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## A Novel Method to Analyze Tourism Webinars

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# **TTRA 2021 Full Paper**

## **A Novel Method to Analyze Tourism Webinars**

### **Introduction**

Webinars and virtual conferences are effective digital platforms to bring academics and practitioners together to share and disseminate knowledge in a dynamic online format (Black et al., 2020; Dorsch, Fisk, & Grove, 2014). Often, a webinar is recorded and shared with others, but rarely is the webinar used as a source of data analyzed for further meaning. Travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic shifted the way individuals and organizations receive new knowledge, information, and research (Falk & Hagsten, 2021; Viglione, 2020). After participating in many tourism industry webinars, researchers chose to explore the potential insights that could be generated from webinars. A webinar from 2020 was chosen for analysis in the present study. The webinar was hosted by a tourism nonprofit organization, following a significant annual report with scientific data and case studies by the same nonprofit, to discuss climate change and COVID-19 in relation to the tourism industry with several panelists and an international audience. Further, the webinar preceded other webinars done by the nonprofit and other global tourism initiatives to heighten evidence-based best practices on climate change and pandemics. In this increasingly digital landscape, how can knowledge obtained through webinars be analyzed, summarized, and be made useful to practitioners and scholars?

### **Literature Review**

Conferences and seminars are platforms for knowledge production, community building, and spaces for future thought development (Henderson & Burford, 2020; Kyvik & Larsen, 1994; Smeby & Trondal, 2005). Information discussed within the conference setting can guide knowledge development for the convened group, as targeted areas of future research are established. Conference planners often set the themes of the sessions, effectively guiding the conversations for attendees (Henderson & Burford, 2020). By including multiple viewpoints within conference discussions, planners can avoid the “missing delegates” phenomenon caused by attendees being excluded from or “struggling to gain access to conferences” (Henderson & Burford, 2020, p. 5). Post-conference literature ranges from summary reports to reflective academic articles (Hickson, 2006; Skelton, 1997).

These same general characteristics of conferences have been transposed to the webinar setting (Black et al., 2020). Web seminars, or webinars, increasingly so, function in similar ways to in-person conferences, given the travel restrictions from COVID-19. Within the webinar platform, the direction of discussion is often set by the organizing institution, knowledge is disseminated, attendees can ask questions and become part of the knowledge creation process through the ‘chat’ function of the webinar, and the direction of future research or goals are established. Arguably, due to the pivot of increased webinars during the pandemic, greater accessibility over conferences where travel is required, and live interactions within the webinar setting, knowledge production may be seen as more inclusive.

While research has been conducted on assessing the efficacy of webinar knowledge transmission (Wang & Hsu, 2008) and the value of webinars as communication tools (Achakulvisut, 2020), there is an absence of literature on the methods to analyze information produced during webinars, specifically, research protocols on how to examine the knowledge to guide the future direction of

the convened group. Similar to conferences, webinar content should be consolidated and analyzed for new knowledge and effective future action, if participants, and those not in attendance, are to obtain the highest value of the webinar content.

When audio-visual recordings of a webinar are transcribed, document analysis can be an effective method to gauge the knowledge of attending experts, speakers, and stakeholders, and is similar to analyzing a radio or television script (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The goal of document analysis is to “elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” from primary or secondary data (Bowen, 2009, p. 27; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Content analysis utilizing thematic coding procedures can increase the levels of reliability and validity for various media documents (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). While it is common to produce a report or summary of the contents of conferences, this is less an outcome of webinars. Instead, sessions are recorded and full audio-visual recordings are often posted online or shared by email.

This research seeks to answer: how can practitioners and scholars transfer knowledge as they pivot to a virtual format, such as webinars, and produce timely, relevant, and strategic knowledge from the information gained during a session by envisioning a new research method that extends content analysis approaches?

## **Methodology**

The following section describes the chosen webinar, organizing entity, framework, method, data collection, and analysis within this research.

