

## Tourism Behaviour and the Transformative Power of the Pandemic – A Post-Pandemic Perspective

Constantina-Alina Miloş (Ilie)  
West University of Timișoara, Romania  
[ilieconstantinaalina@gmail.com](mailto:ilieconstantinaalina@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*In the context of lifting the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, life seems to continue towards normality. More precisely, towards the new normality. Furthermore, in the tourism industry, we see the change not only in consumer behaviour but also in their expectations. There is a shift in emphasis from sufficient consumption to social responsibility and sustainability. In this challenging context, the present work aims to add value to the research of the post-pandemic perspective on the behaviour of the consumer of tourism services in Constanta and analyse the transformative power the pandemic has had on it.*

*The main research directions aim to deepen the post-pandemic situation regarding the emphasis on hygiene and disinfection of accommodation and dining spaces, the attention paid to respecting the rules of social distancing when visiting tourist attractions, consumer preferences towards tourist destinations where they have friends or relatives, the tendency for making reservations and only paying online for stays, their appetite for discounted package tours, and their preference for destinations they have become familiar with through virtual tours.*

**Key words:** Consumer behaviour, transformation, catalyst, tourism, sustainability, post-pandemic

**J.E.L. classification:** M30, M31

### 1. Introduction

The crisis that arose from the Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted travel and tourism. It also impacted other sectors in the field of tourism-related services, such as the artistic sector or events (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020, 554).

As pointed out by Becker (2020), as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, not many industries suffered such a notable and accelerated decline as that tourism (Becker, 2020, online). Even the technological revolution, whose direct effect was, prior to the pandemic, the ease and accessibility of travel and tourism, has shown its powerlessness in counteracting the effects of the virus (Becker, 2020).

If according to UNWTO (2022), in 2019, international tourist arrivals worldwide reached 1.5 billion per year, on the back of a decade of uninterrupted growth, tourism has become one of the world's major socio-economic sectors, an essential pillar of sustainable development, recognised for its unique ability to generate opportunities for all and help provide solutions to some of the biggest problems, the pandemic has brought down all tourism indicators (UNWTO, 2022a).

Despite the devastating effects, at first sight, a series of studies have discussed the role of the crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic as a “potential catalyst for transformation” (Ateljevic, 2020, Nepal, 2020, Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020a).

According to the latest “UNWTO World Tourism Barometer”, there is a growth in international tourism by 182% year-on-year in January-March 2022, and worldwide destinations have received approximately 117 million international arrivals, compared to 41 million in the first quarter of 2021 (World Tourism Organization, 2022, p. 1).

Globally, destinations recorded approximately three times more international arrivals in the first quarter of 2022 than in the same period of 2021, with Europe leading the tourism recovery (World Tourism Organization, 2022, p. 1; UNWTO, 2022b, p. 1), so, post-pandemic, tourism continues to recover at a strong pace. Thus, according to UNCTAD Secretary-General Grynspan R., “tourism can undoubtedly be a vital part of the post-pandemic recovery” (UNWTO, 2022, p. 31).

The pandemic has brought the renewal of social bonds and capacities to the fore as governments have acted to prevent economic and social devastation (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020b, 617). This normality disruption has inspired many researchers to imagine radical transformations in tourism to address injustices and the unsustainability of this economic branch. Others, however, remain sceptical about the likelihood of the transformation (Higgins-Desbiolles et al. 2022, 208).

In this context, the present paper aims to discuss how the consumer of tourist services was affected by the transformative power of the pandemic. It also describes how the tourism consumers in Constanta, Romania, have made decisions regardless of their chosen destination.

## 2. Theoretical background

Regarding the influencing factors on the behaviour of the consumer of tourist services, the authors' Cohen et al. (2014) review a number of nine key concepts, along with three topical external influences. The key concepts are related to "decision-making, values, motivations, self-concept and personality, expectations, attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction and trust and loyalty". At the same time, external influences highlighted by the cited authors include "technology, Generation Y and ethical consumption" (Cohen et al. 2014, 875).

Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, at the consumer level, the situations created were more of an impediment than a favourable situation in the context of an increase in their irresponsible behaviour, which attracted a deficient perception of the actual situation, with the induction of fear as a generalised feeling (Billore and Anisimova 2021, 778; Karaboğa Cici et al. 2021, 729).

As Leach J. pointed out, situations causing disruptions in social life or affecting the health of individuals produce strong behavioural changes (Leach 1994, 15).

One such example is the Covid-19 pandemic, which generated, on the one hand, an increase in the volume of impulse purchases and “panic buying” of consumer products to alleviate negative feelings, reaching to cause some consumers to behave compulsively. It has also generated an extreme shift towards shopping addiction and the aggravation of existing financial problems (Pantano and Willems 2022, 777). It generated an indefinite renunciation of the consumption of some services, such as tourist services, through the prism of the fear of exposure to crowded (Yu and Egger 2021, 231) places fear of contracting the virus (OECD 2020, 6).

Considering the consumer's purchasing behaviour as the sum of the decision-making processes determined by a series of internal and external factors, economic instability (attracted by the health crisis) constitutes one of the factors that exert a predominant influence on consumption behaviours (Karaboğa Cici et al. 2021, 728).

### a) Where is post-pandemic tourism headed?

There is an approach to post-pandemic tourism through the lens of transformative thinking by authors such as Higgins-Desbiolles and Ateljevic. They anticipate a break from the past and business as usual (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Ateljevic, 2020).

Authors such as Everingham and Chassagne (2020) aimed to consider the paradigms of sustainable tourism in the way they are found in movements such as the example of “*Buen Vivir*” with abandoning approaches based on tourism growth (Chassagne and Everingham 2020; Everingham and Chassagne 2020a).

Cave and Dredge supported the regenerative tourism approach based on sound thinking from the regenerative economy (Cave and Dredge 2020, 503). In explaining the concept, Pollock highlighted that “regenerative tourism is the antidote to the fragmentation that affects the current tourism model” (Pollock A. 2019).

Higgins-Desbiolles proposed the concept of “socialising tourism”, which means “... making tourism responsive and accountable to the society in which it takes place”, supporting its necessity to ensure social and ecological justice (Higgins-Desbiolles 2020, 617).

The pandemic offered the opportunity to reimagine tourism beyond those exploitation models that do not consider people, places and the natural environment, shifting the focus to tourism that exerts a positive impact (Everingham and Chassagne 2020b). In shifting priorities from economic growth to alternatives characterised by greater social and environmental well-being and meaningful human connections, several “non-Western alternatives to neo-colonial and neoliberal capitalism” can prove to be of real use (Everingham and Chassagne, 2020b). The focus on *Buen Vivir* minimises unsustainable practices in development and tourism, providing an upward trend to other areas, such as social and environmental well-being and meaningful human connection. This approach is reorienting the tourism industry towards slow, localised tourism. Following its principles that call for the tourist activity should be of a small scale, directed to the local communities with benefits for both the host communities and the tourists, to increase the well-being of the entire community (Everingham and Chassagne, 2020b).

On the other hand, Benjamin *et al.* supported the practical emphasis on equity that the transformation of tourism must bring into the social framework. It calls for a post-pandemic redesign of the tourism landscape and industry to be more sustainable and equitable, arguing that this “reset” should refer to planning a tourism future grounded in ethics of “care, social and environmental justice and racial reconciliation” (Benjamin *et al.* 2020, 476). From this category, we mention the ideas supported by Hall *et al.* (2020), who stated that change could take place in specific locations by reconsidering the nature of the tourism industry, focusing on local, sustainable forms of tourism, “the giant that is international tourism will continue” (Hall *et al.* 2020, 591).

Some authors dispute the possibility of implementing such an approach, considered too optimistic, even utopian, on the tourism industry, arguing that such transformations are “improbable or even undesirable” (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.* 2022, p. 212). One such proponent is Butcher, a promoter of industry recovery and a quick return to business “as usual” (Butcher, 2020).

