POST-PANDEMIC TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR: CASE FROM REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Abstract

This paper explores perceptions about tourists' behaviour after a pandemic. Perceptions during the pandemic are also important, so on this occasion, they are connected with the planned tourist trips in the future. The research makes a new contribution to the understanding of tourists' behaviour during and after the pandemic and planned trips in the future. The research aims to test the model of planned trips in the future to identify post-pandemic travel behaviour. The data were collected on the territory of the Republic of Serbia by the method of an anonymous questionnaire. Five latent variables were used for data analysis: intra pandemic perception, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and post-pandemic travel. The SEM-PLS structural equation model using intelligent PLS software (version 3.0) was used in the data analysis. The results show that the used independent variables (attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control) significantly impact the intention to visit a destination in the future.

Keywords: tourism, Covid-19, post-pandemic travel intention

JEL Classification: Z320, Z300, C500

Introduction and theoretical background

The Covid-19 epidemic, which originated in China, has become a global pandemic, and in order to stop the spread of the disease, almost all countries around the world have introduced restrictive measures, i.e., travel restrictions (Tóth, Kálmán & Poór, 2021; UNWTO, 2020). The new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) global spread has generated an unprecedented crisis that has dramatically impacted public health, individuals' daily lives, and economic systems (Nicola et al., 2020).

According to available data released by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020), 45% have decided to partially or entirely close their borders to tourists, 30% have decided to partially or entirely suspend international flights, and 18% have applied various travel restrictions, such as closing its borders for travelers from certain countries of origin (UNWTO, 2020).

The global tourism industry has faced a massive crisis due to the global COVID-19 outbreak. Based on the insight into statistical data, what is noticeable is that global tourism is in a far bigger crisis than domestic tourism. The closure of borders, the abolition of international routes, and the — stay at home recommendations, and measures harmed international tourism (Pantić, 2021). Mass tourism stopped expanding (Stankov et al., 2020), which led to the fact that the world was temporarily deglobalized, and tourist facilities and attractions were closed (Niewiadomski, 2020).

Having all the above in mind, this paper starts from the effects and behavior of the population during and especially after the pandemic. The research of this paper aims to test and create models of planned trips in the future to identify the behavior of tourists after the pandemic. Following the defined problems and goals, the following research hypotheses have been defined:

H1: Perceive behavioural control significantly impacts intention to visit a destination post-covid-19.

H2: Attitude has a significant impact on intention to visit a destination post-covid-19;

H3: Subjective norm significantly impacts intention to visit a destination post-covid-19.

The travel industry was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. The COVID-19 epidemic had caused the most significant crisis international tourism had faced since the 1950s when UNWTO began analyzing international tourism trends (Golets et al., 2021).

Elements that influence tourists to take a planned trip

In order to understand and predict how tourists will behave after the pandemic, we need to pay attention to those elements that affect the choice of travel destination.

One of the elements that tourists consider when choosing a destination is security and safety. In this context, it is necessary to define the ***perceived risk*** and see

how it affects tourist travel during a pandemic. It is necessary to investigate whether the perceived risk will influence tourists to cancel their trips.

After considering the impact of perceived risk, it is necessary to investigate the ***travel intention*** after the pandemic. This is important to understand how tourists think and predict how the tourism industry's recovery after the pandemic will go.

The research should also include ***changes in tourists' behavior*** to react to them promptly. An adequate marketing strategy can be developed to attract tourists to visit the destination by monitoring these changes.

Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control of an individual's behavior affect whether the planned trip will be realized. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how these elements affect an individual's intentions to travel.

In order to predict the future actions of tourists, it is necessary first to understand their attitudes and actions. The perceived behavioural control and intention method can predict ***the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)***.

