



Influence of Covid-19 on airline passengers' travel motivation in Europe: A literature review

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has caught the world by surprise when it started to spread across the globe in the spring of 2020. A health crisis of this magnitude had far-reaching consequences. Within weeks, various industries around the world were severely affected by the spread of the disease. One of the most prominent industries, which was affected since the very beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, was the aviation industry. In Europe, flight numbers were down to levels last seen immediately after World War II, which makes the Covid-19 pandemic the worst crisis in aviation history.

The main objective of this research was to assess the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe. As the pandemic constituted a previously unknown health hazard to Europeans, it was decided to research its degree of impact on the travel decision making process. This research intended to establish, how much it differs from other hazards, and how it influences the motivation to travel.

Due to the prevailing circumstances at the time the research was conducted, it was decided to implement a qualitative research approach, and to base the research entirely on academic literature. In order to ensure reliable results, a literature review was chosen as the most suitable methodology. By conducting a thorough literature review, the researcher established the current state of knowledge on the topic. Furthermore, by careful synthesis of the data, he was also able to generate reliable results.

The results confirmed that the pandemic has had a substantial influence on the travel motivation of European airline passengers. Various factors affecting travel motivation were identified from the data. These factors were then divided into external and internal factors. External factors consisted of outside influences like health safety measures or economic impact, whereas internal factors consisted of perceived risk, safety concerns, and travel desire. Both the external and internal factors were found to be very significant for determining travel motivation.

Covid-19 was a new phenomenon at the start of this research, which represented a limitation as academic literature was limited at the time. Based on the results of the research, the author recommends further inquiry into health safety hazards and their influence on air travel.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Air travel, Aviation, Covid-19, Pandemic, Tourism, Travel motivation

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

“If someone asked me about the most important lesson learned from the Covid-19 crisis, I would say it is the need for scalability. The whole aviation market needs to adjust because if the unthinkable happened once, it is much more probable to repeat in the future.” – Maciej Wilk, Chief Operating Officer, LOT Polish Airlines, 2021

This quote by the COO of LOT Polish Airlines, Maciej Wilk, highlights some important considerations, which are always present in the aviation industry. One is to be adaptable, and the other one is to always be prepared for any eventuality. Especially since, as Wilk states in above quote, events that have happened once, can happen again.

Covid-19 has rapidly developed into the single most devastating event in aviation history. In early 2020, when the pandemic started to spread outside Asia, the effects of Covid-19 started to become apparent. Finally, in March of 2020, the aviation industry collapsed, and global mobility was affected so severely as it has not been witnessed previously. Aviation is a key prerequisite to globalization, enabling the mobility of not only people, but also goods. As a major amount of goods is transported onboard passenger aircraft, the global grounding of airline fleets has caused impacts that were felt far beyond the aviation industry, significantly affecting economies globally. (Botlikova et al., 2021, pp. 1-6.)

When the aviation industry is considered, the most obvious and visible component is air travel. As is defined by Dresner (2006, pp. 28-32), air travel can be categorized into business travel and leisure travel. According to the researcher, both business travelers as well as leisure travelers, are fundamentally affected by the same factors, which influence their travel decisions. In the context of Covid-19, which constitutes a crisis of unprecedented dimensions, there is a strong possibility that motivations for air travel have changed significantly. This could have long-lasting effects, which potentially require years to be resolved.

The European Union (EU) constitutes the second biggest actor in global trade after China, with the United States ranked as third (European Union, 2020). The EU also has one of the largest aviation

sectors globally. Before the pandemic in 2018, 11 million flights were operated within the EU, flying over one billion passengers to their destinations. On average, 30,168 flights were conducted per day, with summer months being the busiest with over one million flights a month. (Eurocontrol, 2019.)

With the extent of damage that the pandemic has caused to European aviation, it is especially important to investigate how to recover, and also how to prevent similar impacts in the future. Air travel demand has reduced significantly, and estimations of recovery to pre-pandemic levels are uncertain. Publicly enforced measures such as Covid-19 testing, quarantine, mask mandates, and social distancing have been the most visible measures which have made air travel more difficult. Also, the fear of contracting the virus plays a key role, as air travel is perceived as being high-risk by the public. (Zheng et al., 2021, pp. 1-13.)

A better understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on aviation in Europe is the main purpose of this research. As the connection between Covid-19 and travel motivation of airline passengers has not yet been researched much, the author considered it as essential to further investigate said connection. Furthermore, Europe was chosen as the location of this research, due to the scope of the research project.

1.2 Motivation for the research

Several factors influenced the decision to investigate this topic. In addition to the author's broad interest in the field of aviation, a real need for inquiry was identified. The devastating effects of the pandemic will be visible in the industry for a long time. According to McKinsey and Company (2022), cargo airlines are the only ones which have not been as severely impacted, like for example passenger carriers. Also, as a fast recovery started to become unlikely, many passenger airlines started to convert some of their planes into cargo aircraft in an attempt to compensate for losses suffered in passenger transport. However, these efforts yielded only minimal relief. (McKinsey and Company, 2022.)

As Covid-19 posed a health risk which was largely unknown at this scale, it evoked fear and unease in many people across the world. Therefore, the pandemic was regarded as high risk, which had a significant influence on travel behavior, and many people drastically reduced non-essential travel

(Irawan et al., 2022, pp. 529-553). In Europe, pandemics were a largely unknown phenomenon, as the last pandemic of similar proportion was the Spanish Flu in 1918. After the Spanish Flu, most of the consecutive pandemics like the Asian Influenza (1957), the Hong Kong Flu (1968), SARS (2003), and the H1N1 Swine Flu (2009) were mainly limited to Asia. They were not nearly as impactful as the currently ongoing one. (Teeroovengadum et al., 2021, pp. 910-928.)

Due to these exceptional circumstances brought forth by the pandemic, airlines in Europe had to react and adapt quickly. One of the first measures was the conversion of passenger aircraft to cargo aircraft, as was also discussed in a previous paragraph. Apart from such measures, fleet downsizing and restructuring of staff were also implemented as first measures. (Albers & Rundshagen, 2020.)

A significant portion of the literature focuses on the economic measures implemented by the aviation industry. In regard to that, it would be important to highlight the psychological effects to which air travelers were subjected to. This viewpoint was also shared by Polat et al. (2021), who concluded that restoring travel motivation will have to be a top priority. Especially the potential approaches how it can be revived. Also, airlines should address this issue with the urgency required. (Polat et al., 2021.)

It is highly important to understand the dynamics of the pandemic, as it greatly influences global travel. By understanding the underlying factors influencing travel motivation of airline passengers, the aviation industry in particular can adjust itself in a way that it can be more accommodating to concerns expressed by customers. The industry can also develop contingency plans for potential future epidemics and pandemics, which aim to mitigate concerns and increase trust in the airline and the industry as a whole.

The author of this research has had an interest in the psychological aspect of air travel for a long time. As a professional working in the aviation industry, he has become familiar with the thought process of air travelers. When traveling by air, passengers are not in control of their safety or security. Therefore, many concerns are usually associated with air travel. By better understanding this phenomenon, better customer service can be provided in the future.

1.3 Research questions

The dimensions of Covid-19 and how it influences economies and industries worldwide is unprecedented. Many industries have been significantly affected, among which the aviation industry. Worldwide restrictions on travel, reduction of flights, and even expensive Covid-19 testing were some of the measures which have caused the most significant disruptions to the industry. Almost all countries within Europe have implemented different approaches to deal with the situation. However, that has caused a great deal of chaos in international travel, as travel requirements were very confusing for the most part. Consequently, air travel has decreased significantly, and it remains to be seen how the industry recovers.

A psychological point of view is adapted in order to deeper understand the pandemic's implications on air travelers. The motivation to travel by air and how it is affected will be in the center of this study. Motivation is a vital element in the decision making process, also in the context of travel (Robinson, 2010). The focus of the study will be in Europe, investigating European airline passengers. As the meaning of the aviation industry for the European economy is significant, and Europeans being some of the most travel prone people in the world, research on the topic is highly beneficial and much needed.

The research question plays a crucial role in guiding the researcher to the right direction. It directs efforts in order to find the right research design and method (Bryman, 2007). The researcher has carefully reviewed the research problem and identified key issues embedded within. He has then compared them to the available literature and has established following research question:

“How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe?”

A qualitative research approach was determined to be the most suitable to accurately answer the research question, and it is based entirely on reviewing previous academic literature. Due to the highly unusual and exceptional circumstances at the time this research was conducted, using previous literature enabled to exclude several uncertainties, which would have been likely to be encountered if primary data were to be used, such as participants being unable to attend in case of an interview.

As the methodology, the literature review was deemed to be the most beneficial for this research. It has allowed the researcher to establish an overview of the current state of knowledge on the topic. Additionally, the researcher has also increased the knowledge available of travel as well as tourism in the European context. As the topic was very specific and limited to airline passengers in Europe, a thorough and meticulous methodology was essential in order to get accurate results, which was the case for this research.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis contains five chapters in total. The first chapter includes the introduction chapter discussing background, motivation for the research, research questions, and the structure of the thesis. The second chapter is the literature review, where key concepts linked to the research topic are closer examined. This enables to establish more precisely, how much research has already been conducted on the topic. The third chapter is the methodology chapter. Here, aspects like research approach, research context, data collection, data analysis, and the verification of the results are discussed. In the fourth chapter, results, provides the findings which were identified from the secondary data. The fifth and final chapter is the discussion chapter. Here, potential limitations are discussed and highlighted. Further, internal and external validity are established. Additionally, as a final step, reliability and objectivity of both data and its analysis are evaluated.

2 Literature review

2.1 Motivation and needs influencing travel behavior

Motivation is one of the most imperative key concepts in psychology. It is a crucial idea which is used to clarify reasons and causes for certain behavior and to predict it as well. To get a very general understanding of motivation, one can link the idea behind the term to the question of why people are doing what they are doing. In that example, the 'why' is representing a reason for a specific behavior pattern, whereas the 'what' stands for a cause for an act. (Sichler, 2014.)

In the context of tourism and travel, as described in Yousaf et al. (2018), the motivations why people travel to certain destinations can be manifold: Generally, requirements are set for each destination. Depending on the kind of holiday, whether it be to a less safe destination for adventure

purposes or to a very safe destination to benefit from relaxation, different aspects are considered when planning. However, some of these aspects are considered more often than others. (Yousaf et al., 2018.)

As an example, the availability of clean food and water, as well as clean accommodation can be seen as so-called fundamental requirements, or needs, when planning a vacation or journey. A pyramid is chosen to visually depict the significance of each need. The higher up the pyramid and the closer to the top, the less fundamental to humans is the nature of the need. (Yousaf et al., 2018.) This pyramid-model is known as 'Maslow's hierarchy of needs model', and it will be subject to closer study in chapter 2.2.

Yousaf et al. (2018, pp. 197-211) also mention the push-pull factor theory by Dann. They state that Dann's theory is agreeing with Maslow's theory on the fact that there are multiple motivations for people to travel. In addition to Maslow, Dann proposed that these motivating factors consist of two different elements. In the first element, the focus is on the traveler's desire to embark on a journey. In the other element, the focus is on the destination, and in particular what makes it attractive to the traveler. These factors which are due to a traveler's inner desires are known as push-factors, and the corresponding factors, which are catering to them are known as pull-factors. (Yousaf et al., 2018, pp. 197-211.) The push-pull factor theory by Dann will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.3.

As can be seen, there are several definitions, or concepts, of motivation. Not only is it difficult to find a short, condensed definition of the concept in general; even when restricted to a certain field, like the field of psychology, there is still a considerable number of definitions which are specific to different theories. According to Kleinginna & Kleinginna (1981), no consensus has been reached in terms of agreeing on a single definition due to the psychological complexity of the phenomenon. They state that the definition is dependent on whether it is viewed from an academic, psychological viewpoint or whether it is seen as an informal concept. Additionally, further aspects have to be considered depending on the context where the term is used.

Despite the multitude of approaches of defining the term 'motivation', there is a reoccurring concept which is used repeatedly in multiple of those approaches. Pizam & Mansfeld (1999) identify

this concept as the concept of need. They state that it is essential to distinguish human needs before motivation can be understood. As specified by the researchers, a need is defined as the primary force responsible in evoking motivated behavior. This aspect is also shared by Iso-Ahola (1983), who has researched the motivating forces behind recreational travel. From his viewpoint, the contemporary living and working environment can be either overstimulating or understimulating, which can cause negative psychological as well as physiological responses.

If an environment provides the individual with too much new information, also referred to as stimuli, the reaction of a person is most likely withdrawal from the situation to regain more situational stability. On the other hand, should one's environment provide only very few such stimuli, the person is actively seeking them. Both reactions lead to people choosing favorable channels to either find an environment where there are fewer stimuli or more stimuli, which is a significant motivation to selecting a travel destination. (Iso-Ahola, 1983)

Iso-Ahola (1983) extracts from the behavior mentioned in the previous paragraph that there is a core need which is the driving force behind this motivation; he identifies this core need as the human need for optimal leisure arousal. By that he means that humans have a strong desire to structure their leisure time in such a way that two needs are optimized. These needs are the need for stability and the need for change. If a person is seeking a way to decrease arousal and stimuli, as it would be when seeking out a quiet and peaceful destination, the need for stability is prominent. If a person however is in pursuit of more arousal and stimuli, as it would be on an adventure holiday for example, the need for change prevails.

2.2 Maslow hierarchy of needs model

Maslow published his hierarchy of needs-theory in 1943. It was revolutionary, as it was one of the first theories to have closely examined the dynamics behind motivation. It aims to explain motivated behavior through different levels of human needs. According to McLeod (2018), the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs model is a motivational theory in the field of psychology, initially consisting of a pyramid with five levels.

The base level consists of the most basic human needs, which are physiological in nature. This includes for example food, water, or shelter. Successive levels are safety needs, love and belonging

needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs (Figure 3). It is important to note that needs at the base level of the pyramid must be satisfied before needs further up the pyramid can be addressed and satisfied. (McLeod, 2018.)

