A Study of People's Hotel Accommodation and Location Preferences in the Post-COVID-19 Phase

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Abstract

Among the major crises caused by the novel COVID-19, the hospitality industry was one of the most severely affected. The absence of tourism as a result of the lockdown and the post-Covid crisis seriously impacted the industry. The study aimed to analyze the change in tourists' attitudes and perceptions towards their hotel accommodation and location preferences, due to their perceived stress in the post-COVID-19 lockdown. An online survey was conducted among 450 respondents to assess the change in tourists' perception and evaluate results in terms of their gender, income, and marital status. The statistical analysis was conducted in SPSS®23.0. The study's findings reveal that during the COVID crisis, natural surroundings and pleasant weather conditions were the most important factors in determining hotel room and location preferences among people. The research is based on a survey conducted during the pandemic crisis. The findings of this study may be significant to the tourism sector in understanding tourist preferences during a pandemic. The outcome of this study can enhance the awareness of the tourism industry towards the perceived stress of the tourists and their relation with the location and accommodation preferences during a pandemic crisis.

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1 Introduction

The novel COVID-19 caused a major crisis in the hospitality industry during the lockdown and the post-Covid phase, resulting in stagnation and travel restrictions (Qiu et al., 2020; Fotiadis et al. 2021). Flight cancellations, closure of the hospitality industry, foreign embassies, and a massive number of lockdowns almost everywhere in the world were shocking and unpredictable. A large number of workers lost their jobs, and all predictions of the industry booming in 2019 faded away.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was impacted globally due to several events (Blake and Sinclair, 2003; McKercher and Chon, 2004; Pechlaner and Frehse, 2010). However, the early 2020 pandemic crisis of the Coronavirus created challenges worldwide in all aspects of life, from physical to mental health (Greenberg *et al.*, 2020; Kar *et al.*, 2020; Y. Wang *et al.*, 2020; Gruber *et al.*, 2021). As a result, future trends in all sectors, including tourism, have been radically altered. As unprecedented changes were witnessed in the tourism sector (Bakar and Rosbi, 2020; McKibbin and Fernando, 2020; Ranasinghe *et al.*, 2020), the crisis also opened up new opportunities for the study of tourists' behavior, technological innovation, government policies, and academic research (Assaf and Scuderi, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2020; Seyitoğlu and Ivanov, 2021).

Scholars are considering the post-crisis implications of COVID-19 in the tourism sector, (Brouder, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Several scholars attempted to examine the relationship between tourism and COVID-19 and develop theoretical models (Rutynskyi and Kushniruk, 2020; Uğur and Akbıyık, 2020; Yang et al., 2020; Zenker and Kock, 2020). However, research on the implications of COVID-19 on tourists' attitudes towards their accommodation preferences is still in the initial phase, and concrete results are yet to be established. Few studies have addressed the issue of Li et al (2020) suggest that due to the increased risk of infection in international travel, tourists preferred local destinations and short trips to nature-based settings and airy destinations (Li *et al.*, 2020). According to Hall et al. (2020), the scarcity of tourists as a result of the pandemic may be regained quickly for some destinations, while others may require a more sustainable approach to tourism. In a survey of 637 respondents in Czech, Dušek & Sagapova (2021) revealed that wellness was the top priority when choosing accommodation during the summer of 2020. M. Wang et al. (2021) conclude that after the Covid outbreak, tourists prefer to pay a higher price for a cleaner room and a more comfortable environment. Nazneen et al.(2020) highlighted tourists' emphasis on hygiene and safety in accommodation facilities. Kaushal & Srivastava (2021) recognized hygiene and sanitation as prime factors in tourists' preferences for accommodation. According to Li et al. (2020), people preferred small accommodation units due to social distancing and a lower perceived risk of infection.

