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Mountain Tourism and Second Home Tourism as Post COVID-19 Lockdown Placebo?

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Mountain Tourism and Second Home Tourism as Post COVID-19

Lockdown Placebo?

Abstract

Purpose – COVID-19, as a pandemic was expected to stop tourism, instead, it has shed light on second home tourism and subsequently mountain tourism

Design/methodology/approach – This study is adopting a news media narrative approach as this method can produce important insight into emerging wicked problems.

Findings – In the post-COVID-19 lockdown context, second home tourism and mountain tourism could play the role of placebo. The dual dimension of second home tourism and mountain tourism are echoing the Janus-faced character of the tourism industry. Beyond the fact that this study has highlighted the placebo role that both forms of tourism are probably going to play, it (1) has connected mountain tourism with second home tourism (2) highlighted the Janus-faced character of both forms of tourism (3) highlighted the mutation impacts of COVID-19 on tourism trends.

Originality / value – COVID-19 is a current issue. This study is therefore offering a timely perspective on a 'hot topic'

Keywords – COVID-19; France; Mountain tourism; Second home tourism; Crisis tourism

Paper type – Viewpoint

1. Introduction

Creativity, is the main outcome of Janusian thinking (Rothenberg, 1996). This process is applied in business environment, but is referred as ambidextrous management, or organisational ambidexterity, which is in essence the involvement of two polar opposites, namely exploitation versus exploration (Smith, 2017; Vo-Thanh, Seraphin, Okumus & Koseoglu, 2020). By nature, the tourism industry is ambidextrous, hence the reason why Sanchez and Adam (2008), referred to the Janus-faced character of the industry, as for every positive impact of the industry there is a negative one (and vice versa). This theoretical approach is overarching this study.

COVID-19 offers an opportunity to illustrate the Janus-faced character of the tourism industry. Indeed, the breakout of the pandemic was supposed to triggered a total lockdown of frontiers, and ban to travel, either internationally or locally (Jamal & Budke, 2020). At local level, the opposite has happened in some countries in the world, such as France. Indeed, the outbreak of COVID-19 has not stopped individuals to move in and out cities (INSEE, 2020). Instead, the outbreak of the virus has led to an exodus from major cities to countryside or coastal areas (INSEE, 2020). As of the 17th March 2020, Paris had lost 11% of its residents (INSEE, 2020). This exodus is due to the fact that many Parisians have a second home in coastal areas, and mainly in country side areas (*Letelegramme* [Online]). This form of tourism (second home tourism), represents a significant

part of domestic tourism (Hiltunen, 2008). Second home tourism and mountain tourism are closely related since those second homes are very often far away from major population centres (Muller, 2008). Indeed, they are mainly located in rural, or mountain areas (Adie, 2019; Hecock, 2014). It is also worth highlighting the fact that people choose the rural areas (or mountain areas) where they are going to spend their holidays based on personal attachment to the area (Adie, 2019; Nouza et al, 2015).

As a pandemic, COVID-19 has seriously threatened the tourism industry and cognate industries (Getz, 2012; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Jamal & Budke, 2020; Yang et al, 2020). However, the main objective of this paper is to show that mountain tourism, which is characterised by it diversity, marginality, difficulty of access, fragility, niche and aesthetics (Nepal & Chipeniuk, 2006), could play the role of a placebo in the post-COVID-19 lockdown, while shedding light on second home tourism, a niche form of tourism (Hiltunen, 2008; Jaakson 1986; Marjavaara, 2007). Subsequently, the research question (RQ) of this study is as follow:

 Research question (RQ): What role is mountain tourism going to play in the post-COVID-19 lockdown episode?

2. Literature review: An overview

2.1. Mountain tourism

Mountain tourism, which is also associated with sport tourism, and adventure tourism (Beedie & Hudson, 2003) plays a role in the economic contribution of the tourism industry (Fredman, 2008), due to the fact that this form of tourism is growing (Beedie & Hudson, 2003; Gill & Williams, 1994). It has also been highlighted that this form of tourism needs to develop and apply growth management strategies, as its sustainability can be threatened by its success (Gill & Williams, 1994). Indeed, mountain tourism often happens in protected areas and fragile ecosystems, subsequently, activities such as trekking are jeopardising the sustainability of this form of tourism (Geneletti & Dawa, 2009). Mountain tourism is also threatened by commodification due to the democratisation of the industry (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). As a result, many mountain destinations have turned into mere four season destinations resorts (Williams, Gill & Chura, 2004). Despite the fact mountain is a fragile ecosystem (Geneletti & Dawa, 2009) threatened by tourism (Geneletti & Dawa, 2009; Gill & Williams, 1994), this economic activity is necessary for the survival of rural areas, because those areas are suffering from a low density, and lack of integration into the overall economic network (Luthe, Wyss & Schuckert, 2012). The fact that many Parisians for instance have a second in countryside areas (Letelegramme [Online]) is contributing to the local economies of those areas (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015; Larsson & Muller, 2017; Visser, 2008).

