

Risk, Anxiety in a Pandemic: Consequences for Travel and Tourism

Rajendra V. Nargundkar
NMIMS Bangalore

Aditya Deshbandhu
IIM Indore

This article is set in the times of the global pandemic caused by the Novel Coronavirus. By examining dimensions of panic, fear and anxiety amongst fourteen travelers and their various decisions during the pandemic this qualitative study tries to holistically capture their journeys. By reimagining the act of travel as a practice and using a grounded approach this study elicits data through in-depth interviews and allows us to chart the chaos and uncertainty faced by travelers worldwide. The analysis of the data offers us not only a picture of the traveler's psyche during a pandemic but also points to areas of concern that must be addressed in the future by the sector.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, travel, decisions, anxiety, solutions

INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic declared by WHO in lieu of the outbreak of the Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Ghebreyesus, 2020a) is unparalleled in recent history. As the number of affected patients globally has exceeded 94.1 million and the number of deaths over 2 million (WHO, 2020) international leaders have acknowledged that the world will never quite be the same if and when the state of global public emergency ends (Sharma and Prabhu, 2020). The global pandemic has caused several nations to lock-down their citizens in homes as the virus has spread to 210 countries and global territories: in the process bringing several key sectors of the global economy to a grinding halt (worldometer, 2020).

The impact of the virus on the global economy is to be extreme as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the ensuing economic hit to be comparable to the Great Depression and worse than the 2008 economic slowdown (UNIDO, 2020). When compared to the outbreak of other epidemics in recent history the outbreak of Novel-Coronavirus is on a scale and magnitude hitherto unseen. The global uncertainty related to the virus is at a level of extremity that was never charted on the World Pandemics Uncertainty Index (WPUI, a subset of the WUI) (Ahir, Bloom & Furceri, 2020). As the world comes to terms with fighting a virus that is shrouded in uncertainty both in terms of its origin and treatment protocol; the one point where most experts concur at this stage is “make no mistake: we have a long way to go. This virus will be with us for a long time” (Ghebreyesus, 2020b).

In such times, when acts of social distancing and staying at home become the global norm; the fields of tourism and travel are faced with an existential crisis unlike any. This is accompanied by the unenviable task of staying relevant and protecting the allure of travel, adventure, and leisure when at times the global

consensus is to advise against any forms of travel. This article is conceived and written at this juncture when extraneous factors are likely to change the way the world travels forever.

In times of extreme uncertainty, the best decision could be to reflect on our actions and decisions and use them as the requisite foundations to put in place newer policies and practices. This article can be considered as a step in that direction, exploratory in nature and interrogating various established practices in the travel and tourism industry. While there is existing research on the impact of epidemics and disease outbreaks on the travel and tourism sectors there is none that can be used when the outbreak is a global pandemic and, on the size, and scale of the Novel-Coronavirus. The closest epidemic that can be compared to what the world is facing now is the outbreak of the Spanish influenza in 1918. Recent research indicates that the mortality of the 1918 virus outbreak could be conservatively estimated at 50 million people worldwide (Johnson & Mueller, 2002).

Review of Literature

We draw as much as possible from documented epidemics and their impact on the travel and tourism industry in recent years. As Juan Carlos Monterrubio states in his work on short term impacts of the H1N1 virus on the travel and tourism industry in Mexico; “Travel, tourism and epidemics are intrinsically linked” (Monterrubio, 2010 p.1). Similarly, Malcom Cooper in his study on understanding the relation between Japanese tourism and the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 calls the then outbreak a major crisis that affected world tourism (Cooper, 2006). Recent research looks at the financial impact of epidemics on the travel and tourism sector; Joo et al for instance, analyze the economic impact of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (2015-16) on the Republic of Korea to identify that “public health emergencies due to traveler-associated outbreaks of infectious diseases can cause significant losses to the broader economies of affected countries” (Joo et.al 2019 p.1). This when juxtaposed with Monterrubio’s understanding where he states “Although travel may significantly contribute to the actual paths an infection may take, the former may eventually become the victim of the latter (Monterrubio, 2010 p.1)” and recent data which identifies the contribution of the travel and tourism sectors at 10.3 percent of the global GDP (WTTC, 2020) indicates that the direct and indirect economic impact of the COVID-19 on these sectors will be significant, and difficult to ascertain for a while.

We attempt to understand the role of panic, risk, and anxiety in the psyche of the global traveler both in times of the pandemic and when they travel after its effects recede. There is ample existing research that explores the notion of risks for the traveler. Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) build an understanding of risk using Priest (1990) and the Macquarie dictionary as a thing or circumstance that exposes one to the potential of facing loss, injury, danger, a hazard or losing something of value (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). By taking into account the three types of risk (absolute, real and perceived) proposed by Haddock (1993) most scholars in the field of travel and tourism focus on the various dimensions of perceived risk to travelers (Moutinho, 1987; Yavas, 1987; Roehl & Fesenmaier 1992). As Dolnicar writes:

“The concept of fear or risk, as it is mostly referred to in tourism literature, is not new. It is widely accepted that in an industry that is defined by the intangibility of the product, consumers take risks when they make a buying decision” (Dolnicar, 2005 p.3).

Raoul Bianchi (2006) provides a different perspective by balancing risk and insecurity in global travel by using an individual’s “right to travel” as an extension of the liberal conception of freedom and then analyses it against the geopolitical situations that mediate risk and insecurity (Bianchi, 2006). However, there is a difference between risk perceived and the fears that travelers have; Dickson and Dolnicar develop an exhaustive list of sixteen risk categories in the travel and tourism sector in their review (Dickson & Dolnicar, 2004). Dolnicar in the finding of her 2005 work; where she examines the overlap between risk categories and possible categories of fear finds insights into tourists’ fears in an “ever-changing global environment characterized increasingly by unpredictable incidents like pandemics and political instability” (Dolnicar, 2005 p.10). The results of Dolnicar’s study (2005) indicate that her sample of Australian overseas

travelers had an overwhelming frequency of safety-related concerns. She finds this trend indicative of a possible shift within the fear / risk categories in the last few years (Dolnicar, 2005 p.10).