Risk perception

Zhu & Deng (2020) define perceived risk as the probability of adverse outcomes (Zhu & Deng, 2020). Tourists' perceptions of risks have a significant impact on the tourism industry. Risk perceptions influence tourists' choice to travel, especially during times of crises, as well as their decisions to choose a specific destination or product (Hajibaba et al., 2015) since the perceived risk and fear of travel by tourists can significantly influence the choice of destination and the behavior of an individual on the trip (Kozak, Crotts & Law, 2007). In a recent contribution, Neuburger and Egger (2020) found that travel risk perception and tourists' willingness to modify or cancel their travel plans significantly increased during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Risk is considered an essential factor influencing tourists' behaviour, as tourism is an intangible service exposed to potential risks and threats (Hashim et al., 2018). Tourism risks include time, satisfaction, psychological, social, physiological, security, and capital risks (Zhu & Deng, 2020). Faruddin et al. (2020) found significant relationships between perceived risk and intention to travel internationally consistent with the kinds of literature that argue that the more risk associated with a destination, the less likely an individual will choose to visit.

Inconsistent results were found by Bae and Chang (2020), in which cognitive risk perception has a significant favourable influence on post-pandemic travel intention, while affective risk perception negatively influenced post-pandemic travel intention. It can be predicted that perceived risk harms the intention toward travelers.

Travel intention

Travel intention, which is "an outcome of a mental process that leads to action and transforms motivation into behaviour", can be seen as a form of behavioural intentions. Related to the description of behavioural intentions, which is "the expectation to behave in a certain way concerning different products and services", travel intentions are the expectation to travel in a certain way or to a particular destination (Isaac & Keijzer, 2021).

Travel intention is a process of transforming travel motivation into travel behaviour. Travel intention will be shaped from perception or attitudes toward a

particular place. Customers will be affected by word of mouth (WOM), reasonable prices, convenient transportation means, safety, and attractive destinations. Tourists' travel behaviour includes travel intention to a destination (Nguyen, Pham & Pham, 2021).

The government's restrictive measures (e.g. self-quarantining, social distancing) and the risk of infection suppressed individuals' travel-related decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic, but this will not necessarily diminish travel intentions and thoughts when it ends. Post pandemic travel intentions reflect the will and desire to travel and visit destinations after the pandemic. Post-pandemic travel intentions involve cognitive judgments of risk messages, as well as causing a certain level of emotional involvement in a pandemic (Xie et al., 2021).

Behavioural changes

Tourists' behaviours, including their selection of destinations to visit, subsequent evaluation of destination decisions and future behavioural intentions, are related to willingness to revisit or support a destination (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Experience is one of the most powerful predictors of the behavioural intent of a tourist, so it can be concluded that prior experience could be an essential determinant of post-pandemic travel behavioural intention (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017).

Tourist behaviour is the principal problem in the tourism sector, especially when a risk appeared to visit a destination by tourist during the covid-19 pandemic (Jamal & Budke, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have emerged numerous changes in consumer behaviour. In order to ensure survival on the market in unstable and uncertain business conditions, it is necessary to conduct marketing research promptly, among other business actions. The results of the research form a base for formulating an appropriate (marketing) strategy. Also, (marketing) managers in tourism need to understand the behaviour of tourists to formulate marketing and destination management strategies based on accurate knowledge of tourist behaviour and future trends (Perčić & Spasić, 2021). It will be necessary to conduct adequate analyses that will help define future strategies based on accurate data on the pandemic, mortality, and its ultimate economic effects (Luković & Stojković, 2020).

Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control of behaviour

Na et al. (2016) explained that an individual is more likely to travel if they possess a favourable attitude from their initial assessment to the idea of travel. Subjective norms are predicted to strongly influence an individual's intention to travel (Na et al., 2016). Therefore, the consumer will probably engage in some form of behaviour if they evaluate it positively. Attitudes are formed based on cognitive factors, such as needs, expectations and values. Consequently, attitudes influence the intensity of individuals' intentions (Filipović & Šapić, 2021).

The perception of more significant uncertainty about the future in general, and a destination in particular, may indeed reduce tourists' favourable attitude toward that destination and, thus, their intention to visit it (Quintal et al., 2010). Specifically related to the post-pandemic travel intention, Li et al. (2020) reported significant influences of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on post-pandemic travel intentions. Therefore, this study proposes that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control positively affect tourists' travel intentions (Li et al., 2020).