Following a review of thirty-five papers that studied the tourism industry following the pandemic, Sharma *et al.* propose a resilience-based framework for revitalising the post-Covid-19 global tourism industry. The proposed framework highlights four important factors for building resilience in the industry: government response, technological innovation, local ownership and consumer and employee confidence, arguing that by harnessing such inclusive resilience the tourism industry can transform into a new global economic order, characterised by sustainable tourism, the well-being of society, climate action and the involvement of local communities (Sharma *et al.* 2021, 1-4).

The pandemic crisis has caused a change in tourism trends that affects the way hotels are managed (Robina-Ramírez *et al.*, 2022). According to the United Nations (2020), hotels must guarantee safe customer experiences by incorporating sustainability measures. Collaboration between health and tourism authorities and the tourism industry is essential. According to the hotels' estimates, implementing these measures would contribute to starting the recovery process of the hotel industry (Robina-Ramírez *et al.*, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the fragility of tourism capitalism, prompting insightful analysis among critical scholars. While grappling with the political and philosophical implications, the comments were mostly prescriptive and general: contemplating the collapse of tourism as we know it and bringing to the fore the opportunities to reconstitute more sustainable, resilient and inclusive forms of tourism (Gibson 2021, 84).

Sudden disruptions feature heavily in crisis theories. Key moments—disasters, disruption blockages—are positioned as singular events in which everything changes, precursors to necessary existential contemplations and, it is hoped, societal overhauls, a fact especially true for tourism (Rosselló *et al.* 2020).

Profound disruptions to the status quo are “awakenings” (Ateljevic 2020, 467) – moments of “ecological and social reset” (Everingham and Chassagne 2020, 555) that invite the contemplation of alternatives that previously seemed impossible. However, as social science research on disasters and climate change adaptation has shown, disruptions play out unevenly, socially, spatially and temporally.

### **b) Transformative post-pandemic influences over tourist consumption behaviour**

As stated by Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, in the sphere of tourist consumption, “the past, the present and the future are interconnected” (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.* 2022, 208).

In this line of research, we have identified **opinions** as follows:

According to authors Corbisiero and Monaco “the pandemic has inevitably affected everyone's **tourism choices**, regardless of how much their specific area of residence has been affected "... and “will significantly influence travellers' experiences” (Corbisiero and Monaco 2021, 401).

According to Brouder (2020), “the most recent period of unfettered growth in international tourism has come to an abrupt end as the impact of Covid-19 has brought the sector to a standstill” (Brouder 2020, 484).

As stated by Corbisiero and Monaco, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected consumers through two main elements that distinguish tourism: physical travel and social interactions (Corbisiero and Monaco 2021, 401).

According to Bodosca *et al.* (2008), “after each crisis, there is an increase in fear, tension and confusion because the tourist's behaviour is sensitive to crises” (Bodosca *et al.*, 2014, p. 81). According to the same source, the crisis “provides opportunities for clients to learn new coping skills while identifying, mobilising, and improving those they already possess (Bodosca *et al.* 2014, 79). “

Some authors support that the Coronavirus pandemic is a possible “game changer” in globalisation and world tourism. It is clear that most travel industry leaders focus on recovery and getting back to “business as usual” as soon as possible. In industry responses and press releases, there is a clear focus on getting back to normal quickly and maintaining consumer interest (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.* 2022, 208).

As Becker (2020) pointed out, Roger Dow of the United States Travel Association argued that “in the long run, we will turn around and go back to business as usual. People have short-term memory, and there will be a pent-up desire to travel” (Becker, 2020).

### **3. Research methodology**

Resuming the objective of the paper, we recall that we proposed that, through the study undertaken, we would bring into discussion how the behaviour of the consumer of tourist services was affected by the transformative power of the pandemic, through the lens of the manner of adoption of tourism consumption decisions by tourism consumers from Romania, with an emphasis on the Constanta consumer.