We argue that the unique circumstances presented to us in the context of the Novel Coronavirus could be the necessary impetus for a significant shift in travelers' perceptions and could introduce a distinct rupture between established risk categories listed by Dickson & Dolnicar (2004) and the possible dimensions of fear. One such possible shift in the travelers' psyche could be with regards to concern for their health, where earlier they were likely to consider both existing medical concerns and possible diseases/infections they could contract; in the time of a virus where uncertainty is the hallmark the decision-making process is very different. Dolnicar's work (2004; 2005) and newer work in the area (Korstange, 2011; Fuchs et al 2013; Yang et al. 2015; Baker, 2015) has used the terms 'fear' and 'risk' almost interchangeably (Yang & Nair, 2014). So much so that literature suggests terms like uncertainty, worry, fear and anxiety are closely related to the perception of risk (Yang & Nair, 2014). This study uses the various events surrounding a pandemic as a discrete event to look at how perceived risks manifested into risks, anxieties, and panic.

We make the case for this study by arguing against Korstange's interpretation (Korstange, 2011) of Dolnicar's work (Dolnicar, 2005) when he observes that most studies do not view the act of travel as a "social institution" (Korstange, 2011 p.2) and uses this to make the case for disciplines like psychoanalysis to be considered. However, he is dismissive of a qualitative approach to examine the same when he states, "After all, as Dolnicar (2005) puts it, there is no valid reason to research risk perception following a heuristic and qualitative form" (Korstange, 2011 p.2). We on the other hand argue that Dolnicar's indication of a possible shift could best be charted in a qualitative form by viewing the act of one's travel as a repetitive one. One that with numerous cycles of repetition ceases to remain a mere singular act but over time evolves into a practice and in specific cases might transmute into rituals depending on the frequency and periodicity of the repeated act (Wittgenstein, 1978; Bourdieu, 1977: 110; 1992). By building on the understanding of practice we use Schatzki's understanding where he views them as a collection of interleaved actions which when performed in a specific order result in the emergence of not only specialized contextual understanding and new ways of meaning making but also allows the creation of well-defined rules and structures to ensure its safeguarding. The acts of travel and tourism can thus be considered as practices and thus most research in the field focuses on either the multitude of ways in which the act of travel is performed or by interrogating the quotidian during travel and/or examining travel experiences. Recent studies in the sector have looked at intuitive new ways to examine traveler experiences to further the understanding of the field by using a variety of qualitative methods (Dashper, 2020; Chen et al. 2020). We argue that the use of a similar qualitative approach that draws from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and enables us to explore the various facets of travel experience during a pandemic is key to understand a discrete moment like now where paradigm shifts maybe observed and social institutions, acts and practices be permanently reconfigured and transformed. There is minimal possibility to interrogate the everyday in such circumstances from the perspective of travelers and thus the critical understanding of this moment must be built by stitching together a multitude of travelogues, experiences, and reflections from the short windows of time in which people are in transit. The use of a qualitative approach thus allowed us to capture the chaos and uncertainty that permeate these times from several entry points (in the participants' own words) and not only lay the foundation for the formulation of new policy/decisions but also served as a stark reminder of the various experiences that global travelers have faced during the pandemic.

This article, inherently qualitative in nature used the experiences of fourteen travelers during the COVID-19 pandemic to capture distinct snapshots of the way the virus' spread, information and the state of pandemic affected locations worldwide. The 14 travelers' experiences were used analogous to mini travelogues to help paint a picture of the decisions they made, the way global events played out and large-scale international decisions were made. All of them affecting each of these travelers both on a personal level and a larger societal frame. This study thus was able to use the elicited data to examine the intersections of panic, risk and anxiety that the participants in the study experienced and dealt with as they traveled or made travel-based decisions during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The likely impact on travel and tourism in general was sought to be derived both from the reactions of the respondents in the study, and

from various estimates that obtained from industry sources such as world tourism bodies. It must be emphasized that pandemics on this scale have been rare, and emerging information on its likely impact was mostly available from credible industry sources rather than from scholarly articles, though a mix of both was used for this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study, qualitative in nature and cross-sectional in design, used in-depth interviews to elicit travel data and other relevant information. An interview guideline was developed which focused on a multitude of dimensions that constitute the travel experience and then used to get participants to reflect on their actions and circumstance during the pandemic to help build newer understanding, meanings, and theory. This practice of building such a guideline is built on the core tenets of grounded theory where researchers use the emergent data to build theory and newer understanding in an inductive process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). The interview guideline then facilitated the flow of the discussion and the participant pool for the study was built using a snowball sampling technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The non-probable nature of the technique and its ability to collect participants who are perfectly suited owing to its inherent sponsorship characteristic meant that it was ideal for this study (Noy, 2008). In order to build a heterogenous pool of participants; five parallel snowballs were set into motion and the participant pool building stopped when emergent data became redundant.

The participants in the study were operationalized as “travelers” owing to the cross-sectional research design (Bethlehem, 1999) and were classified under three categories namely;

1. Travelers who traveled before Novel Coronavirus had been declared a global pandemic (Ghebreyesus, 2020a) and had returned after it was declared as such.
2. Travelers who traveled after the declaration of the global pandemic (Ghebreyesus, 2020a)
3. Travelers who had confirmed plans to travel but canceled them after the declaration of the pandemic (Ghebreyesus, 2020a).