Mountain tourism is based on a dense network of relationships (Bodega, Cioccarelli & Denicolai, 2004). Previous research has directly associated mountain tourism with other form of tourism such as sport tourism and adventure tourism (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). The association of mountain tourism and second home tourism has been done rather implicitly (Adie, 2019; Hecock, 2014). That said, Dornier and Selmi (2018), have clearly established the fact that tourists in mountain areas are keen to have a sustainable attitude as much as possible, as a result, they tend to stay in home-based accommodation. The latter could potentially be second home. This study is therefore pretty much officialising the relationship between both.

2.2. Second home (tourism)

Despite the fact second homes are booming worldwide (Nouza et al, 2015; Roca, 2013), particularly in North America and Western Europe (Strapp, 1988), and Nordic countries (Nouza, Olafsdottir & Saelporsdottir, 2015), there is a shortage of academic research on the topic (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015; Visser, 2008).

As a form of tourism, second home is associated with terms such as routine and novelty; inversion; back-to-nature; identity; surety, continuity; work; elitism; aspiration; and time and distance (Jaakson, 1986); vacation home; holiday home;

leisure home (Roca, 2013). Similar to other forms of tourism, second home tourism contributes to capital inflows; employment creation; income generation for small businesses such as grocery shops; restaurants; services and leisure companies; construction companies; etc. (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015; Larsson & Muller, 2017; Visser, 2008), all that partly because second home owners tend to have more disposable income than local inhabitants (Larsson & Muller, 2017). However, because individuals investing in this form of tourism are mainly attracted by the low price of property, this form of tourism is not very sustainable, as can fluctuate according to macroeconomic changes (Muller, 2011), but also according to social and environmental factors and conditions (Anabestani, 2014). As a form of tourism, second homes also remain a challenge for municipalities, due to the fact that they trigger increase of property price (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015; Visser, 2008); an increase of crime rate; accidents; need to increase public transport provision; etc., which subsequently lead to a need for municipalities to increase their assignment of resources in terms of police, health care; etc...As a result of the preceded impacts of this form of tourism, coping strategies are developed (Larsson & Muller, 2017).

All that said, it is important to highlight the fact that the impacts of second home tourism are contextual, as a result, research on the topic can't be generalised (Back, 2019).

2.3. Theoretical foundation and theoretical framework of the study

The breakout of COVID-19 has led individuals in many countries to a move to second homes (Appendix 1), to be in a safe environment, away from major population centres (Muller, 2008). This is a throwback to the foundation of the tourism industry, as one of the very first forms of tourism was health related (Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997). Nowadays, this form of Special Interest Tourism is known as wellness tourism, which is 'the act of travelling for the purpose of physical or psychological wellbeing'. (Stainton, 2020 [Online]). Mountain tourism is also associated with wellness tourism. Indeed, Arcaro, Gorla and Zublena (2018), explain that destinations such as the Alpine destinations attract visitors looking for good quality air. In the post-COVID-19 lockdown context, could mountain tourism (which by default involves mobility), be considered a form of placebo? The hypothesis of this study is that individuals would consider the return to nature as necessary for their wellbeing, because the image of mountains is closely related to nature, purity, wilderness, healthy lifestyle (Bourdeau, 2008).

Alongside the concept of Janusian-thinking approach or ambidexterity; the concept of quest of happiness through mobility (Zadeh & Pirnajmuddin, 2013), are at the base of the foundation and framework of this study. By taking this stand,

 this study is adding an additional layer to existing research on COVID-19 and tourism (Gossling et al, 2020; Hall et al, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020), even if very limited at the moment (Table 1).

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

3. Methodology

This study is adopting a news media narrative approach as its analytical framework, based on the fact it 'can produce important insight into emerging wicked problems' (Phi, 2019: 1). This approach was used by Phi (2019) to frame overtourism, and by Jamal and Budke (2020) and other academics to frame COVID-19 (table 1). Indeed, 61% of sources used in Jamal and Budke (2020) research was based on news media. This type of sources is particularly relevant and accepted to unfolding situations such as the current pandemic of COVID-19 (Jamal & Budke, 2019).