For its fulfilment, we proceeded to analyse the results obtained from a sample of 384 people aged between 18 and 70 years.

#### **Sampling techniques**

The decision of the sample size to guarantee representativeness was made using the formula of Daniel & Cross. I started from the information of the Constanța County Statistics Directorate, taking into account the number of adults of 263,001 people (in 2019), score  $z = 1.96$ , which corresponds to a 95% confidence level,  $e = 0.05$  margin of error and  $p = .5$  the probability of getting an affirmative answer to the question.

It was aimed to ensure representativeness by respecting the structure of the sample according to the age criterion - established according to the statistics published by the National Institute of Statistics (18-25 years - 8%; 26-35 years - 17%; 36-45 years - 17%; 36 -45 years). years - 20%; 46-65 years - 34%; over 66 years old - 21%). A sample of 384 people was thus obtained.

The application of the questionnaire took place between March and May 2022. 384 respondents out of the 408 who responded to the invitation and met the selection criteria (legal age mentioned in the questionnaire, Romanian citizenship and domicile in Constanța county) were selected according to the provisions of the “first come, first served” method (Moraru 2021, 131).

The main characteristics of the sample, apart from the age based on which it was constructed, are: 62.5% of respondents are female, 38.5% male; in terms of educational status, a percentage of 1.5% completed elementary education, 21.89% secondary education, 39.32% higher education and 37.24% postgraduate education; from the perspective of socio-professional status, 61.2% are

employed, 9.11% students, 5.47% entrepreneurs, 9.11% freelancers, 28.31% pensioners, and 3.39% housewives.

### Research tools

The study is based on a quantitative marketing research method, and the instrument we put into practice was the questionnaire. In addition to replicating the questionnaire applied by the authors Chebli & Ben Said (2020), we added test-retest type questions that identified the situation regarding the consumption behaviours of the respondent subjects before the pandemic and post-pandemic. The electronic format of this questionnaire, constructed using the "Forms" function belonging to the Google company, was distributed using electronic means - WhatsApp, email and social networks (Facebook) to potential respondents. Answers were rated using a 5-point Likert scale; each answer is assigned a score between 1 and 5 (where one corresponds to the "totally disagree" option and 5 to the "totally agree" option). Thus, individualised values were obtained that correspond to each of the statements included in the applied questionnaire.

We advanced a series of **hypotheses** as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in terms of the emphasis on hygiene and disinfection of accommodation spaces, meals, tourist agreement, pre- and post-pandemic.

H<sub>2</sub>: It is assumed that post-pandemic tourists still place significantly increased importance on observing social distancing rules while visiting attractions.

H<sub>3</sub>: It is assumed that there are significant differences in consumer preferences for tourist destinations where they have friends or relatives before and after the pandemic.

H<sub>4</sub>: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in consumer preference for booking online-only stays between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic situations.

H<sub>5</sub>: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in consumer preference for online-only payment for stays between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic situations.

H<sub>6</sub>: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in consumer appetite for discounts and reductions provided by accommodation facilities and transportation companies in the post-pandemic period compared to the pre-pandemic period.

H<sub>7</sub>: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant pre- and post-pandemic difference in the preference of choosing tourist destinations among those that tourists have become familiar with through virtual tours.