After the building of the participant pool the fourteen participants’ consent to be part of the study was taken twice by the researchers. Firstly, via a consent form where the participants’ assent was recorded and secondly by confirming their quotes used in the article. The participant pool was purposive in nature and provided us with the experiences and challenges faced from five of the seven continents and comprehensive information from countries like the USA, UK, France, Italy and India.

The interviews were then conducted (in March 2020) digitally over Skype (Nehls et al. 2015) as in India, social distancing and the national lockdown had been enforced. The participants were duly informed when the interviews were being recorded and made aware of the red record signal on the platform at all times. The data from the interviews was recorded both digitally and in the form of notes taken during the interview. The transcriptions from the interviews were then digitized and coded. The data was then subjected to open coding in order to arrive at a broad set of themes and then coded axially to arrive at a more specific and nuanced set of themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). The two coding phases of the analyses revealed 8 distinct themes, the transcriptions were coded in conjunction between the two researchers in order to establish and maintain an inter-coder agreement (Carey et al, 1996). There was a 75 percent agreement between the two researchers as we agreed upon on 6 of the 8 emergent themes from the coding phases. During both the data collection and the analyses phases of the study the researchers ensured that the data was collected holistically and no contextual and situational cues were missed out in order to protect the richness of the data obtained through a qualitative approach. To quantify our qualitative data; data from the fourteen interviews was over 20 hours long and provided travel information from five continents. Though the participants/respondents were all from India, the experiences cited are representative of major epicenters of the pandemic such as France, Italy, USA, UAE and the U.K., and are global in nature. Also, their travel dates ranged from January 2020 to as late as the 19th of March 2020 covering a range from before the declaration of the pandemic on the 11th of March 2020 (Ghebreyesus, 2020a) to well after. The profiles of the fourteen participants of the study are in Table 1.

TABLE 1
A TABLE SUMMARIZING THE PARTICIPANT POOL FOR THIS STUDY

Participant Profiles:

Name	Travel dates – Itinerary (2020)	Destination of travel & Purpose	Decision taken in lieu of Pandemic
Aditya P.	March 1 st week – March 2 nd week	Austin, Texas via London Heathrow/ business.	To stay safe carry sanitizers and social-distance at all times.
Amulya K.	March 16- June	London/academic research	Canceled the travel as she felt the UK wasn't prepared to handle the pandemic.
Deepali S	January – May	France/student exchange	Cut short the trip and came back to India on 15 th March 2020
Devina S.	April, May June	Australia, Greece and Finland for conferences	Conferences moved digital travel canceled.
Hrishikesh K.	January – May	France/ student exchange	Cut short the trip and came back to India on 18 th March 2020
Kaivalya K.	January – May	France/student exchange	Cut short the trip and came back to India on 15 th March 2020
Mahati B.	March 13-17	Georgia, Europe/film shoot	The decision to travel was made very carefully and utmost care with constant monitoring of health
Mansi T.	January – May	France/student exchange	Cut short the trip and came back to India on 15 th March 2020
Medha G.	January 28, – February 8	Egypt/wedding anniversary	Social distanced in Egypt, Africa and the Dubai airport during transit
Niharika C.	January – May	France/student exchange	Cut short the trip and came back to India on 15 th March 2020
Prasanna T.	March 1 st week – March 2 nd week	Austin, Texas via London Heathrow/for business.	To stay safe carry sanitizers and social-distance at all times.
Priyadarshi P.	March 13, – March 17,	Georgia, Europe/film shoot	Social distancing, masks and gloves. Constantly sanitized and taken care of.
Sourodeep K.	January – May	France/student exchange	Cut short the trip and came back to India on 15 th March 2020
Surya Bhushan Kumar	March 9 -15 March	San Antonio, Texas/ conference	Canceled the trip after emergency was declared in San Antonio

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Risk, Panic & Anxiety: Manifestations in a Pandemic:

The first section of this analysis focuses on the participants' various anxieties, risks and sources of panic as the COVID-19 epidemic spread across the world. Most participants who traveled in January 2020 and early February weren't too concerned about the spread of the virus as they felt it was something that was localized in Wuhan, China. All of the six participants who travelled as part of student exchange programs in January and the lone participant who traveled for leisure had an idea about the virus' spread in China but hadn't envisaged its spread on a scale or magnitude where countries like the US, UK and most of Europe would be affected. As Medha, who visited Egypt puts it:

At the time (January last week, 2020) it seemed safe and a lockdown or a global pandemic seemed out of the question. While there was a lot of news the only information we had to go on, was that it was contagious. There wasn't much hysteria at that time; the government had guidelines in place and the fact that we weren't going to Eastern Asia and thus we felt we weren't at risk. (Medha G, Personal Interview, 23.03.2020)

Similar views were expressed by most of the foreign exchange travelers. As Deepali S. says "When I left for France, I knew nothing about the Corona virus. It was restricted to China and it wasn't something I thought of when I made the decision to travel." The only traveler from the seven who traveled in early January who had an idea of the virus making its way to Europe was Kaivalya K. who stated "The news (about the virus) was limited to China and when I was taking off from Mumbai (22nd January) there was an alert on my phone of the first case in Europe. However, it didn't bother me too much as no one expected it to become what it did."

