economic dimensions. Virtual reality will offer opportunities, but it will create new challenges and threats.

Climate change seems to be the key reason for the changes in life styles concerning travelling. The younger generation puts attention on the responsible tourism. They will adopt new services via mobile apps. Business travel will stay on lower level, because during Covid19 crisis they get used to virtual meetings. Artificial intelligence will change the ways of doing business and will further develop virtual tours.

Respondents estimated 20 PESTE propositions according to their probability to occur and to their importance for tourism. The propositions were from our previous surveys supplemented with desktop research. There are no right or wrong answers, how the future will look like, but according to Amara (1981) we can still imagine, analyze and influence on the future. The results will show trends on which many actors believe and it will rise up wild cards not kept probable, but still having an impact, if occurring. Trends are ongoing development paths to the future, kept certain (e.g. Naisbitt 1990) whereas wild cards are like black swans not commonly recognized yet (e.g. Taleb 2007).

The estimated propositions are listed below. We found four wild cards having high impact with low probability as well as three trends having high impact with high probability. Close to wild cards there were two propositions and almost trends also two alternatives.

### **WILD CARDS**

- 1. European Union collapses in the next 5 years.
- 4. Virtual tourism and guided virtual tours will replace traveling in real life in the next 10 years.
- 6. Covid19 will stop almost all of international tourism globally for the next 10 years.
- 8. Only very rich people can afford to travel in the next 10 years.

### ***Almost wild cards***

- 3. Growing numbers of terrorism attacks in large European cities will move the focus of tourism towards smaller towns and countryside for the next 5 years.
- 20. Due to health and environmental risks, foreign tourists are treated negatively and disputes between local residents and businesses escalate causing image damage in many destinations in the next 5 years.

### **TRENDS**

- 11. Safety and security issues become key competence in tourism industry in the next 5 years
- 12. Business travel will remain 50% lower than before the Covid 19 pandemic for the next 10 years.
- 13. Rise of "Staycation" and domestic vacation. Domestic and local tourism becomes the main target group in most of the European destinations in the next 5 years

### ***Almost trends***

- 14. Technological solutions reduce the emissions of aeroplanes radically in the next 10 years.
- 17. Sharing economy (like Air B&B and CouchSurfing) will decrease the number of SMEs in tourism industry by 25 % in the next 5 years