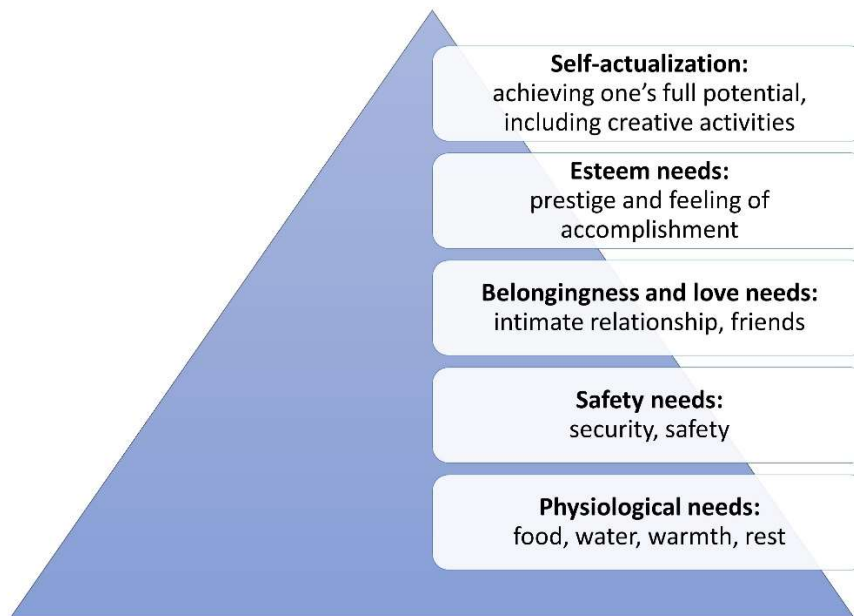


Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (adapted from McLeod, 2020)

Maslow has later further expanded the five-stage model by adding three more stages: After initially publishing the five stages in 1943, he later, in 1970, added the levels of cognitive needs, aesthetic needs and, lastly, transcendence needs. Cognitive needs include knowledge and understanding, curiosity and exploration. Aesthetic needs are made up of the appreciation for beauty and form. Finally, transcendence needs represent the top of the pyramid and refer to the human drive to become more than the self, to free themselves from all limitations, especially in the religious and spiritual sense. (Guest, 2014; McLeod, 2018.)

It is essential to further highlight two aspects of the Hierarchy of Needs model since it can help to understand it better and to avoid misconceptions. Maslow has changed his view on what should be the apex need of his model shortly before his death in 1970. He initially believed that self-actualization needs should be at the very top of the pyramid. However, in 1970, he changed his viewpoint and found that the more abstract transcendence needs were to take that place. Essentially, he meant that the focus of humans would shift from the self to the outside. (Kaufman, 2019.)

Another misinterpreted feature of the model is the pyramid structure, and the assumption that needs lower in the structure need to be satisfied first before needs further up in the model can be addressed and satisfied, when in reality the order can vary. It is in fact the management literature, that has adapted the pyramid model to better illustrate the theory. The pyramid structure has been frequently critiqued, even though it was not created by Maslow in the first place, leading to unfair criticism. (Kaufmann, 2019.)

The Maslow Theory of Needs model is widely known and popular in various disciplines within social sciences. Abulof (2017) reasons in his article that the fact that people can so easily reflect own personality traits and needs in the model sometimes puts the necessity to critically assess the model into the background. He further elaborates that the model can be not only applied to oneself directly, but it can also be used to identify traits from other individuals as well, which is a significant contributor to the success and popularity of the model. Despite its widespread popularity, various limitations and irregularities of the model have been acknowledged, also by Maslow himself.

One such critical evaluation is provided by McLeod (2018), who mentions the methodology as being the most significant limitation, specifically the qualitative method of bibliographical analysis that Maslow used. He only utilized the biographical data of 18 people to extract the information he used to characterize self-actualized individuals. The major issue here was the applicability of the data gathered from 18 individuals on the whole human population. The subjectivity of the information given as well as potential biases are identified as potential factors that could reduce validity.

Bowen & Clarke (2009) also highlight the importance of including the Freudian theory, complementing Maslow's hierarchy of needs, when considering motivation as a phenomenon. Freud divides motivations into conscious motivations and unconscious motivations. The conscious motivations are based on rational thinking and are generally regarded as being acceptable in the social context. The unconscious motivations on the other hand are unfiltered and usually driven by primitive, basic, urges and needs. (Bowen & Clarke, 2009.)

There is some evidence to suggest that travel behavior is guided by an ancient human desire to experience one's surroundings and extended environment. This view is shared by research done by Marchetti (1994). He states that basic human intuition is more in charge than economic factors when considering travel behavior. Furthermore, he proposes that there is a fundamental need for travelling and expanding territory in a large section of the population, which has existed since the beginning of human existence. His research concludes that it is due to this factor, that the need for travelling will always be a high priority for most humans, and that humans will make considerable efforts to achieve more efficient modes of transportation.

In Figure 2, the conclusions reached by Bowen and Clarke (2009) and Marchetti (1994) are illustrated. The intrinsic and fundamental need to travel exerts a significant influence on the subconscious mind of humans in general. Marchetti argues that this subconscious influence surpasses by far any rational limitations which would hinder traveling. In other terms, possible restrictive circumstances like economic are regarded as far less important than intuition. The expansive urge in humans is deeply embedded within the mind, and humans will go to significant lengths to cater to that urge. (Bowen & Clarke, 2009; Marchetti, 1994.)

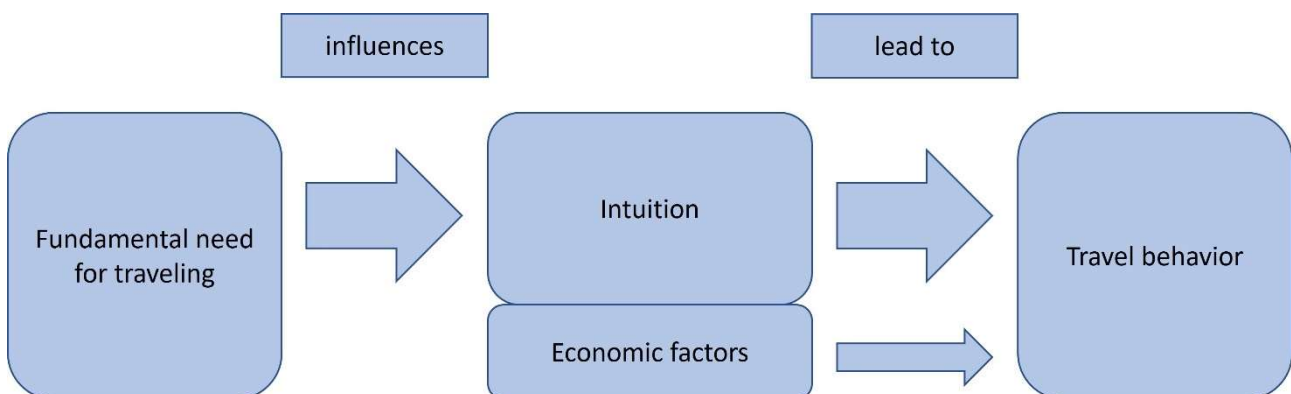


Figure 2. Significance of the need to travel (adapted from Bowen & Clarke, 2009; Marchetti, 1994)

The expansion of territory as a basic human need which surpasses economical and other restrictive parameters is a good indication that overall travel behavior in humans has remained relatively stable and that a significant segment of the population will continue to travel despite of other issues which could be arising.

Based on the abovementioned research by Marchetti (1994), it could be elaborated how important travelling is for humans and what the driving forces and motivations are behind it, since there are different types of travelers. In an article by Leiper et al. (2008), travelers make up two very distinct groups, which are leisure travelers, as well as business travelers. They aim to identify similarities and differences of these two categories. This distinction between leisure traveler and business traveler highlights the different needs between the two, and which factors act as the strongest motivators for each group. Research regarding this matter has been conducted by Marin-Pantelescu (2011), who has investigated the motivations and behaviors specifically for both leisure as well as business travelers. He states that the main needs behind motivations in business travel are less multi-faceted than with leisure travel, since it usually involves a very specific purpose, which is the completion of a work-related duty. The paper names specifically the need for efficiency as the most prominent one. (Marin-Pantelescu, 2011.)

2.3 Push and pull factors

The 'push-pull factor' theory is very popular and visible in tourism and travel research. Tolman (1959) founded the theory, and it was eventually developed further by Dann (1977). (Uysal et al., 2008.) The core principle behind the theory is that two types of factors motivate people to travel. The first factor, which is the push-factor, is influenced by individual motivators, such as a desire to travel. Meanwhile, pull-factors are associated with the travel destination. They describe the main factors which makes people prefer one destination over another. It is important to note that even though the decisions of whether one should travel and where one should travel are most likely made at two different points in time, there is an interconnection between the two. (Uysal et al., 2008.)

As Dann has concluded in Pizam and Mansfeld (1999), the push- and pull factors both have an equally important position in the decision making process. Push-factors are reasons why one chooses to travel, whereas pull-factors indicate, where one is going to travel. Based on these conclusions, Dann proposed seven categories, each one defining a different motivation to travel:

- I. Travel as a response to desire: Here, travel has the function of enabling social communication and interaction which is different to the one at home.
- II. Pull-factors are in contrast to the push-factors in the traveler's motivation.
- III. Motivation as a fantasy – enables one to behave differently than in one's home environment, without the behavior being seen as negative. This induces a feeling of personal freedom and self-fulfillment.
- IV. Motivation being a very specific function, like visiting friends or studying.
- V. Motivational typologies, meaning different categories of motivation.
- VI. Motivation to travel and individual experience.
- VII. Motivation as a tool to reflect – tourist motivation can be better understood when the tourists themselves are reflecting on their situation instead of someone externally observing. (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1999.)

A further interesting distinction regarding the characteristics of push- and pull-factors is made by Mannel and Iso-Ahola (1987) have made an interesting distinction between push- and pull-factors regarding the characteristics of the factors. The researchers divide them into two main categories: personal and interpersonal. They propose that interpersonal problems in one's familiar environment can evoke a desire to get away, in other words a desire for travel. The expectation is to receive personal or interpersonal rewards in the new environment. Pizam and Mansfeld (1999) classify self-determination, feelings of capability, new challenges, learning, as well as discoveries as personal rewards. In turn, they classify social interaction and communication as interpersonal rewards.

The influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on international travel and tourism has been alarming. Since the pandemic started to impact people's everyday lives in early 2020, global mobility has decreased significantly. The tourism and travel industry has suffered major damage, and most non-essential travel has been made almost impossible, or at the very least, highly difficult. It can therefore be concluded that some new, previously unknown push- and pull-factors could arise from this global health crisis. (Kusumaningrum & Wachyuni, 2020.)

In a paper by Roy and Sharma (2020), it is concluded that while the push-factors, which mostly represent intrinsic motivations and basic human needs like a desire for rest, relaxation, and escape, mostly remain unchanged, pull-factors can very well be temporarily affected by natural disasters, like the current pandemic. This is depicted in Figure 3, where the smaller arrow points from external factors (normal circumstances) to pull-factors. Since the arrow pointing from external factors (abnormal circumstances) to pull-factors is bigger, it is representative of the higher influence. However, it can be argued that, since Covid-19 is a once in a lifetime event, those intrinsic, basic human needs can change as well, especially since the measures implemented to fight the pandemic have significantly affected peoples' everyday lives. (Roy & Sharma, 2020.)

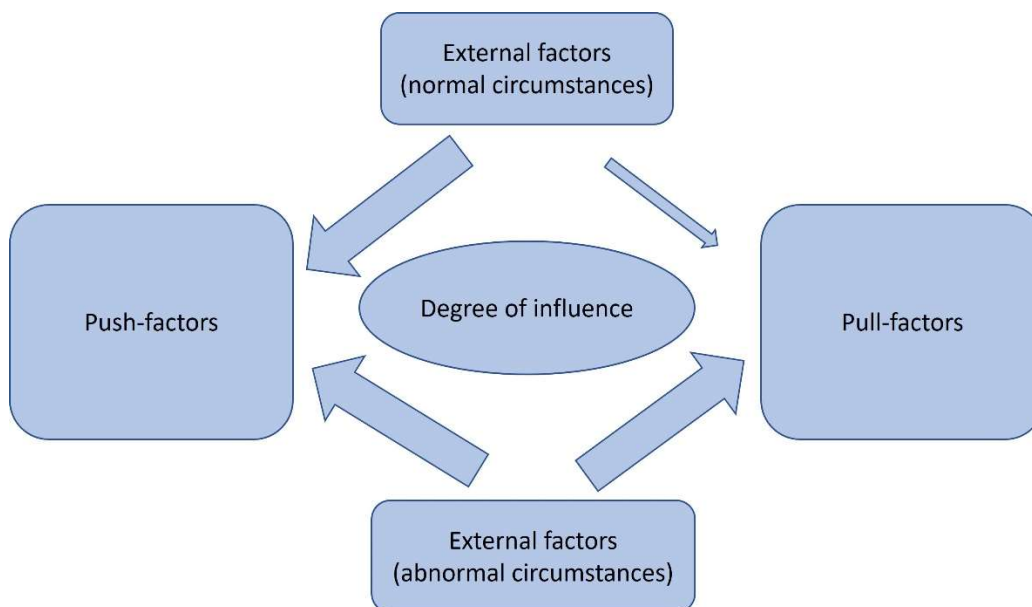


Figure 3. Influence of external factors (adapted from Roy & Sharma, 2020)

Genc (2018) studied, how natural disasters influence the pull-factors of certain destinations. As was concluded in the study, natural disasters mostly have a negative influence on the location attractiveness, and can act as a significant deterrent, which in turn can cause significant and sometimes long-lasting damage to the economy and the destination's reputation. The paper has extracted two aspects regarding this issue: The first aspect highlights the fact that natural disasters are significantly slowing down economic development of a region or destination, due to the numerous insecurities associated with its image. The second aspect demonstrates a more positive side: Here, due to these insecurities and difficulties of the region or destination, a sense of solidarity can be built. People feel sympathy for the area and actively start looking for ways on how it can

be supported. This, in turn, can act as a catalyst for local tourism, businesses of the affected areas and it can help to revive the economy. Also, in contrast to Roy and Sharma (2020), Genc extends the influence of natural disasters on pull-factors from temporary to potentially long-term (Genc, 2018).