### *The Case for Responsible Travel: Lessons from COVID-19 for Tourism in a Changing Climate Webinar*

This webinar, hosted by the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), was held on World Tourism Day 2020, and was meant to provoke future thinking and discussion for strategies for two of the tourism industry’s (and the world’s) most existential threats: climate change and COVID-19. Building off of CREST’s annual report released in September 2020, *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics* (CREST, 2020a), which uses science and case studies provided by members and academic affiliates, the webinar brought together distinguished speakers that represented different aspects of the tourism industry: business (Speaker 1), academia (Speaker 2), and consumer trends (Speaker 3). The webinar was hosted on September 29, 2020, moderated by one individual, lasted about one and a half hours in length, and attended by more than 265 participants from across the globe, including both tourism researchers conducting this current study (these researchers did not use the chat or ask questions during the webinar). Attendees actively participated in a lively, visible conversation within the ‘chat’ function of Zoom and asked questions of the panelists throughout the webinar. The objective of the webinar was to expand on the insights from CREST’s September 2020 report while fielding questions from attendees.

### *Center for Responsible Travel (CREST)*

The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST), host of the webinar, is a “policy-oriented research organization” and non-profit public charity, “dedicated to increasing the positive global impact of responsible tourism” (CREST, 2020b). Its mission is to “assist governments, policy makers,

tourism businesses, nonprofit organizations, and international agencies with finding solutions to critical issues confronting tourism, the world’s largest service industry” (CREST, 2020b).

*Future of Tourism Coalition (FTC) and 13 Guiding Principles*

The Future of Tourism Coalition (FTC) is a new initiative formed by six global non-governmental organizations, CREST included, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic “to place destination needs at the center of tourism’s new future” (FTC, 2020b). FTC created 13 Guiding Principles to direct the conversation for a sustainable future amongst stakeholders involved with the tourism industry (FTC, 2020a). Definitions of the principles are detailed on the FTC website and summarized in **Table 1** (FTC, 2020a).

**Table 1.** 13 Guiding Principles of the Future of Tourism Coalition

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Principle Title</b>
1.	See the whole picture
2.	Use sustainability standards
3.	Collaborate in destination management
4.	Choose quality over quantity
5.	Demand fair income distribution
6.	Reduce tourism’s burden
7.	Redefine economic success
8.	Mitigate climate impacts
9.	Close the loop on resources
10.	Contain tourism’s land use
11.	Diversify source markets
12.	Protect sense of place
13.	Operate business responsibly

Rather than applying a grounded theory or purely inductive approach, the researchers instead looked for overarching concepts that could frame knowledge on two critical areas: climate change and COVID-19. The FTC Guiding Principles emerged as such a framework and preliminary process for coding. The instrumentalization of the FTC Guiding Principles as *a priori* codes allowed for the coding process of the content produced during the CREST webinar. This process established common themes and allowed for efficacy testing of this sustainable tourism-related document (webinar transcript) via COVID-19 and climate change lenses (Guest, MacQueen, & Namely, 2012; Labuschagne, 2003). Analysis was conducted by two researchers working independently and member checks were performed with the moderator and speakers within the webinar, in addition to various CREST staff (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This is a novel methodological approach for webinar data consolidation for several reasons. First, data adds to deeper understanding on webinar knowledge production. Second, the new FTC Guiding Principles have not yet been utilized as an analytical framework and additional scientific evidence supporting the principles will enhance their efficacy. Third, analysis of this CREST webinar is unique in that the subject matters of climate change and COVID-19 were discussed within the same context. Finally, the common themes not only produced insights into COVID-19, climate change, and the FTC Guiding Principles, but also allowed for a graphical representation

of the connections between the common themes, threats, and principles. This deductive, qualitative method illuminates how knowledge produced within a webinar setting could provide strategies to guide future research and industry agendas within the tourism sector.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Permission for the research was granted by the host of the webinar after checking with the panelists. The audio and video recordings of the webinar were received by the researchers. The audio-visual recording of the webinar and the chat content during the webinar are currently posted on the CREST website, thus are both open-access, secondary data. The audio file was transcribed to a text document using the Sonix online software because of its open software availability and affordability. The file was then transferred to a spreadsheet for collation, preliminary cleaning, and analysis of data. Careful and diligent transcribing of the webinar was conducted and duplicated or redundant words (e.g., um), in addition to the names of individuals were removed. Detailed notes on emerging themes were taken throughout this data mining process (Guest, MacQueen, & Namely, 2012; Hand, 2007). This method of content analysis is notably different from primary data collection, as researchers did not choose the speakers or the content discussed during the webinar, and did not change the direction of the conversation through probing questions. Coding was completed for the whole transcript as a piece of secondary data.