The pictures provided by the travelers change drastically as by early March, most travelers were beginning to reconsider their plans owing to the virus' presence in most of Europe, the US, Canada and the UK. As Surya Bhushan Kumar states:

On the 3rd, a fellow traveler informed me that a state of emergency was announced by the Mayor of San Antonio (Texas, USA). It immediately spurred me to search for information extensively. I needed to make an informed decision. Things changed overnight and media reports indicated that local authorities weren't happy with how things were being handled. (Surya Bhushan K, Interview, 17.03.2020)

Similarly, other travelers to their respective destinations had begun to hear of news of the virus' spread there. Devina S. was supposed to travel to Gold Coast Australia and in her interview expressed concern about actors Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks contracting the virus in the same location (Zhao & Gross, 2020). Amulya K. was concerned about traveling to the UK as she was scheduled to travel for a three-month period on a research project from the 16th of March 2020.

Airports were becoming global hotspots for the virus to spread and I was going in the peak holiday period and reports were suggesting a huge spike in numbers of patients between March-June, the exact time I was going. It just made no sense to travel. (Amulya K. Interview, 26.03.2020)

The responses from the participants are clearly indicative of the spike in information about the spread of the Novel Coronavirus while there was little to no information to suggest any travel concerns in late January and early February; things changed rapidly and drastically by early March as three of the seven participants who were scheduled to travel in the time period decided to shelve their plans as the fear of contracting the virus became a major concern.

Of the four travelers who did travel in the month of March, two traveled to the US in early March and returned before the 15th and the other two traveled to Georgia after the declaration of the global pandemic (both of them were aware of it) by the WHO on the 11th of March. As Priyadarshi puts it:

The trip was planned a week in advance. We knew we were supposed to go and shoot and the we were aware of the pandemic being at its peak. A lot of planning goes into making dates work in the film industry. There are factors like funds, availability, and then a lot of things must coincide on the precise dates. It was a mandatory travel trip for me, I had to do it. (Priyadarshi, Interview 23.03.2020)

On the other hand, the travelers on foreign exchange were into their second month in France and were beginning to see the virus' spread across Europe first-hand. Three of them were in Italy in the exact period of the virus' considerable spread (Feb 19-23, 2020) and had traveled from France to attend the Milan Fashion Week, the Venice Carnival and hoped to watch the now infamous football match in Milan (Giuffrida, 2020). As Mansi T. talks about her travel experience in Italy during the time:

We were in Milan for 2 days from the 19-22. I was supposed to visit and watch that fateful football match in Milan. We attended the Milan Fashion week., the afterparties and all of the events were packed. No one in Italy was concerned about Corona at that time. The parties, clubs and everything was in full swing. In hindsight, I feel so lucky I didn't get tickets to that football match because of what it went on to do. (Mansi T., Interview 02.04.2020)

A testament to the Novel Coronavirus' contagious nature is that both the Milan Fashion week and the Venice Carnival were cut short by the 23rd of February as the virus had taken over the Lombardy region in Italy (Lepido & Follain, 2020). All the participants who had traveled to Italy were able to reach their host university in France by bus as the border between Italy and France was not closed. Some of them even attended classes on the 23rd/24th of February by when they were asked to self-isolate and quarantine themselves by their host institutions for a period of two weeks.

This was a major matter of concern as none of the participants had a prior idea about these practices and nor were, they prepared supplies or resources wise to last the fourteen days in isolation. All the participants of the study feared contracting the virus but were also bothered by the guilt of carrying the virus and infecting others. Niharika C., one of the three participants who visited Italy, began to show symptoms of the virus after her return from Italy.

On day 2, I began to cough and feel tired. I had begun to show early symptoms. I called the emergency number given to me by the host institution and they asked me a few questions. They felt that there was not enough to test me. However, they were quite efficient and within an hour of speaking to me, my entire building was covered in protective plastics. The elevators, the common areas they were all promptly covered. On day 3, I had developed a fever and that was the key symptom. I called the emergency line again and after answering a lot of specific questions I was asked to visit a hospital along with a friend. I was instructed to wear a mask and gloves.

When they realized I had no means of private transport, they were worried. They sought the information about which bus and tram I had used. I was taken to an isolated building and was asked not to touch anything. A doctor came to check on me and instructed me sit in a room with just one chair. She was wearing a hazmat suit everything was covered but for the chair. The doctor was very nice and knew English. She checked all my symptoms. They ran a series of tests and I was tested for 2 viruses, 1 COVID-19 and another one locally prevalent.

I was reassured that in case I came back positive they would take care of me and it would be alright. As she was testing me, she appeared quite worried. However, after the tests they let me go. It bothered me that they let me go back and that too using public transport when they didn't know the results. They ideally shouldn't have let me go right? (Niharika C., Interview, 02.04.2020)

Niharika's experience with the health system in France is key in enabling future researchers to understand the challenges that global travelers face in times of a pandemic. The importance of language as a barrier in times like these cannot be overstated. All six of the foreign exchange travelers in France expressed not knowing the local language as a major cause of concern as the Virus began to spread and chaos and uncertainty became increasingly prevalent. The second concern they all expressed was their non-familiarity with the French health system. While both Niharika and her friend who accompanied her to the hospital, Sourodeep K., were appreciative of their prompt actions; they were concerned at not having the entire information. The lack of familiarity with another nation's health systems and practices coupled with the lack of fluency in the nation's language can be a major challenge for global travelers in times when uncertainty becomes the norm.

Decisions During A Pandemic

By mid- March as lockdowns loomed, key decisions were to be made by all the travelers. This section of the analysis focuses on the various factors and variables that were considered by the study's participants as they decided on their actions in the extremely short windows of time available to them.

