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A Framework for Understanding Travel Intention Post-Pandemic to International Tourist Destinations

Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to shed light on risk perception, travel motivation, and destination image as significant factors in travel intention to international destinations. Understanding the influence of these factors is a strong trend in tourism research. However, limited studies have developed a model to understand global tourist travel intentions post-COVID-19. Because of the pandemic constraints, the world economy and the tourism sector have faced severe negative consequences. These consequences led to a drop in the number of international tourists, representing the primary source of tourism income contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for many developing countries. Governments and stakeholders are striving to ensure the recovery of tourism services and products to attract tourists to safe destinations. Based on the review and analysis of selected studies, this study highlights the significance of critical factors influencing tourists' intention to travel post-pandemic. Additionally, this contribution offers a framework for future studies on crisis-related travel behavior.

Keywords: travel motivation, destination image, risk perception, travel intention, COVID-19 pandemic

1. Introduction

The world has witnessed four significant outbreaks in the recent past, including SARS, EBOLA, avian flu, and H1N5 influenza (Breugelmans et al., 2004). On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak experienced a similar occurrence but with a more significant impact. As the number of cases increased, travel restrictions, such as complete or partial lockdowns, mandatory self-isolation or quarantine upon arrival, and other preventative measures, such as the closure of tourist attractions, suspension of public events, and suspension of business activities, were put into place. Although COVID-19 impacts on tourism will be uneven in space and time, estimates show an enormous international economic impact aside from the human toll. International tourist arrivals were estimated to have dropped by 78%, resulting in a loss of US\$ 1.2 trillion in tourism export revenues and 120 million direct tourism job cuts, the most significant decline in history. The future of tourism is at the core of all international talks and economies, as one of the essential worldwide employers (1 in 10 employment is directly related to tourism) and a significant contributor to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for many nations (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2020).

Safety concerns have continued to grow, harming the tourism industry more than ever (Škare et al., 2021). Therefore, it is imperative to explore the elements that determine future travel intentions and how visitors see danger (Villacé-Molinero et al., 2021). In addition, COVID-19 has brought about an unexpected social and economic crisis, quickly becoming a global health issue (Gössling et al., 2020). In the past, tourism has been severely impacted by pandemics occurring in various parts of the world (Breugelmans et al., 2004). Evidence

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from earlier pandemics indicates that tourists' intention to travel is negatively affected by unsafe destination images (Cahyanto et al., 2016; Isaac & Keijzer, 2021; Jonas et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2021; Neuburger & Egger, 2021; Rahmafitria et al., 2021). In 2020, pandemic-related travel restrictions were gradually eased, and countries worldwide have implemented various new processes regarding travel and tourism (Harchandani & Shome, 2021). This framework focuses on the significance of key variables to understand international tourists' future post-pandemic travel intention.

2. Core concepts

2.1. Travel intention

The intention results from a mental process that prompts people to act, transforming motivation into activity (Jang & Cai, 2002). It is a state of being ready to show a particular behavior. Travel intention is described as the function of evaluative views, normative beliefs provided by social elements, and environmental factors that tourists can predict while planning their trip (Moutinho, 1987). Thus, tourist behavioral intention is defined in the tourism literature as the tourist's planned future action (Barlas et al., 2010). Other studies described travel intention as a desire to return and a willingness to recommend the destination to others (Castro et al., 2007). In addition, Zeithaml et al. (1988) considered repurchasing one of the most significant indicators of future behavioral intention.

2.2. Travel motivation

Motivation is the internal force that drives people to action (Kim & Ritchie, 2012). This force is considered to have the ability to reduce the individual's state of tension (Correia et al., 2007). Since the 1960s, tourism researchers have paid close attention to travel motivation as a valuable method to understand travel demands and tourist behavior (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Many researchers attempted to answer the question of why people travel. Several theories have been developed to explain the reasons for behavior in the context of leisure as the collective free time pursuit of human beings. In addition, some well-known theories have been used to shed light on travel needs and motivations (Tasci & Ko, 2017).