An interesting observation regarding destination selection was made by Isaac & Keijzer (2021). According to the researchers, Covid-19 is such a significant event that it forced people to abstain from leisure travel abroad for the first time in years. This can be attributed to the various, strict travel limitations which have been imposed worldwide. These circumstances have led people to reflect about their travel behavior and its environmental impact. (Isaac & Keijzer, 2021.)

While this situation is highly damaging to regions living of foreign tourists, the domestic tourism industry has profited from it, since people are looking for alternative destinations in their home country. Also, domestic destinations are perceived by travelers to be safer than international destinations, even though this might not necessarily be the case. However, this effect was concluded to be most likely temporary, and the assumption is that international travel demand will resume once restrictions are lifted. (Isaac & Keijzer, 2021.)

2.4 Influence of the aviation industry on the economy

Ever since commercial aviation has started to gain significance in the beginning of the 20th century, its economic influence has steadily increased. Global aviation a growing network of international connections has enabled to significantly shorten transport times of passengers and freight alike. There are many ways in which aviation impacts the economy since the industry is very complex and multi-faceted. (Lenaerts et al., 2021.)

As Figure 2 indicates, there are several ways how the aviation industry impacts the economy. In general, it could be said that the influence starts within the industry, goes along the industry's supply chain, and stretches beyond into other industries. This demonstrates the tremendous influence the aviation industry has overall. Not only are industries being affected, which are close to it, but also industries, which are normally not in the sphere of influence of the aviation industry. (International Civil Aviation Organization, 2005.)

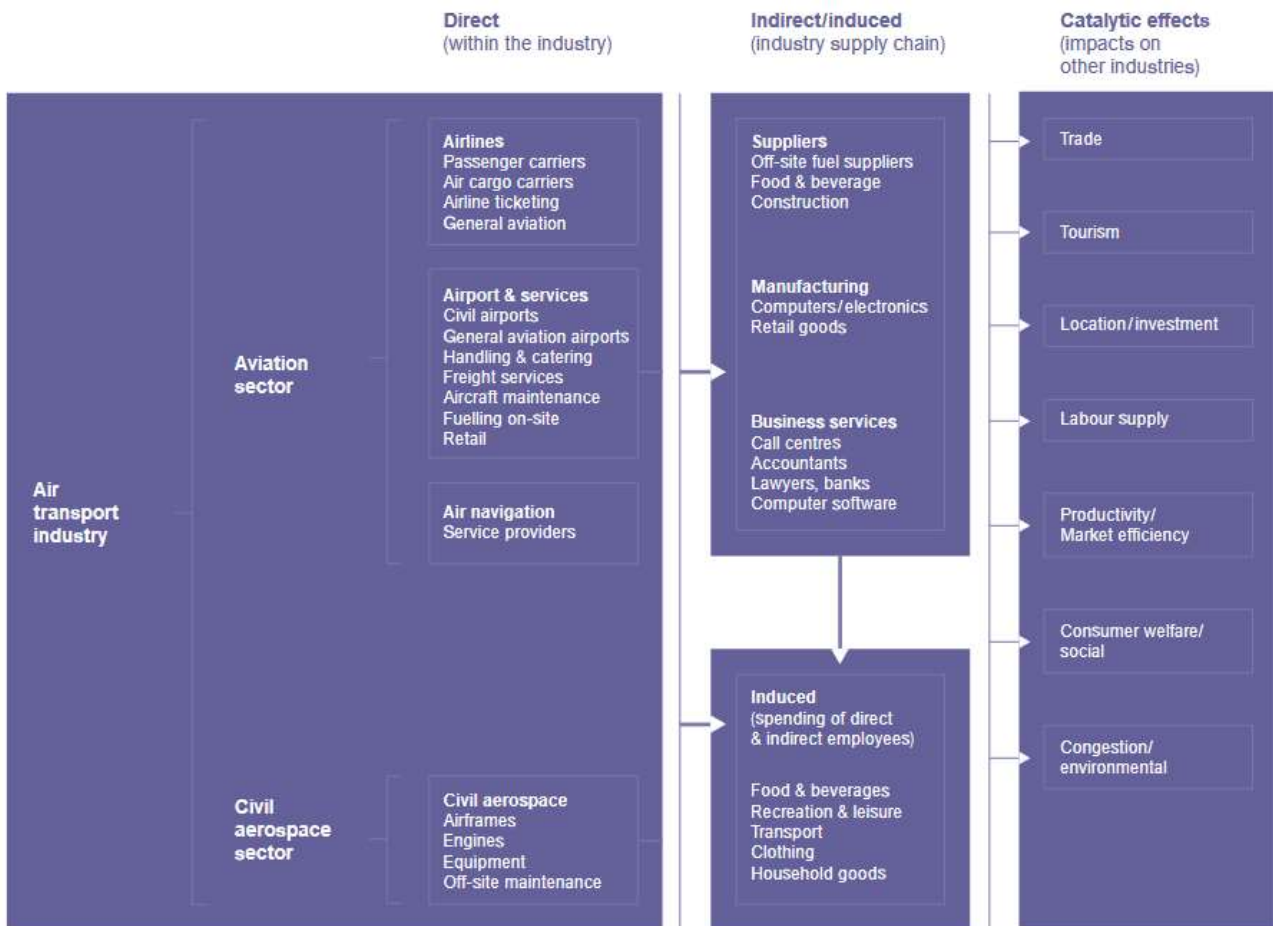


Figure 4. Economic influence of the aviation industry (ICAO, 2005)

As is visible in Figure 2, the economic impacts of aviation are highly intricate and dynamic. Various studies have tried to explain the wider implications and influences of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, a framework has yet to be developed which can accurately and comprehensively describe the various dynamics at play. A key dynamic has been identified regarding connectivity. Many researchers see global connectivity as a prerequisite to economic development. As the rise of the aviation industry has significantly shortened transport and travel times, it is seen as a cornerstone of economic development. (ICAO, 2005; Lenaerts et al., 2021.)

The Federal Aviation Administration (2020) distinguishes between primary and secondary impacts: Primary impacts of the aviation industry include all added revenues from sold goods and services, which are relevant to the industry. Such revenues originate from airline tickets sold, operating costs from private aviation, and passenger spending on trips. Secondary impacts result from

spending of sectors, which were identified in the primary impacts, downstream the supply chain. (FAA, 2020.)

Ishutkina (2009) states that the relationship between commercial aviation and economic activity is an interdependent, reciprocal one. On one side, commercial aviation is providing employment beyond immediate stakeholders and facilitates certain economic activities, which would be impossible or significantly slower to achieve with other means of transport. On the other side, the economy is the driving force behind the demand, to which commercial aviation can cater to. This relationship results in a feedback relationship between commercial aviation and the economy. (Ishutkina, 2009.)

The author has further identified factors which either promote or obstruct commercial aviation development. Factors have been identified from both sides, meaning the supply as well as the demand side of commercial aviation. On the supply side, change factors have been recognized, which include regulatory changes, infrastructure changes, aircraft performance changes, and changes in airline strategy. The demand side of commercial aviation is significantly affected by external variables, such as recession, political sanctions, and development of alternative means of transport. Furthermore, the researcher has identified indirect factors affecting demand, which are due to change in a country's economic structure. (Ishutkina, 2009.)

Despite commercial aviation enabling rapid and efficient means of transport, there is some skepticism as to how much significance aviation has in the economy. Boon and Witt (2005) question the significance of the aviation industry by claiming that its advantages have been exaggerated. They mention that this is due to the fact that studies and claims, which emphasize the economic importance of commercial aviation, might not be based on widely accepted methodological frameworks, which are focusing on the analysis of costs and benefits. Also, the integrity of the studies is questioned. The researchers claim that many studies are funded by the aviation industry and thus heavily biased. (Boon & Witt, 2005.)

It might be true that the viewpoint of the studies is often skewed to benefit the industry, but this could apply to any industry in general. In today's fast paced society, transport by air is the only method which allows adhering to strict time schedules. In an increasingly complex, growing, and

demanding society, lack of such means of transport could very well mean a step back in time. The currently still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has partially grounded fleets around the world. Due to strict travel regulations which are being applied worldwide, many industries have suffered tremendously. One such industry, which has been heavily affected, is the tourism industry. In many countries, tourism constitutes a large part of the economy. Therefore, the influx of tourists is crucial for many countries to sustain their economies. Even if restrictions would be eased in the near future, it is questionable how quickly people are going to travel again for the purpose of tourism, and when the situation is back to pre-pandemic levels.

Skare et al. (2020) were among the first to investigate the degree to which Covid-19 has influenced the tourism industry. They discovered that pandemic outbreaks do have a more substantial influence on global mobility. Further, the researchers argue that the extent of the impact of such health crises has been underestimated. They approximate that while the average recovery period from the pandemic was put at 10 months, the real time it takes for the sector to recuperate is most likely going to be substantially longer. This was mainly attributed to the significantly different dynamics, especially when looking at previous pandemic occurrences. In earlier outbreaks, once the infection cases at a destination decreased to zero, inbound travel commenced immediately. (Skare et al., 2020.)

This effect is not visible with Covid-19 however, and tourism destinations continue sustaining severe economic damage. The researchers suggest that the influence of epidemics and pandemics on business should be better assessed by tourism managers. Based on these assessments, more efficient risk management tools must be developed, which would improve the degree of preparedness in case of any similar occurrences in the future. Additionally, the researchers appeal to political leaders and people in positions of power to ensure that future policies, which are intended to ensure health safety, are created with the tourism and travel industry in mind, so that minimal damage is sustained. (Skare et al., 2020.)

Global mobility has taken a significant step back ever since the pandemic started to spread outside China in early 2020. Among the industries that were impacted first are the travel and tourism industry. With first public health responses consisting of limitations of mobility, and appeals to not travel unnecessarily, the travel and tourism industry has sustained severe economic damage from

early on. As a response, airports and airlines were forced to furlough people, reduce fleet size, and, in the worst case, reduce number of employees. Not only did this reaction cause a significant reduction in holiday makers, thus substantially reducing an important revenue source of many countries. It has also caused a change in the psychological mindset of people working in various industries, which are susceptible to such dangers as Covid-19, and thus are affected first. (Roy, 2020.)

The term crisis is an ever-present term in news media on a regular basis. Most often, the term is used in conjunction with a disruptive event, like natural disasters or wars. In recent times, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is almost synonymous with the term. It is important to define the term 'crisis' and what constitutes it. A look into the literature reveals that although one would think that the term is rather clear and should therefore be relatively easy to define, there are in fact many definitions for the term. In all these different definitions however, there are similar components which make up the definition.

According to the Department of Defense (DoD) of the United States of America (n.d.), a negative occurrence which causes significant changes within an organization and involves yet to be unknown consequences constitute the key components of a crisis. The authors further distinguish the term 'crisis' from the terms 'emergency' and 'problem' (Figure 5). The main difference which distinguishes a crisis from the others is the seriousness of it when compared to the other two. A crisis has the potential to cause permanent damage to an organization or company, or, in the worst case, it can even jeopardize its very existence. An emergency or a problem within an organization or a company is an event which needs to be taken seriously and addressed immediately. Both an emergency and a problem are seen as serious, yet not that serious that it would endanger an organization or company. (DoD, n.d.)

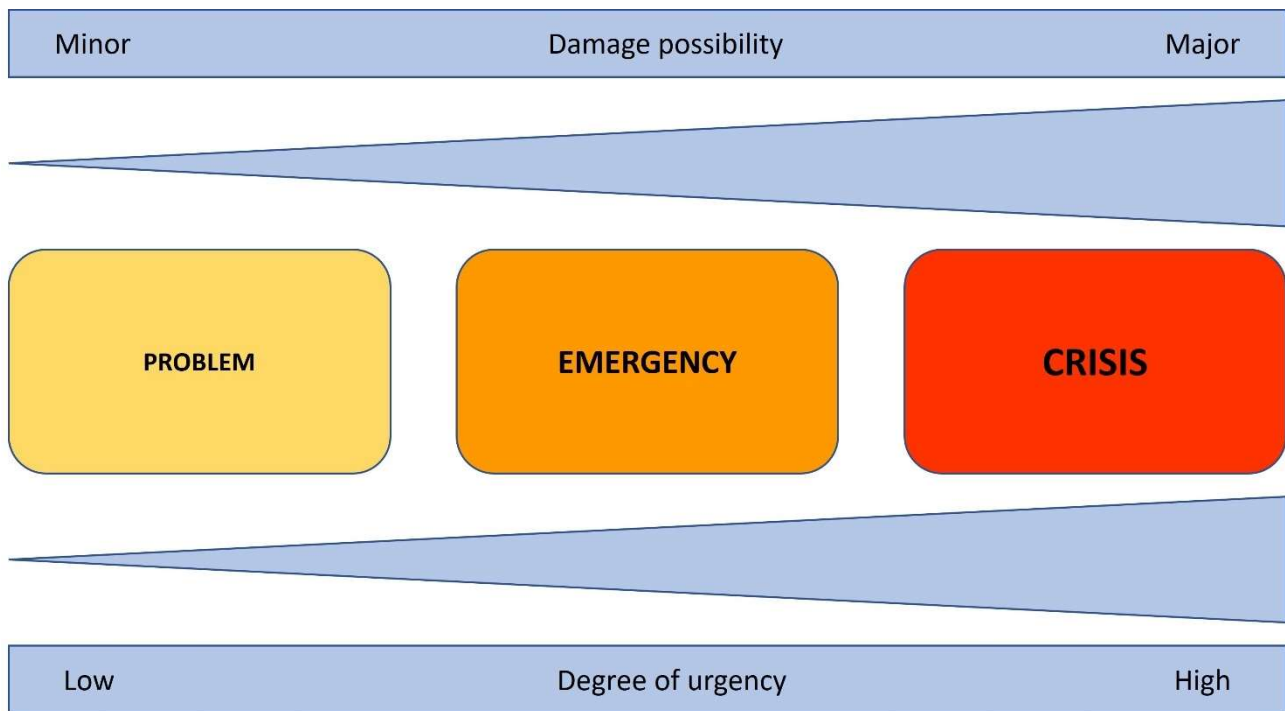


Figure 5. Problem, emergency, and crisis (adapted from DoD, n.d.)

