


UNDERSTANDING POST-COVID TRAVEL INTENTIONS: THE ROLE OF MOTIVATIONS, ANXIETY, HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS, AND RESILIENCE

Abstract

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Purpose – This study aims to provide empirical evidences on how post-pandemic travel intentions are formed in relation to the influences of travel motivations and pandemic-related factors (i.e., pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience). Also, this study aims to understand the differences in this travel intentions' formation between potential and repeat visitors.

Methodology/Design/Approach – An online survey was distributed to Indonesian potential and repeat visitors travelling to Australia, collecting 500 valid questionnaires. The factor analysis and hierarchical multiple regression were used to understand the influences of travel motivations, pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience in determining potential and repeat visitors' travel intentions.

Findings – The findings indicated that pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience jointly influenced the motivation-intention relationships for both potential and repeat visitors. Potential visitors' travel intentions were primarily driven by pandemic resilience, whereas repeat visitors' intentions were significantly influenced by novelty seeking, social seeking motivations, and health consciousness.

Originality of the research – By developing and testing a model that integrates travel motivations and pandemic-related factors in determining potential and repeat visitors' travel intentions, this offers valuable insights for destination marketers, aiding in the sector's recovery during and following challenging times.

Keywords travel motivations, travel intentions, pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, pandemic resilience

Research note

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted global uncertainties and challenges to health and safety, prompting academics and practitioners to explore changes in individual behaviors, including travel behaviors. Although the pandemic has been controlled, health concerns persist, and tourists' travel intentions are currently influenced by pandemic-related factors such as pandemic anxiety (Şengel et al., 2023; Zenker et al., 2021), health consciousness (Pahrudin et al., 2021; Pu et al., 2021) and pandemic resilience (Peco-Torres et al., 2021; Flaherty, 2021). It is therefore essential to discuss how post-pandemic travel intentions are formed, particularly in relation to travel motivations, which considered as the key drivers of travel intentions (Maghrifani et al., 2019). This knowledge will help destination marketers tailor strategies to effectively address tourists' needs, concerns and preferences in challenging conditions, such as those in the post-pandemic era.

Pandemic anxiety, characterized by feelings of nervousness, worry, unease, panic, and fear of the pandemic (Zenker et al., 2021), has led many individuals to stay indoors, avoid specific locations, and adopt enhanced health practices (Zheng et al., 2021). This anxiety significantly impacts travel intentions by increasing perceived health risks, deterring individuals from acting on their travel motivations (Zenker et al., 2021). According to Zheng, Luo, and Ritchie (2021), heightened pandemic anxiety amplifies the perception of travel as risky. This elevated sense of risk acts as a strong deterrent (Şengel et al., 2023), potentially reducing or eliminating the influences of travel motivations on travel intentions, thereby making tourists more reluctant to travel.

Health consciousness influences how individuals assess and respond to health risks associated with travel (Pahrudin et al., 2021). It can either facilitate or hinder the translation of travel motivations into travel intentions (Andruliene & Urbonavicius, 2023). Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2020) suggest that individuals with higher health consciousness make more informed travel decisions, such as choosing destinations with stringent health protocols, less crowded options, or traveling during off-peak times. These proactive health measures can mitigate pandemic anxiety (Pu et al., 2021) thus support the influence of travel motivations on intentions. However, heightened health consciousness can also increase awareness of potential health risks (Pahrudin et al., 2021), leading to greater caution and reluctance to travel. This heightened risk perception can overshadow travel motivations, causing individuals to prioritize health over the desire to travel. Consequently, even with strong travel motivations, heightened health consciousness can lead to lower travel intentions as individuals opt for safety over leisure.

Furthermore, pandemic resilience in the context of travel behaviors refers to individuals' ability to adapt to and recover from the challenges and disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Nambulee et al., 2023). This includes managing stress, maintaining a positive outlook, and being flexible in travel plans despite uncertainties and risks (Flaherty, 2021). Pandemic resilience enables travelers to make confident travel decisions cope with changing restrictions and health guidelines (Peco-Torres et al., 2021), and continue engaging in travel activities while prioritizing safety and health (Zheng et al., 2021). Resilient individuals perceive the risks as manageable and being prepared to implement necessary safety measures and are able to mitigate the negative impact of pandemic anxiety (Barbé et al., 2021). So that, they seem more likely to act on their travel motivations, encouraging continued engagement in travel activities even in uncertain times.

