



ECONOMIC ANNALS-XXI

ISSN 1728-6239 (Online)
ISSN 1728-6220 (Print)
<https://doi.org/10.21003/ea>
<http://ea21journal.world>

Volume 202 Issue (3-4) 2023

Citation information: Karácsony, P., Vasa, L., & Pásztóová, V. (2023). The factors which influenced the Hungarian traveller decisions and tourism organisations during the coronavirus crisis and beyond. *Economic Annals-XXI*, 202(3-4), 52-60. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21003/ea.V202-05>



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The factors which influenced the Hungarian traveller decisions and tourism organisations during the coronavirus crisis and beyond

Abstract. In the 21st century, tourism and hospitality are highly profitable industries. Thousands of people enjoy visiting popular tourist resorts, and historical and natural sites or trying out the most exciting attractions, which give tourists the experience of a lifetime. In the aftermath of the 2019 coronavirus crisis, the way tourism organisations operate has changed dramatically. The coronavirus outbreak caused huge liquidity problems for companies, which also affected the tourism sector. We examine the impact of the COVID-19 coronavirus crisis on tourism organisations operating through primary research. The literature review is based on a synthesis of domestic and international research findings. For the primary research, an online questionnaire survey was conducted among the 312 selected respondents - active tourists - in the all regions of Hungary in 2022.

We analysed the decisions of Hungarians who travelled domestically and abroad and whether such factors as media coverage of coronavirus crisis and financial situation fears influence them.

The research is based on the testing of three hypotheses. Through correlation analysis and chi-square quantification, the research results showed that media coverage of the coronavirus crisis, fear of illness, and financial factors influenced respondents' travel behaviour and thus the performance and operations of tourism organisations in Hungary.

Keywords: Travel; Tourism; Consumer Behaviour; Crisis; Hungary; Fear; Media Influence; Coronavirus

JEL Classifications: H12; J24; L83; Z32

Acknowledgements and Funding: The authors received funding for this research from Obuda University, Budapest, Hungary.

Contribution: The authors contributed equally to this work.

Data Availability Statement: The dataset is available from the authors upon request.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21003/ea.V202-05>

1. Introduction

Today, societies are affected by economic and health crises (Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2020). The coronavirus epidemic was not only a health crisis that claimed human lives, but also had an extremely negative impact on the economy (Everingham & Chassagne, 2020). The viral disease

SARS-CoV-19 was first reported in 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China, and was soon after defined as a pandemic by the World Health Organization - WHO (Madani et al., 2020). The pandemic has brought a dramatic turnaround in tourism (Schmude et al., 2021). Tourism and travel are key activities for meeting human needs (Bae and Chang, 2021). The negative consequence of travel is the spread of infectious diseases (Rather, 2021). Individual governments have been forced to stem the tide of tourists (Shao et al., 2021; Farzanegan et al., 2020; Demirdag et al., 2021). It is well known that the tourism and hospitality industry is based on and driven by community engagement and people mobility, which has been completely held back by the viral situation (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). The pandemic has affected the demand and supply sides of the economy in parallel (Csiszárík et al., 2021), hence, the literature on impact analysis for tourism covers a rather broad spectrum (Pham et al., 2021).

Organisations operating in the tourism sector were among the most vulnerable sectors during the coronavirus outbreak. During the crisis, more and more people were staying at home and cancelling previously booked domestic and international travel. For the future expansion of tourism organisations, the willingness of people to travel and their financial situation are the most important factors. Every crisis has an impact on the financial situation of consumers, which first affects sectors that are not vital for consumers, such as tourism or the luxury goods market. The main objective of this study was to identify the factors that most influenced travellers' decisions and thus the operation and situation of tourism organisations during the coronavirus crisis on the example of Hungary.

2. Brief Literature Review and Hypotheses

The health crisis caused by the coronavirus has challenged many organisations, leading to economic and social problems. From an organisational point of view, the primary victims of the coronavirus crisis were organisations in the service sector. The introduction of the free movement of people, the daily negative media news, and the rising unemployment caused financial difficulties for consumers, all had an impact on the operation of tourism organisations. One of the most popular topics in the press lately has been the coronavirus outbreak. However, news and information from the media did not necessarily give a realistic picture of the gravity of the situation (Yu et al., 2020). Romagosa (2020) agrees with the findings of Yu et al. (2020) that the press plays an extraordinary role in conveying true and false information about the epidemic. The research of Villacé-Molinero et al. (2021) reflects the significant potential of social media to influence people's travel plans. The misinformations and the safety regulations imposed by governments are having a negative impact on people's confidence in travel. The most significant conclusion of the study by Chemli et al. (2020) is that information from media coverage based on trusted sources, reporting on communicable disease risks and deaths, has a positive impact on tourists' travel awareness. The fears of disease and ambivalent information have had a profound impact on the decisions and attitudes of people. News about risky and dangerous travel reached people through the mass media, whether the information was true or misleading (Godovykh et al., 2021).

