

POST-COVID-19 PERIOD OF PREJUDICES – THE INVISIBLE BURDEN OF TOURISM

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Abstract. Aim. After two and a half years of the strong impact of the pandemic on society and the economy, it seems that there are still negative consequences. The goal of the research was to determine which type of fear has the greatest impact on tourists' awareness of the intention to travel to countries that have had the strongest negative impact from the pandemic, and which, thanks to prejudice, have been marked as "risky". **Materials and methods.** The authors conducted a survey on a total sample of 560 respondents in Serbia and analyzed the obtained data with SPSS 26.00 Software. **Results.** The obtained results indicate that all types of fear influence the creation of prejudices about risky destinations, and that prejudices influence the intention to travel to risky destinations. **Conclusions.** The study shows that men are more afraid of financial risk and natural risk, while women are more afraid of the risk of COVID-19 and travel to risky destinations.

Keywords: tourism, COVID-19, prejudices, Republic of Serbia

For citation: Gajić T., Petrović M.D., Radovanović M.M. Post-covid-19 period of prejudices – the invisible burden of tourism. *Human. Sport. Medicine*. 2023;23(S2):185–190. DOI: 10.14529/hsm23s227

Научная статья
УДК 338.48(497.11)
DOI: 10.14529/hsm23s227

НЕВИДИМОЕ БРЕМЯ ПРЕДУБЕЖДЕНИЙ В СФЕРЕ ТУРИЗМА ПОСЛЕ ПАНДЕМИИ COVID-19

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Аннотация. Цель. После двух с половиной лет сильного воздействия пандемии на общество и экономику ее негативные последствия все еще дают о себе знать. Цель исследования – определить, какие страхи оказывают самое сильное влияние на намерение туристов поехать в страны, наиболее пострадавшие от пандемии и отнесенные к категории «рискованных». **Материалы и методы.** Авторы провели опрос 560 респондентов в Сербии и проанализировали полученные данные с помощью программного обеспечения SPSS 26.00. **Результаты.** На основании полученных результатов установили, что все страхи влияют на формирование предубеждений относительно рискованных туристических направлений и сказываются на намерении путешествовать. **Выводы.** По результатам исследования пришли к выводу, что мужчины больше боятся финансовых рисков и рисков, связанных с природными факторами, в то время как женщины больше боятся заразиться COVID-19 и путешествовать по направлениям, классифицированным как «рискованные».

Ключевые слова: туризм, COVID-19, предубеждения, Республика Сербская

Для цитирования: Gajić T., Petrović M.D., Radovanović M.M. Post-covid-19 period of prejudices – the invisible burden of tourism // Человек. Спорт. Медицина. 2023. Т. 23, № S2. С. 185–190. DOI: 10.14529/hsm23s227

Introduction and Background. Unforeseen situations such as the emergence of a pandemic and similar crisis situations can damage the entire social and economic system. Proof of this is the impact of the invisible enemy of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has claimed many human lives in the last two and a half years, disrupted social life, the economy and the healthcare system of every country in the world [5, 15]. The COVID-19 pandemic was called an invisible enemy, because there was a lot of incomplete information about its origin, development, and mode of transmission, but with its unpredictability, it hit planet Earth hard [1, 12, 17]. The fight against such an enemy proved to be the worst option compared to all other crises that have existed for many years [6]. The question arises whether the pandemic has passed completely or will suddenly appear again as a burden on society, health and the economy in the world (www.economist.com). The imposition of a state of emergency quickly transformed into the frenzy witnessed in many other countries, and such a state became part of a new “normal” social response that was transformed again [4, 7, 11]. The security measures

were related to especially the introduction of a mandatory 24-hour curfew, as well as the implementation of work-from-home measures by many companies and home schooling, the closing of catering establishments or limited working hours, keeping a mandatory distance, as well as the closing of state borders [10, 14]. Monthly analysis of media influence is shown in Fig. 1.

Every media claim caused anxiety among the citizens [2, 9]. According to the available data, the level of concern seems to have increased significantly after receiving the news about COVID-19 [13]. Data on the movement of tourist traffic from 2002 to 2020 is given in Fig. 2.

Tourism was on a constant rise until the end of 2019. The year until the onset of the pandemic. The largest number of tourists moved in the interior of the country, creating the profile of a new ecological tourist [3, 17]. Based on the research objective and the available literature, initial hypotheses were set:

H1a: COVID-19 risk has the greatest impact on the creation of prejudices.

H1b: Prejudices do not influence the decision to travel to risky destinations.

