

# Consumer Behaviour in Tourism

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*Abstract:* This article aims to identify factors that affect potential travellers in the phase of gathering information and evaluating alternatives within the shopping model of consumer behaviour. For the purposes of achieving the set goals the survey will be realized. The result of the survey will be identified factors that are having impact on consumer decision in tourism, and that can help operators of tourism to better communicate with their customers.

*Keywords:* Consumer behaviour, COVID-19,

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## 1 Introduction

Augmented free time and financial assets are the prerequisites for tourism activities, implicate, a person without sufficient resources specified cannot satisfy their tourist needs. With the increasing trend of available free time, the freedom to choose favorable product features has been given to an individual. [8] Till the beginning of 2020 mass tourism was a significant contributor to the development not only of regional but also national economies and generally, but then the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the situation dramatically and nothing stood the same. With travel restrictions, the decline in international tourism, bans to enter the country – measures taken by authorities to minimize the spread of the virus causing the illness of COVID-19, the tourism was and still is the most affected industry worldwide.

In PRE-COVID-19 times the number of international tourism and arrivals was in continual growth and predictions were very optimistic and by the time market researchers were almost sure about the knowledge of consumer behaviour of customers in tourism industry. Especially about the way they are making decision about their holidays, the way they are purchasing them and spending them. With the arrival of COVID-19 new factors impacting on consumer behaviour have appeared.

Consumers of tourist services or tourist packages are facing new challenges in the moment of planning their holidays taking in consideration many factors that before were irrelevant. The situation has impact on the choice of services the holiday package

is consisting of like destination, transport, distribution of tourist product, communication in tourism etc.

The decision making of customer is nowadays very difficult because considering the fact, that usually customer is purchasing holidays packages some time before it is used, the customer is deciding in time when he/she doesn't know what the situation will be in time when he/she will spend his/her holidays. So, the customer is paying for something she/he is not sure what will be look like. What kind of restrictions will be applied on entering the country, usage of hotel services, hospitality etc.

That's why is crucial to identify changes in consumer behaviour that are caused by COVID-19 pandemic. And it's the main topic of this article.

## 2 Consumer behaviour in tourism

The first part of this article is dedicated to description of theoretical background of the main topic based on knowledge of various authors about consumer behaviour in tourism and marketing mix in tourism.

Scott argues that the most important conceptual dimensions of tourism CB research: decision-making, values, motivations, self-concept and personality, expectations, attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction and trust and loyalty [11].

Due to the aim of the article the problematic of decision-making process. Smallman & Moore claim that understanding consumer decision-making is a cornerstone of marketing strategy. CB in tourism is underpinned by general assumptions

about how decisions are made. We argue that such levels of complexity can only be fully captured through a focus on the *process* of tourist decision-making. Yet, research on tourist decision-making continues to focus little on process aspects. The ability of choice models to capture the process aspects of decision-making is heavily criticised [11], suggesting that these can only be captured through less-structured methodologies involving narrative accounts of actions and activities.

Heitmann is submitting that there is no universally accepted theory, but several frameworks have been offered to understand consumer behaviour, travel behaviour and tourism motivation. At a personal level, no two individuals are alike and there are significant differences in attitudes, perceptions, and motivation. An individual's perception of travelling depends on the individual's perception of the world but is further determined by a range of external factors such as their childhood, family, work, and the media, as well as wider societal and cultural influences. Despite the difficulty of homogenizing the tourist as a consumer, it is important to the management of tourism to understand the way in which consumers make decisions and consume tourism activities while appreciating the diversity of demand, particularly for the marketing of tourism products and services where an understanding of tourist consumption and consumer behaviour is essential. If we understand what makes the consumer tick, we can cater for their needs and provide the right product and service. It also helps explain why certain types of holidays can be more successful than others and what new products and services might prove popular [4].

