

IMPACT OF DOMESTIC TOURISTS' RISK PERCEPTION ON THEIR TRAVEL INTENTION DURING POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has crippled the tourism sector drastically, not only by preventing foreign tourists from visiting Sri Lanka and domestic tourists from traveling around the local tourism destinations (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2020). The world tourism industry faces multiple issues in tourism demand and supply (Matiza, 2020). This study examines the impact of domestic tourists' risk perception (health risk, psychological risk, financial risk, destination risk, and travel risk) on their travel intention during the post-COVID-19 pandemic as the research objectives.

Community wellbeing and safety measures through lockdowns can control the spreading of infections to a greater extent. However, when such stringent safety measures can negatively impact the tourism industry's continuing development (Bhuiyan et al., 2021). Most international researchers have researched public behavior on making traveling perceptions under the influence of COVID-19. They have identified the relationship between travel intention and the factors involved. In the Sri Lankan context, it would be essential to conduct research to identify how the public change their traveling intention based on risk perception (health risk, psychological risk, travel risk, financial risk, and destination risk). Here hope to see how risk perception affects the travel intention of Sri Lankan domestic tourists during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential to identify factors influencing risk perception on travel intention and investigate the influence of risk perception on the intents and travel of Sri Lankan tourists. With the pandemic crisis, there has been a significant change in future travel planning, inspiration for traveling, and so on. Because of this, the safety of hygiene, financial situation, transport patterns of travel, standards of accommodation (destination facilities), etc. There is an argument that we have adequate knowledge regarding understanding how domestic travelers behave and make decisions under pandemic situations. The researcher has found this is an opportunity to come up with new knowledge and value addition to the field of tourism.

Rebuilding the tourism sector and providing tourists with rewarding experiences must be done by exploring alternatives to mass tourism, focusing on foreign tourism and domestic tourism. Therefore, it is essential to analyze and create new knowledge about the perception and behavior of international and local tourists, which will help explore new ways to recover the tourism industry. If proper strategies are planned and implemented, the tourism sector will grow to its potential as the primary driver of social, economic, and environmental welfare. After completing this study, it is expected to obtain new findings regarding the domestic tourists' risk perception and travel intention and give a path for future studies. As a result, it may benefit some society parties, like other researchers, university students, and academic writers willing to study these research studies. The findings and recommendations may be more valuable for the event and entertainment industry, travel agencies that focus on local tourists to identify their travel behavior and thinking patterns, and businesses can gain new

ideas to promote their services and improve their businesses to the maximum satisfaction of the tourists.

METHODOLOGY

This research explains the study's methodology, the study sample, the way of collecting data, and the data analysis. This study will find the influence of factors on the travel intention of a person by using health risk, psychological risk, financial risk, destination risk, and travel risk as independent variables. Quantitative research is gathering and analyzing numerical data, widely conducted in the natural and social sciences by applying statistical methods (Bhandari, 2020). Therefore, the type of this research is quantitative research that measures variables using numerical systems. This study examines the factors influencing tourists' behavior and perceptions of traveling post-COVID-19.

Further, it explores to what extent characteristics such as health risk, psychological risk, financial risk, destination risk, and travel risk impact their travel intention. So this study aims to use an explanatory research design. As a research approach in this study, the deductive approach is used as we intend to test the belief concerning risk perception factors and tourists. The sample size of the study was determined by using rule of thumb as it is one of the most acceptable methods. According to that, the researcher determined that the sample size was 302 domestic tourists in Sri Lanka. The non-probability sampling method was chosen because there is no equal chance of selecting all population members for the sample. The researcher used a quantitative method to collect data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was presented in English and Sinhala as it is proposed to present to local tourists. It was set up with 5-Point Likert scale questions to measure the variables. An online Questionnaire was developed to collect information about respondents, for example, age, sexual orientation, etc.

Furthermore, in the second piece of the survey, respondents needed to address questions identifying their travel behavior and risk perception. Secondary data was collected through previous research findings, related articles, websites, and other academic publications in the English language. Gathered data should be analyzed correctly to reach the objective of this study. The researcher has used statistical analysis package -21 (SPSS).

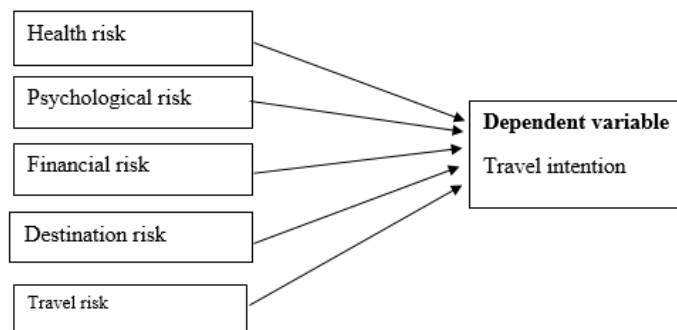


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of research

Based on the conceptual model (Figure 1), the following hypotheses were developed for testing the impact of domestic tourists' risk perception on their travel intention during the post COVID-19 pandemic.

H₁-Health risk has a significant negative impact on the travel intention of domestic tourists during post COVID -19.

H₂-Psychological risk has a significant negative impact on the travel intention of domestic tourists during post COVID -19.

H₃-Financial risk has a significant negative impact on the travel intention of domestic tourists during post COVID -19.

H₄-Destination risk has a significant negative impact on the travel intention of domestic tourists during post COVID-19.