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

It is not very easy to predict customers' future actions without understanding their attitudes and actions in the tourism industry. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), perceived behavioural control and intention can help predict the behaviour. Behavioural intention refers to the motivational factors that influence a given behaviour where the more substantial the intention to perform the behaviour, the more likely the behaviour will be performed. Perceived behavioural control refers to people's perceptions of their ability to perform a given behaviour. The ability to control behaviour can generate positive outcomes (Nguyen, Pham & Pham, 2021). In their study, Susanto et al. (2021) concluded that all variables in the theory of planned behaviour had a positive relationship with the intention to travel after a pandemic. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Susanto et al., 2021).

Pahrudin et al. (2021) say that the use of planned behaviour theory is helpful to predict tourist behaviour to visit a destination during or post-pandemic covid 19. Also, the same authors conclude that the theory of TPB has been applied in several sectors but has not been applied in a pandemic context except the variable of intention in the medical aspect. A study from 2012 used by the authors uses TPB theory to visit during a health crisis (H1N1). Therefore, it is essential to understand the tourist behaviour whether the post-pandemic covid-19 tourism can be expected to follow the pattern recovery rapidly similar after the SARS and MERS epidemics and to evaluate the factors that influence the tourists' in deciding to visit a destination post-pandemic covid-19 (Pahrudin et al., 2021).

The Belief – Desire - Intention (BDI) model has been a widely studied philosophical theory of practical reasoning and behavioural intention. The present study adopts this theoretical framework to investigate how a country's management of the COVID-19 pandemic helps construct beliefs regarding a destination. This belief can be a motivator for shaping a behavioural intention (i.e. the desire to visit a destination) (Rastegar et al., 2021).

Tourist trips after the pandemic

The consequences of COVID-19 can only be glimpsed at for now, and we will be able to measure and understand them after the pandemic is over entirely. Furthermore, their remediation will be long-lasting, and overcoming the consequences of the crisis and returning the world to a pre-pandemic situation depends on the economic policy carriers and their knowledge and experience (Pantić, 2021).

After identifying the key factors that affected leisure travel intention in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the stakeholders in the tourism sector will be able to develop proper marketing strategies for tourism destinations in the future that are focused on the aspects that hold a high level of influence. According to the results of this study, the variables that showed a significant positive relationship with post-pandemic leisure travel intention include attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and non-pharmaceutical interventions. Additionally, there is optimism that the tourism industry will recover soon because most respondents in this study have stated their intention to travel abroad for a vacation after the COVID-19 pandemic ends. Respondents showed positive responses to travel after the pandemic and negative responses to travel anxiety or risks (Susanto et al., 2021).

Material and methods

Data were collected from respondents who travelled to tourist destinations in the Republic of Serbia or plan to travel in the future. The study used social media to distribute and collect data, which has been recommended in recent literature as the most efficient way to collect data, with an average response rate of 54% (Ali et al., 2021). Data for data analysis were collected from January to March 2021. The questionnaire to collect data was developed based on previous studies using a five-point Likert scale, in which 1 and 5 refer to disagree and strongly agree, respectively strongly. The measurement items for constructs were adapted from tourism Li et al., (2020).