Documentary analysis (table 2), using an adaptation of a framework (figure 1), developed by Hammond and Wellington (2013), was performed on 26 news articles covering 8 countries (Appendix 1). Most of the articles used are based on France, because it is the world leading destination (Gouv.fr (2018) [Online]).

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

The limited number of articles used could be explained by the fact this Viewpoint paper is first and foremost a pilot study, which is a small scale version of a full study (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). "Pilot studies are particularly valuable in situations where little is known about the research topic" (Persaud, 2012: 2). Additionally, in a study attempting to define the pedigree of overtourism, Capocchi, Vallone, Amaduzzi, and Pierotti (2019), used a more or less similar sample (22 journal articles).

The first documentary analysis performed on 26 news articles is to uncover the destinations of travellers (table 2).

The second documentary analysis is to uncover the consequence of this domestic mobility. This analysis is based on 8 articles, extracted from appendix 1. These articles are focusing exclusively on France (table 3).

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

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4. Results and discussion

Based on a sample of 10 French news media, it appears that there is balance between countryside and seaside areas in terms of destinations chosen by Parisians. As for the sample based on 16 other destinations, it appears that locals who own a second home are choosing most of the time seaside destinations (12), followed closely by countryside destinations (8). This trend of living major cities

to safer places such as countryside or seaside areas has been long going, as supported by the quote below (*Courrier International* [Online]):

"France has a long history of exodus from the capital during uncertain times, as past outbreaks of the plague and cholera, along with political trouble, have sent the Parisian elite to the countryside (...) Social elites have always had one foot in the city and one in the country (...) Leaving town in times of epidemics has always been the rule".

In France, mountain areas, and therefore mountain tourism are going to be particularly attractive over the summer for a many reasons:

(1) The access of beaches is likely to be restricted due to issues related to social distances (Letelegramme[Online]; France Bleu [Online]; JDD [Online]).

(2) The relaxing and 'healing' virtue of mountain areas (La tribune [Online]; France Inter [Online]; Le Dauphine [Online]) due to their association with nature (Jaakson, 1986); their association with mystic/sacred; but also with health and affective image (Silva, Kastenholz & Luis Abrantes, 2015).

(3) Compared to other destinations, mountain areas/holidays are cheaper (France Inter [Online])

This study is referring to the above described trend in time of crisis, as being part of the placebo effect of second home (tourism). Indeed, placebo effects are all about the unconscious activation of expectancies of the efficacy of a product or service (Shiv, Carmon & Ariely, 2005) to address some needs (Plassmann & Weber, 2015). The changes are attributable only to individual

belief in the efficacy of the treatment (Beedie, Stuart, Coleman & Foad, 2006). This effect is sometimes activated by changes in emotions (Price, Finniss & Benedetti, 2008); price and brands (Plassmann & Weber, 2015). In tourism for instance, World Heritage brand may function as a placebo for less knowledgeable individuals (Adie, Hall & Prayag, 2017). The placebo effect of second home tourism (most of the time located in rural areas – such as mountains areas), is psychological, as second homes are generally in places individuals feel physically and psychologically safe as deeply attached to positive feelings (Adie, 2019; Jaakson, 1986; Nouza et al, 2015). Finally, second home tourism is also associated with happiness (Campistron, 2018; Clement & Demongue, 1995; Smith, 1996). However, Adie et al (2017) explain that this placebo effect can also impact negatively on destinations and locals because it might contribute to attract too many visitors. This is further supported by Yang, Xue and Jones (2019). This is all the more an issue as mountain is a fragile ecosystem (Geneletti & Dawa, 2009).

Seaside destinations have always been more popular that countryside destinations in France (NouvelObs [Online]; LCI [Online]; France Bleu[Online]; Le Figaro [Online]; Courrier International [Online]; New York Times [Online]). The post-COVID-19 lockdown context is likely to reverse the situation (La tribune [Online]; France Inter [Online] ; Le Dauphine [Online]).

 The COVID-19 is therefore contributing to a mutation of the trends in the tourism industry. In tourism, Fournier (2010) explains that a mutation is the shift from one stage to another, and the shift can be the result of a change of variable (environment; context; social; etc.). The term 'mutation' is also associated with the terms 'evolution' (Girard, 2010), or 'transformation' (Breton, 2004).