As can be seen, a crisis is regarded as one of the most severe occurrences that can happen to organizations or companies. Therefore, it stands to reason that every party which is susceptible to crises has a plan on what to do in such an event. Crisis management would be the next logical line of defense, where a proactive response plan for such an eventuality would be instated. In a paper by Vasickova (2019), crisis management, crisis management processes, as well as different approaches are discussed. The importance of crisis management in today's operating environment has gained a lot of importance. The tempo as well as the interconnection in the contemporary business environment is at a level where it has never been before. Despite the many advantages and opportunities that such an environment can offer, there are also significant risks. The influence of crises in such an environment has also increased. It is therefore crucial to be prepared for such an eventuality in the best way possible. That is why crisis management is an essential part of any organization. According to Vasickova (2019), crisis management can be seen as an instrument which redirects a company's resources as to identify and evaluate potential risks to the company or organization. This should be done proactively, so that there is sufficient time to react to any potential issues which can arise.

Vasickova (2019) concludes that there is an enormous variety of crisis management approaches, however, two main categories stand out: proactive and reactive approaches. When looking at reactive crisis management approaches, they usually consist of procedures and courses of action, which are predetermined for specific kinds of issues. Should one issue arise, the applicable procedure or course of action is applied to resolve it. As for the proactive approaches, the key here is to assess the potential impact of an impending crisis, whilst the company or organization is not yet affected by it. The right actions are then taken to minimize or avert the impact of the crisis. Proactive and reactive crisis management solutions are not mutually exclusive, and often times both approaches are implemented to have additional layers of safety. (Vasickova, 2019)

As can be determined, different types of crises will most probably have a different influence on certain industries. According to ICAO (2021), the continuing influence that the pandemic exerts is highly distinguishable. As of 2021, in a preliminary estimate including the whole year 2021, there is a reduction in seat capacity of 35% - 38%. Passenger numbers have dropped by at least 43%, possibly even 47%. Finally, gross passenger operating revenue loss estimates range from 289 billion USD to 312 billion USD. All figures are as compared to official figures from 2019. (ICAO, 2021).

At the time of writing, the outlook was much more positive and optimistic when comparing the estimates to initial estimates. Nevertheless, a high degree of uncertainty is still present, and even if the pandemic itself would be slowly receding over time, other factors such as people's confidence in air travel as well as the economic situation at that time could still cause the recovery time to be much slower than anticipated. (ICAO, 2021.)

Since the pandemic has inflicted so much damage on the global aviation industry, it can be asked how well airlines and stakeholders have been prepared for such an eventuality, and how they have reacted to the situation. Recent insights further emphasize the fact that now is the time to review practices and plans currently in place.

Tabares (2021) criticizes the measures in the aviation industry, which were aimed at improving industry resilience. Also, he mentions trust as being one of the most important issues that need to be addressed in order to promote travel. He concludes that the still ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is one of the major health safety disasters that has ever happened in the history of aviation. Also, he

mentions current assessments, which estimate that it can take anywhere from four to five years for the passenger numbers to reach 2019 level, which is a substantial time. (Tabares, 2021.)

Tabares (2021) further mentions in his research that the potential catastrophic influence of a global pandemic was not fully acknowledged by the aviation industry. Earlier pandemic outbreaks, which have all occurred within the past 20 years, should have been taken more seriously by officials. However, due to their relatively minor impact, a potential major pandemic was never seen as an event likely to occur, which led to a sense of false security. Up until 2015, the United States have not had a national plan on how to respond to a contagious disease outbreak in air travel, which is an indication that the risk may have been neglected and the matter not taken seriously enough. (Tabares, 2021.)

The aviation industry was forced to rethink their crisis management strategy completely, after the true scale of the Covid-19 crisis became visible in early 2020. It also displayed how ill prepared the industry was to face a public health crisis of this magnitude. Despite several pandemics in the past 20 years, like the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph, Covid-19 laid bare a scale of neglect that no one would have expected.

The aviation industry is known for its stringent safety requirements, and that significant resources are directed towards maintaining them. All the more contradictory it seems, that such a well-known hazard has been left without the required attention. It may not have been the lack of preparedness, however, which has led the aviation industry into the worst crisis of its history. Suk & Kim (2021) point to the possibility that Covid-19 might have been just too overwhelming in every aspect, and that the plans available at the time of the outbreak were simply insufficient, not necessarily lacking. The researchers conclude that the industry is highly susceptible to various threats, among which are terrorist attacks, environmental catastrophes, and global pandemics. As they state, the industry has never in its history faced a crisis of this magnitude. It is therefore essential to develop new management strategies from the start, since no currently existing strategy was even close to being able to handle the situation. Also, they mention the increasing importance of global collaboration of aviation stakeholders is key when facing comparable situations further down the road. (Kim, 2021.)

It remains to be seen, whether industries around the world are realizing the extent of influence of the pandemic, and how much effort they put into plans to properly respond in the future. The academic literature that has been reviewed for this research is unanimous in that regard. According to the different authors and researchers, Covid-19 is indeed the most severe crises ever to affect aviation. It is therefore of highest importance to develop a response plan which will build on the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic, which is still ongoing.

3 Methodology

The methodology chapter aims to provide more detailed and comprehensive information on the research being conducted. It also highlights the processes which are ultimately aiming to identify the answer to the research question Travel motivation has been at the center of this research. More specifically, Covid-19 and its influence on the travel motivation on European airline passengers were assessed. Therefore, the most suitable research question was determined to be as follows: *How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe?"*

3.1 Research approach

When commencing research, one of the major decisions the researcher needs to make is which research approach to select. A research approach is comprised of a plan and a subsequent set of procedures, which in detail describe the methods for collecting the data, analyzing, as well as interpreting it (Creswell 2014, p. 3.) In the context of both business and management research, quantitative as well as qualitative techniques are both broadly used. They are utilized in order to distinguish between two different techniques to collect and analyze the data. The nature of the data is one of the most prominent features by which one can differentiate between the two. (Saunders et al. 2009, p. 151.)

Despite its popularity, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research has received some criticism as well. A distinction between both research approaches is very difficult to establish, as there are fundamentally different viewpoints among researchers concerning their definitions. (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Layder, 1993.) Despite some researchers still arguing about where

and how the boundaries should be set, the distinction between the terms is still widely accepted (Bryman & Bell 2015, p. 37).

When looking at suitability of methods for business research, Koskinen et al. (2005, p. 24) underline that within economics and business research, qualitative methods are often regarded as producing preliminary data, which can later be used by applying quantitative methods to produce numerical data. This numerical data is often perceived as the only significant scientific result. To demonstrate the questionability of this claim, Koskinen et al. (2005, p. 24) claim that by applying qualitative methods on data collected by quantitative techniques, a deeper level of understanding of the data can be achieved. Qualitative methods can help in understanding the relationships within the research results. (Koskinen et al., 2005, p. 24.)

For this research, a qualitative research approach has been selected as the goal is to establish a connection between Covid-19 and the motivation to travel by air, in the case of this research, the focus will be on European airline passengers. By reviewing the academic literature available, the author aims to establish the current state of knowledge on the topic as well as perform a synthesis of the collected data. Qualitative research is a very broad term, which evokes the need for further definition and clarification. As is stated in Hennink et al. (2011, pp. 8-9), a qualitative research approach encompasses a broad spectrum of different techniques as well as philosophies. Taking a very general approach, one could broadly describe qualitative research as being a method for assessing human experiences in a very detailed manner. This assessment can be performed by using various different research methods. Examples of such research methods include in-depth interviews, focus groups, and content analysis. (Hennink et al., 2011, pp. 8-9.) In addition to these research methods, Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 97) mention the availability of additional, more specialized methods, which can be used to complement them.

According to Hennink et al. (2011, p. 70), there is another key matter which needs to be looked at when deciding on a method for data collection, and this matter is known as ethics. During the collection of data, it is a fairly challenging task to maintain the highest level of anonymity and confidentiality. (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 70.)

Non-numerical data is often the result of using qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. However, other formats such as video, audio, and pictures may also be used. (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151.) In order for the data to be beneficial to the researcher, qualitative data analysis methods need to be implemented, assisting in the process of creating theory and drawing conclusions from the set of data. Two factors usually decide what methods of analysis should be used: The first factor is the kind of the information, meaning whether the data is descriptive, quantitative, or qualitative in nature. The second factor is the way how the results should be delivered to the readers. (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 480; Kumar, 2011, p. 26).

Qualitative research is often perceived as very attractive, since it can potentially generate a sizeable amount of data in the form of literal material, which is unstructured. However, there are no specific procedures available which could clarify the steps one needs to take in order to form the body of data. This is in contrast to quantitative research, where there are various rules and procedures in place which guide the researcher in the data analysis process. Despite the lack of structure, so called "codification" is not desired. In Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 579), Bryman and Burgess (1994) argue that there is a common consensus among researchers, which questions the desirability of the codification of analytic methods in qualitative research. A potential solution is then provided by Okely (1994), who is suggesting very basic and distinct guidelines, which can help the researcher if needed (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 579). Maxwell (1996, p. 17) supports this view, adding that both research approaches cannot be directly compared, and that their differences in data analysis processes should be respected.

It is essential to ensure that a qualitative research approach is indeed the most suitable. Maxwell (1996, pp. 17-24) describes several research purposes, where qualitative approaches prove to be an excellent choice. Among them are the ability to recognize new phenomena, the ability to explain processes that lead to certain outcomes, and the ability to develop causal relationships within the study. Maxwell describes these abilities as a major advantage of qualitative research approaches. Initially, he has been criticized on that opinion. However, an increasing number of researchers are agreeing on said advantages of qualitative approaches. (Maxwell, 1996, pp. 17-24.)

Based on aforementioned characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research approaches, a qualitative research approach is confirmed to be the most suitable for this research. In addition to

the research approach, a suitable research methodology needs to be established. Due to the very exceptional circumstances imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, a literature review has been determined to be the most suitable methodology. According to the University of North Carolina (2021), the purpose of a literature review is to gain an overview of the literature that has been published on a specific subject. The literature is often narrowed down further by selecting a certain time period during which the literature has been published. The literature review can have different purposes. Sometimes, it is used to summarize the literature available on a topic, meaning that the primary purpose is to gain an understanding of the scope of literature available. Often however, in addition to just condensing the available information, a synthesis is performed. This means that the information is being put together in such a way that it can offer new information and interpretation. (UNC, 2021)

There are various ways of conducting a literature review. For the purpose of this research, a scoping review was conducted. The purpose of a scoping review is to provide an overview of the currently available literature, uncover gaps in the literature, and identify areas in need of further inquiry. The scoping is performed through the identification of certain specific key issues or concepts, and by finding evidence which can help in advancing the knowledge on a topic. In addition, scoping reviews are well suited for areas which have not yet been researched much, or only for a short period of time. (University of Manitoba, 2017.) Hence, since Covid-19 is a relatively new phenomenon in need of further inquiry, a scoping literature review has been deemed the most suitable for this research. The proper application of this research methodology requires a high degree of rigor, accuracy, and discipline. Therefore, each step of the research process has been carefully documented. (University of Manitoba, 2017.)

3.2 Research context

The research context is a key part of any empirical study. In this research, the Covid-19 pandemic forms the setting, or context, where this study takes place. The focus is on the aviation industry, and a closer look is taken at the influences and impacts the pandemic has on the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe.

Covid-19 has had a destructive effect on the whole aviation industry. Scheelhaase et al. (2022) have identified strong fluctuations in supply as well as demand as the main reasons that have

caused the crisis. The researchers state that the changes in demand can be attributed to the restrictive policies, the closure of international borders, and the public health measures. All these actions combined have led to a significant decrease in air transportation demand overall. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused major loss of income in both private households and businesses, which has further lowered the demand for air travel. (Scheelhaase et al., 2022.)

The European subcontinent is the second smallest in the world, and it is bordered by the Arctic Ocean in the north, by the Atlantic Ocean in the west and by the Mediterranean Sea in the south. In the east, the continent's border runs along the Ural Mountains in a north to south direction (Britannica, 2021.) Politically, European countries are divided into EU- and Non-EU members, where EU stands for European Union. Furthermore, a distinction is made among non-EU countries between EU-candidates, possible EU-candidates, and EFTA member states, where EFTA refers to the European Free Trade Association, which allows for bilateral agreements to facilitate economic transactions. Currently, there are 27 EU member states and three EFTA states, which are Iceland, Norway, and Switzerland. (Nations Online 2021.)

Within the European Union, there is a market area called the European internal market, also referred to as the Single Market. The key advantage to such structure is the possibility to allow for free movement of people, goods, services, and capital. (Eurostat, 2022.) The European economy is traditionally very strong, comparable in size to the economies of China and the United States. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant negative impact on the European economy. Until the war in Ukraine, the European economy demonstrated a remarkable capability to rebound from the initial effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The war however has deeply affected the European economic area, and prices of everyday commodities and energy are rising rapidly, causing a decrease in investment and spending. (Kammer, 2022). This research only examines the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The European aviation market is one of the largest in the world. In spring of 2020, the market suffered a catastrophic decline in traffic, with airlines being forced to reduce the frequency of flights and laying off staff. At the time it was forecasted that there will be a wave of airline bankruptcies due to the prevailing circumstances, which ultimately did not occur. Overall, the European aviation

market managed rather well in handling the crisis, increasing passenger numbers slightly but constantly. In the end of 2021, the average passenger levels have remained at -20 percent to -25 percent when compared to pre-pandemic levels in 2019. (Eurocontrol, 2022.)