Fratu in the article dedicated to consumer behaviour is claiming that the discovery of the consumer's needs and decision processes is very important for the marketing activity because it allows the marketing manager to improve his own decision-making process, to forecast future behaviour and to have a real and objective image of the consumer demand. Understanding consumer behaviour is important for developing new tourism products and services because it offers a clearer view of what consumers are looking for and the manager can reflect them in the development process. To develop effective and efficient advertising campaigns, it is required to comprehend consumer behaviour. Segmentation is used to design advertising campaigns based on the market segment's particular demands. An understanding of customers' demands can be achieved by answering the following questions like who is important in the buying decision, how do consumers buy, what are the

criteria their choice is based on, where do they buy or when do they buy. These factors define the five key dimensions of buyer behaviour. Answers to these questions can be provided by personal contact with customers or using marketing. Also, an important source of consumer information is the internet. Using search engines like Google can provide links to web pages which offer consumer statistics. Buying processes are complex, sometimes involving many variables. Making false assumptions about these processes can result in an otherwise good product or service not being bought [2]

## **2.1 Consumer behaviour of tourists in pandemic of COVID-19**

Travelling in Covid-19 pandemic time is about the fact that traveller is taking a risk, because she/he is making decision in uncertain conditions with lack of information about the situation in future. Williams and Balaz claim that the tourist decision-making process is inherently an amalgamation of cognitive contextual facts and affective perceptions, with the last subject to several intangible attributes [15]. Karl states that risk perceptions thus contextualise the likelihood and magnitude of the negative consequences of an incident, rather than being its factual assessment. Within the decision-making process individuals explore the limits of the risk and uncertainty associated with their decisions, aiming to maximise utility while minimising loss [5].

Papas and Glyptou amidst the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, risk assessment, risk decoding, and the decision-making process are all uncharted territory. Besides the ambiguity of its transmission and the lack of treatment, this pandemic has a strong dynamic element because it is still ongoing [9].

Apart the financial risk caused by the cancelation of holiday, in case that the customer is not allowed to travel because of not meet the requirements for entry the destination country, that can be minimized by insurance. Matiza claims that the more important is health risk in tourism is associated with potential hazards to the health and well-being of the tourist when engaging in travel and tourism activities. Within the contemporary travel and tourism context, the perceived health risk is one of the most critical to the decision-making process of tourists. More-so, it is the perceived susceptibility to and severity of health risk that acts as a heuristic cue that influences the conative behaviour of tourists. However, apart from the perceived health risk associated with the COVID-19 crisis, the unique nature of the pandemic may also exacerbate both psychological and social risk. Psychological

risk is related to the possibility that the travel and tourism experience will not reflect favourably on the tourist in relation to their image of self or personal. While the social risk is attributable to how the choice to undertake travel and tourism would affect the tourist's social reference groups such as friends and family in terms of their opinion of them. Prior studies have determined the causal effect of health and socio-psychological risk on tourist decision-making in various contexts. This suggests that as an antecedent to consumptive decision-making in tourism, risk perceptions are multi-dimensional and dynamic and would be susceptible to both intrinsic and extrinsic forces such as the COVID-19 pandemic [6].

All the information above have led the author to dedicate the survey on how much the customer when realize the decision-making process considering all the facts to minimize the health risk.

## 2.2 Methods of research

The questionnaire survey method will be used to achieve the goals of this article. The questionnaire survey will take place online and will be combined with personal interviewing. The selection file will contain 380 respondents. To obtain relevant data, the random selection will be used to select the sample this can guarantee maximum representativeness of the research. The selection will contain the entire structure of the surveyed file considering the age. The aim of the questionnaire survey will be to identify changes and trends in consumer behaviour due to the COVID 19 pandemic in decision making while consuming tourist services compared to the "pre-covid-19" period.

The aim of this article was to identify trends, trends that can be expected in the behaviour of consumers of tourism services in the summer season 2021 and in the 2022 season, which health experts believe will still be marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. A questionnaire survey was carried out in March and April 2021 to meet the target. 380 respondents participated in the questionnaire survey, of which 200 were women and 180 were men. The age range of respondents was from 18 years to 65+ with an even distribution into groups of 18 - 24 years, 25 - 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years, 55 - 64 years and age category 65 +. To understand better the changes in consumer behaviour the questionnaire will contain couple of questions that aimed to find out data to find relation between the questions identifying consumer behaviour and basic characteristics of respondents like how frequently

they used to travel before COVID-19 pandemic, with who they are mostly travelling and so on.

The questionnaire survey was carried out both online and by the personal questioning method. The questionnaire will be dedicated to find out information about changes in consumer behaviour in the choice of destination, extra costs of holiday due to pandemic COVID-19, the way respondents are purchasing their holiday, the importance of marketing communication and if they prefer packed holidays or individuals one. Some results of this survey are compared to the similar authors 'survey carried out in 2019.