5. Conclusion

The fact that COVID-19 has contributed toward second home tourism and mountain tourism, instead of totally putting an end to tourism (table 1), shows how resilient the industry is. However, the post-COVID-19 lockdown can seriously threaten the sustainability of both forms of tourism discussed in this Viewpoint paper. Destination management is going to be very important.

In the post-COVID-19 lockdown context, second home tourism and mountain tourism could play the role of placebo for the 'crisis tourists', defined in this study as: 'individuals or groups traveling from one place to another for the purpose of physical and/or psychological wellbeing during a crisis (global warming, energy crisis, war, terrorism or global pandemics)'. However, in the case of locals, second home tourism has played an anxiety accelerator role (figure 1). The dual dimension of second home tourism and mountain tourism are echoing the Janus-faced character of the tourism industry. Beyond the fact that this study has highlighted the placebo role that both forms of tourism are probably going to play, it (1) has connected mountain tourism with second home tourism (2) highlighted the Janus-faced character of both forms of tourism (3) highlighted the mutation impacts of COVID-19 on tourism trends.

This study is also of interest because in the hospitality sector, accommodation has been severely impacted, with most (mountain) hotels and resorts being closed, or experiencing lower tourism numbers (Gossling et al. 2020), which is contrasting with second homes. As COVID-19 outbreak is going to lead to societal and economic changes (Hall et al, 2020), second home and mountain tourism are considered in this study as two of them. It is worth highlighting the fact that this exodus from major cities to countryside (or coastal areas) is not specific to France. The same phenomenon, triggered by second homes, has been noticed in other parts of the world such as the United States of America (USA); Turkey; Spain; Italy; Germany; Greece; Norway (Appendix 1).

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

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Table 1: Literature review COVID-19/Tourism

Author(s)	Year	Title article	Journal	¹ OP	² RN	³ FP	Key points	Submission (S) Acceptance (A)
Jamal & Budke	2020	Tourism in a world with pandemics: local-global responsibility and action	Journal of Tourism Futures	X			Overview of the COVID-19 context (what the virus is about / casualties / governments actions / potential impacts on the tourism industry)	S = 08.02.20 A=09.02.20 O=09.03.20
Gossling, Scott & Hall	2020	Pandemics, tourism and global change: A rapid assessment of COVID-19	Journal of Sustainable Tourism			Х	Impact of COVID-19 on the different sector of the tourism industry / strategy for the future	S=06.04.20 A=17.04.20 O=27.04.20
Higgins- Desbiolles	2020	Socialising tourism for social and ecological justice after COVID-19	Tourism Geographies			Х	COVID-19 offers the tourism industry an opportunity to reinvent itself	S=12.04.20 A=13.04.20 O=23.04.20
Hall, Scott & Gossling	2020	Pandemics, transformations and tourism: Be careful what you wish for	Tourism Geographies		2/	x	COVID-19 is going to lead to important changes in the industry (with global and national initiatives). Other changes will be societal, and economic.	S= 15.04.20 A=15.04.20 O=28.04.20
Yang, Zhang & Chen	2020	Coronavirus pandemic and tourism: Dynamic stochastic general equilibrium modelling of infectious disease outbreak	Annals of Tourism Research		X	Q	Model to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry	O=02.04.20
Yu, Li, Yu & Zhou	2020	Communication related health crisis on social media: A case of COVID-19	Current issues in Tourism		X		Impacts of COVID-19 on customers' perception of tourism products and services	S=25.03.20 A=31.03.20 O=14.04.20
Zheng, Goh & Wen	2020	The effects misleading media reports about COVID-19 on Chinese tourists' mental health: a perspective article	Anatolia			X	COVID-19 and its impacts on Chinese tourists' mental health + stigmatisation of individual Chinese	O= 28.03.20

Rivera	2020	Hitting the reset button for hospitality research in times of crisis: COVID19 and beyond	International Journal of Hospitality Management	X		Academic research tourism/COVID-19	O=28.04.20
Parnell, Widdop, Bond & Wilson	2020	COVID-19, networks and sport	Managing Sport and Leisure		X	Impact of COVID-19 on events	O=31.03.20
Hammami, Harrabi, Mohr & Krustrup	2020	Physical activity and Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): Specific recommendations for home- based physical training	Managing Sport and Leisure		X	COVID-19 and impacts on physical activities	A=15.04.20 O=20.04.20
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Opinion paper Research note Full paper							
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Table 2: Exodus related to context COVID-19; General public audience.