### ***Other factors with relatively high importance (but not enough probable to be trends)***

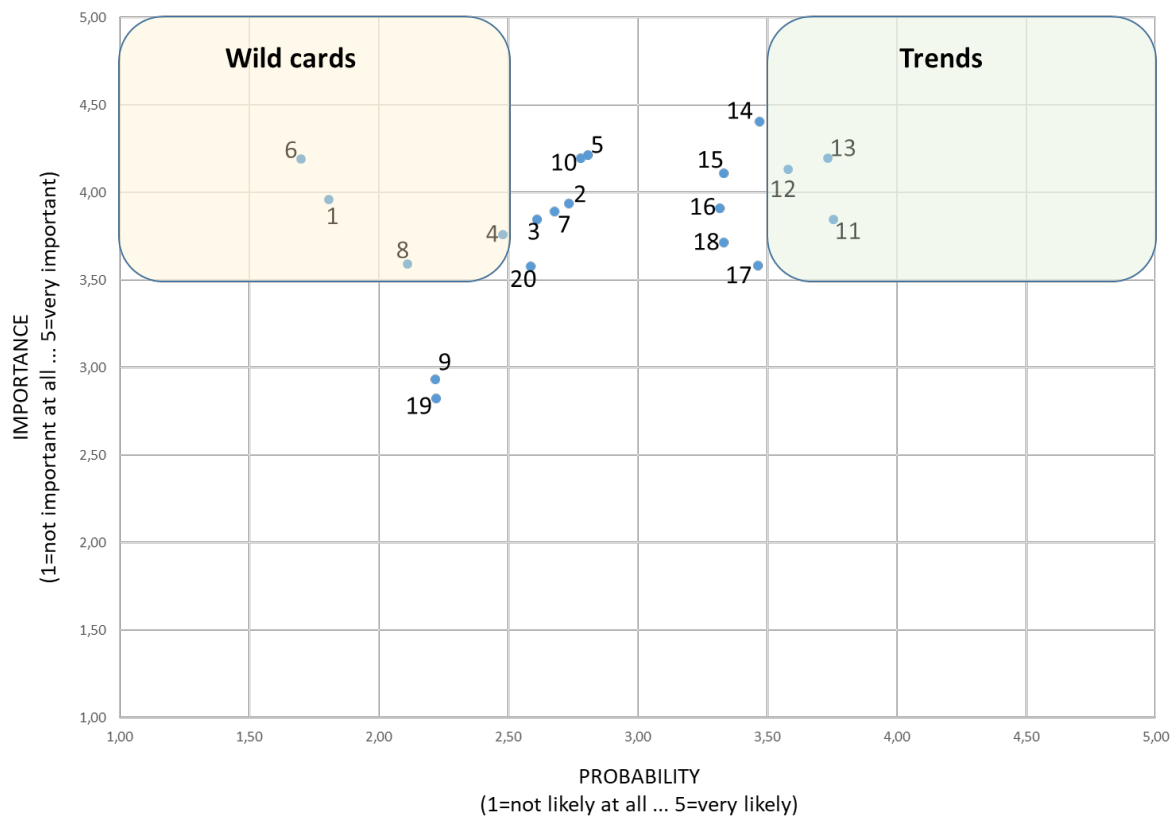
- 2. The trend of continuous economic growth stops in the next 10 years.
- 5. The climate change issues are more and more important for the people and that will stop tourism flights between continents in the next 10 years.
- 7. High unemployment rate in Europe will radically reduce the use of money spent on tourism for the next 5 years.
- 10. The pandemics become more common in the next 5 years.
- 15. Sustainable accessibility like train connections is prerequisite for a successful destination in the next 10 years.
- 16. Political instability outside Europe increases by 25 % Europe's attractiveness as destination for the next 10 years

- 18. Many destinations start to suffer from too much of tourism. Communities start to delegalize Air B&B and introduce fees for tourism in the next 10 years.

**Not so probable and not so remarkable**

- 9. Robots replace remarkable share of the human workforce in hotels and restaurants for the next 5 years.
- 19. Self-driving cars (autonomous vehicles) become part of everyday logistics for the next 5 years

Figure 1 illustrates how the above listed propositions have been classified based on given estimates for probability and importance.



**Figure 1:** Estimated probability and importance for PESTE propositions: summary of surveys results (n=46).

The highest uncertainties for the tourism will arise from the collapse of European Union, virtual tourism, Covid19 and lack of money from mid class people. Also, the fear of terrorism and environmental damages will rise up uncertainties. Trends which tourism will meet in the future are safety and security issues. Another trend is the constantly lower volume of business travel. The third trend is local tourism, which is a strong weapon in the fight against climate change.

The 20 propositions of the future cover all PESTE dimensions (Table 1), each category having four propositions.

**Table 1:** Future propositions 1-20 sorted according to the PESTE category.

Political	Economic	Social	Technological	Ecological
1, 6, 11, 16	2, 7, 12, 17	3, 8, 13, 18	4, 9, 14, 19	5, 10, 15, 20

In terms of sustainable development, the results show the importance of the social dimension for tourism. In Table 2 the recognized wild cards as well as trends are divided into the cells presenting the dimensions of the sustainable development. Social dimension has the most of the wild cards and trends recognized, altogether five, whereas economic and ecological dimension both got three of them.