The introduction by some countries of border controls restricting the free movement of people and quarantine requirements has completely transformed the way people travel (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020, Almeida & Silva, 2021; Priatmoko et al., 2021; Remenyik et al., 2021). Seyfi et al. (2020) stress the importance of measures and border-crossing regulations that restrict people's mobility. Tourism as an industry was in a highly vulnerable position (Stankov & Filimonau, 2020; Tovmasyan, 2021). Due to the rapid spread of the epidemic, people's mobility has stopped (Haywood, 2020), and international and local travel has been minimized at the global level (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020). The decline in tourism's role in the economy is also striking, because before coronavirus, people's reckless and excessive willingness to travel, as well as the subsidies given to tourism by some countries, significantly increased the economic role of tourism (Benjamin et al., 2020). The outbreak of the coronavirus has had a major impact on tourists' preferences and intentions, as well as on their previous tourism-related habits. In their 2020 study, Addo et al. found that the impact of feelings of fear has led to a transformation in tourists' behaviour and decision. In their study, Kusumaningrum and Wachyuni (2020) found that the pandemic has reshaped previous travel trends, with mass tourism falling dramatically. The virus has made tourists more independent and less likely to use travel agents. In an empirical contribution, Rasoolimanesh et al. (2021) show that the health crisis had a passive effect on domestic and foreign travel intentions and that the press may have portrayed the resorts visited by tourists in a negative light. The threat and risk to a destination can determine people's

perceptions of travel. If tourists perceive a risk, they can change their decision or cancel their trip altogether (Neuburger & Egger, 2021). Fear of the coronavirus has also affected the Hungarian tourists' willingness to travel (Keller & Printz-Markó, 2021).

Worldwide, the outbreak of COVID-19 was a much more complicated problem than tourism and hospitality sector ever expected (Okafor et al., 2021). Consumer demand for tourism and hospitality has fallen sharply as a result of the disease scare (Canhoto & Wei, 2021). In most countries around the world, the health crisis has forced a significant proportion of restaurant, fast food and café operators to close their outlets, with negative consequences for employment in the sector. Studies by Gössling et al. (2020) and Gretzel et al. (2020) show that the hospitality and tourism sector has experienced significant labour loss. According to Bakar and Rosbi (2020), the rapid spread of infectious diseases causes anxiety and fear in people, which has a major impact on the recovery of tourism (Song & Li, 2021). However, once the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has subsided, tourism will be determined to regain its former leading position (Renaud, 2020), one of the most dynamic and extensive sectors internationally (Riadil, 2020). According to Lapointe (2020), post-COVID-19, tourism will be affected by extraordinary changes. The coronavirus epidemic affects not only people's willingness to travel but also their economic situation, causing financial difficulties and fear of unemployment. This has the effect of changing people's minds, making them give up traveling habits or take more considered decisions. Demand for tourism services has fallen below the minimum, leaving many small and medium-sized enterprises in a desperate situation (Umukoro et al., 2020; Gretzel et al., 2020). In their study, Bak and Pásztor (2020) found that fear of the epidemic and feelings of insecurity led people to change their travel decisions. Felkai (2021) argues that the increased travel-related costs significantly influenced the Hungarian tourists' travel habits. Research by Keller and Printz-Markó (2021) shows that during the epidemic the domestic prices of travel-related services increased in Hungary, and because of this, consumers spend fewer days in tourism than before.