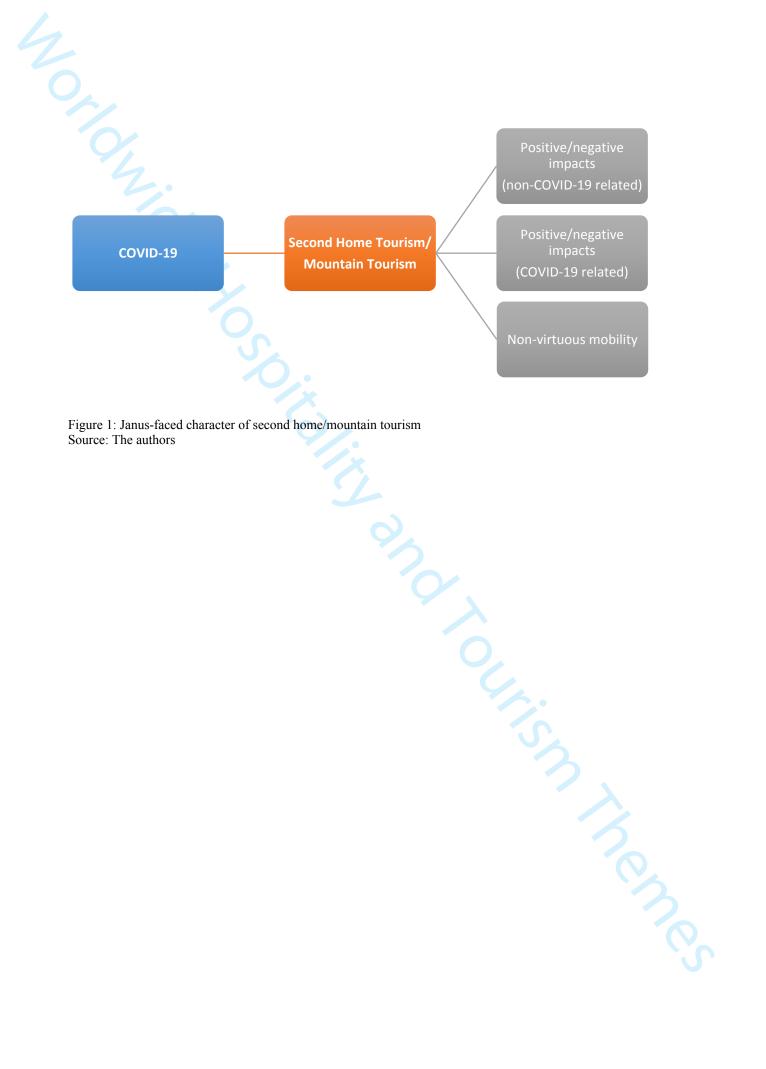
Country	Item No.	Authorship/ source	Date released/date published	Destinations	Countryside (C) Seaside (S)
France	1	La Croix	17.03.20	Normandie	С
	2	La Croix	21.03.20	Normandie	С
	3	Courrier international	21.03.20	Normandie	С
	4	New York Times	14.03.20	Long Island (New York)	S
	5	Bloomberg	14.03.20	Hampton, Hudson Valley	C; S
	6	Huffingtonpost	17.03.20	Bordeaux, Mayenne	С
	7	L' Express	17.03.20	South West France; West France	C; S
	8	Le Parisien	16.03.20	Nice	S
	9	Le Telegramme	17.03.20	Belle-ile-en-mer; Bretagne	S S C; S C
	10	Le Monde	26.03.20	Ile de Ré, Bretagne	S
	11	NY Times	29.03.20	Noirmoutiers (France); Germany	C; S
	12	France TV Info	10.04.20	Yvonne ; Gers; Orne	С

	14	Wall Street Journal	21.04.20	New Yorkers to Maine	C
	15	Daily Mail	22.04.20	New York to suburbs and smaller cities	С
Turkey	16	Le Monde	17.04.20	Istambul to Bodrum and Egea sea.	S
Spain	17	Telecinco	13.03.20	Madrid to Murcia, Extremadura	S
	18	El Coreo Gallego	14.03.20	Madrid to Countryside and south Spain	C
Italy	19	Il Tiempo	08.03.20	Lombardia to Venetie	S
	20	Il corriere dela sera	14.03.20	Lombardia to Venetie	S
	21	NY Times	29.03.20	Rome to Mediterranean coast	S
	22	Il Messaggero	06.04.20	North to south Italia	C; S
	23	Il corriere dela sera	10.04.20	North to south Italia	C; S
Germany	24	NYTimes	29.03.20	From big cities to countryside	С
Greece	25	NY Times	29.03.20	From big cities to Aegean Islands	S
Norway	26	Le Figaro	19.03.20	Oslo to coasts	S
ource: The	author				
	autio	(adaptation of Ham	mond & Wellingtor	n, 2013 + news media)	S