## 4. Findings

In identifying the true value of the advanced hypotheses, we started from **H<sub>1</sub>**: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in terms of the emphasis on hygiene and disinfection of accommodation spaces, meals, pre- and post-pandemic tourist agreement. Comparing the average value of the marks given to the answers by the participants results in a decrease in the post-pandemic average value compared to their value during the pandemic in terms of the emphasis on hygiene and disinfection of accommodation spaces, meals, and tourist agreement. In testing hypothesis **H<sub>1</sub>**, we used the non-parametric test -Wilcoxon - "Test of the sum of ranks". Given the Asymptotic value Sig. (2-tailed) equal to 0.00 (less than 0.05) shows that there is a significant difference in the emphasis on hygiene and disinfection of pre- and post-pandemic accommodation spaces (Mdn = 5 before the pandemic and Mdn = 4 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was statistically significant,  $T = 1788.50$ ,  $z = 11.009$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Specifically, a percentage of 70.8% of the respondents agree with the statement that before the pandemic, they attached greater importance to the hygiene and disinfection of accommodation spaces. The post-pandemic situation reveals that 69.3% of respondents pay more attention to hygiene and disinfection of accommodation spaces than before the Covid-19 pandemic, 69% to hygiene and disinfection of public catering spaces and 71.4% to hygiene and disinfection of tourist leisure units.

In testing **H<sub>2</sub>**: It is assumed that post-pandemic tourists still attach significantly increased importance to respecting the rules of social distancing while visiting attractions, as a result of applying the non-parametric statistical test -Wilcoxon - "Test of the sum of ranks" results, considering obtaining a value an Asymptotic Sig. (2-tailed) equal to 0.00, there is a statistically

significant difference between tourists' attitudes towards social distancing before and after lifting pandemic restrictions (Mdn = 4 before and Mdn = 4 after the pandemic,  $T = 9120.50$ ,  $z = 4.182$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

Also, 66.9% of the participants in the survey expressed their total or partial agreement concerning giving, post-pandemic, the increased importance of respecting the rules of social distancing while visiting the attractions.

When testing **H<sub>3</sub>**: It is assumed that there are significant differences in consumer preferences for tourist destinations where they have friends or relatives before and after the pandemic, according to the results of the same Wilcoxon test, the value of 0.029 of the sig. (2-tailed) coefficient shows the existence of a significant difference between the attitude of the respondents before and after the period of the Coronavirus pandemic (Mdn = 2 before the pandemic and Mdn = 2 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was statistically significant,  $T = 4073$ ,  $z = -2.177$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis of a significant difference between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic situation of consumer preferences regarding tourist destinations where they have relatives or friends is confirmed, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Analysing the obtained percentages, we can identify that preferences for destinations where respondents have relatives or friends have increased post-pandemic, with 31.2% expressing their partial or total agreement, compared to 25% in the situation before the pandemic.

In testing **H<sub>4</sub>**: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in consumer preference for booking online-only stays, between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic situation, given the Asymptotic value Sig. (2-tailed) equal to 0.54 (greater than 0.05) shows that there is no significant difference between the post-pandemic and pre-pandemic situation regarding the preferences of the surveyed consumers on online-only booking of stays (Mdn = 4 before the pandemic and Mdn = 4 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was not statistically significant,  $T = 8203.5$ ,  $z = -1.929$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

So, in this situation, **the null hypothesis is retained** - that there is no statistically significant difference regarding the pre- and post-pandemic situation in the preference of tourism service consumers to make reservations for stays only online.

The percentage analysis of the average marks given to the statements regarding pre- and post-pandemic preferences on reservations made only online shows very small differences in the sense that if pre-pandemic, the share of people who expressed total and/or partial agreement with the statement was 57.81%, in the pre-pandemic context this share varied in the sense of a slight increase to 61.20%.

In testing **H<sub>5</sub>**: It is assumed that there is a significant statistical difference in terms of consumers' preference for making payments for stays only online between the pre-pandemic and the post-pandemic situation, as a result of the application of the non-parametric statistical test -Wilcoxon - it results, having because of obtaining a value of Asymptotic Sig. (2-tailed) equal to 0.00 that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic situation of consumers' preference to pay for stays online only (Mdn = 4 before the pandemic and Mdn = 3 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was statistically significant,  $T = 4959$ ,  $z = -5.937$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ).

This difference is also found at the percentage level in the total share of people who opted for total and partial agreement with the statement regarding the preference for online stay payments in the period before the pandemic (57.8%) and those who had a similar option but in the post-pandemic period pandemic (54.65%).