Despite promising evidences on the influences of pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience on travel intentions, limited research exists on how these factors, combined with travel motivations determining travel intentions. Furthermore, there is a lack of discussion on the differences between potential and repeat visitors' travel intentions concerning these combined influences. This study therefore aims to provide empirical evidences on how travel intentions of both potential and repeat visitors are formed in relation to travel motivations and pandemic-related factors (i.e., pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience). The firsthand experiences of repeat visitors contrast with those of potential visitors who have yet to visit a destination (Maghrifani, et al., 2024a), leading to different ways in which travel intentions are formed. By developing and testing a model that integrates travel motivations and pandemic-related factors in determining both potential and repeat visitors' travel intentions, this study contributes to the tourism literature and offers valuable insights for destination marketers, aiding in the sector's recovery during and following challenging times.

1. METHODOLOGY

1.1. Data Collection

This study surveyed Indonesian tourists, including both potential and repeat visitors, to assess their travel motivations, pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, pandemic resilience, and intentions to travel to Australia following the COVID-19 outbreak. Data collection was conducted in March 2022, when the border between Australia and Indonesia began to reopen. Indonesia is a significant source market for Australia's tourism industry, with varying degrees of familiarity and emotional connection to Australia (Australian Government, 2021). A commercial online panel was conducted to 250 Indonesian potential visitors (46% male, Mage = 49.34, SD = 14.55; 54% female, Fage = 46 years old, SD = 16.70) and 250 Indonesian repeat visitors (44% male, Mage = 53 years old, SD = 13.81; 56% female, Fage = 48 years old, SD = 15.10) (see Table 1). There were no missing data or outliers in this study and the sample size was sufficient for the analysis.

Table 1: Demographics Samples

Variable	Indonesian Potential Visitors (N = 250)	Indonesian Repeat Visitors (N = 250)
Gender		
Male	46%	44%
Female	54%	56%
Age		
18-35	24%	20%
36-55	51%	50%
56+	25%	30%
Work Status		
Employed	59%	63%
Unemployed or retired	41%	37%
Relationship Status		
Married/De facto	58%	39%
Single	42%	61%

Source: Authors

Travel motivations and travel intentions (7-point scale from totally disagree to totally agree) were adapted from a study by Maghrifani et al., (2022). The participants were asked to rate their travel motivations by stating agree or disagree to 16 statements about their traveling reasons to Australia (e.g., I travel to Australia for learning new things), and to four statements conveying travel intentions to Australia (e.g., I intend to travel to Australia after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak).

Four items of 7-point pandemic anxiety scale (1= very unlikely, 7= very likely) were adapted from Wheaton et al., (2012), asking the respondents about their anxiety of COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., how likely could you become infected with COVID-19?). Four items of 7-point self-health consciousness scale (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree) were adapted from Gould (1988) to assess respondents' concerns about their health-related issues (e.g., I am conscious about my health). Six items of Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) (7-point scale from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree) were adapted from Smith et al., (2008) to measure respondents' ability to bounce back or recover from stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times in COVID-19 pandemic)

1.2. Data Analysis

Considering the context specific nature of travel motivations (Maghrifani et al., 2022), this study performed the exploratory factor analysis to ensure the dimensionality and the validity of travel motivations. The confirmatory factor analysis was performed to ensure the dimensionality and the validity of pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, pandemic resilience, and travel intentions constructs. The reliability of all constructs was verified using the Cronbach's alpha.

This study performed hierarchical multiple regression analyses in SPSS 23 according to Kim, Hallab, and Kim (2012) to verify the moderating role of pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience in travel motivations – intentions relationship. The dependent variable (travel motivations) was first regressed on an independent variable (travel intentions) and the moderator variables (pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience) were added in the next block of regression analysis to investigate if a significant change occurred in the model's relationships when a moderator variable was added into the model to assess the adjusted R² value (see. Kim et al., 2012).

