

Post-pandemic travel intention to heritage tourism in Henan, China

Jiaojiao, Zhao,¹ Nyen Vui, Chok,² Siti Haryani Mat Yusoff³

Manipal International University^{1,3}, Manipal Globalnxt University²

jojozhao@126.com (Corresponding author)¹

chok.nyen@globalnxt.edu.my²

siti.haryani@miu.edu.my³

ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper aims to explore the travel intention for travelers in Henan province, China, and the complex relationships among destination images, destination marketing, the role of emotion and the policy guide against the background of COVID-19 and the post-pandemic period. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, numerous studies have focuses on the lives of citizens and specifically on the travel and tourism industry. This study plans to adopt a survey research strategy using a combination of descriptive and analytic survey method. The findings will be revolved around the emotion of the travelers and the rebuilding of trust involving the China government and the tourism industry. It helps the policy makers in the creation of marketing campaigns due to the tourist experiences against the current social background needs to be recovered properly. In the meanwhile, it is beneficial for the agency and stakeholder to better in delighting and managing the expectancy of tourist during their travel.

Keywords: *travel intention, destination strategy; destination image; emotion; policy guide*

1.0 BACKGROUND

Tourism is vital for the success of many economics around the world. Boosting the revenue of the economy, the direct contribution of travel and tourism accounted for 3.3% of the world's total GDP in 2019 and represented a small rise since 2018.

At the beginning of 2020, the world evidenced an unprecedented situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Its (i.e. coronavirus) outbreak was deemed a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, affecting most countries across the globe. At present more than 400 million people have been infected and more than 5 million have died from the virus around the world (real time data from. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented actions to be adopted by many countries to avoid the spread of the virus. It is a global phenomenon that is also a highly personal experience with wide-ranging effects. Estimates indicate the virus reduced global economic growth in 2020 to an annualized rate of around -3.2%, with a recovery of 5.9% projected for 2021. Global trade

is estimated to have fallen by 5.3% in 2020, but is projected to grow by 8.0% in 2021. According to a consensus of forecasts, the economic downturn in 2020 was not as negative as initially estimated, due in part to the fiscal and monetary policies governments adopted in 2020. In particular, the prolonged nature of the health crisis is affecting the global economy beyond traditional measures with potentially long-lasting and far-reaching repercussions. In the meanwhile, the number of infected people and death rates has increased rapidly according to the WHO declaration (Jackson, J. K. (n.d.). Global Economic Effects of COVID-19). For tourism, the travel restrictions adopted by some countries, and regions have caused severe damage to the global tourism industry (Wen et.al., 2020).

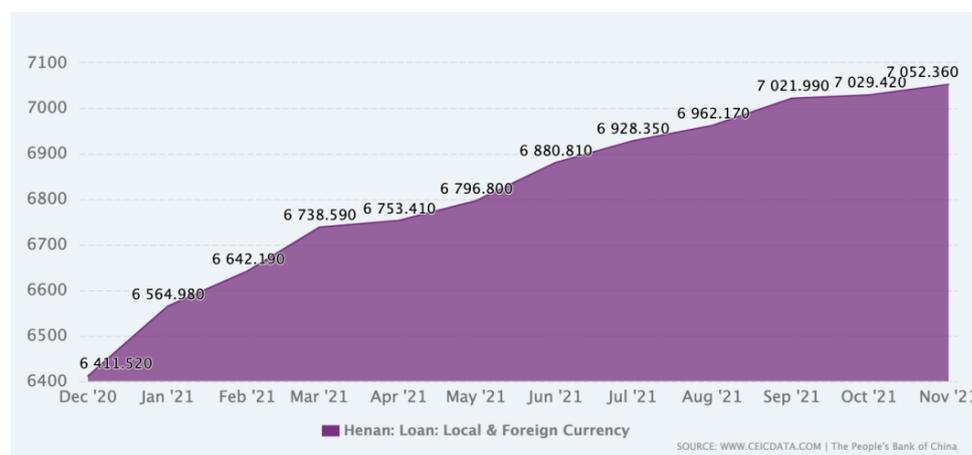
For China, the government reported 3.2% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the second quarter and 4.9% GDP growth in the third quarter of 2020. China is still grappling with the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, including sluggish domestic consumption, slow recovery in its top export markets, and reliance on government spending and exports to boost initial growth.