The parsed data were examined and compared to the published descriptions of the FTC Guiding Principles. The corresponding principle or an emerging theme was aligned with each of the parsed statements. Emerging themes that differed from the principles were given a name and added to the codebook (e.g., consumer). Memos were taken during this phase to interpret the meaning of the themes, per the speakers' conversations during the webinar. Quotes that directly matched the principles and explicitly described new themes were highlighted for further analysis.

Inter-rater reliability testing was performed by the second researcher to increase the validity of the coding process. There were 113 parsed data fields and 10% (n=12) were randomly selected for code consistency, thus serving as a proxy for validity (Kurasaki, 2000; Ryan, 1999). These 12 fields were independently coded by the second researcher. Researchers discussed any differences and compromised on the appropriate code in order to reconcile the results of the coding process. One data field was changed per the second researcher's code (8.3% of the randomly selected data fields). Additional data fields containing this single code were adjusted where necessary within the other parsed data fields.

Data were then sorted by the codes given during the parsing process to examine how speakers discussed common themes of the FTC Guiding Principles. Quotes of the same code were compared to assess how the principles were used, why some statements did not exactly match the FTC principle definitions, and to determine the meaning of the new themes that emerged outside of the FTC Guiding Principles (functioning as *a priori* codes). Once the results were compiled, member checks were conducted with the speakers, moderator, and members of the CREST staff. Adjustments to formatting and other minor changes were completed. The speakers were offered and agreed with the results, including quotes, interpretations of their statements, the summaries, strategies, and the graphical representation of the data. The data and coding processes consolidated the knowledge from the webinar and resulted in a graphical and written representations of climate change and COVID-19 management and recovery strategies as per the aim of the webinar.

## Results

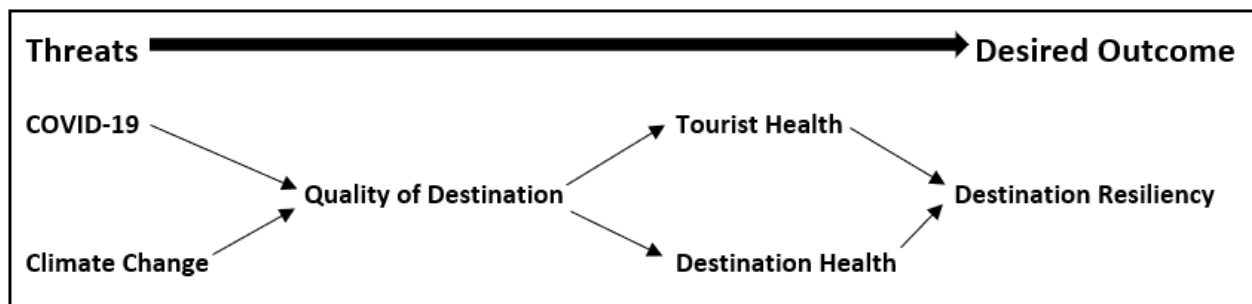
After ranking the coded data (such as per the number of mentions) the top five themes were solidified (derived from the FTC Guiding Principles), an emerging theme of “consumer” was produced (**Table 2**), and a graphical representation of the connections between the common themes, climate change, and COVID-19 was created.

**Table 2.** Top Six Codes and Frequencies

FTC Principles (See Table 1)	Code / Theme Title and Number of Mentions
4.	Choose quality over quantity (13 mentions)
3.	Collaborate in destination management (10 mentions)
8.	Mitigate climate impacts (9 mentions)
11.	Diversify source markets (9 mentions)
13.	Operate business responsibly (7 mentions)
<b>Emerging Theme:</b>	
Consumer	Consumers’ perspective and responsibilities (21 mentions)

**Figure 1** illustrates the data analysis with several mitigating variables to explain how the panelists viewed the transition from the existential threats of COVID-19 and climate change to the outcome of destination resiliency.

**Figure 1.** Flow Chart Generated from Tourism Webinar Data



There are two tracks in **Figure 1**, distinguished by how the speakers discussed the two primary threats to the tourism industry, COVID-19 and climate change, leading to destination resiliency:

1. COVID-19 → Quality of Destination → Tourist Health → Destination Resiliency
2. Climate Change → Quality of Destination → Destination Health → Destination Resiliency

The flow chart in **Figure 1** rendered a novel way of representing dialogue sourced from a webinar and can help businesses, governments, consumers, and local communities visualize their roles and

responsibilities. The intersection of these two existential threats converges at *Quality of the Destination* and again at *Destination Resiliency*. In other words, the primary way that climate change and COVID-19 can be managed, from a tourism perspective, is at the destination level. Appropriate strategies to increase the quality of the destination, for the health of the tourist and the health of the destination, can lead to the resiliency of the destination. The speakers discussed several ways to mitigate and manage the impacts of these two threats that can ultimately lead to destination resiliency.