In next studies the artificial intelligence can be combined with the method of questionnaire survey. Typically, in these cases, for example, ANOVA or classic regression analysis is used to identify trends. Their use would make it possible to detect possible autocorrections and statistical anomalies. The next step is the possibility to use a neural network, which, for example, can refine the estimate of development or more precisely model the trend of the development of a quantity than only classical regression analysis could do.

The Finite differences method could be used if data from multiple time periods could be compared. Comparing two periods – the period before the COVID-19 pandemic (2019 data) and the COVID-19 pandemic downturn (2020 data).

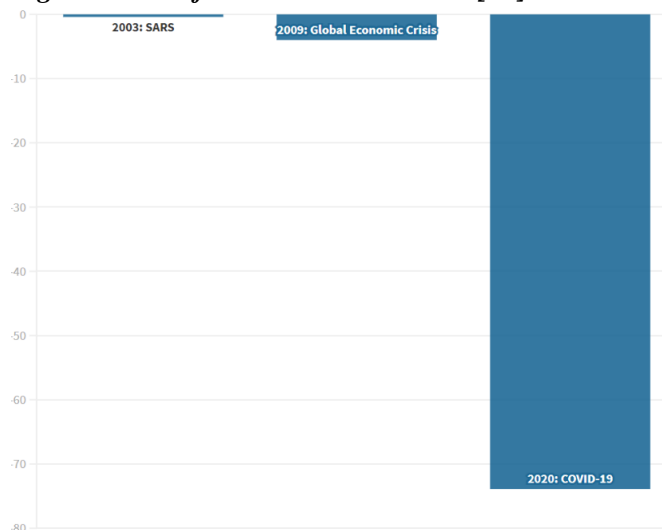
## 3 General impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tourism

Travel and tourism are among the most affected sectors with a massive fall of international demand amid global travel restrictions including many borders fully closed, to contain the virus. International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) fell by 72% in January-October 2020 over the same period last year, curbed by slow virus containment, low traveller confidence and important restrictions on travel still in place, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decline in the first ten months of the year represents 900 million fewer international tourist arrivals compared to the same period in 2019, and translates into a loss of US\$ 935 billion in export revenues from international tourism, more than 10 times the loss in 2009 under the impact of the global economic crisis [14]. In many countries, as in Croatia, tourism revenues account for one-fifth of the GDP, so any reduction in tourism revenues significantly impacts the economy. In Croatia, the peak season, July, and August in 2020, was 54 percent and in 2021 was 84

percent of 2019 arrivals due to a better epidemiological situation [10].

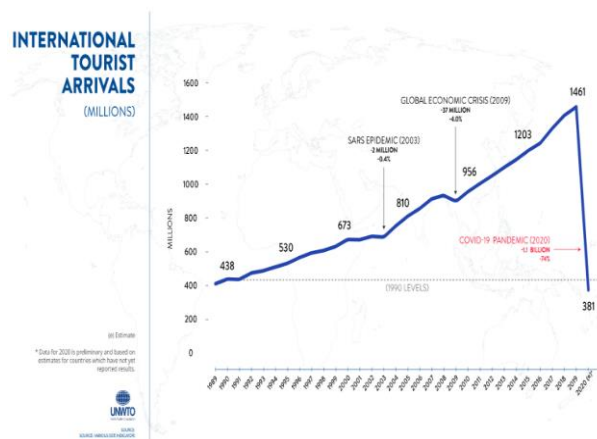
The year 2020 was marked by a significant decline of international tourism see Figure 1 Unprecedented fall of international tourism and Figure 2 International tourist arrivals. The possibilities of foreign holidays were very limited, very harsh conditions were accepted for the travel and return of Czech tourists. Some countries then shut down organised tourism at all for example Spain, Italy, France. The offer for spending foreign holidays was thus relatively limited.

**Figure 1 Fall of international tourism [14]**



Many Czech tourists who were used to spending their summer holidays abroad before the pandemic were relied on the offer of Czech tourism, or if they wanted to go abroad, they did it more individually, without using the services of travel agencies – this was true for European destinations. For more distant destinations such as Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Tunis, Turkey used the services of travel agencies at the time when it was possible.

