Exploring the potential of VFR travel for a destination recovery after crises

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Background

New confirmed cases, by date of report (n = 46,840,783)

(World Health Organization, 2020)
Background

UNWTO Tourism Dashboard: 
- International Tourist Arrivals: -70% January - August 2020
- Change by month: January - 1%, February - 16%, March - 65%, April - 97%, May - 97%, June - 91%, July - 81%, August - 79%
- YTD change by region: Europe - 68%, Asia and the Pacific - 79%, Americas - 65%, Africa - 69%, Middle East - 69%
- YTD change by subregion: North Asia - 66%, North Africa - 74%, South-East Asia - 72%, Northern-Mediterranean Europe - 72%, Southern-Mediterranean Europe - 69%, Central Eastern Europe - 69%, Middle East - 67%, South Asia - 66%, Sub-Saharan Africa - 66%, North America - 64%, Caribbean - 63%, South America - 63%, Western Europe - 63%

(UNWTO, 2020)
Japan

102,281 cases, 1,780 deaths

(World Health Organization, 2020)
Inbound visitor number to Japan

(JNTO, 2020)
Background

Domestic visitor number in Japan

(Japan Tourism Agency, 2020)
Introduction

VFR market was promoted at some destinations in the post-crisis period since it is more resilient than other markets. (e.g., UKOK campaign in 2002 and Great Kiwi Invite campaign in 2009)
Introduction

UKOK campaign

Britain rules, UKOK?

It does not slip easily off the tongue and could be mispronounced. But government authorities have decided the four-letter phrase, “UKOK”, is the perfect way to encourage tourists back to Britain.

BTA pins hopes on UKOK campaign

THE British Tourist Authority is hoping its new global logo UKOK will emulate the highly successful I Love New York slogan.

UKOK will front a £15 million marketing campaign to lure visitors back to Britain after last year’s disasters of foot and mouth and September 11, which cost the country £2 billion in lost tourism revenue (Travel Weekly, January 7).

(The Guardian, 2002; TRAVEL WEEKLY, 2002)
## Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>VFR (thousand)</th>
<th>Holiday (thousand)</th>
<th>Business (thousand)</th>
<th>Other (thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visitor number</td>
<td>Visitor number</td>
<td>Visitor number</td>
<td>Visitor number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5,834</td>
<td>9,302</td>
<td>7,322</td>
<td>2,750</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>5,898</td>
<td>7,585</td>
<td>6,778</td>
<td>2,574</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>6,398</td>
<td>7,735</td>
<td>7,158</td>
<td>2,888</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>6,978</td>
<td>7,973</td>
<td>6,967</td>
<td>2,797</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7,861</td>
<td>9,275</td>
<td>7,470</td>
<td>3,149</td>
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(Office for National Statistics, 2020)
Great Kiwi Invite campaign

Prime Minister John Key has launched a tourism campaign encouraging New Zealanders to invite friends and family based overseas to visit here.

The Great Kiwi Invite campaign, which will run for four weeks, was launched in Auckland on Friday, the 10th anniversary of the highly successful “100% Pure New Zealand” marketing campaign.
Introduction

Fluctuation of inbound visitor number to NZ between 2008 and 2009 by purpose of travel

(Stats NZ Inforshare, 2020)
Introduction

VFR market was promoted at some destinations in the post-crisis period since it is more resilient than other markets.
(e.g., UKOK campaign in 2002 and Great Kiwi Invite campaign in 2009)

How about the case of COVID-19?
(e.g., with/after COVID-19)

(Backer, 2012)
In some situations where crises or disasters linger with no clear ending, it may be difficult to implement recovery marketing until the all clear is given (Ritchie et al., 2003).
Extended literature review

VFR travellers staying with their hosts are crucial to recover the tourism economy in suburbs and they have similar behaviours to the local residents (Backer & Ritchie, 2017).

COVID-19: Possibility to be a risk, threat and spreader

VFR travellers may be threat and spreaders of diseases for local areas and businesses (Ma et al., 2020).
The major focus of VFR travel is on reuniting families and friends, and it prolongs close contact (Peters et al., 2020).

**COVID-19: Risk to get infected for travellers and hosts**

VFR travellers and hosts may be at risk of acquiring infections (Angell & Behrens, 2020).
Extended literature review

Domestic VFR travel is less risky and more suitable than international VFR travel to promote in the post-crisis period (Backer & Ritchie, 2017).

**COVID-19: No completely safe VFR market**

Both domestic and international VFR travellers may carry health risks in the destination trying to recover (Peters et al., 2020).
Preliminary insights and findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19: Difficulty of when to start recovery marketing</th>
<th>COVID-19: Possibility to be a risk, threat and spreader</th>
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<tr>
<td>COVID-19: Risk to get infected for travellers and hosts</td>
<td>COVID-19: No completely safe VFR market</td>
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Effectiveness of VFR travel for recovery marketing: Resilience, benefit in suburbs and domestic, and long length of stay
Future research direction

With/after COVID-19,

1. Revealing the ability and resilience of the VFR market for destination recovery

2. Developing a new VFR marketing concept, strategy and model for destination recovery

3. Identifying the potential to develop the VFR market between rural areas for destination recovery
Summary

Background
- Profound impact of COVID-19 on tourism
- Extended literature review/
  Preliminary insights and findings
  - Controversy and limited understanding of the effectiveness of the VFR market with/after COVID-19

Introduction
- Effectiveness of the VFR market for the past destination recovery marketing
- Future research direction
  - Potential of destination recovery marketing, using the VFR market, with/after COVID-19
Reference


• TRAVEL WEEKLY. (2002). BTA pins hopes on UKOK campaign. https://www.travelweekly.co.uk/articles/18090/bta-pins-hopes-on-ukok-campaign


Thank you for your attention