

# **CULTURE OF HEALTH: PAVING THE WAY FOR AN INCLUSIVE POST - PANDEMIC TOURISM AGENDA**

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

This study assesses the potential extension of the UN's Sustainable Developmental Goals through the inclusion of a Culture of Health framework. The Covid-19 pandemic has raised global concerns in the ability of governments to continue funding the SDGs, thus paving the way for the private sector to play a larger role in the development of SDG-related outcomes (Benedek, Gemayel, Senhadji, and Tieman. However, there are concerns regarding the fit of the SDGs in a post-pandemic environment as Covid-19 has turned the clock back on a number of the goals (Time to revise the sustainable development goals, 2021). The value of these goals is as important as ever but a fresh perspective is now necessary to reconfigure the strategies to achieve them. It must be noted that the SDGs were set in 2015, a period where economic growth and international cooperation was on the rise, but given the current circumstances raised by the pandemic, such as contraction of national economies, rising unemployment, curtailed travel and leisure activities and raised health consciousness, these goals and the strategies for their achievement need a serious rethink.

One effort that maybe undertaken is the reframing of the SDGs through the lens of a Culture of Health (CoH). The Culture of Health first gained traction through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2013 with the aim of advancing health as the core aspect of human health in a diverse society. The CoH involves a 4-pillar framework that examines organisational and societal well-being: Employee Health (the treatment of its workers), Consumer Health (healthfulness and safety of its products and services), Community Health (health and safety efforts in location of doing business) and Environmental Health (impact of operations on the environment) (Quelch and Boudreau, 2018). The comprehensiveness of the CoH framework allows organisations to reframe their agendas to encompass individual, organisational as well as societal well-being as part of their strategic direction, while at the same time being aligned with the aspirations of the SDGs.

The Tourism and Hospitality industry, a key contributor to national wealth and employment creation, has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. The prospects of this industry may appear bleak at the moment, but it is nonetheless a resilient industry and is expected to rise from this setback. It is timely, therefore, for the tourism and hospitality industry to reconsider its approach and strategies to facilitate a speedy shift towards a post pandemic mindset. The industry has suffered from a loss of revenue in all sectors (airline, accommodation, food and beverage, travel, events and leisure) (UNCTAD, 2021) and these losses are not just economic but also have psychological impact on the actors within the industry. Therefore, the post pandemic recovery strategies should not just examine the economic health of the industry but also the health of the industry's employee and the communities it engages with.

Quelch's (2016) model of the four-pillars of CoH will be used as the underpinning framework for the study. These four-pillars argue for the involvement of business in creating a corporate 'health footprint' for the betterment of the business as well as society. While the notion of a

culture of health appears to have with the health or medical associations, Quelch and Boudreau (2016) and Purcell et al's (2021) work have pointed out the applicability of the four-pillars in various industries. However, the adoption of CoH in the tourism and hospitality industry has not been explored. The confluence between the different subsectors in tourism and hospitality therefore, are ripe for the exploration of the use of a CoH as a common ground in bringing the stakeholders of the industry into a cohesive whole.

The research adopts a qualitative approach as its methodology. Using published reports, research, interviews and focus group feedback, this research will analyse the potential to embed a Culture of Health in tourism and hospitality organisations as a means of recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic and as a means of driving the industry forward in a healthier and sustainable economic and social direction. The qualitative methods will be used to identify the potential application/use of the pillars of the CoH framework and develop a working model to embed CoH into tourism and hospitality organisational practices.

The research aims to show that in incorporating a CoH, tourism and hospitality businesses not only will make an impact on public health, but would also create new business opportunities for themselves. It is expected that with this model, business operators are able to circumnavigate the challenges of rebuilding their business in the aftermath of the pandemic and transition into a sustainable, healthy and revitalised tourism and hospitality industry. It is also expected that this research will extend the body of knowledge of the culture of health and test its applicability in the tourism and hospitality field of study.

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