Regarding **H<sub>6</sub>**: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference in consumer appetite for discounts and reductions provided by accommodation facilities and transport companies in the post-pandemic period compared to the pre-pandemic period, we referred to the testing of two sub-hypotheses – one based on the discounts on accommodation facilities and the second on those granted by the transport companies.

According to the same Wilcoxon test, both sub-hypotheses are validated with the statistically significant difference we assumed because of the Asymptotic value Sig in both situations. (2-tailed) is equal to 0.00, which signifies the rejection of the null hypothesis (a. Mdn = 4 before the pandemic

and Mdn = 4 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was statistically significant,  $T = 3981.50$ ,  $z = -5.876$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ; b. Mdn = 4 before the pandemic and Mdn = 4 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was statistically significant,  $T = 3085.50$ ,  $z = -5.192$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ).

In support of what has been highlighted comes the percentage analysis of the weights occupied by the responses in total and partial agreement with the statement regarding the pre- and post-pandemic situation of consumer preferences for discounts on accommodation facilities - respectively 62.3% versus 59.4% for transportation companies in the pre-pandemic period, 56.5% of respondents agreed with their preference for discounts. In contrast, for pre-pandemic, 52.9% supported this. Although these differences do not seem large percentage-wise, they are, according to the statistical tests, some significant in both situations rejecting the null hypothesis.

In testing hypothesis **H<sub>7</sub>**: It is assumed that there is a statistically significant difference before and after the pandemic in terms of the preference for choosing tourist destinations among those that tourists have become familiar with through virtual tours, we proceeded to test with the Rank Sum Test, and considering the results obtained – Asymptotic Sig. (2-tailed) equal to 0.028, lower than the significance value of 0.05, from which it follows that this statistical difference is verified, the null hypothesis is rejected (Mdn = 3 before the pandemic and Mdn = 3 after the pandemic, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test indicated that the difference between the two moments was statistically significant,  $T = 7146.50$ ,  $z = -2.200$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ).

The statistical difference between the two moments is also highlighted by the percentage analysis - where 38% of respondents expressed partial and total agreement with the statement before the pandemic, while only 37.7% fully and/or partially agreed post-pandemic.

Table no. 1. Statistical hypothesis testing  $I_1 - I_7$  - Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

Null hypothesis	Sig.	Decision
<i>Hypothesis 1 Test Summary</i>		
The median of differences between "I generally* give greater importance to the hygiene and disinfection of accommodation spaces" and "I currently pay more attention to the hygiene and disinfection of public food establishments than before the Covid-19 pandemic" equals 0.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
<i>Hypothesis 2 Test Summary</i>		
The median of differences between "I generally* attach greater importance to social distancing in selected tourist destinations" and "Currently I attach greater importance to respecting social distancing rules while visiting attractions" equals 0.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
<i>Hypothesis 3 Test Summary</i>		
The median of differences between "I generally* prefer to choose tourist destinations where I have friends or relatives" and "Currently I prefer to choose tourist destinations where I have friends or relatives" equals 0.	.029	Reject the null hypothesis.
<i>Hypothesis 4 Test Summary</i>		
The median of differences between "I currently prefer to book stays online only" and "In general* I prefer to book stays online" equals 0.	.054	Retain the null hypothesis.
<i>Hypothesis 5 Test Summary</i>		
The median of differences between "I generally prefer to pay for stays online" and "Currently I prefer to pay for stays only online" equals 0.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
<i>Hypothesis 6 Test Summary</i>		
a. The median of differences between "I generally prefer to choose accommodation facilities that offer special discounts" and "I currently prefer to choose accommodations that offer special discounts" equals 0.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
b. The median of differences between "I generally choose shipping companies that offer special discounts" and "I currently choose shipping companies that offer special discounts" equals 0.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
<i>Hypothesis 7 Test Summary</i>		
The median of differences between "I generally prefer to choose destinations/places that I have become familiar with through virtual tours" and "I currently prefer to choose destinations/places that I have become familiar with through virtual tours" equals 0.	.028	Reject the null hypothesis.
*Statements that include the phrase " <i>in general</i> " refer to the pre-pandemic period		

Source: own processing according to the results of the questionnaire

## 5. Discussions

Analysing the results obtained and the hypotheses validated in the present research, we can glimpse a series of transformative post-pandemic influences in tourist consumption behaviour.