2. RESULTS

2.1. Descriptive Analysis

The findings of descriptive analysis showed the mean scores for all seven constructs were slightly similar between potential and repeat visitors. The highest rated items of travel motivations were novelty-seeking for both potential ($M = 6.33$) and repeat visitors ($M = 6.32$), followed by relationship-seeking ($M_{\text{potential visitor}} = 6.02$; $M_{\text{repeat visitor}} = 6.06$), and escape-seeking ($M_{\text{potential visitor}} = 5.63$; $M_{\text{repeat visitor}} = 5.56$). While pandemic-anxiety ($M_{\text{potential visitor}} = 4.99$; $M_{\text{repeat visitor}} = 4.94$) and resilience ($M_{\text{potential visitor}} = 4.68$; $M_{\text{repeat visitor}} = 4.56$) were slightly higher among potential visitors than repeat visitors, health consciousness ($M_{\text{potential visitor}} = 6.24$; $M_{\text{repeat visitor}} = 6.33$) was slightly higher among repeat visitors than potential visitors. Also, repeat visitors were more likely to travel than potential visitors ($M_{\text{potential visitor}} = 6.17$; $M_{\text{repeat visitor}} = 6.22$).

2.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measured the sampling for each construct, resulting in KMO score for travel motivations (0.797), pandemic anxiety (0.843), health consciousness (0.739), pandemic resilience (0.829), and travel intentions (0.851). It indicated a relatively compact correlation patterns and therefore, the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). The internal consistency computation of all constructs resulted in Cronbach's alpha coefficient was above 0.7 (satisfactory), thus confirming the reliability of the item set (Hair et al., 2010).

The results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that travel motivations items were loaded into three factors: social seeking (five items), novelty seeking (five items), and escape seeking (two items) motivations. The percentage of total variance and eigenvalue were concluded for social seeking (38.54%; 4.624), novelty seeking (12.58%; 1.510), and escape seeking motivations (10.13%; 1.216). The factor loading of each item was above 0.7, thus satisfactorily representing the factors (Hair et al., 2010).

Pandemic anxiety (four items), health consciousness (three items), pandemic resilience (four items), and travel intentions (seven items) were loaded onto a single factor except for one item of health consciousness and two items of emotional resilience due to low factor loadings. Therefore, the factor analyses confirmed three factors of travel motivations (social seeking, novelty seeking, escape seeking) and one factor of each pandemic anxiety, health awareness, pandemic resilience, and travel intentions.

The initial model 1 in the hierarchical regression included three travel motivations (social seeking, novelty seeking, escape seeking) explained 43% of the variance in travel intentions for potential visitors ($F = 3.667$, $p = .013$) and 33.4% of the variance in travel intentions for repeat visitors ($F = 41.207$, $p = .000$). While only novelty seeking motivation was found significantly predict the potential visitors' travel intentions, social seeking and novelty seeking motivations significantly influenced repeat visitors' travel intentions (see Figure 1). Model 2—incorporating the pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience constructs—explained significant additional by 41% of the variance in travel intentions for potential visitors ($F = 3.410$, $p = .002$) and 12% of the variance in travel intentions for repeat visitors ($F = 21.502$, $p = .000$), indicating the moderating role of pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience in the relationships between travel motivations and travel intentions.

In Model 2, only pandemic resilience that had significant and positive association with travel intentions of potential visitors, ($\beta = .162$, $p = .012$), indicating that tourists' travel intentions increased with their resilience. The travel intentions of repeat visitors were significantly predicted by social seeking ($\beta = .230$, $p = .001$) and novelty seeking motivations ($\beta = .414$, $p = .000$), and health consciousness ($\beta = .109$, $p = .024$), indicating that tourist intentions to return to Australia increased with these three factors (Table 2 and Table 3) (see Figure 2).