The two travelers who traveled to the USA witnessed the declaration of the pandemic as their trip was about to conclude and they were set to fly out of Austin, Texas in a few days. All the six travelers in France were in a difficult situation as educational institutions were going to be closed indefinitely from the 14th of March and the nation was to enter a state of lockdown on the 16th. Hrishikesh's words offer us insights into the situation-

France had around 1,000 cases at this point, Germany was over 500 and Italy was out of control. The fear, anxiety and panic were real and at extremely high levels. (Hrishikesh K., Interview, 30.03.2020)

Analysis of the interview data reveals that the various factors being considered by the foreign exchange contingent were quite unique and specific to the nature of their travel. They were all waiting for permissions from their home institutions to return, were anxious about being locked down in a country where they didn't speak the native language and the status of their visas as an indefinite lockdown could stretch longer than their permissions to stay in the country. As Mansi T. puts it "The fear of staying back and getting locked down at a time when resources would be difficult to get and food and groceries may become scarce was too daunting for a vegetarian like me. Coming back (to India) was a no-brainer." For someone like Kaivalya K. it was important to also be financially prudent at this time as he states "we were three people staying together and we had to decide because the accommodation would become too expensive even if one of us left. We unanimously decided to go home." In the case of some of the exchange students their parents in India were beginning to get concerned by the virus' spread in Europe and they were anxious for their safety. In the words of Deepali S. "By the 11th of March my parents were checking with me if I wished to come home."

The participants who canceled their plans to travel all considered a variety of factors for their decisions. In the case of Devina S., she had received her visa to visit Australia and attend the conference but the conference chose to switch to a digital only mode and her decision of not traveling was not her choice as it was made for her by the organizers. Surya Bhushan details his thought process on his decision not to travel by carefully weighing the benefits and gains from the proposed travel plan.

The biggest fear was of the virus being heavily communicable, with no cure in sight and a lack of complete understanding with regards to COVID-19. In such a scenario the risks far outweighed the benefits of visiting a conference. (Surya Bhushan Kumar, Interview, 17.03.2020)

Similar to Surya Bhushan Kumar's decision to cancel was that of Amulya's. Her opportunity to travel to the UK was extremely important for her career as an academic. However, she felt she was at a natural disadvantage because of being affected by a prior respiratory disorder. Despite this, the biggest factor in her decision she feels were Boris Johnson's (UK Prime Minister) statements and the UK's unpreparedness to handle the pandemic.

Boris Johnson's press conferences were one of the biggest reasons for me not to travel. The UK came across as a nation that wasn't concerned by it. Another big factor was the cost of treatment; it is very expensive there. (Amulya K., Interview, 26.03.2020).

While a lot of other management studies in the near future will evaluate, examine and prescribe the right style of leadership in the time of an emergency like a pandemic, Boris Johnson's message failed to inspire any confidence in a traveler who chose to forego an extremely important opportunity because she wasn't convinced that the UK's health machinery could take care of her. There is an overwhelming number of responses that resonate with Amulya's take in the study where everyone felt it would be safer to face the virus at their own homes. The familiarity with the health system (or a lack of it) keeps reappearing as a cross-cutting factor across all the themes analyzed. Thus, the final part of this analysis section is anomalous with the standard pattern as two travelers chose to leave the comfort of their homes at a time when everyone was striving to return or canceling trips. Priyadarshi P. and Mahati B. chose to travel because their film was in production after the declaration of the global pandemic. Their interview responses detail to us the uncertainty, chaos and fear they were feeling.

I decided the best way to go into the pandemic was to go prepared. I travelled with masks (N92 kind) and surgical grade sanitizer in large quantities. I also carried a lot of Vitamin C tablets with me. I made it a point to avoid crowded places and especially washrooms. I was scared and constantly anxious during the entire trip; on a scale of 1-10, fear-wise I was constantly on a six. It is never easy when you are exposing yourself to a greater risk. It felt like I was traveling to Chernobyl, a do or die situation. (Priyadarshi P., Interview 23.03.2020)

Mahati on the other hand had earlier been diagnosed with a potentially fatal viral infection in 2015 which relapsed in 2017. As someone who was advised by her doctors not to travel at such a time and whose parents were against the whole idea of travel, Mahati had to convince everyone to travel because the opportunity was essential for her career.

Despite my medical history I had to travel because when you are a freelance actor/artist who wants to take things to the next level; opportunities are few. This was my first big project in 18 months. A big opportunity, a pan-Indian film and it was a big chance; the wait can be painful and there are a lot of rejections. You never know when the next offer will come. There was simply no way I wasn't going; I agreed to be under constant medical supervision but I had to go. (Mahati B., Interview, 23.03.2020)

Priyadarshi and Mahati's responses are indicative of the fact that the only reason they chose to travel was because a lot was at stake for them professionally. Priyadarshi had committed to the dates and in the film-industry getting another set of dates where everyone is available can be quite problematic. Mahati's decision to travel in order to save her fledgling career as an actor is also indicative that in desperate times

people can resort to desperate measures. However, these anomalies must be seen as such and not as acts of bravado. The overwhelmingly common trend for international travelers is to make their way 'home' or choose to stay at 'home' in the times of a medical pandemic; 12 of the 14 participants in a variety of contexts, situations and traveling for a multitude of reasons made that their primary course of action.

Travel During the Pandemic

This section of the analysis draws from the responses of the participants to help provide us with an understanding of how things played out in the various hubs of the travel and tourism sector. The two participants who traveled to the US were keen to point out that they weren't scanned for the virus when they landed either in Dallas or Austin nor at their layovers in London at the Heathrow airport. As Prasanna T. puts it:

The place we were visiting (Austin, Texas) didn't seem affected by a pandemic in any way. People were still working, restaurants were crowded. It didn't seem as lively to me as my earlier trips but there was no lockdown. The big changes however had just begun to happen. Just a couple of days before I left, a film festival happening in Austin was cancelled. Flights were being cancelled and people were concerned. (Prasanna T., Interview, 28.03.2020)

Medha who visited Egypt pointed out that on her way back via Dubai she was quite concerned about contracting the virus there as a lot of passengers from several countries were going to be in close proximity at such places. The data from the study reveals that all the travelers were concerned about layover airports primarily because of the significant number of other travelers and secondarily the fact that they could be quarantined there if they were to be tested positive. The travelers to Georgia, Europe went out of their way to use Doha instead of Dubai as a point of transit as Doha had a significantly lower number of positive cases. Similarly, most participants on their way back from France chose a direct flight to India.