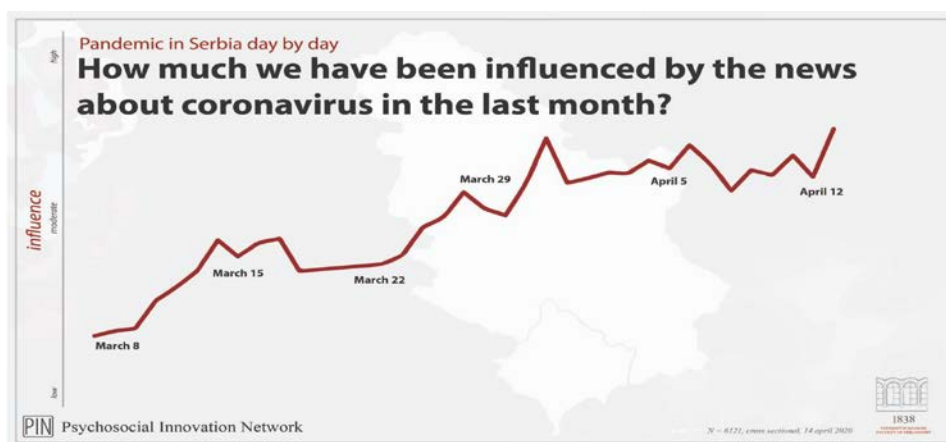


Fig. 1. The influence of media. Source: PIN, 2022

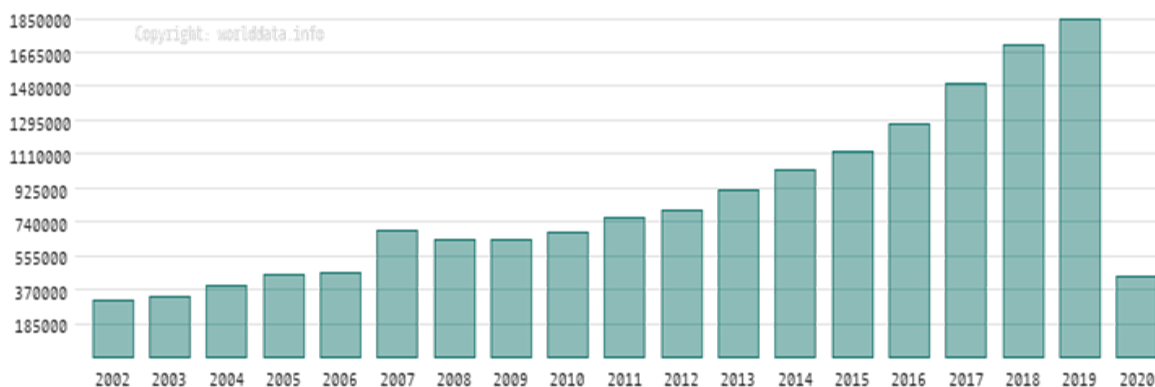


Fig. 2. Movement of tourist traffic in Serbia from 2002–2020. Source: www.economist.com

H2: There is no statistically significant difference in the perception of risk and the intention to travel to risky destinations in relation to the gender structure of the respondents.

Methods. A survey was conducted on a sample of 560 respondents in the Republic of Serbia, in the period from April to August 2022. Residents from three cities participated in the survey: Novi Sad (129 questionnaires), Belgrade (293) and Niš (138). SPSS 26.00 software was used for entering, analyzing and processing the collected data, while a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate items. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to obtain data on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, and in order to extract items, the authors approached the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) model. Also, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the influence of predictors on the criterion variable travel to risky destinations. Immediately afterwards, the canonical discriminative analysis established differences in the perception of the type of risk and travel to risky destinations in relation to the gender structure of the respondents.

Results. A total of 46.8% of men and 53.2% of women participated in the research. Then, of the total number of respondents, 20% are between 18 and 30 years old, 46.9% belong to the age category of 31 to 65 years, and 33.1% are over 65 years old. All items were extracted by

exploratory factor analysis, and four factors were obtained which were named: F1 – Type of fear, F2 – Safety measures, F3 – Cause of prejudice and F4 – Travel to risky destinations (Table 1). Cronbach alpha was determined for each of the items grouped into 4 factors. The first factor F1 – Type of fear contained three questions: COVID-19 risk $\alpha = 0.832$; Financial risk $\alpha = 0.814$; Natural risk $\alpha = 0.824$. The second factor F2 – Safety measures contained questions: Vaccines are sufficient $\alpha = 0.885$; Masks are sufficient $\alpha = 0.802$; Physical distance is sufficient $\alpha = 0.793$; Hygiene is sufficient $\alpha = 0.797$. Third factor F3 – Cause of prejudice: Media $\alpha = 0.822$; Experience $\alpha = 0.817$. Fourth factor F4 – Travel to risky destinations: It is necessary to return to normal $\alpha = 0.794$; I'm still afraid to travel $\alpha = 0.815$. It is observed that for each question the value of Cronbach alpha is in values that indicate high reliability of the questionnaire.

Multiple regression analysis determined the influence of predictors on the criterion variable Travel to risky destinations (Table 2). The percentage of explained variance is 64.2%, which seems very suitable for further analysis. The regression analysis model also shows that the statistical significance is within the allowed limits ($p = 0.00$), with values of $F = 299,366$, and $df = 1$.