While various studies identified factors contributing to satisfaction or preferences (Darini & Khozaei 2016, Khozaei et al. 2016), studies on hospitality and hotel preferences in the post-COVID-19 era require further investigations. This study, therefore, aimed to investigate the change in tourists' preferences towards their hotel accommodation and its location, in relation to their

perceived stress during the post-COVID-19 phase. As a result, the research questions posed were whether tourist preferences significantly changed as a result of the pandemic crisis and whether participants' gender, income, or marital status had any influence on their hotel room and location preferences.

2 Literature Review

Tourists choose the destination and accommodation based on their personal experiences or the services offered (Heung, 2000). The type of traveler and the circumstances also influence tourist's attitudes toward their destination choices and accommodation preferences (Bigné et al., 2008; Žabkar et al., 2010; Aruan and Felicia, 2019). Hotels are the most crucial components of the tourism industry, and without high-quality hotels, no tourist destination could have an upholding power (Attila, 2016).

Previous studies highlight factors that influence tourist accommodation preferences, such as cleanliness, safety, price and value of money, staff attitudes, services, and physical attractiveness (Chu and Choi, 2000; Raymond K.S. Chu, 2000; Lockyer, 2005; Sohrabi *et al.*, 2012). The quality of the accommodation (Chen and Yang, 2010), and room facilities have also been considered a great determinant of peoples' choice (Sohrabi *et al.*, 2012). Some other studies have canonized the role of quietness in the surrounding environment (Albaladejo and Diaz-Delfa, 2009; Edgard and Iraci, 2011). Gender preferences differ as well, for example, in the case of female travelers, security and safety become the top priority (Fawzy, 2010). The younger generation, on the other hand, prefers accommodations equipped with Wi-Fi and the latest technology (Kelley, 2012).

Location is one of the other significant factors that affect travel decisions (Lockyer, 2005; Lee and Jang, 2011; Yang et al., 2018). Mccleary et al. (1993) stressed the importance of geographic and traffic conditions of hotel locations in travelers' choice. Hotel location has proved to be one of the most essential factors influencing both business travelers' hotel choices (Chou et al., 2008), and leisure travelers (Chu and Choi, 2000). The physical and socio-cultural characteristics of the neighborhood are also a determining factor in choosing a hotel location (Adam and Amuquandoh, 2013).

3 Methodology

The study examined people's preferences to reside in various possible hotel rooms in varying locations in relation to their perceived stress during the post-Covid phase. An online survey was conducted with questions based on peoples' preferences for hotel accommodation and location and their perceived stress.

To examine the respondent's hotel room preferences, 3d visualization of five different views visible from the hotel room window was presented. These views ranged from Room#1 with a view of the most natural surroundings, to Room#5 with scenes from the most urban context. Preferences to stay in these hotel rooms were sought on a five-point Likert scale.

The study also examined the respondent's location preferences for the choice of their hotels. The seven criteria selected for location preferences were affordable neighborhood and

surroundings, beautiful natural surroundings, beautiful urban surroundings, close to shopping hubs, close to cultural and historical areas, pleasant weather, close to the centre and vibrating areas.

To study the perceived stress, seven statements administered were- I felt I was close to panic, I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything, I felt I wasn´t worth much as a person, I felt that I was rather touchy, I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion, I felt scared without any good reason, and I felt that life was meaningless. Responses to these questions were sought on a four-point scale.

4 Analysis and Results

Out of 450 questionnaires distributed through online mode, 426 responses were received, out of which 6 were returned blank, and 420 were usable, which yielded a fairly high 98% content response rate. Data were analyzed using SPSS® Statistics 23.0 (Table 1). There was a preponderance of female participants (61.9 %) over males (38.1%). In terms of income, 52.4% of respondents were in 1-3 million range, 22.6% in 4-6 million range. Of the sample studied, 67.9 % of respondents were single, 32.1% married, and no respondents were divorced/ separated.

Table 1: The demographic background of respondents.

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	260	61.9
	Female	160	38.1
Income	1 to 3 million	220	52.4
	4 to 6 million	95	22.6
	7 to 9 million	25	6.0
	Above 10 million	30	7.1
Marital status	Single	285	67.9
	Married	135	32.1
	Divorced/ Separated	0	-

The data was analyzed for tourist's preferences towards their hotel room and location, and their perceived stress during the COVID phase.