The data also revealed the transformation of airports as sites of activity after the declaration of the pandemic. Prasanna T. paints a picture of the Austin airport in Texas as he was leaving for India after the declaration of the pandemic "shops were crowded, gates were crowded and there was no distancing of any kind." Aditya P. does the same for Heathrow when he says "the environment at London was completely different, we were prepared for it and it was packed with lots of people wearing masks and we were distancing as much as possible." Kaivalya's interview informs us about Paris and the Charles De Gaulle airport on the 14th of March when he found the airport to be extremely crowded but the city to be quite relaxed. He was able to squeeze in a bit of travel and found it odd that there was no scanning system in place despite he being swapped for explosives as frisking was no longer permitted. Hrishikesh speaks about the same airport on the 18th, two days after France's lockdown, and about how he found it deserted. "On the 17/18th and while it was extremely empty, there were military personnel in the airport who were advising people to maintain social distancing," he adds.

In less than fifteen days we see the hustle and bustle of the airports vanish as all the participants speak of getting back home as quickly as possible. As confusion and chaos dominated the situation most of them were scared of what awaited them once they were back in India. They were wary of the arrangements in place and how they were going to be treated. Hrishikesh who was on one of the last flights out of Europe to India provides a lot of detail about the uncertainty he was facing as the flight was going to land in India after the Indian airspace was scheduled to lockdown.

Once I reached the airport in Paris (Charles de Gaulle), the stress hadn't reduced at all because the Indian airspace was going into lockdown on the midnight of the 18th. The fear was if my flight would reach India before that. Confusion and uncertainty were high as there was no clarity on what would happen even if I boarded the flight. Air India wasn't responsive and it took a while for them to confirm but there was still uncertainty. These were the last flights from Europe to India and prices went through the roof. ((Hrishikesh K., Interview, 30.03.2020)

Similarly, Mansi T. who was on her way back to India on the 14th (March, 2020) provides us with a different dimension of how things were being handled. “In Lyon we were told by the airline officials that we could only board the flight if we agreed to be quarantined for 14 days. Listening to this the anxiety levels spiked but we had no other option, we had to get home.” The insights from the airports and the way airlines were handling the global traveler clearly showcases their inability to handle the commotion caused by a global pandemic. As airports like Heathrow and the ones in the USA and France were oblivious to scanning passengers; the airlines had no singular, clear communication strategy for their passengers. A sheer lack of cohesiveness, planning and execution was apparent as people raced to safety in the final hours before countries shut down. The travel and tourism sectors were both unprepared and non-decisive to handle the situation.

Once they all landed in India, the travelers were all greeted by long queues at immigration and scanners waiting to check their body temperatures. The data from the study provides us information from Hyderabad, Bombay, Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati and Panaji airports. All the participants confirmed that they were made to sign self-declaration forms at immigration counters that required them to self-isolate and quarantine themselves for two weeks. While the passengers entering India via Hyderabad found the process quite efficient, Mahati felt quite anxious when she saw the scanner as it was the only thing that stood between her and the safety of home. Aditya P. also at Hyderabad, found people taking paracetamol pills in queues as they tried everything, to beat the thermal scanner. The travelers who landed at Mumbai were in for a shock as they were coming from France and the ones who had travel history in Italy were being segregated. Despite evidence of prior self-quarantines and isolation (from France) the teams had no idea how to deal with them and they were made to wait for hours. Kaivalya talks about the confusion in Delhi on the 15th of March where people who had transit flights weren't being screened and people in the queue were quickly booking them to beat the system. The system seemed to have a lot of loopholes and was non-uniform as chaos was most common in the queues. Social distancing at such times was non-existent. As Niharika C. puts it, “It would be ironic after my entire ordeal in Italy and France to contract the virus at an Indian airport.”

This section showcases to us the world's unpreparedness to deal with a pandemic on the scale and magnitude of Covid-19. However, while this is the larger theme another key point that emerges is the onus on the global traveler. In times like these it is imperative that travelers are transparent and forthcoming with the authorities so that the authorities can help them. The “right to travel” that Bianchi (2006 p.1) talks about can only be upheld if today's travelers are aware of their responsibilities and ensure that they don't harm or put fellow travelers and workers in the travel and tourism sector at risk. Ideals that can be seriously questioned when people try to skip the queue at screening and ‘pop fever pills’ to beat the system. As things stand, neither the service providers nor the travelers seem ready to resume travel in a world post Covid-19.

DISCUSSION

The global pandemic due to the Novel Coronavirus has brought the travel and tourism industry to a standstill and this moment perfectly illustrates Monterrubio's words, as global travel has become victim to this epidemic (Monterrubio, 2010 p.1). All fourteen participants of the study in their responses vehemently indicated that they had no plans for travel of any kind till the virus' grip on the world subsided. Most of them indicated that even after that they would travel only if it was an absolute necessity. While most of them agreed that travel and tourism would change forever after this episode, Medha for instance felt that scrutiny on travelers would increase significantly. However, there were some who were skeptical and felt that humanity has a tendency to forget and things would go back to the same as they were pre-pandemic after some time. Most of the participants wanted specific infrastructures in place that would make places like airports, contact-free zones especially facilities like restrooms and water fountains.