It can be seen from the table that each of the factors has statistical significance in predicting the criterion variable. In the first case, the influ-

Table 1

Results of factor analysis – extraction of items into factors

Total Variance Explained					
Component	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a	
	Total	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
F1	5.285	5.285	44.042	44.042	4.761
F2	1.478	1.478	12.318	56.361	3.617
F3	.954	.954	7.953	64.314	2.757
F4	.865	.865	7.212	71.526	1.943

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

^a When components are correlated, sums of squared loadings cannot be added to obtain a total variance.

Source: author's research.

Table 2

Results of predictor influence on criterion variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Standard error	Beta	t	Sig.
F1 – F3	.176	.053	.130	3.328	.001
F2 – F3	.079	.054	.073	1.464	.044
F3 – F4	.959	.055	.593	17.302	.000

Source: author's research.

ence of F1 on F3 (the influence of the type of fear on prejudice) has the following values: sig = 0.01, t = 3.328, then the influence of F2 on F3 (the influence of security measures on prejudice) has the following values: sig = 0.44, t = 1.464. The influence of prejudice F3 on trips to risky destinations F4 has the following values: sig = 0.00, t = 17.302. The existence of a partial contribution of each of the predictors, the strength of which is given by coefficient B, is certainly observed, while the coefficient β indicates a positive correlation of each predictor with the criterion variable. This analysis refutes the hypothesis H1a that only the COVID-19 risk has an impact on creating prejudices about risky destinations. Also, hypothesis H1b is rejected because prejudices influence the intention to travel to risky destinations.

Canonical discriminative analysis revealed differences in the perception of attitudes about going to risky countries, as well as the strength of the type of fear in relation to gender (Table 3). The values of statistical significance are within acceptable limits: Wilks' Lambda value (df = 4, sig = 0.02, $X^2 = 17.138$).

Table 3
Results of canonical discriminative analysis

Factor	Values	
COVID RISK	-.478	Male .189
FINANCIAL RISK	.717	
NATURAL RISK	.586	
Travel to risky destinations	-.465	Female -.167

* TIRD – travel in to risky destinations.

^a 56.8% of original grouped cases correctly classified. Source: author's research.

Observing the sign in front of the demographic factor, it is clear that men are more afraid of natural risk and financial risk, while women are more afraid of COVID-19 risk and travel to risky destinations. With this analysis, a total of 56.8% of respondents were correctly classified. Hypothesis H2 was confirmed, that there are differences in the perception of the type of risk and the intention to travel in relation to gender.

Conclusions. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world economy to collapse in the last two and a half years [6]. The negative consequences were noticeable in all sectors of the economy, especially in the health sector [4, 12]. There are no accurate predictions that can be

relied on for the economy in the future. It is debatable whether the pandemic has passed or will suddenly reappear as an invisible enemy of civilization [1, 10]. Some of the destinations where the pandemic left unprecedented losses were marked as risky, mostly thanks to the media that reported on the number of deaths and the spread of the pandemic day after day [4, 14]. Nowadays, there is still fear in the minds of tourists during their travels to those destinations, if at all even during the decision to go on a trip [8]. The goal of the research was to determine whether tourists are still afraid to travel to destinations that have suffered from the image of risky destinations. Also, it was necessary to establish whether the risk of COVID-19 is the strongest in creating prejudices, and whether prejudices have an impact on the intention to travel to risky destinations. The authors conducted research in the three largest cities in the Republic of Serbia, in the cities of: Novi Sad, Belgrade, Nis. The research was conducted in the period from April to August 2022, on a total sample of 560 respondents. Descriptive statistical analysis determined the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Then, using exploratory factor analysis, items were extracted into four factors. Multiple regression analysis revealed that every fear has an impact on the creation of prejudices, and that prejudices influence the decision to travel to risky destinations. Also, the research found that men are most afraid of financial risk and natural risk, while women are most afraid of COVID-19 risk and travel to risky destinations.

The importance of the research is reflected primarily in the addition of the existing literature on the issue of the negative impact of the pandemic and the development of tourism. Although there is a large amount of research on the topic of the consequences of the pandemic, there is little research that focuses on the future of risky destinations after the pandemic. Also, the importance is reflected in the applicative aspect, because almost all tourist subjects can use the research data as information for abducting business if there is some other unexpected crisis situation. The research also had limiting circumstances, mostly during the survey. Respondents are less willing to participate primarily because of the fear of expressing their opinion about the pandemic. A large number of answers are socially desirable. Many of the respondents were still afraid of not keeping their distance from the researchers.

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Contribution of the authors: the authors contributed equally to this article.

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

Вклад авторов: все авторы сделали эквивалентный вклад в подготовку публикации.

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

The article was submitted 28.11.2022

Статья поступила в редакцию 28.11.2022