Tourism is one of the world's major economic sectors, and one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on all continents. All parts of its vast value-chain have been affected. Any tourism activities does affect the tourist experiences during the consumption of services (Vui, 2021) In the past, tourists themselves believe that experiences in other cities or countries increase a person's cognitive flexibility, though depending on how a person engages. Admiring the scenery and alleviating pressure are always the main purposes for tourists to arrange a travelling to boost a person's happiness. The perceived quality of a destination's cultural offering has long been a significant factor in determining tourist choices of destination. Heritage tourism is traveling to understand the cultures and places of the past — including those of your ancestors. It is a branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring. The integration of cultural relics with tourism development to drive the regional national development has currently become the world trend. The impact of COVID-19 on tourism places further pressure on heritage conservation as well as on the cultural and social fabric of communities, particularly for indigenous people and ethnic groups. For instance, many intangible cultural heritage practices such as traditional festivals and gatherings have been halted or postponed, and with the closure of markets for handicrafts, products and other goods, indigenous women's revenues have been particularly impacted.

This conceptual paper aims to put forward the initial literature insights on people's travel intention to Henan Province after the disastrous pandemic. The discussion of the situation in Henan Province is worth exploring. Henan, as the important birthplace of Chinese history and culture, its underground cultural relics occupies the national first, its ground cultural relics occupies the national second. It is a landlocked and central province in China, is home to many heritage sites left behind. Luoyang's Longmen Grottoes and Anyang's Yin Dynasty ruins were listed into the world cultural heritage list. A large number of historical records

and years of archaeological excavations signified that at least 8,000 years ago, ancestors in this area had created a precedent of human civilization. For the majority of tourists who want to appreciate the rich and profound oriental cultural connotation as well as its precious and unique style, Henan province plays the role of a vast natural history museum for them to see and touch. Due to its large amount of natural resources, convenient traffic, large population, the development of Henan Tourism has broad prospect and huge market potential. (<https://www.topchinatravel.com/henan/henan-tourism.htm>)

According to the data from Ministry of Cultural and Tourism in China, Local & Foreign Currency data was reported at 7,052.360 RMB bn in Nov 2021. This records an increase from the previous number of 7,029.420 RMB bn for Oct 2021.



(Source: www.ceicdata.com)

However, being important as it may be, the tourism industry is most vulnerable to calamity, natural calamities or pandemic, such as floods, tsunami, volcanic eruption, spread illnesses or pandemic which would exert an influence on the tourism sector, and Henan Province is not an exception. The global tourism industry has been devastated by the pandemic due to the severe travel restrictions imposed by most countries and areas, such as travel controls, school closures, limitations on internal movement to contain the speed in the places. Tourists willing to Henan are expected to travel mostly domestically due to the limited transportation methods. Understandably, tourists feel safer when travelling shorter distances from home. Self-guided and self-driven trips will dominate over the group and organized tour packages (Ivanova et al., 2021), which is a significant change for the tourists, who are known to prefer guided group tours and special care during their trips (Wen et al., (2020). However, a series of ways of the policy restrictions, they probably will stay where they are, thus cutting down domestic tourism in Henan Province.

The crisis makes an impact on people's travel intention to visit any destination, especially the health measures and communication approaches like homestay campaigns, lockdowns, travel bans, quarantine, and social distancing have ceased tourism-related industries operations. The subjective probability of whether a customer will or will not take certain

actions that are related to a tourist service (NGUYEN et al., 2021), and this reflects an individual's intent to travel or commitment to travel (Jang et al., 2009). The tourism industry shows its resilience in bouncing back from major economic, political, and health crises (Sigala, 2020). Viruses and pandemics can be spread around the world by travellers and can disrupt the growth and development of regional and global tourism (Haque & Haque, 2018; ; Kuo et al., 2008; McKercher & Chon, 2004; Novelli et al., 2018). Particularly, the COVID-19 pandemic is considered to be a highly impactful incident and a major health crisis in world history, and tourism is one of the industries most affected by it (Fong et al., 2020). Tourists' travel intention to any places is severely affected under such circumstances.