In the travel and tourism context, many researchers build their theoretical foundation on the theory of human motivation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is used as a fundamental paradigm for analyzing travel motivations (Hsu & Huang, 2008). Maslow (1958) defined human needs in many spheres of life with a simplified conceptual pyramid of deficiency and growth needs, giving one of the most prominent theories of the twentieth century. This pyramid of needs featured a hierarchy that began with basic physiological requirements that must be met before progressing to safety and security needs. Tasci and Ko (2017) explained that the physiological conditions, or the basic requirements for survival, such as food, air, sleep, and even sexual needs, are the primary pursuits for some travelers. For example, many travelers base their decisions on the idea that they can eat and drink as much as they want. For example, this essential need can be affected if the cuisine of a particular destination does not meet a traveler's taste. However, it is also well established that travel involves several risks that threaten one's safety and security, including financial, psychological, social, and time risks. In summary, the needs of basic physiological, safety, and security requirements apply to the leisure and travel domains, and they can be the primary purpose for travel.

2.3. Destination image

A destination image is described as a subjective representation of a location maintained in the mind of a tourist that influences his behavior (Agapito et al., 2013). Gartner (1994) stated that the concept of destination image consists of three main components: cognitive, affective, and conative. Many studies on destination images were categorized based on the definitions of the overall image, cognitive image, affective image, and

cognitive-affective joint image (Zhang et al., 2014). Other researchers argue that destination image consists of only cognitive and affective components (Stylidis, 2016). The researchers discuss that intention or conation is motivated by cognition and affection (Chen et al., 2016). Therefore, behavioral intention as a dependent variable appears essential in understanding tourist destination choices and future motives and behavior.

Some studies proposed that cognitive attributes generate feelings about a destination. Hence the cognitive image precedes the affective appearance (Lin et al., 2007). The conative image mirrors behavior, which includes a tendency to visit, return to, and recommend the destination to others (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Furthermore, it has been discovered that people can form an organic image of a goal based on their initial acquired knowledge or the information that has been conveyed to them about the place. This organic image held by potential tourists significantly impacts their behaviors and decisions to visit that place (Castañeda et al., 2007). For that, There are practical implications for destination managers in terms of using destination images in marketing to various tourist segments (Jani, 2021). Marketing by using destination images can create a motivation that pushes tourists to visit a particular place by affecting their intention positively.

Several studies have shown that a destination's cognitive image significantly impacts behavioral intentions (Wang & Fu, 2015). Moreover, it is noted that cognitive image was found to have a positive impact on visit intention (De La Hoz-Correa & Muñoz-Leiva, 2019). additionally, According to a study done by Regan et al. (2012), a compelling destination image was revealed to exert a considerable impact on travel intention. Therefore, to better understand the overall image of a tourist destination and how it affects a tourist's travel intention, it is relevant and meaningful to identify the influence of cognitive image and affective image on travel intention.

2.4. Risk perception

Risk perception refers to people's attitudes and instinctive judgments regarding risk (Cui et al., 2016). According to Stone and Grønhaug (1993), a certain probability level can be attributed to risk to assess the potential loss. The perceived risk can also be described as the likelihood that activity will expose visitors to danger, which might impact travel decisions if the perceived threat is assessed to be above an acceptable level (Reichel et al., 2007). Sönmez and Graefe (1998) investigated perceived risk and identified it as a significant factor in avoiding travel to a risky destination. In tourism and travel studies, Roehl and Fesenmaier (1992) stated that perceptions of risks and travel behavior appear to be situational. They propose that tourists perceive risks differently in different destinations, and thus there is a need to study destination-specific risk perceptions.

Because travelers expect a memorable vacation and a safe destination, the perceived risk has become a problem among tourists worldwide. Furthermore, because tourism is inherently a service-oriented industry that depends on the human factor, tourists could be threatened by infectious diseases (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009). Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists may have considered psychological and social concerns significant factors in their decision-making (Matiza, 2020). Consequently, tourists may think about the likelihood of procuring a potentially fatal disease, having a vacation that does not match their expectations, and/or selecting a tourist attraction/service that will harm their social status (Hasan et al., 2017). Therefore, risk management is essential in developing a holistic system for the tourism industry (Mikac & Kravarščan, 2021).