This qualitative study that draws from grounded theory has allowed us to understand that in the case of travel and tourism sector where the product is intangible (Dolnicar, 2005) the resultant experience is often both uncertain and deeply personal. Thus, in the inimitable circumstances presented to us by the pandemic we can't just stop the examination of the travelers' psyche by measuring perceived risks (Yang & Nair,

2014) but rather examining the various moments in which they encounter these risks allows us as researchers to make new meanings. For instance, Priyadarshi's observation that he was constantly at a six in terms of fear (on a scale of 1-10) is a great place to understand how the boundaries between perceived risk and absolute and real risks blur and become one in such moments. Similarly, the fact that travelers cancelled their plans of travel or advanced their returns to home nations allows us to understand the various cost/benefit decisions they make in such a time. This study allows us to chart the way perceived risk becomes real, causing travelers to experience anxiety and stress in a multitude of ways (as is clear from the analyses of all fourteen travelogues) and then its transformation into a widespread state of panic where quick, decisive actions become necessary. Newer theory, practices and policy development must begin at the intersection of these dimensions.

While newer practices of travel are already being formulated; for example, airlines have begun testing their passengers with quick tests before they board the flight (Emirates, 2020) and others have begun to test newer uniforms for their workforces (Asokan, 2020); travelers are unlikely to throng to popular tourist hotspots when travel resumes. Data from the study indicates that most of the participants were going to avoid popular tourist locations, places with high population densities, peak travel seasons and airport hubs like Dubai, London and Singapore when they were to plan future travel (a trend confirmed by Wei, 2020). The travelers' navigation of travel and tourism spaces by formulating a variety of unique strategies and tactics in the last several years (De Certeau, 1984 p. 91-110) might have to be revisited (off-season traveling for instance) as the entire practice might need to be reconfigured in the near future if we must learn to live with the virus (Ghebreyesus, 2020b). Similarly, the participants of the study claimed that they were going to spend a lot more time researching a nation's health system and outlook, commitment towards global travelers and epidemics before confirming their travel plans. Medha in her responses mentioned about being encouraged to social-distance from travelers hailing from South-East Asia by her tour guide in Egypt as the geographical region was just recovering from combating MERS. As the data from this study indicates the travel and tourism sector has failed to integrate best practices that could have been imbibed from epidemics caused by earlier respiratory disorders. Similarly, the lack of a singular message that could be disseminated globally and nationally to alleviate concerns (a possibility claimed by Schroeder et. al 2013 in their work on social media and travel) or the failure of a uniforms system to screen incoming passengers are all serious shortcomings. By providing future researchers with holistic snapshots of the pandemic, this article hopes to serve as a starting point to initiate necessary conversations and marketing/policy decisions required to address these concerns. By providing us the detailed psyches and decision-making processes of fourteen individuals this article allows for us to understand what the global traveler experiences, thinks and requires in such extreme times.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's qualitative nature offers us with a lot of different perspectives from the fourteen travelers. However, the fact that all of them were Indian and traveled back to India restricts our ability to get a more complete picture. The participant pool is however not homogenous as the purpose of travel, motivations and contextual settings make all their perspectives unique. Future studies might consider building on this, with quantitative or mixed-method studies, further exploring travel-related decisions of travelers in various kinds of travel.

CONCLUSION

As the world makes its way to a new 'normal' there are a few challenges that the travel and tourism sector must face. Cost of travel is likely to rise significantly as airlines might carry fewer passengers due to norms on social distancing and nations that rely on tourism for their economic needs may face a lot of hardship. Another dimension to consider is the impact on first-time travelers, like the participants of our study who were exchange students. The panic, anxiety and risk that they had to experience will last with them a lifetime and the same is likely to happen with a lot of travelers as the scars of the epidemic will take

time to fade. In the conceptualization of practice as a term by Schatzki (1996), Wittgenstein (1978) or Bourdieu (1977; 1990) one thing they are all consistent with is the way by which repeated acts allow for the performers to make the act their own, a key step that allows for the formulation of a practice. In the case of travel and tourism in a situation where the world lives with the pandemic, the repetitive act of travel may be extremely difficult to perform and thus, elevating it from an act performed in the time of dire necessities with great risk to the self (with the virus now being airborne) could prove to be a difficult ask. The allure of destinations, adventure and locations that promise a break from home will forever be diminished if the goal of the traveler is to reach 'home' come what may. Addressing this should be the foremost concern of tourism marketers.

REFERENCES

- Ahir, H., Bloom, N., & Furceri D. (2020) Global Uncertainty Related to Coronavirus at Record High, *IMFblog*. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/04/04/global-uncertainty-related-to-coronavirus-at-record-high/>
- Asokan, A. (2020). COVID-19: AirAsia trials PPE suits for cabin crew, *Channel News Asia* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/airasia-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-suits-cabin-crew-12681196>
- Baker, D.M.A. (2015). Tourism and the Health Effects of Infectious Diseases: Are There Potential Risks for Tourists? *International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism and Hospitality*, 1(12), 1.
- Bethlehem, J. (1999). Cross-sectional research. *Research methodology in the social, behavioural and life sciences*, 110, 142.
- Bianchi, R. (2006). Tourism and the globalisation of fear: Analysing the politics of risk and (in) security in global travel. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 7(1), 64-74.
- Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological methods & research*, 10(2), 141-163.
- Bourdieu. (1977). Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 16, 110.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). Structures, habitus, practices. The logic of practice, 52-65.
- Carey, J.W., Morgan, M., & Oxtoby, M. J. (1996). Intercoder agreement in analysis of responses to open-ended interview questions: Examples from tuberculosis research. *CAM Journal*, 8(3), 1-5.
- Certeau, M.D. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Chen, X., Mak, B., & Kankhuni, Z. (2020). Storytelling approach of the self-reported slow adventure to Tibet: Constructing experience and identity. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 35, 100679.
- Cooper, M. (2006). Japanese tourism and the SARS epidemic of 2003. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 19(2-3), 117-131.
- Dashper, K. (2020). Holidays with my horse: Human-horse relationships and multispecies tourism experiences. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 34, 100678.
- Dolnicar, S., & Dickson, T. (2004). No risk, no fun - The role of perceived risk in adventure tourism. *CD Proceedings of the 13th International Research Conference of the Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE)*.
- Dolnicar, S. (2005). Understanding barriers to leisure travel, tourists fears as marketing basis. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 11, 197-208.
- Emirates. (2020). Emirates becomes first airline to conduct on-site rapid COVID-19 tests for passengers, *Emirates* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from: <https://www.emirates.com/media-centre/emirates-becomes-first-airline-to-conduct-on-site-rapid-covid-19-tests-for-passengers/>
- Fuchs, G., Uriely, N., Reichel, A., & Maoz, D. (2013). Vacationing in a terror-stricken destination: tourists' risk perceptions and rationalizations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(2), 182-191
- Ghebreyesus, T.A. (2020a). WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19-11 March 2020, *WHO*. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from