Hungary was not spared the health crisis and its effects was felt throughout the country (Fekete-Fábián & János, 2022). Tourism and hospitality accounted for 6.4% of the country's GDP in 2019. The number of workers in these sectors was close to half a million. The main destinations were the capital Budapest and the Balaton region (Csapó & Lőrincz, 2020). The number of foreign tourists in the Hungarian capital of Budapest has also fallen (Boros & Kovalcsik, 2021). In 2020, the number of foreign tourists arriving in the country fell by 73% compared to the previous year. Loung Group's 2020 found that 43% of the Hungarian population have had their travel plans cancelled. In the period between the two waves of the pandemic, the number of the Hungarian tourists traveling abroad decreased, while the number of domestic trips increased (Michalkó et al., 2022). Less research has been done on the impact of the coronavirus on Hungarian tourism until 2020. In 2021, however, the potential of Hungarian tourism research has attracted the attention of many Hungarian researchers. Travel was expected to be domestic and compliance with epidemiological measures played an important role in the choice of destination. The future of Hungarian tourism will see an increase in the number of domestic trips and the need for a sense of security. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), the tourism and hospitality industry had a good year in 2019 when foreign tourists spent approximately 2 248 billion HUF (6 977 million EUR with HUF 322.16 for EUR 1 exchange rate) in Hungary, while domestic tourists spent 723 billion HUF (2 244 million EUR with HUF 322.16 for EUR 1 exchange rate), which amount was 21% more than the previous year of 2018. In 2020, foreign tourist spending was 978 billion HUF (2 919 million EUR with HUF 334.98 for EUR 1 exchange rate), and domestic tourist spending was 406 billion HUF (1 212 million EUR with HUF 334.98 for EUR 1 exchange rate) in Hungary, which was less compared to 2019. Table 1 shows the main tourism related data to Hungary between 2019 and 2021, based on available data from KSH. The table shows that there was a small increase in 2021, but it was still weak compared to 2019.

Table 1:
Main data for the Hungarian tourism sector in 2019-2021

The number of foreign tourists in Hungary	The number of foreign trips by the Hungarian tourists	Number of domestic trips by the Hungarian tourists (trips lasting more than 1 day)
61 379 (2019)	24 860 (2019)	14 249 (2019)
31 641 (2020)	12 727 (2020)	8919 (2020)
36 668 (2021)	13 258 (2021)	10 183 (2021)

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), 2022

The only way to recover from the coronavirus epidemic and restore tourism is for the industry to operate in a much more sustainable mode in the future, which meets the financial means and needs of tourists (Spenceley et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the coronavirus epidemic affected the operation of tourism organizations in several ways. The negative effects of governments' crisis management interventions were immediately felt in the tourism sector. The media has created fear in people, often unintentionally, which has influenced consumers' travel decisions. The tourism sector has fallen significantly due to rising unemployment and the deteriorating financial situation of people as a result of the crisis. Many tourism organisations around the world have been forced into bankruptcy and have been forced to close down.

The main purpose of the research was to identify the factors that influenced consumers' travel decisions during the coronavirus crisis. In the research objectives, the examination of the three most important factors: the media, fears, and the financial situation was given an important role.

Based on the literature analysed, three hypotheses were formulated and then tested:

- H1:** There is a correlation between following-up media news about the coronavirus and travel decisions.
- H2:** A significant relationship can be shown between the fear of the coronavirus and the travel decision of the Hungarian tourists.
- H3:** There is a connection between the financial situation of the Hungarian tourists and their travel decisions.

3. Methodology

The research was concentrated on achieving of the primary information and data using a questionnaire survey. Questionnaire surveys are a fast and secure data collection technique, while the anonymity of the potential respondent is guaranteed. In addition to the presentation of the results, data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH) on the tourism sector in Hungary were also summarised being a source of the secondary data. The survey was conducted in 2022 using an online questionnaire. The snowball sampling method was chosen. The snowball method consists of initially contacting a few members of the target group and then recruiting additional participants through those already interviewed (e.g. by involving their acquaintances). This method can be particularly useful when the respondents are too difficult to reach, and the usual outreach methods are not effective enough. A criterion for the survey was that only respondents who were active tourists before the crisis were asked to fill in the questionnaire. Active travellers were defined as those who make at least 2 domestic and 1 international trip per year. A total of 540 questionnaires were sent out. Of the returned questionnaires, 312 were valid. Particular care was taken to collect data from all regions of Hungary. For the questionnaire survey, a structured questionnaire with a total of 25 questions was prepared. The first half of the questionnaire asked about demographic data in addition to general data, while the second half asked about tourism-related habits and choices. To obtain and provide useful results and information, a Likert scale from 1 to 7 was used to rank individual preferences. Statistical methods were used to evaluate data and test hypotheses using IBM SPSS Statistics 23.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2. In the questionnaire survey, 59% of the respondents were female and 41% were male. In terms of age, the 40-50 (24.4%) age and 18-25 (22.8%) age groups were the most represented. In terms of educational