H₅-Travel risk has a significant negative impact on the travel intention of domestic tourists during post COVID-19

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As per the all-frequency analysis researcher has indicated, in 302 samples, the majority of respondents were females; the highest percentage is 40.7% in the 25-34 age group. Most of the respondents are from North Central province, a percentage that is 25.5% in the survey. The most significant number of respondents were employed in the public sector, with 37.7%. In the survey, most respondents earn a monthly income of 25,000 to 50,000. Moreover, most of the sample visit the country from 1 – 2 per year and 3-5 times per year. According to descriptive statistics, the mean value of every independent variable exceeds 3. It represents that most of the respondents were given their answers on the relatively agree and the strongly agree level. The dependent variable of travel intention indicated 3.7494, and its St. The deviation is 0.6986. Hence travel intention is on a relatively agreed level. The R squared value is 0.517, which means 51.7% of the data affecting travel intention by health risk, psychological risk, financial risk, destination risk, and travel risk. On the other hand, the remaining 48.3% of travel intention is explained by other factors beyond the study.

Table 1- Regression analysis (coefficient results)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	7.067	.387		18.271	.000		
Health_Risk	-.578	.061	-.499	-9.432	.000	.582	1.718
Psychological Risk	-.201	.063	-.188	-3.193	.002	.470	2.127
Financial_Risk	-.146	.052	-.152	-2.797	.006	.554	1.807
Destination_Risk	-.207	.061	-.185	-3.358	.001	.535	1.868
Travel_Risk	-.211	.062	-.203	-3.374	.001	.449	2.228

a. Dependent Variable: Travel Intention

According to the regression analysis the result of the coefficient table has been represented that health risk ($\beta = -0.499$, $p = 0.000$), psychological risk ($\beta = -0.188$, $p = 0.002$), financial risk ($\beta = -0.152$, $p = 0.006$), destination risk ($\beta = -0.185$, $p = 0.001$), and travel risk ($\beta = -0.203$, $p = 0.001$) were shown significantly negative impact on the travel intention. Therefore, all hypotheses in the study were accepted. According to the above results, the researcher achieved the sub-objectives of the study.

According to (Perić et al., 2021), the findings indicated that the risk perception (health, psychological, financial, and destination risk) among Serbian tourists negatively impacted their travel intention during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, the researcher also indicates the same result as this empirical study.

This empirical study is based on research that gathers data from foreign tourists (Serbian). However, this study is based on information on domestic tourists in Sri Lanka. Here the researcher points out that although the two countries are different, their behavioral pattern, expectations, and way of thinking are differently. However, in planning their travels (travel intention), the level of concern given in the face of different natural and artificial risks (risk perception) is very similar. Then the researcher emphasizes the reason for similar findings based on research findings.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study aims to examine the impact of risk perception on the travel intention of domestic tourists in Sri Lanka. To find out this impact, researchers selected 302 domestic tourists as a sample of the Sri Lankan population. A well-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Then gathered survey data were calculated and analyzed using the software SPSS 21. It used five identified risk factors to examine the domestic tourists' travel risk in Sri Lanka. They are a health risk, psychological risk, financial risk, destination risk, and travel risk. As per the result of regression analysis, the five variables (all variables) significantly negatively impact the travel intention of domestic tourists in the Sri Lankan region.

To fulfill the study, the researcher has identified five specific objectives and developed a conceptual framework and research hypothesis based on the empirical research studies. Travel intention, risk perception, and risk perception variables' mean values are higher than three based on the regression analysis; all variables showed a significant negative impact on the dependent variable. Then all hypotheses were accepted. Finally, according to the research findings, the researcher identified a significant negative impact of domestic tourists' risk perception on their travel intention post-COVID-19.

Travelers worry about stopping their usual trips by discovering new virus strains. So researcher's recommendations are to launch and promote destinations through an online promotional program that reflects that it is safer to travel to destinations to alleviate the current fears of tourists. Travelers, drivers, and conductors who engage with public transportation can also be introduced and enforced to follow specific rules by the government and expand the use of electronic ticket issuing machines so that tickets can be purchased without direct contact with the conductors without exchanging money. Moreover, sanitary facilities can be added to the transportation mode. Priority will also be given to hotels that follow the health guidelines

issued by the government and relevant authorities, providing the most reliable and quality service in the appropriate travel arrangements. It was also noted that even after COVID- 19, most domestic tourists are reluctant to travel to overpopulated destinations. This situation is an excellent opportunity for accommodation providers and small souvenirs in sparsely populated areas that have not been highly attractive in the tourism industry. As a result, hotels can build tourists' confidence using marketing strategies to travel to those areas and organize new travel events giving higher advertising. At the same time, the government, insurance companies, hotels, and travel agencies should work together to adopt the necessary rules and policies and introduce new insurance agreements to cover all risks related to COVID-19 at a reasonable price.

The researcher has focused on Sri Lankan domestic tourists who travel for leisure. Therefore, the researcher proposed to conduct future research based on study purpose, business study, religious purpose, etc. However, those who wish to do future research in this field may be able to conduct studies based on other regions and domestic and international tourist populations. Also, only five types of risk perceptions were used for this study. However, there are many other risk factors affecting tourists' travel intentions. Therefore, the researcher proposed to include other risk factors when conducting future research.

Keywords: COVID- 19, risk perception, Sri Lanka, travel intention

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