3. Theoretical basis

3.1. Tourist behavior

Tourist behavior is the most significant issue in the tourism industry. It becomes even more relevant when tourists perceive risks in the destination during uncertain times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Jamal

& Budke, 2020). Several changes in consumer behavior have emerged during the outbreak. For that, it is necessary to carry out timely research that can serve as the foundation for understanding travel and tourism post-pandemic. Furthermore, marketing managers must understand emerging travel behaviors as they develop strategies grounded on current knowledge of future travel trends (Perčić & Spasić, 2021). For example, individuals are more likely to travel if they have a favorable attitude about travel based on their initial evaluation. In addition, subjective norms are expected to significantly impact an individual's intention to travel (Na et al., 2016). Thus, if these norms are rated favorably, the consumer will likely engage in some behavior. Also, cognitive elements such as needs, expectations, and values influence attitudes. As a result, attitudes alter people's intentions (Filipović & Šapić, 2020). Hence, the more significant uncertainty about the future in general and a specific destination, in particular, may decrease tourists' favorable attitude toward that destination and their intention to visit it (Quintal et al., 2010). The previous research found that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all substantially influenced post-pandemic travel intentions. Therefore, the current study uses the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain the influence of specific factors on tourists' travel intention.

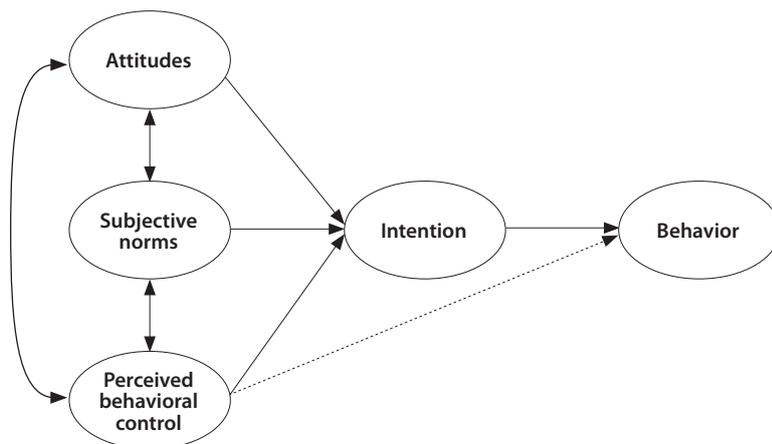
3.2. Theory of planned behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a psychological theory that explains how attitudes, subjective norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) interact to produce behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This theory proposes three distinct determinants of intention, as shown in Figure 1. The first attitude is toward the behavior, which relates to how a person evaluates or appraises the action. The second predictor is a social component known as the subjective norm, which refers to the perceived social pressure to perform or avoid performing the activity. The third antecedent of intention is the degree of perceived behavioral control, which relates to the perceived ease or difficulty of doing the behavior and is thought to reflect the experience and predicted barriers and obstacles. People's judgments of their ability to accomplish a specific behavior are perceived as behavioral control. The ability to control one's behavior can result in positive outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2021). It is assumed that the relative impact of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in predicting intention will vary across activities and situations. Thus, in some applications, only attitudes significantly impact intentions, while in others, attitudes and perceived behavioral control are sufficient to account for intentions, and all three predictors contribute independently (Ajzen, 1991).

Several studies in the tourism and hospitality industries have used the TPB to explain consumer behaviors, including tourists' behavioral intentions to visit a destination (Meng & Choi, 2019). Regarding travel intention studies, all variables in the TPB had a positive link with travel intention following a pandemic (Susanto et al., 2021). Therefore, TPB is useful in predicting tourist behavior to visit a destination during or after a pandemic (Pahrudin et al., 2021). Moreover, researchers employed TPB to discuss travel intention during the health crisis (H1N1). As a result, it is essential to study tourist behavior and whether post-pandemic COVID-19 tourism can expect to follow the pattern of rapid recovery seen after the SARS and MERS epidemics. In addition, the research assessed the factors influencing tourists' decisions to visit a destination post-pandemic (Pahrudin et al., 2021). Therefore, TPB is the study's framework for several reasons. First, the TPB model is widely used in tourist behavior studies and is well-known by the academic community (Huang et al., 2020).

Additionally, TPB has been demonstrated to anticipate human intentions (Sánchez-Cañizares et al., 2021), and this study used it since it is based on behavioral intention. Moreover, there is a lack of theory use in understanding travelers' post-pandemic behavior.

Figure 1
Theory of planned behavior model



Source: Ajzen (1991).