4.1 Hotel Room Preferences

In the analysis of people's preferences for their hotel rooms, Room#1 with the most natural surroundings (M= 4.06, SD=0.97) was most preferred. In a test of reliability for items relating to hotel room preferences, Cronbach's Alpha was reported as .801 which is strong and acceptable (Taber, 2018). No significant correlations were observed between people's room preferences and their perceived stress.

4.1.1 Room Preferences and Gender

Both males (M= 4.09, SD=0.92) and females (M= 4.04, SD=1.01) preferred Room#1 (Table 2), the Independent samples *t*-tests revealed no significant difference (0.132 < p < 0.629) among people's choice towards their hotel room preferences.

Table 2: Independent Samples Test for hotel room preferences based on gender

	Female (n=260)		Male (n=160)		t	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Room#1	4.04	1.01	4.09	0.92	-0.55	0.58
Room#2	3.63	0.96	3.70	0.87	-0.7	0.484
Room#3	3.06	1.28	3.22	1.03	-1.33	0.184
Room#4	2.75	1.35	2.94	1.17	-1.51	0.132
Room#5	2.49	1.50	2.56	1.44	-0.48	0.629

4.1.2 Room Preferences based on Income

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of income groups of people on their room preferences (Table 3). People across all income groups significantly preferred Room#1($F_{(3, 361)}$ = 5.891, p<0.01), while the other moderate preferences were for Room#2 ($F_{(3, 346)}$ = 11.98, p<0.01), and Room#3 ($F_{(3, 346)}$ = 6.8, p<0.01), all with more natural surroundings.

Table 3: Independent Samples Test for hotel room preferences based on income

	Income groups				F	p
	1 to 3 million	4 to 6 million	7 to 9 million	Above 10 million		
Room#1	4.1	4.3	4	3.5	5.89	0.001
Room#2	3.8	3.9	3.2	3	11.98	0
Room#3	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.3	6.8	0
Room#4	3	2.9	2.8	2.3	2.32	0.075
Room#5	2.6	2.7	2.4	2	1.72	0.163

4.1.3 Room Preferences and Marital Status

Both single (M= 4.30, SD=0.87) and married respondents (M= 3.56, SD=1.00) preferred Room#1, though singles were more enthusiastic towards their hotel room preferences and reported higher means (Table 4). The Independent samples *t*-test showed a significant preference for Room#1 $t_{(419)}$= 7.46, p < 0.01, and Room#5 $t_{(419)}$= 2.86, p< 0.005 among single respondents, indicating their contrasting preferences for natural as well as urban settings.

Table 4: Independent Samples Test for hotel room preferences based on marital status.

	Single (n=285)		Married (n=135)		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Room#1	4.30	0.87	3.56	1.00	7.46	0
Room#2	3.70	0.98	3.58	0.80	1.31	0.19
Room#3	3.16	1.28	3.04	0.94	1.06	0.291
Room#4	2.86	1.41	2.74	0.90	0.99	0.321
Room#5	2.65	1.58	2.24	1.18	2.86	0.005

4.2 Hotel Location Preferences

In the analysis of people's preferences for their hotel location, "pleasant weather" (M=4.60, SD=0.74), and "beautiful natural surroundings" (M=4.57, SD=0.68) were most preferred, indicating people's willingness to live in natural settings. In a test of reliability for items on hotel's location preferences, Cronbach's Alpha was reported as .524 with moderate, but acceptable reliability

(Hinton et al., 2014). No significant correlations were observed between hotel location preferences and perceived stress among people.

4.2.1 Location Preferences and Gender

Females (M= 3.90, SD=1.17) significantly preferred hotel rooms with 'beautiful urban surrounding' t(419)= 3.18, p=0.002, compared to males (M= 3.56, SD=1.00) (Table 5). Females also significantly preferred (M= 4.10, SD=0.95) a hotel room 'close to shopping hub' t(419)= 8.85, p<0.01, against males (M= 3.06, SD=1.28).

