

# COMMENT ON PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE GLOBAL HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY - IMPACT OF PANDEMIC COVID-19

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## Dear Editor,

This comment refers to a recently published article on the paradigm shift in the global hospitality industry in the context of COVID-19 (Malhotra, 2021). In the article, the author demonstrates the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the hospitality services worldwide, and highlights the critical importance of safety, hygiene and sanitation during the pandemic and the post-pandemic era. Although there is enough merit to support these arguments (Naumov, Varadzhakova & Naydenov, 2020), I argue that a paradigm shift as such is highly unlikely to occur.

First, we need to put a much greater and detailed emphasis on what we mean by a 'paradigm shift'. As Thomas Kuhn (1962), an American physicist and philosopher, introduced in his seminal work on *The Structure of Scientific Evolutions*, a paradigm shift refers to major changes to experiments and practices in each discipline. His definition is mainly restricted to natural sciences, but we can easily apply it to non-scientific contexts to explain fundamental changes to how we look at things, for example, changes to how we define and understand various changes in the context of hospitality and hospitality management. Over the last decades, we have witnessed a few paradigm shifts: disruptive innovations (e.g., Internet, big data analytics), the growth and development of information technologies, changing consumer preferences, emergence of online distribution systems (e.g., Expedia) and the proliferation of lodging alternatives (Ivanov, Webster & Berezina, 2017; Naumov, 2019). Those changes in the industry have greatly influenced how we look at things and led to a few fundamental changes in strategic planning and operations. In this context, the pandemic has not brought any fundamental changes to hospitality businesses. The closure of many small and medium enterprises has occurred for varied reasons and deliveries and take away services have been part of hospitality operations for a long period of time. The pandemic has led an increased popularity of previously neglected services (e.g., video conferencing calls) but is highly unlikely to bring disruptive innovations.

Second, from a business perspective, a paradigm shifts brings a 'reset' to business models and strategies and stimulate the emergence of new business models. In this context, the pandemic will inevitably bring new ways of how businesses operate. Online meetings, remote conferences and social distancing are here to stay as we will need to live with the outcomes of the pandemic. However, hospitality operations will evolve, for example assisted by sophisticated technologies such as artificial intelligence and service automation.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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