Table 2:
Demographic characteristics of respondents

Gender	Age group	Educational level	Sector	Job position
Female (59%)	18-25 (22.8%)	University degree (36.2%)	Tourism or hospitality (16.3%)	Employee (70.8%)
Male (41%)	25-30 (19.2%)	High school degree (35.9%)	Education (12.2%)	Manager (18.3%)
	30-40 (18.3%)	Grammar school (25.0%)	Trade (11.2%)	Entrepreneur (10.9%)
	40-50 (24.4%)	Other (2.9%)	Building industry (7.7%)	
	50+ (15.4%)		Administration (6.7%)	
			Healthcare, social care (4.8%)	
			Agriculture (3.5%)	
			Other (37.6%)	
N Valid=312, Total=100% Missing=0				

Source: Own research, 2022

level, 36.2% of respondents had university degree, 35.9% had a high school degree, 25.0% had a primary school degree and 2.9% had other educational qualifications. In terms of sector of the workplace, 16.3% of respondents worked in tourism and hospitality, 12.2% in education, 11.2% in trade, 7.7% in construction, 6.7% in administration, 4.8% in health and social sector, 3.5% in agriculture and 37.6% in other sectors. 70.8% of respondents were employees, 18.3% were managers and 10.9% were entrepreneurs.

4. Results

Table 3 shows the most important results related to the travel habits of respondents. According to the questionnaire survey, 30.8% of respondents travel on a monthly basis. The coronavirus has changed the travel habits of the Hungarian tourists. Before the coronavirus, 52.2% travelled to domestic destinations, after the coronavirus 66.3% travelled abroad destinations, mostly to the seaside (40.4%). Between the different coronavirus waves, 39.4% of the Hungarian tourists did not travel because they were afraid from diseases.

Table 3:
Travel habits of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Value
Frequency of travel	96	30.8%	30.8%	68.9%	monthly
Travel habits before COVID-19	163	52.2%	52.2%	52.6%	domestic
Travel habits after COVID-19	207	66.3%	66.3%	100%	abroad
Most preferred abroad destination	47	40.4%	40.4%	40.4%	seaside
Travel between different coronavirus waves	123	39.4%	39.4%	92.3%	no, because I was afraid
The most common duration of the travel	101	32.4%	32.4%	62.8%	1-3 days
N=312 Total=100% Missing=0					

Source: Authors' own research (2022)

To support the first hypothesis, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Correlation analysis is a type of statistical analysis that can detect the existence and strength of a relationship between the variables under study. The correlation coefficient can take a value between < -1 and $1 >$, which means that the closer the value is to 1, the stronger the relationship between the variables. Table 4 shows that the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.465$) is significant at the 0.01 significance level, indicating a moderately strong relationship for the variables under study. Since $p = 0.000$, it can be concluded at the 99% probability level that following media news about COVID-19 influences respondents' travel decisions. Based on the statistical test, the first hypothesis is accepted.

The second hypothesis of the research regarding the significant relationship between the fear of the coronavirus and the travel decision of the Hungarian tourists was tested and the results were summarised in Table 5.

To test the second hypothesis, a Chi-square test was applied, which can be used to determine the relationship between the variables examined. There is a significant correlation between fear of COVID-19 and travel decision variables, based on Table 5. The condition $p < 0.05$ applies, as $p = 0.000$, so the fear of COVID-19 influenced the respondents' travel decision. As both variables are nominal measurement levels, it is also appropriate to establish a value for Cramer's V that reflects the strength of the relationship between the nominal variables. The symmetric measure of Phi is 0.506, and the association coefficient of Cramer's V is 0.358, which means a weaker than average relationship. Based on the statistical test, the second hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4:
Correlation analysis between follow-up media news and travel decisions of the Hungarian tourists

		How afraid are you of COVID-19 infection?	To what extent do you follow the news about COVID-19?
Travel decision	Pearson Correlation	1	.465**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	312	312
Following-up media news related COVID-19	Pearson Correlation	.465**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	312	312

Note: ** - correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Authors' own research (2022)

Table 5:
Chi-square test to examine the relationship between the fear of COVID-19 and travel decisions of the Hungarian tourists

	Value	df (degree of freedom)	Asymptotic significance (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi square	79.752	12	.000
Likelihood-ratio	84.617	12	.000
N valid	312		Approximate significance
Nominal-Nominal Phi	0.506		.000
Cramer's V	0.358		.000
N valid	312		

Source: Authors' own research (2022)

The third hypothesis of the research was to examine the relationship between the financial situation of the Hungarian tourists and their travel decisions, and the results of that were summarised in Table 6.