**Figure 2 International tourist arrivals [14]**



### 3.1 Results of research

Based on the questionnaire the author finds out that COVID-19 pandemic is having huge impact on customers ‘behaviour in tourism. Changes are presented in all elements of marketing mix – product, price, distribution, and promotion. After obtaining the results of the current survey author has compared these results with previous results from the survey that was carried on in 2019. The main changes, see Table 1 Changes in consumer behaviour due to COVID-19 pandemic, are in the way the customer is choosing his destination, in the way the customer is searching for information. Different is also the customer are organizing their holiday or what kind of transport they reach the holiday destination. Based on the results it’s clear that communication in COVID-19 period is more than important. What kind of changes caused COVID-19 will be commented below.

**Table 1 Changes in consumer behaviour [12]**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The COVID-19 pandemic is having impact on how I spend my holiday.	38	31	12	11	8
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have changed my destination for upcoming holiday.	21	23	16	12	8
When buying my holiday, I miss the opportunity to visit the branch.	28	19	13	16	4
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I started using online channels to buy my holiday.	16	13	21	19	31
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I prefer to spend my holiday in the Czech Republic.	18	12	37	14	19
When deciding on the destination of my holiday, I will consider its COVID-19 reputation.	26	15	18	19	22
When deciding on the destination of my holiday, I will consider the additional costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (tests, quarantine).	31	16	13	19	11
Information that are providing travel agencies, travel portals I find clear and understandable.	26	21	13	21	19
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I will prefer a trip organized by a travel agency for my foreign holidays.	33	26	12	15	14
Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I will prefer destinations available by car in upcoming holidays.	27	14	11	22	26

### 3.1.1. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behaviour

Hypotheses set for the statement The COVID-19 pandemic has an impact on how I spend my holidays.

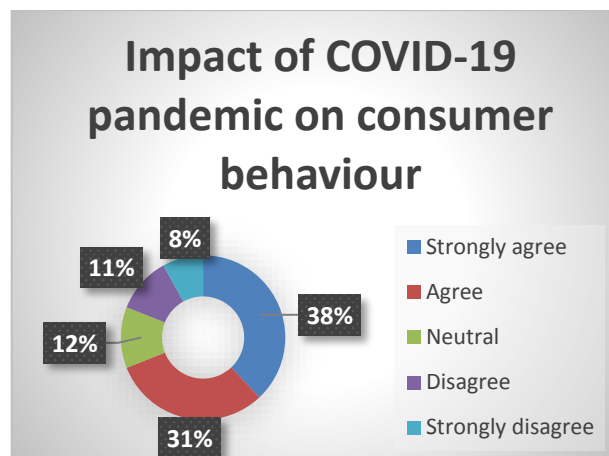
**H0:** The proportion of respondents who perceive the impact of covid on their holiday and those who do not perceive this influence is the same.

**H1:** The proportion of respondents who perceive the impact of covid on their holiday and those who do not perceive this influence is different.

To test this hypothesis, a good match test was performed (at a normal significance level of 5%). This test compared the actual frequencies of each response with theoretical ones. The resulting p-value came out 0.00, and thus less than 0.05. On this basis, the zero hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The proportion of people who admit the impact of the pandemic on the way they spend their holidays has proved statically significant than the proportion of those who reject it or take a neutral stance.

As for the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behaviour of Czech travellers it can be characterized as huge. The 69% of respondents has declared that COVID-19 pandemic has changed their behaviour and preferences see figure.

**Figure 3 Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behaviour [13]**



Most affected were respondent who characterized themselves who used to travel before the pandemic of COVID-19 as minimum twice time a year and at least once of this two times abroad. there is a direct relationship here the more respondents travelled in the pre-pandemic period, the more they feel influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic in meeting their need to travel, which they consider necessary.