Table 2: Results of a Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Potential Visitor

	Model 1 (R ² =.043) Constant 5.353				Model 2 (R ² =.083) Constant 5.522				ΔR ²	F
	B	SE	β	P	B	SE	B	ρ	.041	.014
Social-seeking	.056	.043	.099	.189	.072	.042	.126	.091		
Novelty-seeking	.125	.064	.140	.053	.073	.066	.082	.267		
Escape-seeking	-.055	.029	-.124	.064	-.057	.029	-.128	.051		
Pandemic anxiety					-.032	.019	-.104	.095		
Health consciousness					.077	.055	.087	.164		
Pandemic resilience					.053	.021	.162	.012		

Notes: B = Unstandardized Coefficients, SE = Standard Error, β = Standardized Coefficients

Source: Authors

Figure 1: Model 1 of the relations between travel motivations and travel intentions

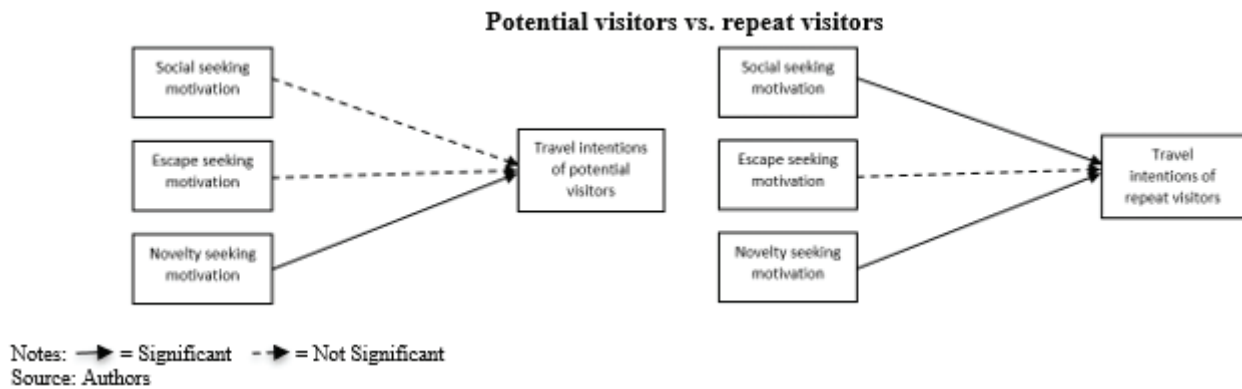


Figure 2: Model 2 of the relations between travel motivations, pandemic-related factors and travel intentions