Despite encouraging signs that indicate a rise in travel demand, many uncertainties remain. A study by Troyer and Bidaisee (2022, pp. 13-21) reveals that passengers remain skeptical about travelling by air due to the increased risk of contracting Covid-19. The authors state that 75 percent of passengers expressed concerns about airline's health and safety measures, and whether they were sufficient. Even if the concerns of travelers would be addressed, possible future public health measures mandated by authorities could decrease revenue significantly. The authors agree that a recovery of the aviation industry is vital for a globalized world to function, and they suggest that public health measures should remain in place to some degree for the foreseeable future. (Troyer and Bidaisee, 2022, pp. 13-21.)

There is some discussion whether the Covid-19 pandemic is going to alter travel patterns in the long-term. Gössling and Schweiggart (2022, pp. 915-931) state that both business and leisure travellers have adapted to the present situation. While business travellers have replaced physical conferences with virtual ones, leisure travellers have shifted from international travel to domestic travel. Meanwhile, the governments and the industries that are dependent on aviation and tourism are looking to return to the old normal. (Gössling & Schweiggart, 2022, pp. 915-931.)

3.3 Data collection

Academic literature was collected by researching several trustworthy databases, which allow for precise search results. The databases used in this research are the Janet Finna database by Jamk, Google Scholar, Emerald Insight and ScienceDirect (Elsevier). In the case of articles found on Google Scholar, they were subjected to a search via one of the other databases. If the article did not meet the search criteria, it was dismissed. The aforementioned databases, with the exception of Google Scholar, are found on several listings of recommended databases from reputable academic institutions and are therefore deemed trustworthy. Google Scholar was found to be useful for getting an initial overview of the literature available.

The research methodology, which the author has chosen to implement, is a literature review, which supports a research standpoint by means of argumentation (Machi & McEvoy, 2012, pp. 3-5). The position taken in the research is justified by the contextual background and the body of current literature (Machi & McEvoy 2012, pp. 3-5). A literature review process should follow a precise and well-documented protocol in order to be trustworthy. It is then a versatile tool to address various types of research questions. (Snyder, 2019, pp. 333-339.)

The protocol that was chosen for this research is a 7-step process (Figure 8). It starts by defining the research question, which helps in the assessment of the scope of the research. Then, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are selected, which further set the boundaries of the research. In step three, the databases used are determined. The results of the database search are then reviewed in step four. In step five, search results are synthesized and evaluated to assess potential biases, the research methodology used, and the thoroughness of the research. Step six includes the analysis of the search results, where the current state of knowledge is established. The process concludes with the writing of the literature review in step 7. (University of Texas Libraries, 2022.)

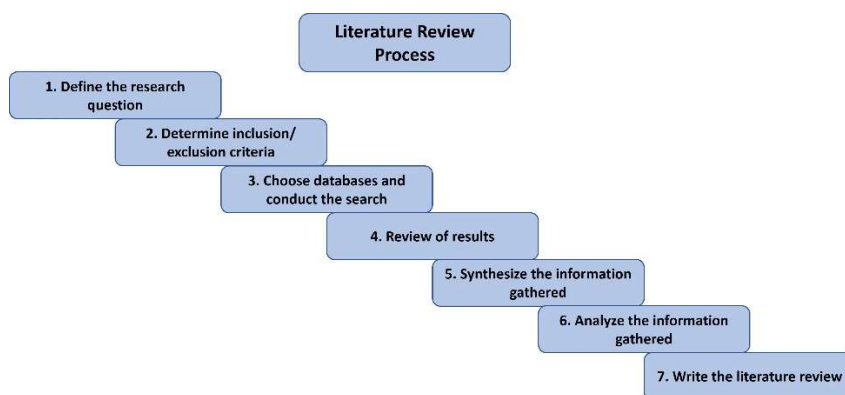


Figure 6. Steps in the literature review process (adapted from University of Texas Libraries, 2022)

The literature for this research was collected between April 2022 and August 2022. At this time, the Covid-19 pandemic has existed for over two years, meaning that significantly more literature on the topic was available than earlier in the thesis process. The timeframe for the literature search was determined to be from 2019 to 2022, which would allow for an inclusion of all literature written on the topic. At the beginning stage, Google Scholar and Janet Finna, the database from Jamk, were used to get an overview of the literature available. It was then determined that

sufficient secondary data was available to answer the research question, and that the focus of the research did not require adjustment.

The purpose of inclusion and exclusion criteria is to set a boundary for the literature review, in order to be able to find the relevant literature. The researcher may conduct preliminary searches in order to determine the appropriate criteria. There may be various criteria depending on the research topic, and it is therefore recommended to record the inclusion and exclusion criteria in either a paragraph or table. (The University of Melbourne, 2022.)

The importance of having a comprehensive set of inclusion and exclusion criteria has to be emphasized, since it is vital to the reliability of the study. As stated by Randolph (2009, p. 6), the degree of precision of the inclusion and exclusion criteria should be such that search results can be either retained or excluded based entirely on the chosen criteria. A way of ensuring the reliability is to let other people test them and compare whether they got similar search results. The more similar their search results were, the better the criteria applied. (Randolph, 2009, p. 6.) Also, several attempts might be necessary in order to determine the right criteria and to reach a sufficient level of reliability (Randolph, 2009, p. 6). Ultimately, after a preliminary literature search using Google Scholar and Janet Finna database by Jamk, the inclusion and exclusion criteria in Table 1 have been defined as the most suitable.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Peer-reviewed	Not peer-reviewed
Full text available	No full text available
Publication in English, Finnish, or German	Publication in another language than English, Finnish, or German
Timeframe 2020-2022	Timeframe before 2020

The decision which databases to select is important. Selection criteria are often ambiguous and not sufficiently explained. According to the University of Bath (n.d.), the selection of databases is dependent on the question that the research is aiming to answer. Further, three things should be

taken into consideration: 1. Is the topic of the research covered by the database? 2. Which categories of literature does the database have to include? 3. What are the journals and journal articles that are included in the database? (University of Bath, n.d.) Emerald Insight, Janet Finna (Jamk), and ScienceDirect (Elsevier) were selected as the main databases for this research. When conducting the preliminary research on Google Scholar and Janet Finna, these databases proved to be the most reliable and offered a substantial amount of literature. In addition, the literature was often openly accessible or accessible via Jamk credentials, as well as peer-reviewed, increasing the reliability and validity of the literature.

When conducting database searches, accurate and carefully chosen key words are essential for finding the right information. Key words describe the main topics and concepts of the research. Consequently, if the selection is not done properly, the results will be inaccurate or irrelevant. Also, the process of finding right keywords is an iterative one, meaning that it will most likely require several attempts before the right ones are identified. (Walden University Library, n.d.)

As stated by Boland et al. (2014, pp. 149-150), the screening phase of the literature review can be very time consuming. However, the researchers suggest that despite a potentially significant pool of articles, one should be inclusive rather than exclusive in the literature screening stage. In qualitative research, the identification of relevant information from the data is more complex than in quantitative research. For that reason, one has to carefully evaluate the search parameters. (Boland et al. 2014, pp. 149-150.) Following concepts, synonyms and abbreviations have been identified (Table 2) for this research:

Table 2. Keywords

Research question: “How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe?”		
Concept	Synonym(s)	Abbreviation(s)
Covid-19	Corona, coronavirus	SARS-CoV-2
Pandemic*	Epidemic*	-
Influence	Affect, alter, change, impact	-
Travel	Tour, trip	-
Motivation	Behavio*, intention*	-
Airline*	Air passenger carrier*, air service, carrier*, charter airline*, commercial airline*, commuter airline*, flag carrier*	-
Passenger*	Traveler*, commuter*, customer*	PAX
Europe	European Community, European Economic Community, European Union	EC, EEC, EFTA, EU

Once the key words have been defined, a comprehensive search was conducted using various combinations of key words and Boolean operators, which are used to connect concepts or key words in order to narrow down or broaden search results (Columbia University Libraries, n.d.). In addition, wildcards are used, which allow the use of a part of a word, words with potentially different spelling, and plural forms. Common symbols being used include the asterisk (*) and the question mark (?). This is a simple, yet effective way of making the search more inclusive, with the added benefit of remaining specific and focused on the research topic. (Columbia University Libraries, n.d.; Boland et al., 2014, pp. 44-46.)

Several rounds of literature searches were conducted in order to locate relevant literature in accordance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. While researching the data, the researcher established that more relevant results were found by using several key words connected by Boolean operators and including an asterisk as a wildcard. In Table 3, the results of the search are summarized. Even after both inclusion and exclusion criteria have been applied, the number of results is

significant in both Janet Finna and ScienceDirect databases. Due to the organized structure of the databases however, the screening process was efficient. In the end, 7 articles were selected, which all satisfied the inclusion criteria and also answered the research question.

Table 3. Article search results

Database	Results in total	After application of inclusion/ exclusion criteria	Answer research question	Duplicate results
Emerald Insight	737	85	0	0
Janet Finna (Jamk)	15,662	2,738	1	0
ScienceDirect (Elsevier)	247,559	48,847	6	0

A point of theoretical saturation has also been reached during the search, since at the final stage of the literature search, the same results have appeared across the databases used, which marked the end of the literature search stage. Kumar (2011, p. 213) describes saturation as the point where no new information or data can be generated. Further, the data saturation is achieved faster if the topic of the research is more specific than diverse. This also implies that the techniques used to collect the data have been properly applied. (Kumar, 2011, p. 213.)

3.4 Data analysis

This chapter elaborates on the techniques used to analyze and assess the qualitative data, which has been collected by means of reviewing the literature. As is described in Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 13), data analysis is more than only the application of a few techniques to the dataset. Rather, the data is subjected to a thorough, multi-step protocol (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 13). Qualitative data analysis also often involves identifying topics within the dataset. Thus, breaking down the body of data into fragments is required. Once the data is broken down into smaller pieces, each piece is then labeled in a process known as coding. It is then established whether the coded text can be found across the other collected data. Further, the researcher is also looking for potential connections between codes. (Clark et al., 2021, p. 12).

In both qualitative and quantitative research alike, researchers link the data analysis, the research question(s) and the literature, which enables them to interpret it. Reduction of the data is key in order to enable its' interpretations. The reduction of the data, in qualitative research, can be achieved by identifying categories within the material. (Clark et al., 2021, p. 12.) For this research, content analysis is deemed as the most suitable technique. As stated in Stemler (2001, p. 1), content analysis can be described as a technique where a large volume of text is reduced into a few categories based on a coding protocol. Content can also be extended beyond verbal and textual data (Harwood & Garry, 2003, pp. 479-498). It is necessary to select either an inductive approach or, depending on the study purpose, a deductive one..

An inductive approach is most suitable when the knowledge about the topic is either limited or spread out. The categories are then obtained from the different sources of data. A deductive approach is used if the aim is to test a theory. Specific, fragmented data is used to establish a general, broad statement in the inductive approach. (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, pp. 107-115.) In this research, an inductive approach is used, as the aim is to generalize from specific sources of data. Elo and Kyngäs (2008, pp. 107-115) have identified three main phases in the content analysis process which are represented in both the inductive and deductive approach. The three phases are depicted in Figure 9 below.

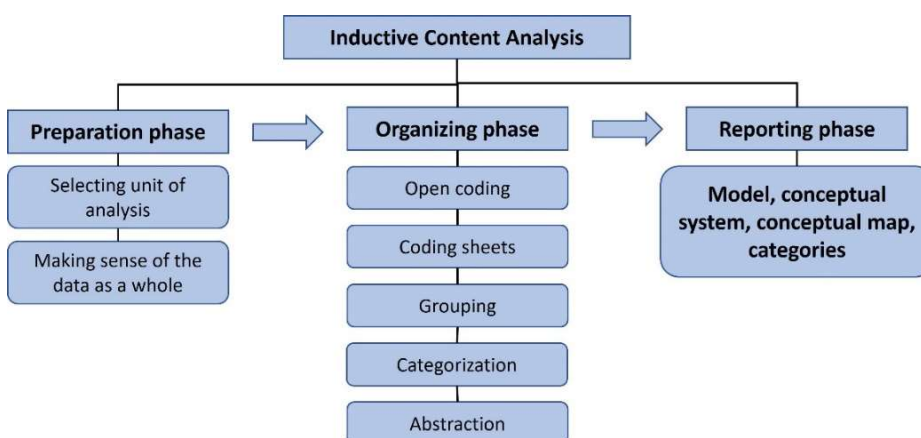


Figure 7. Inductive content analysis (adapted from Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 110)

Preparation phase

The first phase of a content analysis is the preparation phase, where the objective is to find a unit of analysis, which can either consist of a word or theme. Before selecting the unit of analysis however, several considerations are necessary regarding which topic to analyze and in how much detail. After the researcher has decided on a unit of analysis, the data needs to be thoroughly studied, in order to properly understand the material. In order to understand the data, following five questions were created to help in the process: *“Who is telling?”*; *“Where is this happening?”*; *“When did it happen?”*; *“What is happening?”*; *“Why?”*. Once the researcher has fully familiarized him- or herself with the material, he or she can conduct the analysis using either an inductive approach, or a deductive one. (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 109.)

Organizing phase

The organizing phase when using the inductive approach consists of open coding, category creation, and abstraction. When performing open coding, the researcher is reading the material several times, while writing notes and headings into the text. The process is repeated until all topics within the material have been assigned a heading. Once each topic has received a heading, they are then transferred to coding sheets, where they are grouped into different categories. Since the goal is to reduce the number of categories, the various categories created are then grouped under broader or higher order categories. The goal is to find similar categories and trying to put them into one common heading. This process subjects the data to researcher bias; therefore, rigor is essential. The final step in the organizing phase is the abstraction phase, where the research topic is described by condensing sub-categories into more generic categories. Also, generic categories are further condensed into main categories. (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 111.)