3.3. Travel intention post-pandemic

Recently, scientists focused on key research topics like post-pandemic recovery strategies and changes in travel behavior (Lončarić et al., 2022). Current research on travel intention post-COVID-19 has shown a variety of factors that influence travel intention. In their study, Das and Tiwari (2021) stated that tourists' intention during COVID-19 is negatively impacted by attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and positive and negative predicted emotions. Furthermore, it was found that fear of COVID-19, travel anxiety, and risk perception negatively impact the intention to travel (Luo & Lam, 2020; Şengel et al., 2022). In addition, the destination image is considered a key factor in travel intention due to cognitive image, representing a tourist's knowledge and information about the destination's attractions and attributes (Jaafar et al., 2022). Affective image, on the other hand, reflects a tourist's emotions and feelings about the destination (Ren & Sánchez-Aguilera, 2022). Also, a study by Wang and Xia (2021) revealed that nostalgia is essential to travel intention. They explained how to employ feelings of nostalgia to stimulate people to travel post-pandemic.

Other studies have found that people's willingness to travel depends on past experiences (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). A study has highlighted the significant influence of increasing or decreasing the level of Awareness toward risk perceptions and how this trigger can affect tourist behavior (Carvalho, 2022). Social media and electronic word of mouth significantly impact tourists' cognitive image and travel intention (Alfandi & Marco, 2022). Other researchers have predicted that once the pandemic is over, there is going to be an excellent chance for tourism to recover quickly because constraints and pandemic fatigue that people felt during their extended stay indoors can increase their intention to revenge travel post-COVID-19 (Zaman et al., 2021). Indeed, infectious diseases have long been considered a significant threat during a trip (Jonas et al., 2011). Hasan et al. (2017) have further reported that financial risk is another important factor affecting travel intention.

Therefore, scholars continue to discuss how pandemics affect future travel intentions. Several studies have identified key factors influencing tourists' travel intentions during and after a pandemic. Table 1 below summarizes the most significant key factors.

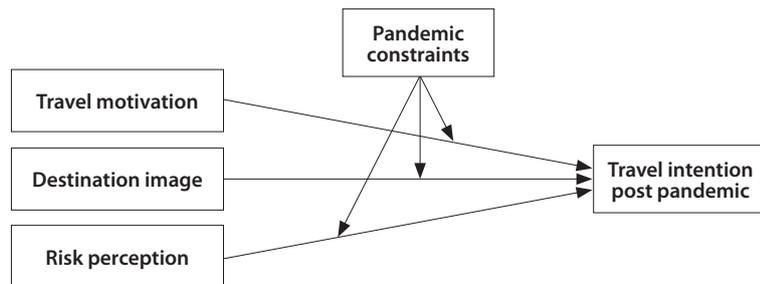
Table 1
A summary of key factors influencing travel intention post-pandemic

Key factor	Author and year
Personal/psychological motivations	Aziz & Long (2022)
Destination attributes	Jaafar et al. (2022)
Anxiety and travel fears	Şengel et al. (2022)
Pandemic fatigue	Zaman et al. (2021)
Nostalgia	Wang and Xia (2021)
Destination image	Ren & Sánchez-Aguilera (2022)
Past experience	Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021)
E-word of mouth	Alfandi et al. (2022)
Perceived risk, awareness	Carvalho (2022)
Financial risk	Hasan et al. (2017)

3.4. Proposed conceptual framework

A vast majority of research studies have investigated the influence of risk perception, travel motivations, and destination image on travel intention. Furthermore, travel intention is the dependent variable in multivariate models (Das & Tiwari, 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Therefore, to identify the potential influence of specific independent variables on travel intention as a dependent variable post-COVID-19 and following a review of the extant literature, the present study has developed the following conceptual framework Figure 2.

Figure 2
Conceptual framework of the study



4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly highlighted several emerging issues in tourism worldwide (Brozović & Saito, 2022). Tourist behavior and travel intention post-pandemic became essential issues, especially when tourists perceive risks in the destination. Therefore, the present framework sheds light on the influence of three significant factors: risk perception, destination image, and travel motivations on post-pandemic travel intention. This research developed a conceptual framework and proposed an integrated model based on identifying a variety of key factors by illuminating their effect on international tourists' travel intention to tourist destinations. This framework will guide toward a better understanding of tourists' motivations and decisions. Finally, future research on travel intention post-pandemic will have new reference frameworks and variables to obtain new meaningful findings. Moreover, this study will also be helpful for policymakers to develop policies and strategies related to future pandemics and the travel market.

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