### *Six Top-Mentioned Themes and Attributed Meanings Resulting from Webinar Analysis*

The strategies of how to address the threats of climate change and COVID-19 were described within the themes and principles that emerged from the webinar analysis. As shown in **Table 2**, these six top-mentioned themes included: *choose quality over quantity* (13 mentions), *collaborate in destination management* (10 mentions), *mitigate climate impacts* (9 mentions), *diversify source markets* (9 mentions), *operate business responsibly* (7 mentions), and the emerging theme of *consumers' perspective and responsibilities* (21 mentions). For each of the first five themes, the direct definition of the theme associated with the corresponding FTC Guiding Principle (derived from the FTC website) is stated, followed by a summary of the panelists' perspectives on each theme which includes selected direct quotes from the webinar. Finally, a summary of the emerging theme consumers' perspective and responsibilities is stated.

Principle 4: Choose quality over quantity (13 mentions): "Manage tourism development based on quality of visitation, not quantity of visitors, so as to enhance the travel experience while sustaining the character of the destination and benefiting local communities" (FTC, 2020a).

Panelists discussed destination quality in terms of both COVID-19 and climate change, with effective quality improvements leading to healthier travelers and destinations. However, there were different views on the source of the demand for higher quality destinations, and how COVID-19 could potentially benefit destination quality and sustainability. Speaker 1 connected consumers' demand to healthy, high-quality, and sustainable destinations, from the business perspective. Speaker 3 discussed the "*converging paths*" of destination health and consumers' heightened consciousness of travel during COVID-19. Speaker 3 elaborated: "I think what COVID-19 did was really show that tourism is a leader... in the overall health and humaneness of a destination. You see all these DMOs [Destination Management/Marketing Organizations] taking part, doing the advertising and the public health campaigns about how to travel safely."

Principle 3: Collaborate in destination management (10 mentions): "Seek to develop all tourism through a collaborative management structure with equal participation by government, the private sector, and civil society organizations that represent diversity in communities" (FTC, 2020a).

Panelists discussed collaboration within the destination as a way to better manage COVID-19 and climate change. Destination leadership, private sector, and consumers were all seen as actors in the system-thinking approach to collaboration and management. Speaker 2 clarified that a "*unified vision*" and top-down leadership was a missing component of collaboration within destinations and connected the importance of collaboration to systems thinking and climate change. Speaker 2 urged attendees to work together and saw policy as a primary mechanism for change.

Principle 8: Mitigate climate impacts (9 mentions): “Strive to follow accepted scientific consensus on needed reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Invest in green infrastructure and a fast reduction in transport emissions involved in tourism - air, sea, and ground” (FTC, 2020a).

Panelists discussed the different levels of stakeholders’ insights around climate change mitigation, both from a consumer and business perspective. Additionally, ideas for how to manage and who would manage mitigation at the destination level was explained by Speaker 2: “If countries don't prioritize, if that policy of climate and other sustainability elements is not built into that stimulus, I think it will actually work against some of the sustainability momentum that we had.” Speaker 3 discussed the changes in consumer beliefs around climate change and shared insights around climate change and tourism business attitudes.

Principle 11: Diversify source markets (9 mentions): “In addition to international visitation, encourage robust domestic tourism, which may be more resilient in the face of crises and raise citizens' perceived value of their own natural and cultural heritage” (FTC, 2020a).

Panelists discussed the challenges and opportunities to diversifying the source markets, specifically in relation to domestic travelers, in connection to overtourism, COVID-19, and climate change outcomes. Speaker 2 explained the broad challenges for destinations experiencing a shift in the market sources for travelers, and how this connected to overtourism: “This experiment we've been thrust into provides us some good opportunities to learn how some communities didn't anticipate that additional demand [from domestic tourists], and what they need to do differently to make sure they don't have the same problems with overtourism as some other places have had over the last several decades.” The moderator added how some destinations are currently pivoting to “staycations” for the domestic market.