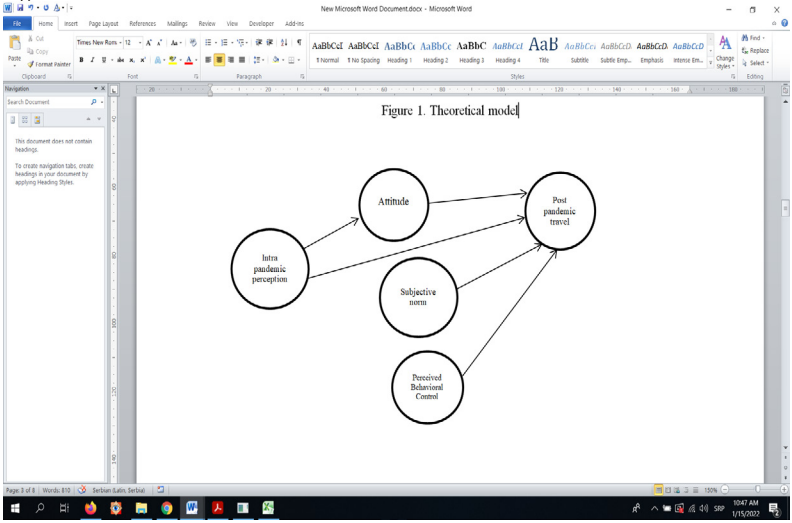
Of the respondents to whom the request for filling in the questionnaire was sent, 229 respondents filled in. Out of the total number of respondents, the prevalence by gender is almost ideal, 117 male and 112 female. The majority of respondents (142) belonged equally to the two age groups; 21–30 and 31–40 groups, and the majority of respondents (180) hold faculty, master's degree, or PhD.

The SEM-PLS structural equation model using intelligent PLS software (version 3.0) was used in the data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents such as gender, education, age using SPSS software tools.

Results and discussion

In the first step of model analysis using the PLS-SEM model, a measurement model of five latent variables intra pandemic perception, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and post-pandemic travel, was set up as a theoretical model.

Figure 1 *Theoretical model*



Source: Authors Calculation

Considering the satisfactory parameters of model fit and the fulfilment of the conditions for the validity of the concept, a structural analysis was conducted in the next stage. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to estimate the measurement scale of the theoretical model. Using the software package Smart PLS v.3, the path coefficients between the defined groups of variables in the tested model were calculated, and the coefficients of determination (R2) were determined. Trajectory coefficients (β coefficient) indicate the strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The obtained values of the coefficients of determination are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Coefficients of determination (R^2)*

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Attitude	0.03	0.028
Post-pandemic travel	0.603	0.599

Source: Authors Calculation

For further evaluation of the model, we used: (1) construct reliability and validity, (2) Discriminant Validity and (3) Regression coefficients after the bootstrapping process. As suggested by Nanally, the composite reliability of latent variables should not be less than 0.7 (Nunnally, 1994). Also, the average variance extracted (AVE) should not be less than 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 2 *Construct reliability and validity of the model*

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived behavioural control	0.833	0.845	0.923	0.856
Attitude	0.802	0.803	0.91	0.834
Intra pandemic perception	0.494	0.25	0.51	0.299
Post pandemic travel	1	1	1	1
Subjective norm	0.849	0.926	0.928	0.865

Source: Authors Calculation

Tables 2 and 3 indicate that the model is valid, given that all AVE values are greater than 0.5 and that Cronbach's Alpha factor for all values is greater than 0.7. The exception in both cases is an indicator of Intra pandemic perception, so in this case, we will further conclude about post-pandemic travel, taking into account the fit model.

Table 3 *Discriminant Validity of model*

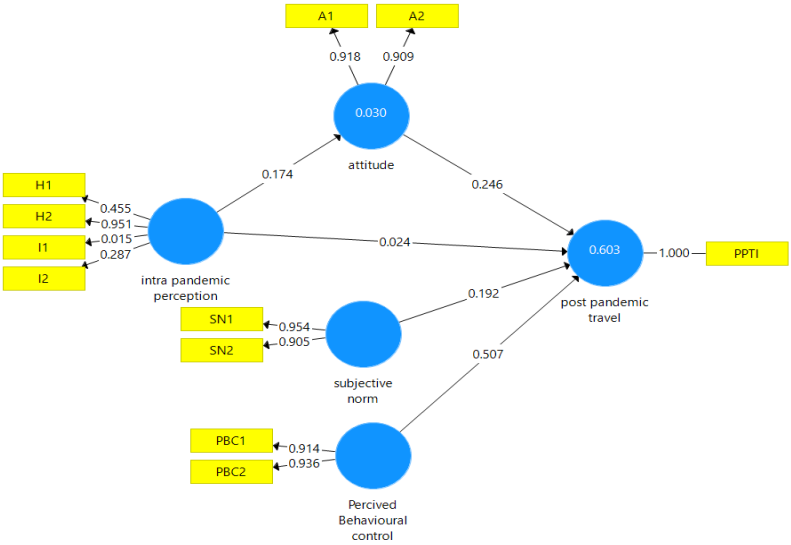
	Perceived Behavioural control	attitude	intra pandemic perception	Post-pandemic travel	subjective norm
Perceived Behavioural control	0.925				