#### Product/destination

**Statement: When deciding about destination on the destination of my holiday, I will consider its COVID-19 reputation.**

Hypotheses set:

**H0:** The proportion of respondents who take into account the country's reputation and those who do not are balanced.

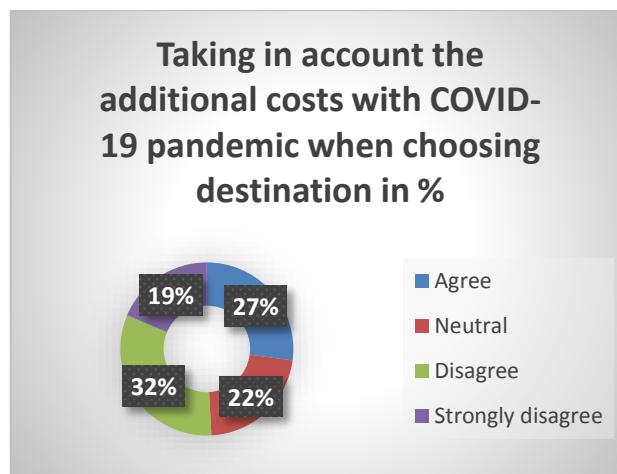
**H1:** The proportion of respondents who take into account the country's reputation and those who do not are not balanced.

Based on the implementation of the chi-quadrant good match test at a significance level of 5 %, the actual frequencies of each response were compared with theoretical ones. The calculated p-value has acquired a value of 0.009. This is less than 0.05, therefore the zero hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. The proportion of persons taking into account the covid situation in the country of travel is statistically more significant than the proportion of persons who do not take into account the current epidemiological situation.

As for product of tourism – destination the changes are as follows due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 44 % of respondents have changed their destination for their upcoming holiday comparing to their holiday destination in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic 40% of respondents have declared that they prefer to spend their holiday in Czech Republic, in 2019 it was only 32% of respondents

who preferred to spend their holiday only in the Czech Republic. In case of Czech Republic, the area of South Moravia and Bohemia seems to be the most attractive. The 41% of respondents prefer for their upcoming holidays destinations that can be reached by car like Croatia, north of Italy, Slovakia, north of Poland. The reason for such behaviour could be in the fact that requirements when travelling by car were less comfortable for travellers and giving to travellers more freedom in the moment of premature departure from the destination

**Figure 4 Changes in choice of destination [13]**

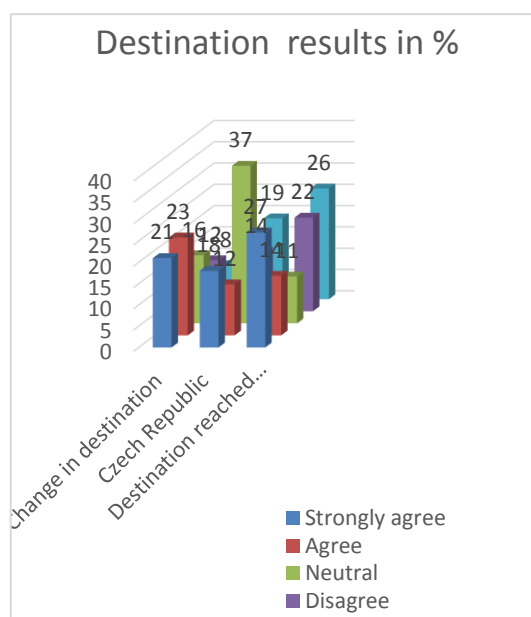


Those who declared the change in destination were mostly people in the age over 55 + and people having family in the age between 35 – 45%. More holidays in the Czech Republic, mainly people having family and young people till 25 years of age. Respondents in the age between 36 to 45 years having family are preferring mainly destinations that can be reached by car, this fact is it not so important for people in the age 55 +.

**Price**

The importance of the price is constant in decision making process of travellers. The new thing that brought the COVID-19 pandemic are the extra costs related to anti COVID-19 measures. Because the existence of COVID passport is not sure yet it is possible that upcoming summer holidays will be affected by obligatory testing before entering the destination abroad or the fear of possible quarantine if the traveller get sick abroad. Those extra costs related to COVID-19 apart from for example obligatory testing is the price of travel insurance covering the risk of COVID-19.

**Figure 5 Price [13]**



The additional costs are important for respondents in the age between 35 – 45

that are mainly traveling with families and for people in the age 55 +, because for this group of travellers the cost for whole family can reach substantial amount of money. Additional costs it is not important for people in the age between 18 and 34 years. And it's important for those who are planning to spend their holidays abroad.