Principle 13: Operate business responsibly (7 mentions): “Incentivize and reward tourism businesses and associated enterprises that support these principles through their actions and develop strong local supply chains that allow for higher quality products and experiences” (FTC, 2020a).

Panelists discussed how businesses can operate more responsibly during this time of COVID-19 and climate change to provide better outcomes for destinations. Speaker 1 explained the importance of education and motivations from the business perspective, in addition to the private sector’s role in sustainability: “We show them all [what] we do, and we prove to them that... luxury is not influenced by an environmental conservation program. In fact, they go hand in hand.” Speaker 2 connected these thoughts from Speaker 1 to governmental leadership in several ways throughout the webinar, emphasizing the need for destination leadership to recognize the importance of a bottom-up approach to tourism management.

Consumers’ perspectives and responsibilities (new emerging principle with 21 mentions):

The role of the consumer was the final distinct theme that was discussed in the webinar, but was not directly reflected in the Future of Tourism Coalition’s Guiding Principles. Panelists connected consumers to principles 3 (collaborate in destination management), 4 (choose quality over quantity), and 8 (mitigate climate impacts). Speaker 3 elaborated on surveys conducted on



consumers' opinions of their environmental impacts while traveling and where change needed to occur. Speaker 3 urged businesses to put more emphasis on climate change efforts because of the developing consumer trends, and explained the motivation of travelers during COVID-19: "At least amongst American travelers, who's traveling right now are those that feel less risk averse." Speaker 1 discussed the relationship between travelers and business: "We were able to tell our customers, when you stay with us, the only thing you leave behind is your footprint in the sand. The customer... feels [like he is] actually redeeming himself by staying in an environmentally sustainable resort or in a location that has sustainability at heart."

### *Validation through CREST*

The summary of the CREST report, *The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics* (CREST, 2020a), from which the webinar was based, was reviewed to identify potential differences between the report and webinar content. The report used the terms "resilient" and "healthy" as ideal outcomes of COVID-19 and climate change management strategies, consistent with **Figure 1**. However, the term defined the tourism sector, rather than destination resiliency, as in **Figure 1**. More specific strategies are discussed in the report when compared to the webinar. The report also identified consumers as an important factor in sustainability outcomes, consistent with the presence of the emerging theme *consumers' perspectives and responsibilities*, and urges the use of the FTC principles to realize destination competitive advantages. CREST staff and speakers at the event, including CREST's Executive Director who introduced the event, served as member checks to the content of the research and approved the results with minor changes.

### *Validation through webinar chat discussion*

A final assessment of the knowledge produced through this analysis was conducted by reviewing the chat discussion during the webinar. Given the digital nature of the webinar, audience interaction and validation of that content is another unique data feature that other knowledge transfer modes do not offer. Overall, the comments and questions from the total 265 participants were dynamic, interactive, and agreeable with the speaker content. At times, the chat discussion enhanced the speaker conversations, exemplified by text related to government involvement (principle 3), carbon neutrality of the tourism sector (principle 8), and staff sustainability education within accommodations (principle 13). For example, in one instance, a participant agreed with Speaker 2, then elaborated on the discussion surrounding government involvement. Participants using the chat function during the webinar maintained consistent conversations about the content and overall, had similar views as the speakers on strategies to manage COVID-19 and climate change for the tourism industry. No significant changes were completed from these checks.

## **Discussion**

As the world, and the tourism industry, continues to grapple with the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change, this novel method to webinar analysis and the findings from this research can solidify or fill gaps in current literature. While the FTC framework was utilized for this specific webinar, the framework and this method could provide a process for further researchers conducting content analysis related to webinars that problematize and discuss the sustainable future of the tourism industry in general, as this is the purpose of the FTC Guiding Principles. In the context of

the CREST webinar, the sustainable future was connected to COVID-19 and climate change. Additional research utilizing the FTC framework may also contribute to further insights that may support or illuminate gaps within the FTC Guiding Principles.

In this research, for example, it was clear that speakers discussed the emerging theme of *consumers' perspectives and responsibilities* significantly more than any of the other FTC Guiding Principles themes (21 mentions, followed by the next most frequently discussed theme of *choose quality over quantity* at 13 mentions). This may be attributed to a few factors. First, the way in which consumers were discussed was distributed over several themes, specifically principles 3, 4, and 8. Second, one of the panelists is the owner and CEO of a Caribbean resort and another panelist specifically discussed consumer trends and sentiments during the webinar. Both of these panelists, therefore, may have deeper insights into the consumer perspective due to their proximity to travellers. Third, consumers were discussed by the speakers as part of the recovery, management, and resiliency process within destinations. Thus, consumers were discussed during the entire webinar, allowing for the possibility of additional mentions throughout, when compared to more specific questions and answers on single FTC Guiding Principles. Evidence of changing tourist responsibilities due to COVID-19 is consistent with various findings by Dias et al. (2021).