- <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>
- Ghebreyesus T.A. (2020b). WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 22 April 2020, WHO. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19--22-april-2020>
- Giuffrida, A. (2020). Bergamo mayor says football match escalated infections in Italian province, *The Guardian* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/bergamo-mayor-says-football-match-escalated-coronavirus-infections-italian-province>
- Haddock, C. (1993). *Managing risks in outdoor activities*. New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.
- Johnson, N.P., & Mueller, J. (2002). Updating the accounts: global mortality of the 1918-1920" Spanish" influenza pandemic. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, pp. 105-115.
- Joo, H., Maskery, B.A., Berro, A.D., Rotz, L.D., Lee, Y.K., & Brown, C.M. (2019). Economic Impact of the 2015 MERS Outbreak on the Republic of Korea's Tourism-Related Industries. *Health Security*, 17(2), 100-108.
- Korstanje, M.E. (2011). The fear of traveling: a new perspective for tourism and hospitality. *Anatolia*, 22(2), 222-233.
- Lepido D., & Follain J. (2020). Venice Carnival Ends Early as Italy Virus Outbreak Spooks Europe. *Bloomberg* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-23/venice-cancels-all-public-events-including-carnival>
- Monterrubio, J.C. (2010). Short-term economic impacts of influenza A (H1N1) and government reaction on the Mexican tourism industry: an analysis of the media. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 3(1), 1-15.
- Moutinho, L. (1987). Consumer Behavior in Tourism. *European Journal of Marketing*, 21(10), 5-44.
- Nehls, K., Smith, B.D., & Schneider, H.A. (2015). Video-conferencing interviews in qualitative research. In *Enhancing qualitative and mixed methods research with technology* (pp. 140-157). IGI Global.
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of social research methodology*, 11(4), 327-344.
- Priest, S. (1990). The Adventure Experience Paradigm. In A. Miles and S. Priest, *Adventure Recreation* (pp. 157-62). State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Roehl, W., & Fesenmaier, D. (1992). Risk Perceptions and Pleasure Travel: An Exploratory Analysis. *Journal of Travel Research*, 30(4), 17-26.
- Reisinger, Y., & Mavondo, F. (2005). Travel anxiety and intentions to travel internationally: Implications of travel risk perception. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(3), 212-225.
- Schatzki, (1996). *Schatzki T. Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Schroeder, A., Pennington-Gray, L., Donohoe, H., & Kioussis, S. (2013). Using social media in times of crisis. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 30(1-2), 126-143.
- Sharma, A.M., & Prabhu, S. (2020, April 8) Coronavirus India: Lockdown Likely To Be Extended, PM Modi Suggests At All-Party Meeting, *NDTV* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/coronavirus-pm-narendra-modi-at-all-party-meeting-will-consult-chief-ministers-but-from-all-accounts-2208243>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J.M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- UNIDO. (2020). Coronavirus: the economic impact. Impact of Covid-19: the catchphrase may be uncertainty, but the losses are real, *UNIDO*. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.unido.org/stories/coronavirus-economic-impact>
- Wittgenstein, L., von Wright, G.H., & Nyman, H. (1978). *Vermischte Bemerkungen*. Oxford: Blackwell, p.107.

- Wei, T.T. (2020). Operations at Changi Airport T2 to be suspended for 18 months from May. *The Straits Times* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/operations-at-changi-airport-t2-to-be-suspended-for-18-months-amid-coronavirus-outbreak>
- WHO. (2020). Novel-Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation dashboard – 20 January 2021, *WHO*. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://covid19.who.int/>
- Worldometer. (2020). COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic, *worldometer*. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>
- WTTC. (2020). World Travel and Tourism Council Economic Impact Report, *WTTC*. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>
- Yang, E.C.L., Sharif, S.P., & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2015). Tourists' risk perception of risky destinations: The case of Sabah's eastern coast. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 15(3), 206–221. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358415576085>
- Yang, C.L., & Nair, V. (2014). Risk Perception Study in Tourism: Are we Really Measuring Perceived Risk? *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 144, 322-327.
- Yavas, U. (1987). Foreign Travel Behaviour in a Growing Vacation Market: Implications for Tourism Marketers. *European Journal of Marketing*, 21(5), 57-69.
- Zhao, S., & Gross, S. (2020). Tom Hanks, Wife Test Positive for Coronavirus in Australia, *Bloomberg* [online]. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-12/tom-hanks-and-wife-rita-wilson-have-coronavirus-in-australia>