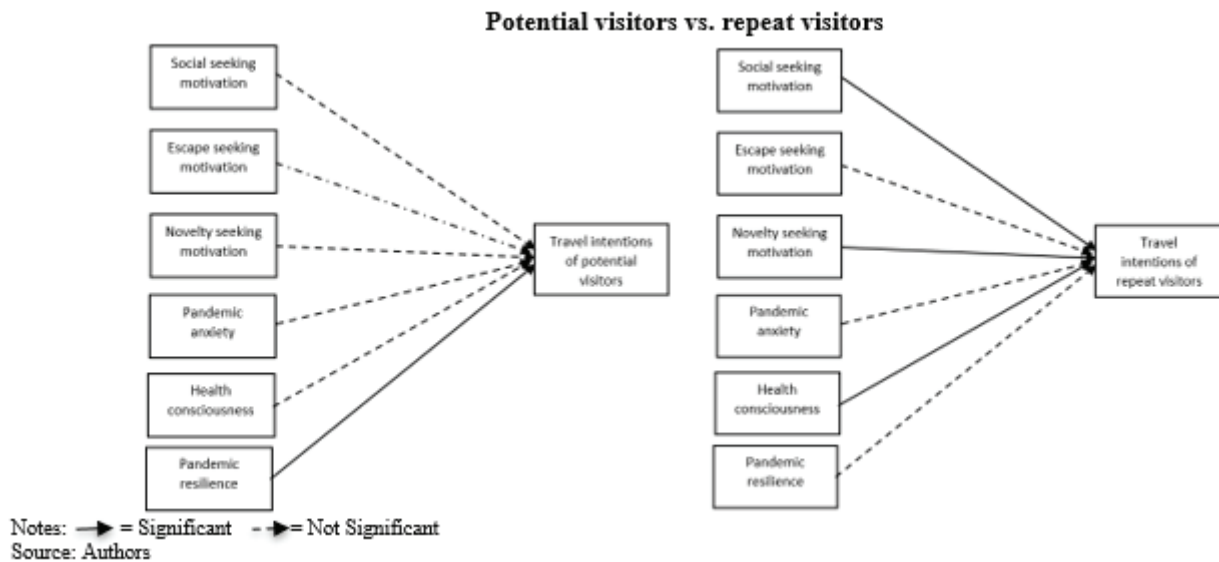


Table 3: Results of a Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis of Repeat Visitors

	Model 1 (R ² =0.334)				Model 2 (R ² =.347)				ΔR ²	F
	Constant 2.991				Constant 2.462					
	B	SE	β	P	B	SE	B	P	.012	.207
Social-seeking	.155	.041	.245	.000	.146	.042	.230	.001		
Novelty-seeking	.390	.058	.426	.000	.379	.061	.414	.000		
Escape-seeking	-.031	.026	-1.216	.225	-.026	.026	-.056	.324		
Pandemic anxiety					-.001	.020	-.002	.966		
Health consciousness					.106	.055	.109	.024		
Pandemic resilience					.009	.020	-.027	.640		

Notes: B = Unstandardized Coefficients, SE = Standard Error, β = Standardized Coefficients

Source: Authors

3. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings show that pandemic-related factors (pandemic anxiety, health consciousness, and pandemic resilience) play a significant moderating role in the relationship between travel motivations and travel intentions for both potential and repeat visitors. For potential visitors, when pandemic-related factors are not considered, their travel intentions are significantly influenced by novelty seeking motivation, consistent with prior studies (Andruliene & Urbonavicius, 2023; Maghrifani, et al., 2024b, 2019) which show that visitors travel to find something that they have not experience yet, unusual, and new. However, when pandemic-related factors are considered, only pandemic resilience significantly influences travel intentions, diminishing the impact of travel motivations. This suggests that in the presence of health challenges, pandemic resilience becomes the key factor for potential tourists in forming travel intentions. Pandemic resilience enhances travelers' confidence and perceived safety (Zheng et al., 2021). It demonstrates individuals' ability to effectively manage and recover from disruptions, thereby reducing perceived risks and increasing the attractiveness of traveling to such locations (Flaherty, 2021). For this reason, travel motivations lose their influence on travel intentions.

Repeat visitors' travel intentions is significantly influenced by social seeking and novelty seeking motivations when pandemic-related factors are ignored, aligning with previous studies (Andruliene & Urbonavicius, 2023; Maghrifani, et al., 2024b). People travel for novelty and social seeking because experiencing new environments and cultures satisfies their innate curiosity and desire for stimulation, while engaging in social interactions and forming new connections fulfill their fundamental need for belonging and socialization (Maghrifani et al., 2022). When considering pandemic-related factors, travel motivations remain influential, and health consciousness also significantly affects their travel intentions. The continued influence of motivations can be attributed to their familiarity with the destination (Maghrifani, et al., 2024a), which boosts their confidence to travel even in challenging situations. This supports previous findings (Kim et al., 2012) that actual experience is a crucial factor in shaping travel intentions for repeat visitors. Additionally, the significant influence of health consciousness on repeat visitors' travel intentions further corroborates existing studies (Pu et al., 2021) on the importance of health considerations in post-pandemic travel behaviors.

This study provides practical insights for destination marketers to tailor strategies for both potential and repeat visitors in the context of health challenges, such as those following the COVID-19 pandemic. For potential visitors, marketing strategies should emphasize the importance of resilience pandemic and adaptability to uncertain conditions. For repeat visitors, it is crucial to address their need for novelty and social interaction while highlighting the importance of health consciousness. Advertisements targeting repeat visitors should stress the availability of robust health protocols at the destination. Further studies are needed to replicate this model in various travel contexts, such as targeting tourists from different countries or focusing on specific types of tourism, such as adventure or wellness tourism. This would deepen the understanding of the relationships between travel motivations, pandemic-related factors, and travel intentions.

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