**Distribution**

**Statement:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I will prefer a trip organized by a travel agency for my foreign holidays.- GRAF-8

Hypotheses set:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The proportion of persons who prefer a holiday organized by a travel agency is the same as the proportion of persons travelling alone.

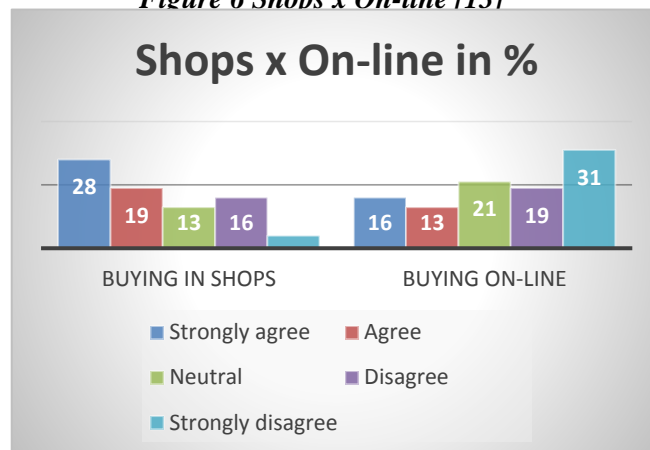
**H<sub>1</sub>:** The proportion of persons who prefer a holiday organized by a travel agency is not the same as that of persons travelling alone.

In this case, too, after conducting a good match test at a significance level of 5 %, the zero hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. The P-value of the test came out at  $7.8 \cdot 10^{-13}$  (basically 0) and that's less than 0.05. Statistically the most important was the group of respondents who prefer a trip organized by a travel agency when travelling abroad. This means that this is the preferred way to travel abroad due to covid.

No one doubts that life after the pandemic will no longer be the same as before because the whole world is living by the new rules for the second year in a row. During the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all business processes in the field of international trade were affected, in particular in the commercial real estate markets around the world. Restrictions imposed by governments on the operation of shopping malls, service outlets, catering, entertainment, and leisure have led to changes in consumer behaviour and, as a consequence, to dynamic sales growth in e-commerce and m-commerce. [1] The travel industry not only shares the characteristics of the service industry, but also serves as an intermediary in the tourism industry. [8] The travel industry is a service industry in which individuals or corporations sell travel related products to the public, including accommodation, catering, transportation, and sightseeing [7] What the COVID-19 pandemic has changed dramatically is the way and place the customer is purchasing his product. When buying holiday there was all the time significant preference to buy holiday in branches/shops. The reason is simple, customer is buying holiday, holiday is package of services and visiting the branch/shops brings to customer the feeling of reliability.

The will to buy holidays online is higher for travellers in the age to 34 years of age. The importance of visiting the shop is rising if traveller is having a family or is more than 55 old.

Figure 6 Shops x On-line [13]

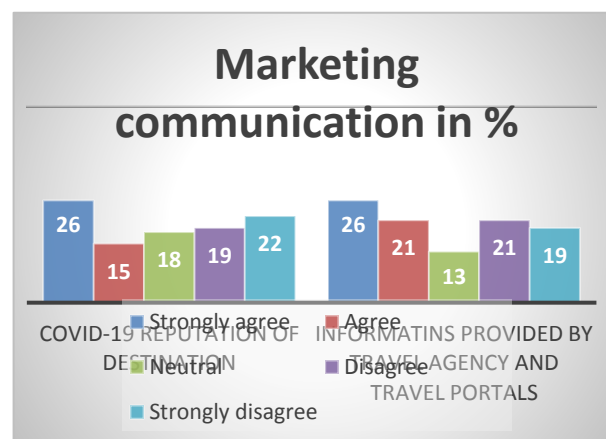


### Communication

Marketing communication is in moments of unprecedented crisis in tourism sector the basic key to overcome these bad times. It is marketing communication that can changed consumer decision where to spend his/her holidays. The travellers must get feeling that they are always informed and that they are having enough relevant information to make good decision about their holiday. Destinations can use marketing communication as a tool to present their selves as destinations having COVID-19 under control and are safe for travellers and travel agencies will use the marketing communication to be more reliable to its customers.

The importance of COVID-19 reputation of the destination is significant for travellers older than 35 years in general and even more for travellers with family. As for the quality of information there is still some place to improve the communication of travel agencies or travel portals.