**Table 2:** Wild cards and trends divided into sustainable development dimensions (survey results).

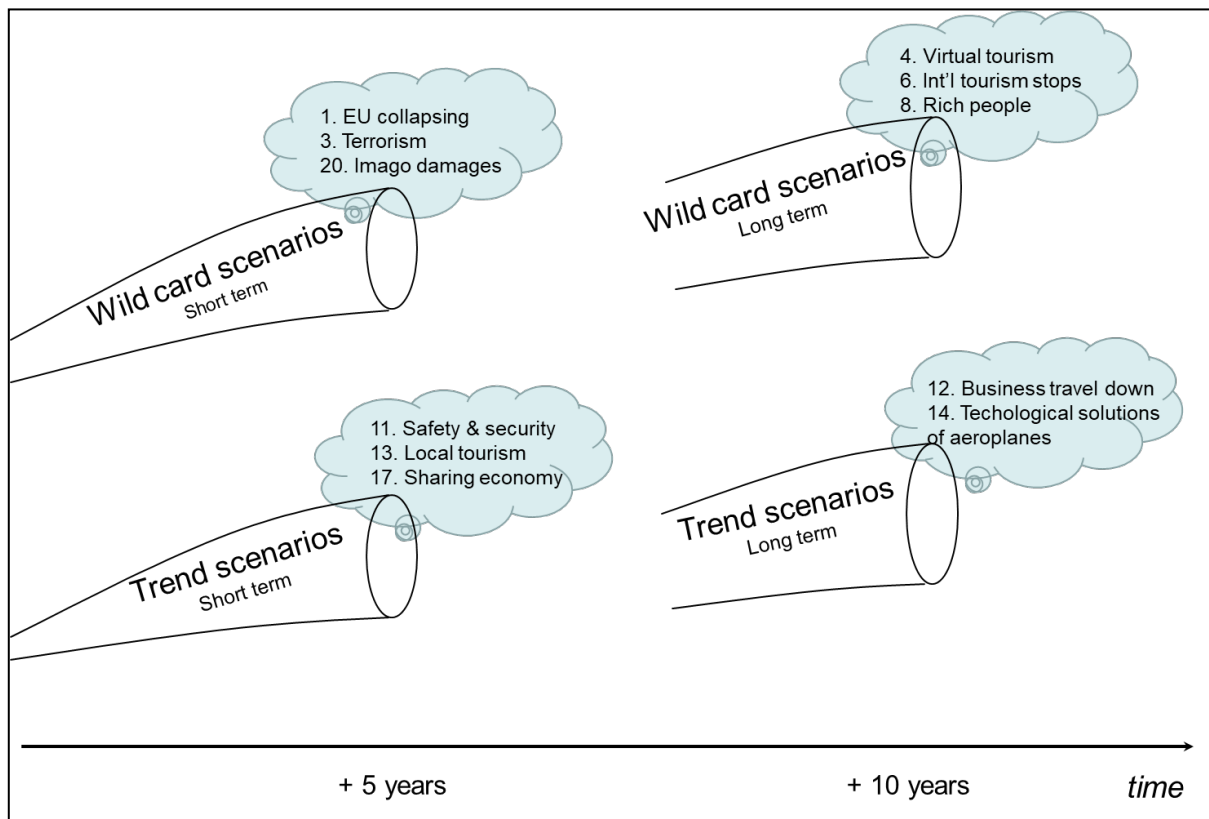
	Economic	Social	Ecological
Wild Cards or almost wild cards	1	3, 6, 8	4, 20
Trends or almost trends	12, 17	11, 13	14

### 3. Conclusions

Our aim was to recognize the actors and factors influencing the development of sustainable tourism. The variables were classified on PESTE and according to the time line long or short. Additionally, the survey answers were divided into trends and wild cards, which gives the basis for the trend driven scenarios or scenarios including surprises.

Based on the content analysis of the open answers, it seems that the worst case scenario for the tourism is the case, where people do not travel because of the fear of the pandemic and terrorism, but also in the case people travel causing overtourism and damages to the environment and to the local culture. In the best case scenario tourists find their sustainable way of living in tourist areas and staying there longer.

The propositions have been listed according to the rate of surprise and to their time perspective to the future.



**Figure 2:** Short term and long term scenarios.

In short term wild card scenarios, tourism will decrease because of the fear of terrorism, pandemic or economic recession caused by the collapse of European Union. Drivers for short term trend scenarios are safety issues leading e.g. to local sharing economy. In longer run, wild cards will stop international tourism or lead towards virtual tourism. Trend scenarios in the long run will trust on new technology with lower emissions of aeroplanes, but with smaller number of business travelers. The contribution to business and academic is the

time horizon divided into short and long run, which requires more attention to exploit it completely. In the project, the scenarios will be deepened and focused on case areas in practice.

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