Reporting phase

The reporting of the content analysis represents one of the most demanding phases. Even though a more specific procedure is often missed by many researchers in order to better facilitate the content analysis process, a major part is based on individual decisions of the researcher, and

therefore remains subjective. It should also be noted that the final data may not have been abstracted to a sufficient degree, rendering the analysis incomplete. (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, pp. 113-114.)

3.5 Verification of results

In this chapter, the author will discuss the essential concepts of validity, reliability, and objectivity. As is stated in Morse et al. (2002, pp. 13-22), research has no value when it is conducted without rigor, and it is therefore vital to address validity and reliability in all methods of research. The term validity, in the relation to this research, describes the methods that have been applied during the whole research process. These mechanisms effectively ensure that the research is valid and reliable. Ultimately, validity and reliability are significant contributors to ensure the rigor of qualitative research. (Morse et al., 2002, pp. 13-22.)

Validity

It has been regarded as difficult by many researchers and scholars to establish validity criteria for qualitative research which would be commonly accepted. Rigor, subjectivity, and creativity are essential factors of the research process. The simultaneous implementation of all the factors has proven to be highly challenging, and, further, the validity criteria have also been criticized by many as being overly vague and intangible. (Whittemore et al., 2001, pp. 522-537.)

Internal validity is defined by Morse (2015, pp. 1212-1222). He states that validity describes internal validity as the accurate representation of a phenomenon that adds value to a qualitative research study. Also, the logical and detailed description of the whole research process is a vital element that contributes significantly to internal validity (Morse, 2015, pp. 1212-1222). This research used data triangulation to further increase its validity. According to Wilson (2014, pp. 74-75), data triangulation uses several sources of data, which includes data collected at different times and from various sources.

External validity, also referred to as generalizability, is also defined by Morse (2015, pp. 1212-1222). According to him, external validity means that the results of the study would be applicable in other, similar studies. However, Johnson (1997, pp. 282-292) argued that qualitative research

does not emphasize generalizability for two reasons: Firstly, qualitative research mostly focusses on a group of people or a specific segment of a demographic. Quantitative research on the other hand mostly uses random sampling when gathering data. Consequently, qualitative research results cannot normally be generalized, whereas results from quantitative research mostly can. Secondly, qualitative research is generally particularistic as opposed to quantitative research, which usually is universalistic. (Johnson, 1997, pp. 282-292.)

Reliability

The reliability of a research means the level of consistency of the data gathered via different data collection techniques. Also, aspects like transparency on how conclusions were drawn and whether similar observations were made by other researchers play an important role. (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 815.) The role of reliability within qualitative research has been scrutinized by many researchers, just like validity. Many question the compatibility of qualitative research and the concepts of validity and reliability. Also, reliability can be divided into two components: internal and external reliability. Internal reliability refers to the level of consensus among multiple researchers involved in the same study. External reliability describes how well a research can be reproduced by other researchers in a different context. Despite changing social and environmental settings, which are seen as major challenges to ensuring external reliability, strategies are at the researchers' disposal to increase external validity despite these challenges. (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 400.)

The accurate assessment of reliability within qualitative research is considered challenging, and the issue has been brought forward by several researchers. As is stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) in Golafshani (2015, pp. 601-602), if the researcher is able to comprehensively demonstrate the validity of his or her research, the reliability of said research is established as well, since validity cannot exist without reliability. This is due to the interrelationship between reliability and validity in qualitative research. Patton (2001) shares the view of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and mentions that the reliability of a study is a direct result of its validity. (Golafshani, 2015, pp. 601-602.) The researcher has improved validity and therefore reliability by accurately and precisely describing the research process and providing detailed information. Further, during data collection, a thorough protocol has been applied to ensure the quality of the data.

Objectivity

Some researchers suggest that within qualitative research, objectivity cannot be achieved due to the very nature of the research and its subjects, which often entails and evokes personal feelings and thus can introduce bias (Khatwani & Panhwar, 2019, pp. 130-131). The author of this study has recognized the possibility of personal bias since he has been involved in aviation for many years. Personal bias has thus been identified at the very beginning of the research process as a possible risk to the integrity for this study. Therefore, several measures have been implemented to guarantee minimal subjectivity and a high reliability and accuracy of the research results.

4 Results

The findings of the research study are presented by the author in this chapter, and they are based on a thorough analysis of carefully selected research articles. Ultimately, this chapter aims to answer the research question: *“How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe?”*

In the analysis process, five major factors were identified, through which the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe (Figure 10). The identified five factors are: Economic impact, public health measures, risk perception, safety concerns, and travel desire. (Battisti et al., 2022; Bremser et al., 2021; Budd et al., 2021; Gallego et al., 2022; Garaus & Hudakova, 2022; Graham et al., 2020; Piccinelli et al., 2021.)

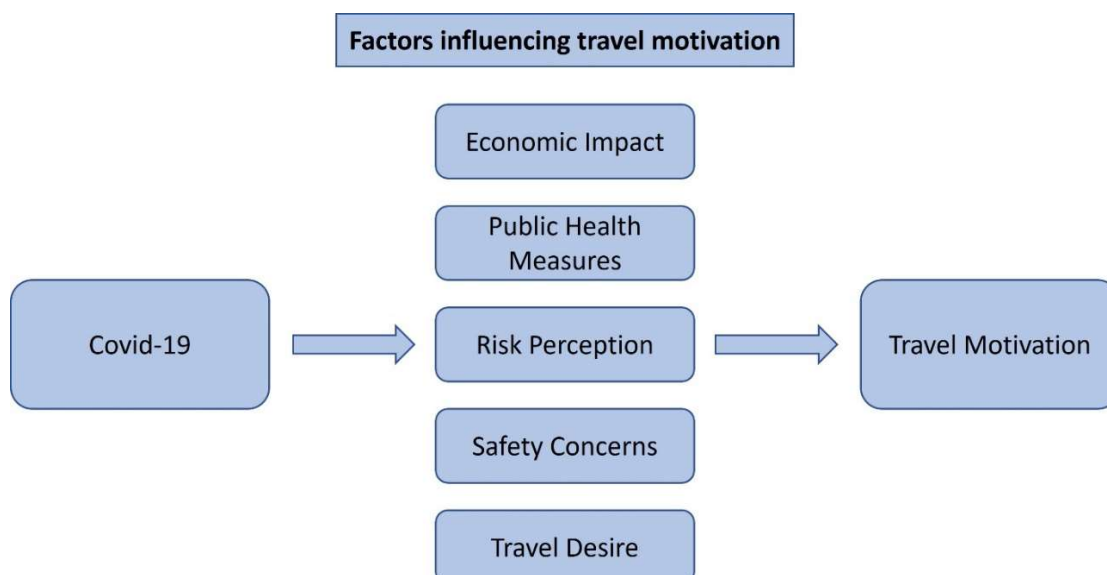


Figure 8. Factors influencing travel motivation (source: author's own)

Each of the factors mentioned in the previous paragraph will be closer examined in chapters 4.1 and 4.2. However, in order to establish an initial overview, a short and concise definition will be provided for each of the mentioned factors.

The first factor is economic impact. Since the pandemic has significantly influenced the economy, many people were laid off or even lost their jobs. This in turn led to financial hardship across Europe, with businesses having to shut down and people having to find new ways to support themselves. Due to these circumstances, people were unable to invest in recreational travel, which caused a decline in travel demand.

Public health measures play a key role in the context of travel. The term describes actions employed by governments and health authorities, which aim to reduce the spread of the virus. The most prominent measures, which will be closer discussed later, include social distancing, face masks, and the Covid-19 vaccines. Quarantine and Covid-19 testing requirements are also amongst the most prominent and visible public health measures.

The term risk perception describes the individual and subjective assessment of risk, which is associated with a particular situation. Risk perception is influenced more on a sub-conscious level and

could also be regarded as an instinctive feeling one has about a certain environment, like an intuition.

With the safety concerns factor, it is important to establish a distinction from risk perception. While risk perception was described as a sub-conscious, subjective assessment of risk, safety concerns can be described as existing conditions, with a legitimate potential to progress into a threat. In contrast to risk perception, the variables included in the assessment whether a situation is regarded as a safety concern, are more of a general nature and are based on objective analysis rather than subjective interpretations of it.

Travel desire also evokes the need for a distinction. The term is often used synonymously with the term travel motivation. However, travel desire is a precondition to travel motivation, and is therefore not to be confused as being the same thing. Travel desire will be later discussed in chapter 4.2 in conjunction with Gray's 1979 travel-motivation theory, which further differentiates the two terms.

Based on the reviewed articles, a need for further distinction between the five identified factors has become necessary. After a close assessment of each the five factors, the researcher has established that each one of these factors can be allocated to one of two very specific characteristics. These characteristics describe whether the factors influence the travel motivation from the outside, or whether the influence comes from within, from one's mind.

To further explain this classification, the outside influences have been assigned the term of external factors, and the influences originating from within one's mind are given the heading of internal factors. Consequently, the identified five factors are then divided into external and internal factors (Figure 11). Economic impact and public health measures are external factors, whereas risk perception, safety concerns, and travel desire constitute internal factors.

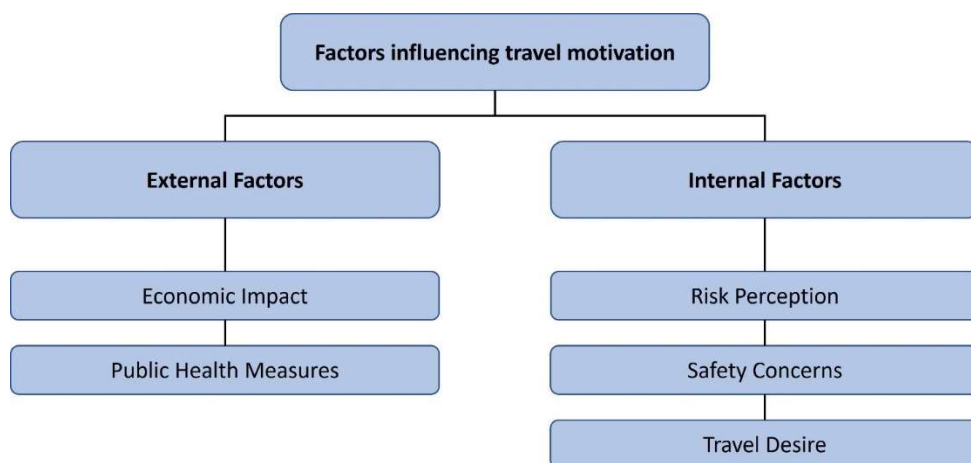


Figure 9. External and internal factors (source: author's own)

4.1 External Factors

As mentioned earlier, external factors consist of economic impact and public health measures. Across the analyzed data, these external factors were consistently mentioned as having the most influence on travel motivation. Economic impacts can be further classified into sub-categories such as job insecurity, lower income, and financial risk of traveling, as these sub-categories were extracted from the data. Public health measures include all measures taken by authorities aimed at slowing down the spread of the disease and can also be further categorized. The most prominent public health measures mentioned in the data include social distancing, face masks, and the Covid-19 vaccine.

4.1.1 Economic Impact

The global spread of the pandemic started to become visible in early 2020, where the United Nations and numerous health experts started to express their concerns about the new disease. Eventually, in March 2020, the pandemic hit with full force, and life came to an abrupt halt. Immediate health care measures were put in place, which severely restricted everyday life. All these factors combined lead to unprecedented economic damage in Europe, which in turn has caused people to abstain from travelling. The main economic factors influencing travel decisions have been identified as job insecurity, lower income, financial risk of travelling, and collapse of demand. These factors were consistently mentioned across the data. (Graham et al., 2020; Bremser et al., 2021; Garaus & Hudakova, 2022; Piccinelli et al., 2021.)

Job insecurity

The global mobility restrictions as well as the implemented health measures have caused a major change in social behavior across the population. People were encouraged to remain at home and avoid meeting other people as much as possible. In addition, all services, which were considered non-essential, were forced to close or shut down, meaning that there was an immediate impact on various industries, most notably on the travel- and hospitality industry. Due to the rapid spread of the disease across Europe, these measures were implemented almost simultaneously in most countries. Therefore, industries which were relying on tourists or global mobility in general immediately started to feel the impact. As a consequence, stakeholders in the travel- and hospitality industries were forced to furlough people or even terminate working contracts.

In 2021, Piccinelli et al. conducted research mapping the concerns of Italian travelers in the wake of the pandemic. Amongst several concerns, the high percentage of unemployment and the potential loss of employment were highlighted as having a dampening effect on any travel intentions. The people being surveyed have classified travel as an unnecessary activity in times of high uncertainty, posing a significant financial risk in the case of sudden unemployment caused by the pandemic. Also, due to the very pessimistic outlook especially in the beginning of the pandemic, people have put travel plans on hold until the pandemic situation has improved significantly. (Piccinelli et al., 2021.)

The increase of unemployment in Europe meant that people had to reorient themselves professionally, either temporarily or permanently. One substantial factor which promoted job insecurity in Europe was the wave pattern of the pandemic. After the first wave, cases started to go down significantly, which led to an easing of measures during the summer of 2020, thus encouraging mobility. Many affected industries were able to reopen again, and an optimistic outlook led companies to employ again, or call people back to work who have been furloughed. Due to the many people having reoriented themselves professionally, a skill shortage in many industries meant that most furloughed employees could start working in their previous positions. This recovery was caused by an optimistic view that the pandemic consisted of just one wave, after which things would return back to normal.

Lower income

The influence of the pandemic has not only been restricted to certain industries. After the tourism and hospitality industry, various other industries followed, and started suffering as well. The changes in consumption and mobility could be regarded as a result of lower buying power of the consumers, as many had to adjust to a lower income and to a potentially uncertain future, since the full dynamics of the pandemic were yet unclear.