Figure 7 Marketing Communication [13]

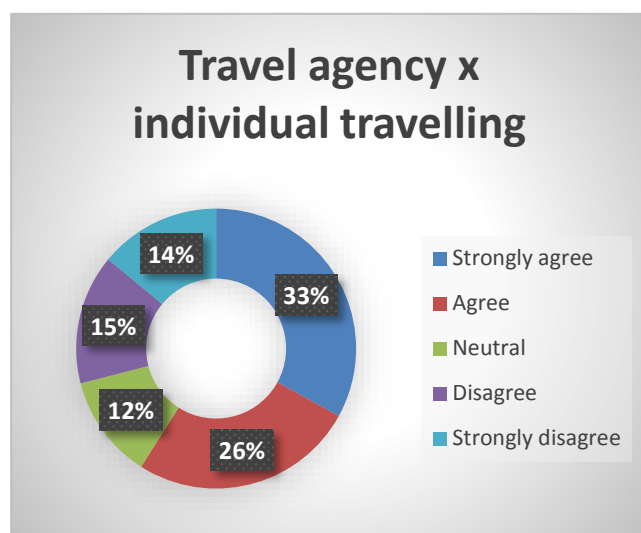


## Packing

Due to instable situation and COVID-19 restriction the question of in which form I will purchase my holiday is getting important. The reason is simple there are still some destinations that are better to visit buying holiday packet in travel agency, because in that way entering the holiday destination can be simpler e.g. – not travel ban, entering without test etc. Comparing to the survey carried on in 2019 the number of respondents who are showing the will to purchase their holiday has increased for 5%.

Respondents with families and in elderly age are preferring to organize their holiday by travel agency. Younger respondents and respondents travelling without children are organizing holiday by their own.

**Figure 8 Travel agency x individual travelling [13]**



## 4 Conclusion

The article dealt with a popular issue of consumer behaviour in tourism with a focus on the characteristics of its consumer behaviour with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. The described changes in consumer behaviour are based on a comparison of the results of two surveys, which were conducted in the period before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the period when the entire planet "lived" with COVID-19 for one year.

Regarding the results of the research, it can be stated that in relation to the change in consumer behaviour when using tourism services, 2 factors can be identified - an external factor - the very existence of COVID-19 pandemics and an internal factor based on consumer needs to minimize health risks when traveling. Both factors have a clear impact on the

changes identified by the research in the customer's decision-making process when choosing the destination and mode of transport, assessing the price, considering the information obtained by marketing communication of tourism entities.

Based on the comparison of the achieved results with the statements of tourism experts, the author is convinced that the changes can be clearly determined and the longer the current uncertainty will last, the more the tendency to change behaviour will manifest itself.

Vaccination could contribute to a return to the pre-COVID-19 pandemic, but it is not progressing fast enough, and its relatively slow pace is causing mutations that largely put all tourism participants in an unenviable situation of ever-present uncertainty.

The behaviour of consumers of tourism services is normally influenced by many factors, however, the specificity of the COVID-19 pandemic is the fact that the changes associated with it came very suddenly and appear to be long-lasting. And one of the few ways to return to normal is to minimize a fundamental factor that prevents consumers of tourism services, namely their health concerns.

One way is to put even more emphasis on marketing communication, the main goal of which is to inform and persuade. Inform, in addition to standard things such as the attractiveness of the destination, accommodation, transport, etc., what are the travel options, what are the conditions of entering and returning from the country, what current measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the country.

The persuasive goal of the communication campaign must be that the chosen holiday destination is safe and that the destination, its accommodation facilities, catering facilities and organizations providing leisure services have taken all measures to increase the sense of security of potential visitors.

In the case of the appeal of marketing communication, it is clearly necessary to focus on rational appeals supplemented by emotional ones. A rational appeal that tourism service providers must emphasize is the importance of the measures taken to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and thus eliminate fear and negative perceptions of health risks. As part of the emotional appeal, it is appropriate to highlight the positive emotions that people have with travel.

This topic seems so interesting to the author that she is considering deepening her research into other aspects that the customer is considering in the decision-making process. It would also be worth considering conducting research focused on changes in consumer behaviour during the actual use of



tourism services in the destination and the evaluation phase.

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