The growing discussion on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and tourism industry calls for a deeper research of traveler risk and intention to travel (Khan et al., 2020); Khan et al., 2021). The transformation of the tourism industry depends on the behavior of the traveler in response to potential crisis (Sigala, 2020). There is an extensive stream of knowledge about tourism, destination marketing, destination image, and terrorism risk, such as those of Jonas et al. (2011) and Want et al. (2019). Hence, these studies are conducted in a normal situation, overlooking the severity of a pandemic like COVID-19 on travelers' psychological condition and behavior intention under the policy restriction under government.

For effective crisis management such as COVID-19, it is essential to get an insight in the perceptions and perception changes of the travel intention of tourists, "an outcome of a mental process that leads to action and transforms motivation into behaviour". The intensive research of the factors that drive and limit travel intention against the background of the pandemic and post-pandemic time. The literature on the perceived risk of infectious diseases, such as SARS, Ebola and H1N1, comes from studies such as Kim et al. (2015), Brug et al (2004) and Gee and Skovdal (2017). This study is based on a solid theoretical background and provides a validated and reliable measure of COVID-19 risk perception and its connection to media channel, policy restriction and travel intentions, which make the study unique and creative.

2.0 CURRENT ISSUES

Tourism demand has traditionally reacted to disasters through severe declines and changes, and the travel intention, together with the process of recovery after any disaster or situation requires research on the shifting consumers' attitudes and perceptions, to understand the changes in the characteristics of the demand.

Soon after the COVID-19 outbreak, numerous research and theses explored this novel phenomenon and its impact on the lives of citizens and specifically on the travel and tourism industry (Ivanova et al., 2021). The majority of studies focus on the current effects and the negative consequences over diverse economic sectors (Goodell, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020), including tourism. Many studies examine deeply the supply-side perspective, estimating the damage caused, forecasting the consequent changes and remodeling of the tourist offers (Gössling & Hall, 2020). However, the demand side studies remain quite scarce (Zenker &

Kock, 2020), partly owing to the uncertainty in the economic aspect and the persisting risk of infection. Currently, a few papers investigated the emerging signs of consumers' recovery and a readiness to renew their travel.

Although studies provide an assessment of the impact of intra-pandemic destination image and subsequent post-pandemic travel intention, significant research gaps nevertheless remain. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no prior study has investigated the differences between the cognitive and psychological states of tourists with past experience and without past experience of a given destination and post pandemic travel intention. More recently, the need to present touristic offerings that include travel intentions and cultural heritage has become widely recognized, that this aspect of the traveling experiences has become a vital differentiator of destinations. Drwal to the information, the consumer's behavioral understanding during the pandemic situation is worth further investigation (Hing, W. Y., & Vui, C. N. 2021). This has also led to an increase in the management of such experiences through special exhibitions, events and festivals, as well as through ensuring more routine and controlled access to heritage sites (Kaminski, et al., 2013). The current research deals with the travel intention that contributes to the existing literature on destination marketing in particular, together with destination image, by testing a theoretical model that examines the complex relationships among the destination market strategies, tourism destination images, emotion of tourists and policy restrictions to explore the travelers' intention to visit in Henan Province within its heritage tourism framework.

Due to the COVID-19, the sustained interest in the concept of image among numerous disciplines fell dramatically which influence marketing, consumer behaviour, business, communications, and political science. And tourists are highly sensitive to destination risk messages which, in turn, would have a direct impact on their tourism experience and travel decisions. This topic matters in its social significance and a wide investigation helps policy makers in different crisis context.