Attitude	0.417	0.913			
intra pandemic perception	0.085	0.174	0.546		
Post-pandemic travel	0.68	0.602	0.153	1	
subjective norm	0.354	0.73	0.219	0.556	0.93

Source: Authors Calculation

After checking the validity of the model, the value of the regression coefficients was calculated, and the results of the PLS-SEM model are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Results of the PLS-SEM model



Source: Data Analyzed

Based on the results shown in Figure 2, it can be concluded that all regression coefficients are positive, as defined in the research hypotheses. However, to test the set hypotheses, it is necessary to calculate the corresponding p-values for all regression coefficients, which determines the statistical significance of the obtained coefficients. Table 4 shows the Regression coefficients after the bootstrapping process.

Table 4 *Regression coefficients after the bootstrapping process*

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/ STDEV|)	P Values
Perceived Behavioural control -> post-pandemic travel	0.507	0.509	0.049	10.403	0
attitude -> post-pandemic travel	0.246	0.247	0.079	3.106	0.002
subjective norm -> post-pandemic travel	0.192	0.19	0.076	2.528	0.012
intra pandemic perception -> attitude	0.174	0.184	0.073	2.374	0.018
intra pandemic perception -> post pandemic travel	0.024	0.022	0.053	0.461	0.645

Source: Data Analyzed

The results shown in Table 4 indicate that all regression coefficients are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) except for latent variables intra pandemic perception > post-pandemic travel. Given that the regression coefficient showing the relationship between perceived Behavioral control and post-pandemic travel is favourable and relatively high (0.507), it can be concluded that Hypothesis 1 is confirmed and statistically significant. Thus, perceived behavioural control significantly impacts the intention to visit Serbia post-covid-19.

A positive regression coefficient (0.246) was obtained for the relationship attitude and post-pandemic travel, based on which it can be concluded that hypothesis H2 was also confirmed. Considering that the p-value, in this case, is at the level of <0.05, this statement is also statistically significant.

The next tested relationship is between subjective norm and post-pandemic travel. A positive regression coefficient (0.192) was obtained, so it can be concluded that hypothesis H3 was also confirmed. The lowest statistically significant coefficient was obtained for the intra pandemic perception and attitude (0.174). However, the coefficient is positive and indicates a positive impact of intra pandemic perception on attitude. Also, there is a positive impact in the relationship between intra pandemic perception and post-pandemic travel, but it is not statistically significant, so we can neither reject nor confirm this hypothesis.

Conclusion

This study highlights the complexity of the problems in the tourism industry during and after the pandemic, as well as the fact that the tourism industry is particularly affected. The results of this study, in addition to a detailed analysis in the Republic of Serbia, offer socially beneficial implications for all stakeholders: agencies, tourists, the entire tourism industry and the state. First of all, the intention of the tourist to visit the destination after the pandemic indicates essential information for creating a

business strategy for industries that are highly affected by the crisis. However, it also imposes a situation that tourists are very aware of their health risks, but they will not give up their planned trips in the future.

Conducted analyzes and research results also have certain limitations. In addition to striving for the model to be comprehensive to visit the destination, the study focused on the tourist intentions of a local destination such as the Republic of Serbia. New research that would build on existing ones could be conducted internationally. In that case, a comparative analysis would be instrumental. In order to fill the gaps in the research, the authors invite other scientific researchers to equally participate in the analysis of this behaviour of the tourist population, which is advantageous both from the economic and from the practical and strategic aspect of the future of tourism.

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