Graham et al. (2020) mention in their study a dynamic which demonstrates the effects of a lower income level across the population. Declining income, which can be attributed to people being put on furlough or even fired from their job positions, leads to less demand for air travel. In addition, public health measures raise the expenses further, as there are requirements for expensive Covid-19 tests in many countries, which are prerequisites for being able to travel in the first place. These factors combined led to a collapse within the aviation industry, as there was drastically less demand for air travel. Thus, the aviation industry and its stakeholders had to terminate employment or furlough considerable amounts of employees, which again lowered overall income. (Graham et al., 2020.)

Financial risk of travelling

As travel restrictions were enforced not only in Europe, but globally, the demand for flights decreased to previously unseen levels. The decreased demand and the change in operating environment led to frequent cancellations of flights. The difficulty in predicting the dynamics of the pandemic made it impossible for airlines to proactively inform their customers. In many instances, flights had to be cancelled at short notice. Flight cancellations are not uncommon, however the degree of unpredictability and the frequency of cancellations made people hesitant to travel by air.

This uncertainty and the high probability of one's flight being cancelled can present a considerable financial risk for many air travelers. In most cases however, it was determined that the cancellations themselves were not the primary cause of this hesitancy. Refunds were seen as the major cause which made people hesitant to book airline tickets in the first place. Also, in the beginning of

the pandemic, Covid-19 was regarded as a force majeure situation, meaning that initially airlines and even most travel insurances would not refund or cover the cost of the ticket and possible expenses associated with the cancellation. The situation did somewhat improve, as insurances started including Covid-19 in some of their policies and airlines started to refund tickets. However, the high need for cash flow caused most airlines to postpone refunds, which did not help the hesitancy to book airline tickets. (Piccinelli et al., 2021.)

As established in the previous paragraph, the unusually high number of refund claims has directed many airlines into a financial crisis. Passengers are entitled by law to receive a refund in case of cancellation or compensation in case of delay. However, governments started to grant airlines exceptions from said laws, in order for them to sustain operations. Many governments accepted vouchers as a replacement for refunds, as they entitled the passengers to a flight of the same value as the original flight, and it also allowed the airlines to maintain cashflow. Passengers affected by cancellations were not satisfied by this solution, as it was unclear when it would be possible to fly again. (Piccinelli et al., 2021.)

4.1.2 Public Health Measures

Since the very beginning of the pandemic in Europe in March 2020, public health measures have been implemented as a way to reduce the spread of the virus and ultimately to slow down the spread. The scale of these public health measures was unprecedented, affecting the whole continent. Three measures were identified from the research articles as playing a key role in passengers' motivation to travel by air: social distancing, face masks, and vaccination. (Battisti et al., 2022; Bremser et al., 2021; Budd et al., 2021; Garaus & Hudakova, 2022; Graham et al., 2020; Piccinelli et al., 2021.)

It can be said that everyone on the continent has been affected by public health measures in one way or another, and some of the measures have caused more controversy than others. In general, it can be said that social distancing and mandatory wearing of face masks was a new phenomenon in Europe, especially since it was required by law in many places. In addition, the Covid-19 vaccine is probably the most controversial public health measure, which has resulted in several conspiracy

theories, which have been expressed very prominently in social media. In the following paragraphs, these three public health measures will be examined in more detail, since they play a significant role in the decision making process of European air travelers.

Social distancing

Maintaining social distance has been regarded as a very effective measure when trying to contain the transmission of viruses from one person to another. With Covid-19 in particular, due to its primary path of transmission being via aerosols, social distancing was implemented and recommended as one of the standard practices worldwide. (Moosa, 2020.)

When looking at the aviation industry, airlines and airport operators were forced to limit the number of passengers in order to adhere to these very strict regulations. Airlines implemented social distancing by leaving empty seats between passengers, which drastically lowered profitability. Within the terminal buildings, airport operators enforced various approaches in order to avoid crowds and the formation of bottlenecks. In addition, airlines even bypassed busy hubs by introducing ultra-long-haul flights, directly flying point-to-point. (Battisti et al., 2022.)

Despite the airlines and airport operators enforcing social distancing regulations, people were skeptical at first whether the measures could be enforced effectively. Another concern was, especially with the arrival of new strains of the virus, if the implemented social distancing measures were enough, or if the new strains were more transmissible and thus could infect people more easily over a longer distance or in a shorter period of time. Moreover, adding to the concern of infection, people started to perceive these implemented measures as a nuisance, which would interfere with their travel experience. However, quarantine and social isolation has led to people becoming more motivated to travel and overlook such barriers, since they saw the value of being able to travel. (Bremser et al., 2021.)

While many people appreciated the ability to still being able to travel, the lingering fear of contracting the virus has acted as an efficient deterrent, which has triggered a significant decrease in non-essential travel. Bremser et al. (2021) have studied public health measures extensively in the European context. They identified social distancing as being the single most important measure for

most of their study participants. People perceived social distancing as being easy to implement in their everyday life, effectively reducing the risk of contracting Covid-19. This perception combined with airport operators and airlines enforcing social distancing measures led to an increase in confidence to travel for leisure purposes. (Bremser et al., 2021.)

Social distancing has been a controversial public health measure, and its effectiveness in closed spaces has been questioned numerous times. Also, the difficulty to control people maintaining proper distance to one another has further added to skepticism towards the usefulness of the measure. Despite social distancing being perceived as an effective measure to avoid infection, it is also regarded as an annoyance in certain situations. In the context of air travel, people perceived social distancing measures to be chaotic, especially in a crowded environment such as an airport terminal. Therefore, airport operators and airlines, who have managed to implement these measures in an organized fashion, did have an advantage, as it offered a chance to market themselves, which increased passenger confidence. (Garaus & Hudakova, 2022; Graham et al., 2020.)

Finally, after initially accepting social distancing as a measure to improve health safety, it became a nuisance to many. Here, the arrival of the second wave was also seen as the turning point, since people assumed the pandemic to become endemic, thus making public health measures obsolete. The decreased level of acceptance caused a drastic decline in demand for airline tickets, as people regarded air travel as being too troublesome and stressful.

Face masks

Face masks have been in use from the very beginning since the pandemic started in Europe in March of 2020. As was the case with other public health measures, face masks have also been subject to much controversy. From medical professionals to conspiracy theorists, many different people have expressed criticism of the widely implemented mask mandates. Over time however, masks have become more accepted, as they have prevented the spread of other pathogens, and have reduced transmission rates of the seasonal flu as well.

Despite this controversy, face masks are not a new measure to reduce the risk of disease transmission and have been widely used in past pandemics as well. Especially in Asian countries, face

masks are a common sight, even if there is no ongoing pandemic or epidemic. A study by Budd et al. (2021) has researched the opinions on various interventions on the pandemic, meaning which would be the public's preferred method to fight the pandemic. For their study, they surveyed over two thousand Norwegian airline passengers. The results demonstrated a clear preference for social distancing and face masks, as they were seen as a low effort way to combat the pandemic. Also, as social distancing is challenging in an aircraft environment, masks were perceived as a reliable way of compensating for that shortcoming. (Budd et al., 2021.)

The study by Budd et al. (2021) demonstrates that in times of severe health crises, people tend to fall back to proven methods, instead of relying on newer ones. The researchers discovered that passengers have by far the most confidence in traditional measures, namely the wearing of face masks, followed by social distancing. The airline passengers have also demonstrated a tendency to be more willing to accept more technological measures, if they are implemented in such a way that they complement the traditional measures instead of replacing them. (Budd et al., 2021.)

Another interesting result by Budd et al. (2021) was the realization that the use of face masks can extend beyond its initial purpose. While the primary objective of the mask is to limit actual transmission of the virus, a less known effect has also proven to be of significance. When face masks are subjected to a psychological viewpoint, it becomes apparent that the mask in itself can have a significant influence on passenger confidence. The study showed that mandatory wearing of masks onboard aircraft significantly raised confidence to travel in the participants surveyed. Therefore, especially to alleviate concerns when boarding the aircraft, face masks were determined to be an effective instrument to maintain passengers' trust in the airlines. (Budd et al., 2021.)

A promising conclusion has also been reached when looking at the travel confidence in the elderly population. Graham et al. (2020) have surveyed over-65 year old pensioners in the United Kingdom and assessed their attitudes towards air travel. As the population ages, the over-65 customer segment becomes increasingly important. Especially the travel industry has noticed a significant increase in the amount of elderly people and pensioners within their customer base. Thus, it is important to establish how confidence can be regained in order to encourage the elderly to resume travel again. As the elderly are the most vulnerable demographic, it is crucial to know how to implement sufficient protection measures to ensure their safety. (Graham et al., 2020.)

As is mentioned in the research conducted by Budd et al. (2021) on Norwegian air travelers, UK residents showed a similar preference pattern when it came to measures which would make them more confident to embark on a journey. They valued traditional measures over more modern ones, and mentioned face masks, social distancing, and regular sanitation as the most essential factors which influenced their confidence to travel. The studied customer segment has demonstrated a very high level of concern of contracting the virus, especially onboard the aircraft. Customer confidence can therefore be raised significantly in this segment with mandatory mask wearing onboard. (Graham et al., 2020.)

These results show that there is a preference across a significant section of the traveling public for more traditional measures. In the context of air travel, these measures were deemed to be very effective in raising confidence levels in various passenger demographics. Especially in the aircraft environment, which was perceived as the most likely place to contract the virus, use of face masks was found to have the most reassuring effect on passengers. The effectiveness of face masks has even encouraged elderly people to travel again. Meanwhile, more advanced technological measures were found to be the least popular among the Covid-19 measures across all ages.

Covid-19 vaccine

The Covid-19 vaccines were developed in a fairly short amount of time, with the first generation of vaccines being administered in the United Kingdom in December of 2020 (Department of Health and Social Care of the United Kingdom, 2021). As was the case with most public health measures, Covid-19 vaccines were subjected to controversies and conspiracy theories. Especially the short timeframe, in which the vaccines were developed, tested, and administered, caused widespread suspicions about their safety.

The short time that was needed for the development, testing, and administration of the vaccines can be explained in a very logical way though. The research on coronaviruses has been going on for many decades, therefore there is a substantial amount of research data available. This is also due to the fact that coronaviruses are the most common type of viruses. Further, the mRNA-technology on which the vaccines are based, has also been studied for many years already. The key however was the prioritizing of the vaccine-program, meaning that such amounts of resources

where available which enabled a fast-track process through the development pipeline. (University of California San Diego Health, 2021.)

In the early stages of the vaccine rollout, there was widespread skepticism about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. In combination with the other public health measures like social distancing and mandatory wearing of masks, especially younger people saw an aspect of social control mechanism, which culminated in the vaccine mandates. Confusion and fear have been identified by Bremser et al. (2021) as being the prominent emotions in the early stages of the vaccine rollout. These emotions were explained by the researchers as being the result of the unprecedented measures, which have significantly limited peoples' everyday lives. (Bremser et al., 2021.)

4.2 Internal Factors

The internal factors affecting travel motivation, which were identified from the data, are risk perception, safety concerns, and travel desire. Risk perception was determined to be highly subjective and individual, and also dependent on many different variables. It was determined that safety concerns could be efficiently addressed via measures such as crisis communication and safety measures.

Infection rates could either lower or increase concerns regarding safety. Despite higher infection numbers however, clear and effective crisis communication was found to be very effective in mitigating safety concerns in air travelers. Therefore, efficient crisis communication using a multitude of communication channels was established to be a highly effective strategy to encourage travel. Interestingly, travel desire was found to be higher in some groups due to the pandemic. The feeling of isolation and loneliness evoked a desire to change one's surroundings, which lead to a substantial growth in travel domestically and a slight increase in international travel. (Garaus & Hudakova, 2022.)

4.2.1 Risk perception

Risk perception was found to be the main internal factor which influenced the motivation to travel. It was mentioned consistently throughout the data as having the most influence on the decision making process. Risk perception in itself is influenced by several factors, which have been extensively studied within the tourism and travel literature.

In a study by Battisti et al. (2022), the researchers have studied the relationship between the current mood in the light of Covid-19 and the choice of destination, which are accessible via air travel, in young respondents in Italy. The study discovered that the perceived risk of a destination can be reduced through a positive and affirmative air travel experience. The researchers further discovered that such affirmative experiences could condition travelers over time to have a permanently lower level of perceived risk. This finding is further confirmed by research conducted by Bremser et al. (2021), who have concluded in their study on a larger sample consisting of European travelers that travel experience influences risk perception. In their research, people with more travel experience were generally more willing to engage in travel, despite potential health risks. It was thus determined that more travel experience leads to lower perceived risk. (Battisti et al., 2022; Bremser et al., 2021.)

In the study conducted by Battisti et al. (2022), the participants offered an interesting insight on how they rank Covid-19 in terms of severity. Many of them compared the Covid-19 pandemic to terrorist attacks and aircraft accidents, which is an indication of how much the pandemic affects the sense of safety and security, and, ultimately, the level of perceived risk in young travelers.

Another significant factor which influences perceived risk is destination familiarity. In a study by Gallego et al. (2022), the researchers subjected over five billion flight searches and over 300 million flight bookings to a closer inspection. The study was conducted in 2020, and it involved 17 different tourist destinations, which were most popular among tourists from Germany and the United Kingdom, which both constitute the two largest outbound tourist markets in Europe.

Gallego et al. (2022) state that uncertainty about a travel destination can, in combination with a health crisis such as Covid-19, induce risk aversiveness. The perception of uncertainty of the conditions at the destination and whether one can adapt to those conditions leads to the preference of

more familiar destinations over new destinations. In addition, factors such as subjective personal traits, social background, and one's culture are elements of risk aversiveness. In their study, they focused on German and British travelers, and discovered that the destination most preferred during the pandemic by both nationalities was Spain. Germany and the United Kingdom are both important markets for the Spanish tourism industry, and both countries constitute a significant amount of the tourist pool. Therefore, Spain constitutes a familiar destination which has a very low perceived risk. (Gallego et al., 2022.)