First, travel intentions in crisis situations continues to be a contested topic among scholars. According to the academic study, it is widely believed that tourists avoid unsafe destinations, and the dangerous social environment lessen confidence and intentions to visit. Academics have widely believed that tourists avoid unsafe destinations, and crisis events and risk messages lessen confidence and intentions to visit (Pizam & Smith, 2000; Sano & Sano, 2019). Particularly in a major crisis context, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, triggered 'travel fears' lead to the public's protective travel behaviours (e.g. travel avoidance, cautious travel) (Zheng et al., 2021).

Second, the effect of emotional factors for travelers on travel intentions lacks empirical investigation. In a post-COVID landscape, building interest and evoking positive emotions toward tourism products are vital for destination recovery (Yung, et al., 2021). For example, when people become more anxious about the virus, they tend to maintain a high level of personal hygiene, more social distancing and are more likely to get vaccinated when

available, and they are reluctant to get involved into social activities, let alone being on their way to any destination. It involves psychological cognition and affective involvement and tourism researchers generally pay little attention to research on people's feelings and emotions, including people's fear for the pandemic, travel anxiety, risk attitudes and rebuilding of their travel intentions in a certain period of time.

Third, there is still space of the research on the boundary conditions taking policy restriction into consideration during a long-term risk situation. The policy enforcing living and traveling restrictions during COVID-19 pandemic may cause social isolation and a series of problems that influence economy. For example, an increase in work from home (Leger, 2020), e-learning, and a reduction in public activities and events significantly reduced the travel demand (De, 2020). However, it is uncertain how people perceive their daily activity engagement and travel related to it in this new normal and to what extent various socio-economic segments of the population have adopted these unprecedented situations.

Therefore, the mingled effects and relationships among destination marketing, destination image, emotion and policy restriction mentioned above about a pandemic on post-pandemic travel intentions needs further research and with differing theoretical perspectives.

3.0 CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper adopts both supply-side and demand-side perspectives and focuses on the travel intention. The future study deals with the complex relationship among destination marketing, destination image and travel intention. It also takes the role of emotion and policy restriction into consideration. The future research provides both academic and managerial implications in the tourism industry. The findings of the study are relevant from an academic point of view since it focuses on the intention of travelers once travel restrictions have been lifted following a period of the COVID-19 crisis, and the factors influencing this intention. This field still has much space to dig in.

From a managerial point of view, the findings related to the emotion of the travelers including people's travel motivation, personal values and travel constrains, ect. And the rebuilding of trust is a concerted and cooperative effort involving government and tourism industry. It helps the policy makers in the creation of marketing campaigns due to the tourist experiences against the current social background needs to be recovered properly. It is of great importance to maintain the harmony in the society and boost the economy in tourism industry. Therefore, the proposed conceptual model by incorporating destination marketing, destination image, emotion and travel intention are all worth of exploration. Furthermore, scope and significance of the study were included in the future study.

References

- Brug, J., Aro, A. R., Oenema, A., De Zwart, O., Richardus, J. H., & Bishop, G. D. (2004). SARS risk perception, knowledge, precautions, and information sources, the Netherlands. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 10(8), 1486.
- De Vos, J. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 and subsequent social distancing on travel behavior. *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 5, 100121
- Fong, L. H. N., Law, R., & Ye, B. H. (2020). Outlook of tourism recovery amid an epidemic: Importance of outbreak control by the government. *Annals of tourism research*.
- Gee, S., & Skovdal, M. (2017). The role of risk perception in willingness to respond to the 2014–2016 West African Ebola outbreak: a qualitative study of international health care workers. *Global health research and policy*, 2(1), 1-10
- Goodell, J. W. (2020). COVID-19 and finance: Agendas for future research. *Finance Research Letters*, 35, 101512
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. M. (2020). Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of sustainable tourism*, 29(1), 1-20
- Haque, T. H., & Haque, M. O. (2018). The swine flu and its impacts on tourism in Brunei. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 92-101
- Hing, W. Y., & Vui, C. N. (2021). Malaysian consumers' purchase intention towards online seafood shopping amid pandemic: The moderating role of the Covid-19 risk perception.
- Ivanova, M., Ivanov, I. K., & Ivanov, S. (2021). Travel behaviour after the pandemic: the case of Bulgaria. *Anatolia*, 32(1), 1-11
- Jackson, J. K. (n.d.). Global Economic Effects of COVID-19
- Jang, S., Bai, B., Hu, C., & Wu, C.M.E.(2009). Affect, travel motivation, and travel intention: A senior market. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 33(1), 51-73
- Jonas, A., Mansfeld, Y., Paz, S., & Potasman, I. (2011). Determinants of health risk perception among low-risk-taking tourists traveling to developing countries. *Journal of Travel Research*, 50(1), 87-99
- Kaminski, J., Benson, A. M., & Arnold, D. (Eds.). (2013). *Contemporary issues in cultural heritage tourism*. Routledge.