To test the third hypothesis, was performed a Chi-square test. According to the respondents there is a significant correlation between the financial situation of respondents and the travel decision variables, as the condition $p < 0.05$ holds since $p = 0.002$ (Table 6). Thus, the financial situation of the Hungarian tourists impacts their travel decisions. The value of the symmetric measure Phi is 0.315, and the value of the association coefficient of Cramer's V is 0.223, which shows a weaker than average relationship. Based on the statistical test, was accepted the third hypothesis.

Table 6:
Chi square test for the financial situation and travel decision of the Hungarian tourists

	Value	df (degree of freedom)	Asymptotic significance (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi square	30.971	12	.002
Likelihood-ratio	30.931	12	.002
N valid	312		Approximate significance
Nominal-Nominal Phi	0.315		.002
Cramer's V	0.223		.002
N valid	312		

Source: Authors' own research (2022)

5. Discussion

The coronavirus crisis started as a health crisis, which very quickly became an economic crisis. The global crisis has completely affected the economic development of the tourism sector. Based on the data collected during the primary research, statistical testing of the hypotheses showed that fear of infectious disease plays a significant role in the decisions of Hungarian customers. International journal articles also confirmed the results of this study, for example, Neuburger and Egger (2020), Higgins-Desbiolles (2020), Almeida and Silva (2021), and Seyfi, Hall, and Shabani (2020), which highlight the impact of coronavirus on tourists' decisions and habits. During the crisis, the media had a significant impact on people's decisions. Several international researchers, including Ramagosa (2020), Yu et al. (2020), Villacé-Molinero et al. (2021), Chemli, Toanoglou, & Valeri (2020), and Godovykh, Pizam, & Bahja (2021), concluded that the negative media news about coronavirus can affect the travel decisions of costumers. One of the economic effects of the coronavirus epidemic was the increased unemployment rate, thus worsening of the financial situation. The study also showed that if the financial situation worsens of people, consumers' spending habits also change, they spend less on non-essential things, e.g. tourism. This is supported, among others, by Ekinçi (2021) study.

The exact scenario of how to recover from the coronavirus crisis and restore tourism is still unknown, but it is certain that in the future the world will need a different kind of tourism and a sustainable solution to meet the needs of tourists. The future of the tourism sector has to be built around sustainability, based on the expectations and needs of the costumers.

In the future, it would be worthwhile to conduct a similar questionnaire survey after the coronavirus outbreak, and to carry out a comparative analysis based on the two surveys, showing the situation of tourism organisations before and after the coronavirus outbreak. It may be interesting to approach the research problem from an organisational point of view only or to carry out a questionnaire survey with employees of tourism organisations. Tourism organisations need to rethink

their corporate strategy, it is important to open up to new innovative solutions in order to win the trust of consumers.

6. Conclusion

The main purpose of the study was to evaluate the behaviour of the Hungarian tourists during the coronavirus crisis, based on a questionnaire survey. Based on the research the restrictions introduced by governments, fears of disease, negative media news and financial problems of people had a significant impact on the Hungarian tourists' willingness to travel, which also caused negative consequences for tourism organisations. The travel restrictions related to the coronavirus crisis had a huge impact on the Hungarian tourism sector, which affected the national economy too. Tourism as an economic sector needs to be revitalised through national and international support programs by tourism organisations. From the point of view of employment, it is important that the tourism sector and the organizations operating in this sector return to their pre-coronavirus crisis level. During the coronavirus crisis, many Hungarian tourism organizations went bankrupt, as a result of which thousands of employees lost their jobs in Hungary as well. Tourist organizations must be prepared so that a similar crisis will cause them less trouble in the future. This will require a responsible economic policy and appropriate, targeted subsidies in the future. Furthermore, the Hungarian tourism sector must be modernized, because consumers are looking for quality services.

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Received 27.02.2023
Received in revised form 16.03.2023
Accepted 19.03.2023
Available online 10.04.2023