Table 5: Independent Samples Test for hotel location preferences based on gender

	Female (n=260)		Male (n=160)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Affordable neighborhood and surrounding	3.46	1.10	3.50	0.90	-0.39	0.698
Beautiful natural surrounding	4.54	0.72	4.63	0.60	-1.33	0.186
beautiful urban surrounding	3.90	1.17	3.56	1.00	3.18	0.002
close to shopping hubs	4.10	0.95	3.06	1.28	8.85	0
close to cultural and historical areas	3.77	1.25	4.03	0.89	-2.51	0.013
pleasant weather	4.56	0.72	4.66	0.78	-1.32	0.187
close to the city centre and vibrating areas	3.52	1.27	3.66	1.32	-1.06	0.289

4.2.2 Location Preferences based on Income

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of income groups of people on their location preferences (Table 6). People across all income groups preferred 'beautiful natural surroundings' (F (3, 366) = 1.244, p<0.294), and 'pleasant weather' (F (3, 366) = 10.257, p<0.01), while being 'close to cultural and historical areas' (F (3, 366) = 2.062, p<0.105) was the other moderate preference.

Table 6: Independent Samples Test for hotel location preferences based on income.

	Income groups				F	p
	1 to 3 million	4 to 6 million	7 to 9 million	Above 10 million		
Affordable neighborhood and surrounding	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.5	0.479	0.70
Beautiful natural surrounding	4.6	4.6	4.8	4.5	1.244	0.30
beautiful urban surrounding	3.9	3.7	3.6	3.3	3.204	0.02
close to shopping hubs	3.8	3.7	3.0	2.7	11.152	0
close to cultural and historical areas	4.0	3.8	3.4	4.0	2.062	0.11
pleasant weather	4.5	4.7	4.0	5.0	10.257	0
close to the city centre and vibrating areas	3.5	3.8	3.4	4.3	5.129	0.002

4.2.3 Location Preferences and Marital Status

Both single and married people preferred 'beautiful natural surrounding' t(419)= 1.78, p=0.076, and 'pleasant weather' t(419)= 0.05, p=0.96. While single respondents significantly preferred 'beautiful urban surrounding' t(419)= 5.77, p< 0.01 (Table 7).

Table 7: Independent Samples Test for hotel location preferences based on marital status

	Single (n=285)		Married (n=135)		t	Sig (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Affordable neighborhood and surrounding	3.46	1.01	3.52	1.07	-0.58	0.563
Beautiful natural surrounding	4.61	0.64	4.48	0.74	1.78	0.076
beautiful urban surrounding	3.98	1.05	3.33	1.13	5.77	0
close to shopping hubs	3.74	1.15	3.63	1.29	0.86	0.391
close to cultural and historical areas	3.81	1.21	4.00	0.95	-1.78	0.076
pleasant weather	4.60	0.79	4.59	0.63	0.05	0.96
close to the city centre and vibrating areas	3.65	1.28	3.41	1.29	1.80	0.072

4.3 Perceived Stress

In the analysis of perceived stress, people attributed more to the phrase "I felt that I was rather touchy" (M= 1.47, SD=1.01. Cronbach's Alpha for items on perceived stress was .818 which is strong and acceptable (Taber, 2018). 14 out of 20 factors on perceived stress reported moderate positive correlations, indicating multiple signs of stress existing simultaneously among people (Table 8).

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Item Correlation Matrix for Perceived Stress (n=420)

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	I felt I was close to panic	0.93	0.91							
2	I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	0.93	0.91	1.00						
3	I felt I wasn´t worth much as a person	0.58	0.85	.260	.260					
4	I felt that I was rather touchy	1.47	1.01	.500	.500	.334				
5	I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion	1.28	0.95	.334	.334	-.037	.345			
6	I felt scared without any good reason	0.96	0.98	.559	.559	.229	.495	.415		
7	I felt that life was meaningless	0.95	1.08	.359	.359	.289	.451	.093	.577	

4.3.1 Perceives Stress and Gender

Female respondents were significantly more stressed as compared to male respondents, in 5 out of 7 given statements (Table 9).