Khan, A., Bibi, S., Lorenzo, A., Lyu, J., & Babar, Z. U. (2020). Tourism and development in developing economies: A policy implication perspective. *Sustainability*, 12(4), 1618.

Khan, A., Bibi, S., Lyu, J., Latif, A., & Lorenzo, A. (2021). COVID-19 and sectoral employment trends: Assessing resilience in the US leisure and hospitality industry. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(7), 952-969

Kim, Y., Zhong, W., Jehn, M., & Walsh, L. (2015). Public risk perceptions and preventive behaviors during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, 9(2), 145-154

Kuo, H. I., Chen, C. C., Tseng, W. C., Ju, L. F., & Huang, B. W. (2008). Assessing impacts of SARS and Avian Flu on international tourism demand to Asia. *Tourism Management*, 29(5), 917-928

Leger, 2020. Covid-19 Tracking Survey Results.

<https://leger360.com/surveys/concerns-about-covid-19-april-21-2020/>.

McKercher, B., & Chon, K. (2004). The over-reaction to SARS and the collapse of Asian tourism. *Annals of tourism research*, 31(3), 716

Nicola, M., Alsafi, Z., Sohrabi, C., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., ... & Agha, R. (2020). The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review. *International journal of surgery*, 78, 185-193

Novelli, M., Burgess, L. G., Jones, A., & Ritchie, B. W. (2018). 'No Ebola... still doomed'—The Ebola-induced tourism crisis. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 70, 76-87

Pizam, A., & Smith, G. (2000). Tourism and terrorism: A quantitative analysis of major terrorist acts and their impact on tourism destinations. *Tourism Economics*, 6(2), 123-138

Sano, K., & Sano, H. (2019). The effect of different crisis communication channels. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 79, 102804

Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research. *Journal of business research*, 117, 312-321

Sutherland, K. M. S. M. D. China's Economy in 2020: Navigating Headwinds

Nguyen, N. M., Pham, M. Q., & Pham, M. (2021). Public's Travel Intention Following COVID-19 Pandemic Constrained: A Case Study in Vietnam. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(8), 181-189



Vui, C. N. (2021) Modelling Eco Tourists Experience, Satisfaction And Word of Mouth Recommendation: A Mediation Model of Satisfaction. *International Journal of Business, Marketing and Communication* 1(2) 1-17

Wang, J., Liu-Lastres, B., Ritchie, B. W., & Mills, D. J. (2019). Travellers' self-protections against health risks: An application of the full Protection Motivation Theory. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 78, 102743

Wen, J., Kozak, M., Yang, S., & Liu, F. (2020). COVID-19: potential effects on Chinese citizens' lifestyle and travel. *Tourism Review*

Yung, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Potter, L. E. (2021). Virtual reality and tourism marketing: conceptualizing a framework on presence, emotion, and intention. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(11), 1505-1525

Zenker, S., & Kock, F. (2020). The coronavirus pandemic—A critical discussion of a tourism research agenda. *Tourism management*, 81, 104164

Zheng, D., Luo, Q., & Ritchie, B. W. (2021). Afraid to travel after COVID-19? Self-protection, coping and resilience against pandemic 'travel fear'. *Tourism Management*, 83, 104261