Table 3: Impacts of second home tourism in a COVID-19 context

Item No.	Authorship/ source	Date released/date published	Production / Context/Frame	Audience	Centring on	Content (summary/key points)
1	Liberation	16.03.20			Traveling issues	Parisians traveling to 2nd homes in the countryside are spreading the virus
2	Le Telegramme	17.03.20	ospi		Locals	Locals consider that Parisians are putting them in dangers as coming with the virus as Paris was the starting point of the pandemic in France, and the leading city in France in terms of number of people affected. Parisians are told they are not welcomed
3	Egora	18.03.20		1/1	Traveling issues	Parisians traveling to countryside are spreading the virus
4	Le Progres.fr	18.03.20			Locals	Parisians are told they are not welcomed
5	20-minutes	18.03.20			Traveling issues	Parisians traveling to countryside are spreading the virus
6	DNA	18.03.20			Traveling issues	Parisians traveling to countryside are spreading the virus
7	Ouest France	24.03.20			Locals	Locals consider that Parisians are putting them in dangers as coming with the virus as Paris was the starting point of the pandemic in France, and the leading city in France in terms of number of people affected
8	Europresse	15.04.20			Locals	Locals consider that Parisians are putting them in dangers as coming with the virus as Paris was the starting point of the pandemic in France, and the leading city in France in terms of number of people affected

1 2				
3 4 5	9/10			Locals are getting violent against Parisians (tourismphobia)
6	Source: The author (adaptation of Hammond &	Wellington 2013 + news	media)	
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Appendix 1: New media sources

18 July 2018

https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20180718.OBS9887/tourisme-on-part-pour-oublier-le-monde-plutot-que-pour-le-decouvrir.html

21 March 2020

https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/vu-de-letranger-avec-le-coronavirus-les-fractures-entre-les-francais-vont-encore-saccentuer/

14 March 2020

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-11/new-yorkers-flee-to-hamptons-hudson-valley-to-escape-virus

17 March 2020

www.letelegramme.fr/dossiers/confrontes-au-coronavirus-des-bretons-temoignent/coronavirus-tension-surbelle-ile-en-mer-avec-les-residents-secondaires-17-03-2020-12528216.php

18 March 2020

https://www.nouvelobs.com/coronavirus-de-wuhan/20200318.OBS26261/les-parisiens-se-refugient-a-belle-ile-en-mer-personne-n-a-pense-qu-ils-seraient-aussi-cons.html

19 March 2020

https://immobilier.lefigaro.fr/article/coronavirus-le-confinement-dans-les-residences-secondaires-fait-debat_c505a128-69bb-11ea-a768-fcc2dce54077/

21 March 2020

https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/vu-de-letranger-avec-le-coronavirus-les-fractures-entre-les-francais-vont-encore-saccentuer

27 March 2020

https://acteursdeleconomie.latribune.fr/territoire/2020-03-27/montagne-la-crise-du-covid-19-et-apres-843580.html

29 Marc 2020

https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/29/world/europe/rich-coronavirus-second-homes.html

09 April 2020

https://www.lci.fr/population/coronavirus-covid-19-plus-d-un-parisien-sur-dix-a-quitte-la-capitale-depuis-le-debut-du-confinement-2150498.html

11 April 2020

https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/covid19-la-migration-des-parisiens-en-pays-de-la-loire-1586600202

26 April 2020

https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/la-chronique-tourisme/la-chronique-tourisme-26-avril-2020

28 April 2020

https://www.letelegramme.fr/france/deconfinement-par-departement-ecoles-commerces-ce-qu-il-faut-retenir-du-plan-d-edouard-philippe-28-04-2020-12545141.php

29 April 2020

https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/societe/coronavirus-au-pays-basque-les-montagnes-seront-a-nouveau-accessibles-le-11-mai-1588180027

01 May 2020

https://www.lejdd.fr/Societe/deconfinement-les-plages-pourraient-elles-rouvrir-avant-le-2-juin-3965696

https://www.letelegramme.fr/bretagne/appel-a-la-reouverture-des-plages-le-11-mai-la-vague-monte-enbretagne-01-05-2020-12546103.php