Table 9: Independent Samples Test towards perceives stress based on gender.

	Female (n=260)		Male (n=160)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
I felt I was close to panic	1.04	0.95	0.74	0.80	3.25	0.001
I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	1.04	0.95	0.74	0.80	3.25	0.001
I felt I wasn´t worth much as a person	0.64	0.88	0.48	0.80	1.79	0.075
I felt that I was rather touchy	1.60	1.04	1.26	0.92	3.45	0.001
I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion	1.29	1.06	1.26	0.72	0.35	0.729
I felt scared without any good reason	1.08	1.04	0.77	0.83	3.26	0.001
I felt that life was meaningless	1.12	1.11	0.68	0.97	4.09	0

4.3.2 Perceives Stress based on People's Income

In terms of their incomes, though people differed widely in their perception, most agreed with the statement 'I *felt I wasn´t worth much as a person*' (F (3, 361) = 1.579, p=0.194).

4.3.3 Perceives Stress and Marital Status

In terms of their marital status (Table 10), while singles significantly felt 'touchy' t(419)= .97, p=0.03, the married ones significantly felt 'scared without any good reason' t(419)= -3.52, p=0.001.

Table 10: Independent Samples Test for perceives stress based on income.

	Single			Married			t	Sig. (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD		
I felt I was close to panic	275	0.87	0.83	135	1.04	1.04	-1.60	0.111
I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	275	0.87	0.83	135	1.04	1.04	-1.60	0.111
I felt I wasn´t worth much as a person	280	0.55	0.80	135	0.63	0.95	-0.80	0.424
I felt that I was rather touchy	280	1.57	0.96	135	1.26	1.08	2.97	0.003
I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion	280	1.29	0.90	135	1.26	1.04	0.25	0.801
I felt scared without any good reason	280	0.84	0.88	135	1.22	1.10	-3.52	0.001
I felt that life was meaningless	280	0.96	1.05	135	0.93	1.12	0.34	0.734

5 Discussion

5.1 Hotel Room Preferences

The study attempted to analyze the shift in people's preferences towards their hotel room and location during the COVID-19 phase. The study revealed that participants highly preferred Room#1 with the most natural setting, which is consistent with the findings of Li et al. (2020). No significant correlations were identified between people's hotel room preferences and their perceived stress. Both males and females, people across all income groups, and single and married respondents preferred Room#1. Though single respondents also showed a contrasting significant preference for Room#5 (urban setting).

5.2 Hotel Location Preferences

People across all income groups, and their marital status indicated their preference to live in natural surroundings and pleasant weather conditions while choosing their hotel location, although location preferences did not significantly correlate with people's perceived stress. Females preferred a hotel room with beautiful urban surroundings and close to a shopping hub, while single respondents also preferred beautiful urban surroundings.

5.3 Perceived Stress

More people felt touchy, indicating their emotional weakness. Strong correlations among stress-related factors indicated multiple signs of stress among people, while females felt more stressed. Irrespective of their incomes, people didn't feel their worth much as a person. While singles felt touchy, the married ones felt scared without any good reason.

6 Conclusion

The survey was performed during the post-Covid phase on tourist preferences for hotel accommodation and location. The majority of the people preferred Room#1 for its natural

surroundings, though single respondents also preferred Room#5 for its urban setting. People favoured natural surroundings and pleasant weather conditions for considering hotel locations. Females and singles preferred beautiful urban surroundings, though females additionally preferred locations close to shopping hubs.

The findings reveal that during covid crisis, natural surroundings and pleasant weather conditions were the most important factors in determining hotel room and location preferences among people. This could be due to the fact that, despite their desire to go out of their homes, people chose to remain in isolated locations with more nature and away from people in order to avoid infection.

7 Availability of Data and Material

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding author.

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