The discussions within the webinar regarding the top five mentioned FTC principles are also consistent with current literature on COVID-19 and climate change. Abbas et al. (2021) examines the “implications for a sustainable recovery” in connection to the debate between quality and quantity (Principle 4) within destinations (p. 1). Specifically, overlaps between Abbas et al. (2021) and this current research are related to tourist health and mental well-being within the destination (See **Figure 1**), as they urge managers of destinations to increase measures for sanitation in order to recover more effectively. Škare, Soriano, and Porada-Rochoń (2021) connect the improvements of destination quality (Principle 4) with health protocols and collaboration (Principle 3). In referencing Krueger, Uhlig, and Xie (2020), they show that the combined public policy and private responses (Principle 3) to COVID-19 recovery may have drastic differential impacts on tourism investments, employment, and other “economic and human costs” (Škare, Soriano, & Porada-Rochoń, 2021, p. 13).

Abbas et al. (2021) also make the case to “reposition the tourism industry and change the tourism products” (Principle 11) and adjusting the way staff is educated on issues of COVID-19 and sustainability (Principle 13) (p. 9). The urge to operate businesses responsibly (Principle 13) is also connected to overcrowding (Principle 4) and government collaboration (Principle 3) in their study, as was similarly discussed in the CREST webinar (Abbas et al., 2021). The push to diversify source markets and ‘staycations’ (Principle 11) that was discussed in the webinar also is supported by academic research that predicts increased domestic travel to offset negative economic impacts from COVID-19 (Fotiadis, Polyzos, & Huan, 2021). Finally, academic literature supports management and recovery strategies that address both climate change (Principle 8) and COVID-19, and discourage the return to ‘business as usual’ post COVID-19 (Prideaux, Thompson, & Pabel, 2020).

Utilizing this method provided coherent and consolidated insights of the knowledge discussed within the webinar, as well as produced a graphical representation of the analyzed data. **Figure 1** shows that the two existential threats of climate change and COVID-19 impact the quality of the destination, specifically through tourist and destination health, leading to destination resiliency. The figure can provide a unique starting point, given that it is a flow chart as opposed to an executive summary, to discuss the interactions between COVID-19, climate change, and resiliency

at the destination level. This flow of management from the two threats to resiliency is consistent with academic literature.

Further triangulation of the data could improve the credibility of the findings (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For example, performing additional coding with the original CREST report, or through interviews with the speakers or other industry experts, could have elicited complementary or differing results. Within this research, the FTC Guiding Principles, transposed into *a priori* codes, produced consolidated results from the content discussed within the CREST webinar through the coding process.

## **Conclusion**

By utilizing the FTC Guiding Principles to understand the statements made in the CREST 2020 World Tourism Day Webinar, key strategies took shape to improve destination resiliency, namely through the quality and health of destinations and tourists. This is a novel method that shows the strengths and weaknesses of the FTC Principles, while also adding to the literature a new way to assess, compile, summarize, and graphically represent knowledge disseminated within a webinar setting.

Given that webinars may continue to take the place of in-person meetings and conferences, future researchers should utilize this novel method to analyze tourism-related webinars in order to contribute to the reliability of this method. Not every webinar is ripe for content analysis that leads to new or extended tourism frameworks. The webinar tested had many inter-consistency and validity checks including a science-based report, a panel of speakers, an active audience who used chat to vocally support (or disagree) with concepts and evidence. As well, the research utilized a leading new framework (FTC Guiding Principles) that can benefit from more empirical evidence to support its ecological validity. Additionally, there are currently over 500 signatories of the Future of Tourism Coalition's Guiding Principles, including government agencies, DMOs, businesses, consulting firms, NGOs, academic institutions, media and public relations firms, and investors from around the world (FTC, 2020c). Given this global reach, testing future-oriented and tourism-related content via the FTC Principles with many different methods is necessary to academically support the validity of the 13 Guiding Principles and their definitions if a sustainable tourism industry is to be realized.

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