As stated by Corbisiero and Monaco, the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected consumers through two main elements that distinguish tourism: physical travel and social interactions (Corbisiero and Monaco 2021, 401).

In support of hypotheses 1 and 2, we bring into discussion a study carried out by Rahman *et al.* (2021), which demonstrated that the Covid-19 pandemic greatly affected travel risk and perception management, these two being significantly associated with risk management, service delivery, transport patterns, distribution channels, avoiding overcrowded destinations and hygiene and safety (Rahman *et al.* 2021). According to Orîndaru *et al.*, one of the main consequences of the health crisis is "health care and awareness" (Orîndaru *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, in support of hypothesis 3, we can mention the study by the authors Volgger *et al.* (2021), which shows that "recovery measures can influence tourists' risk acceptance..." (Volgger *et al.* 2021, 439). In support of the third hypothesis, we also find the study by the authors Assaf *et al.*, which concluded that intimacy in the relationship between hosts visited by friends and relatives and guests was perceived as a travel motivation for them (Assaf *et al.* 2022, 1), supports consumer preferences for tourist destinations where they have friends or relatives before and after the pandemic (Yousuf and Backer 2017, 445).

Regarding the fourth hypothesis, we identified studies that show the role of online bookings during the Covid-19 pandemic, not before or after it. Thus, according to Zhao *et al.*, "reservation systems have an impact on the tourist decision making and behavioural intention" (Zhao *et al.*, 2022) with input on destination marketing. According to Moor (2022), in support of the fifth hypothesis, the pandemic has made society dependent on technology, something shown in a report which reveals that 73% of people prefer a hotel with technology that allows them to- and manage the entire experience through mobile phones, minimising contact with the establishment's staff and the rest of the guests, and 49% also prefer contactless payments (Moor 2022).

Regarding the sixth hypothesis, a study by Yusnita *et al.* (2022) showed that the price discount offered by the hotel could attract public interest for a hotel stay, and its influence is not weakened by the perception of risks during the Covid-19 pandemic (Yusnita *et al.* 2021). On the other hand, Orden-Mejía *et al.* (2022) conducted a study whose results support the dimensional structure explaining a set of post-pandemic tourists' expectations, identifying five factors: "Smart Care, pricing strategy (including discounts), safety, comfort and social distance" (Orden-Mejía *et al.* 2022, 1).

Regarding the seventh hypothesis formulated, according to Chen (2020), "for years, airlines, travel agencies and tourist boards have used virtual reality technology to market destinations to potential customers". During the pandemic, virtual travel experiences have grown in popularity (Chen A, 2020). The dramatic tourism restriction by the pandemic context has made virtual tourism an option for travellers (Tsai 2022, 1).

## 6. Conclusions

As stated by Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, in the sphere of tourist consumption, "the past, the present and the future are interconnected" (Higgins-Desbiolles *et al.*, 2022, p. 208). A dramatic and even traumatic event like the pandemic, with the restriction of some fundamental freedoms, cannot go unnoticed at individual and collective consciousness levels.

Thus, post-pandemically, a behavioural change trend can be observed in tourists, which is modulated by the transformative effect of the pandemic. Besides the various theories that trend researchers in the field of tourism marketing research and beyond, the trends that manifest in this period when consumers adjust their priorities and social values are still influenced by the experiences lived during the pandemic.

Consumers of tourist services are thus trying to return to old travel habits, but with a baggage of expectations richer following the pandemic experiences: digitisation, the implementation of new technologies in the creation of customer experience, and sustainable tourism, are just some of the expectations and at the same time the new trends which manifest itself in the world tourism market.



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