The Covid-19 pandemic has been consistently mentioned in various media outlets since the start of the global outbreak in March of 2020. The daily updates on the situation and the news footage have since dominated the media landscape, and become a part of everyone's lives, no matter where in the world one is located. Since the early days of the pandemic, news footage has been rather graphic, offering few reasons for optimism. This constant influx of often times very graphic material has had a dramatic influence in many areas of everyday life, and in the psyche of people. It can therefore be debated whether the communication about the crisis was as appropriate as it could have been, and whether it would have relieved some of the anxieties people have experienced during the pandemic.

Garaus and Hudakova (2022) have in their research studied the importance of communication during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researchers have come to the conclusion that the influence of crisis communication as well as social media in managing risk perception has been severely underestimated. The importance of communication is further emphasized by their proposition that communication could be an effective tool in the reactivation of tourism worldwide. (Garaus & Hudakova, 2022.)

It is only very recently when airlines started to realize that through positive, reassuring communication the motivation to travel can be substantially increased. The way airlines implement this is by means of rational advertising appeals, which emphasize, by means of reassuring messaging, the high levels of safety in the airport and aircraft environment. In contrast to rational advertising appeals, there are emotional appeals, which are aimed at evoking strong feelings, usually negative ones, with the goal to "scare" people to follow instructions. Such appeals have been frequently used in the very beginning of the pandemic, especially by media and health officials, in order to

expedite the implementation of public health measures, like wearing a face mask or maintaining distance to other people. (Garaus & Hudakova, 2022.)

Within the airline industry, communication of safety measures was found to be strongly linked to the formation of trust. If an airline is capable of lowering the perceived risk within its customer base through communication, it will have a positive effect on trust. Trust is a highly important factor for the airline industry, which also needs to be earned every day. It is also crucial for the reputation of an airline. (Garaus & Hudakova, 2022.)

4.2.2 Safety concerns

The term 'safety concern' bears a strong similarity to the term 'perceived risk', which was discussed in chapter 4.2.1. It is therefore necessary to make a clear distinction between the two. In Garaus and Hudakova (2022, p. 3), the authors state that perceived risk is a perception individual to each person. It is an evaluation of uncertainty, and the consequences of engaging in the buying of either a product or a service. The term safety concern is also defined by Environment, Health and Safety (2021). According to them, safety concerns are usually conditions, which most likely lead to damage or harm. It can therefore be concluded that risk perception is a subjective, subconscious assessment of the level of risk, while safety concerns are linked to more obvious risks and hazards.

In the context of the current pandemic, and in addition to the definition presented in the previous paragraph, the term 'physical harm' could be synonymous to 'Covid-19 infection'. By switching the terms, it can be seen that any condition, practice, or violation, which subjects a person to the risk of contracting Covid-19, can be seen as a safety concern. Also, the terms 'health concern' or 'health safety concern' are seen frequently throughout the literature and are treated similarly to 'safety concern', with the addition of being in a health context. The distinction between perceived risk and safety concerns is very important, since both can be clearly defined, and a distinction can be made between the two. However, in more superficial literature, there is a danger of both terms being used as synonyms.

Health safety concerns have become an increasingly popular area of interest in the field of tourism research. Growing global mobility combined with frequent outbreaks of new strains of viruses

pose a significant health risk in today's global society. The risk of getting a viral infection abroad is a major safety concern, which has a substantial influence on the motivation to travel. As an example, Gallego et al. (2022) mention the tropical areas, where infections with Malaria, Dengue, Yellow Fever, and Ebola are legitimate concerns, meaning that travelers have to assess whether the risk is acceptable or not. While these infections are a permanent risk, there is also an increased risk for temporary, local, epidemics like SARS or the Avian Flu, which can influence the decision to travel. (Gallego et al., 2022.)

When travelling by air, the airport and aircraft environment are commonly seen as safety concerns by passengers, especially since they require being in an enclosed space with other people for a prolonged period of time. Budd et al. (2021) have examined this environment in a study conducted in Norway with Norwegian passengers. The researchers conclude that the aviation industry has always been a highly vulnerable one. As some of the major recent events, which have brought aviation to a halt, they mention the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, the SARS epidemic of 2003, as well as the Eyjafjallajökull volcanic eruption of 2010. In addition, internal events such as the IT systems failure, which grounded most British Airways planes in 2017, are mentioned. Such events evoke safety concerns in passengers, which need to be immediately addressed by airlines in order to retain their customers' trust. Such events ultimately demonstrate the need for resilience in an industry like aviation. (Budd et al., 2021.)

As Garaus and Hudakova (2022) mention in their research, Covid-19 and the associated health safety concerns of airline passengers have increasingly limited air travel demand in the early stages of the pandemic. Passengers have become increasingly worried about the safety of the airports and the aircraft environment. This phenomenon was studied by Budd et al. (2021) in Norway, where these two specific safety concerns were identified as being the most central throughout the surveyed population. They concluded that sentiments about these safety concerns are manifold, and that safety concerns, despite being relatively homogenous within the population, are graded differently in terms of severity, which is dependent on factors such as health, age, and personality. (Garaus and Hudakova, 2022; Budd et al., 2021.)

Another study which was focused about the safety concerns related to the airport and aircraft was conducted by Graham et al. (2020), where pensioners over the age of 65 in the United Kingdom

were surveyed about which stage of the air travel journey they classify as the greatest safety concern. The results clearly indicate that time spent inside the aircraft raises the most safety concerns, while time spent in the terminal is seen as having significantly fewer safety concerns. (Graham et al., 2020.)

4.2.3 Travel desire

At first glance, travel desire and travel motivation seem like two rather similar concepts. Both concepts evoke a need to leave one's familiar surroundings, to experience change. It is therefore important, in order to understand the concepts, to make a clear distinction between the two. A distinction is made by Tasci and Ko (2017), who use Gray's 1979 travel-motivation theory to define the two concepts. According to them, the travel-motivation theory states that travel desire constitutes a key factor that fuels travel motivation. In other words, a desire to change one's surroundings leads to travel motivation. Depending on the desire, the motivation is affected. (Tasci & Ko, 2017.)

Travel desire yielded some surprising results, when looking at how it was discussed in the context of air travel and the current pandemic. The expectation was, after looking at Maslow's hierarchy of needs model, that travel is closely related to the need for self-actualization, located at the top of the pyramid, meaning that all other needs have to be accounted for, before the need for self-actualization arises. However, the analysis of one study has revealed interesting results, which leads to a new insight.

According to McLeod (2018), physical needs and safety needs are situated at the bottom of the pyramid in Maslow's hierarchy of needs model. Since the pandemic constitutes a significant infringement on both physical and safety needs, it would stand to reason that a desire to travel is not an immediate need, since it is located far away at the top of the hierarchy structure. Budd et al. (2021) however have demonstrated that some research participants put the desire to travel much lower on the pyramid, so that it constitutes a more basic, immediate need. Another study by Bremser et al. (2021) confirms this observation, and, in addition, the researchers not only validate some participants heightened desire to engage in travel, but they also highlight the "fluidity" of the need within the context of Maslow's model. This means that a need can change its location

within the hierarchical structure, and that external or internal events can act as the catalyst for said movement. (McLeod, 2018; Budd et al., 2021; Bremser et al., 2021.)

5 Discussion

The main objective of this research project was to gain a better understanding of how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe. The need for such research became quickly apparent in March of 2020, when the aviation industry collapsed worldwide, and travel demand declined drastically, either due to restrictions or people being too afraid to travel. Within Europe, flight numbers reached levels last seen at the end of the Second World War, which makes the Covid-19 pandemic the most serious crisis in civil aviation history.

Further objectives of this research, apart from gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon, were to supply practical information for aviation stakeholders, helping them to better prepare for possible future pandemic outbreaks. Here, the purpose was to focus on the European market and population, which allowed for a more thorough examination of said demographic and its dynamics. Hence, following research question was formulated:

“How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence the travel motivation of airline passengers in Europe?”

In order to answer the research question, the author conducted a literature review. After a careful evaluation and checking the suitability of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches, it was decided that the qualitative approach was the most suitable. In the context of this research, academic literature was utilized, meaning high-quality research articles from well-established scientific databases. Due to the high impact Covid-19 had on society, and especially on the aviation industry, significant research has been undertaken, hence there was a body of high-quality literature available.

Since this research relied solely on previous academic literature, the research process was designed to be thorough and meticulous. From an initially vast amount of literature, the author was eventually able to extract research articles that fulfilled all the criteria and quality standards. This meticulous process enabled a high degree of rigor, which is a requirement for high-quality results.

Furthermore, the research was found to be reliable, as a careful documentation of the research process allows for similar results when the protocol is followed. In other words, the research is replicable.

5.1 Summary of the main findings

The results of this study offer an initial overview of how the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the travel motivation of European air travelers. One of the main findings is that there are major, common pathways through which the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the decision making process. In addition to these common pathways, there are more individual ones as well. They are often dependent on the age, gender, or socioeconomical background of the traveler. As can be seen in Figure 8. in chapter 4, two types of factors were identified through which Covid-19 influences the decision making process: External factors and internal factors. External factors are comprised of economic impact and public health measures. Meanwhile, internal factors consist of risk perception, safety concerns, and travel desire.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly influenced the travel motivation of European air travelers from the very beginning of the pandemic in March of 2020. The pandemic constituted a new travel hazard not faced by Europeans since the Spanish Flu, which was the last pandemic in Europe of similar scale. In contrast to Asia, where there have been several contained epidemics in recent decades, and where health and safety measures have been implemented to address these situations, Europe has not been sufficiently prepared for such an eventuality.

5.2 Practical implications

The results of this research offer an initial insight into the thought process of airline passengers when confronted with a health crisis like Covid-19. Moreover, since this research focuses on European airline passengers, the studied demographic has very little experience with this type of health crises, thus the results can prove valuable for aviation stakeholders, especially airlines and airport operators.

The research revealed that there is a significant lack of preparedness within the aviation industry to deal with a pandemic. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is a so-called black-swan event, which

most likely would have caused significant disturbance even if contingency plans would have been available, due to the sheer extent of the crisis. From the results yielded in this research, the author has comprised three recommended actions, which would help airlines and airport operators prepare for future pandemic outbreaks. The three recommended actions are Improvement of communication, advanced airport design, and the reform of airline refund policy. Each one of the recommended actions addresses one or more factors identified in chapter 4.

Improvement of communication

One of the most often mentioned frustrations that passengers have complained about are related to how airlines have communicated with them during before, during, or after their journey. This issue is not new to the airline industry, but it has also not been addressed properly. Usually, the complaints are linked to flight delays, cancellations, or policy changes. The issue of insufficient communication could be described as an endemic problem, meaning that it has existed for a long time, yet it does not influence daily operations enough to cause a significant issue. Bizarrely, the fact that the problem has existed for a long time already has made people used to it, they perceive it as being part of the travel experience.

This is where the situation has changed, however. Usually, lacking communication has been perceived by passengers as a nuisance. With Covid-19, communication has become one of the most important factors affecting passengers travel decisions. This means that a lack in communication or bad communication can lead to passengers avoiding an airline and opting for another one.

What once was an endemic problem has suddenly developed into a key issue, capable of causing significant financial and reputational damage to the airline or airport operator. It is therefore the recommendation of the author that airlines in particular develop their communication channels, through which they can reach their customers. This could be achieved by means of more active social media channels or a mobile application. Also, instead of having solely one-way communication channels, there should be an easier option for customers to contact the airline, for example via a dedicated online chat.

The severity of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that passengers have higher levels of anxiety, since the pandemic situation has been highly dynamic the whole time. This led to a need for up to

date knowledge, and people making decisions based on that knowledge. Referring to the airlines and airport operators, better communication equals a higher level of trust, and, therefore, competitive advantage.

Advanced airport design

The way an airport is designed has a significant influence on how safe passengers feel and how pathogen transmission can be reduced (Chung, 2015, pp. 42-53). It is common to adapt a health safety viewpoint when thinking about airport design. However, designing an airport is in fact a balance act between optimizing health safety and efficiency. Restrictive health safety measures would inevitably cause disruptions in daily operations, while solely focusing on efficiency would lead to increased health safety risks. (Chung, 2015, pp. 42-53.)

As was highlighted in the previous paragraph, the airport design is a very complex issue, where many different variables need to be taken into account. The design is therefore a compromise, which needs to be adaptable to various different situations and circumstances. One way of improving on the design of an airport which would also allow for social distancing measures to be implemented more efficiently would be to simply make the airports bigger or adjust the space available. Terminals are usually long and narrow, which makes it more difficult to maintain distance to one another. It could be investigated whether different terminal shapes would help in reducing contacts and improve passenger flow. Also, more self-service stations would help in reducing potential pathogen transmissions, as contact between staff and passengers would be limited.

Reform of airline refund policy

The last recommendation addresses the issue of airline refunds. It is notoriously difficult to get refunded by many airlines. It is not uncommon to take weeks or even months to get a refund for a ticket. It is often unclear under which circumstances the customer is entitled to a refund. Often times, when a flight is cancelled due to severe weather or a similar event, airlines will refer to a force majeure situation. If a flight is cancelled due to force majeure, a refund for a cancelled flight is unlikely. However, the airline is required to offer an alternative transportation to the destination.

In the case of Covid-19, people started to become apprehensive towards air travel, as they were afraid to not being entitled to a compensation should their flight be cancelled due to the pandemic. Also, airlines were suffering financially, making the process even more difficult. Moreover, airlines had to incorporate Covid-19 into their refund policy, which proved to be a difficult and very confusing for consumers. This uncertainty of getting one's money back in the event of a flight cancellation due to Covid-19 has caused people to avoid flying altogether. Noticing this trend, some airlines and travel agencies have started to offer insurance policies, which would cover disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Also in this case, Covid-19 has brought to light another latent issue which has not been addressed to a sufficient degree. In order to increase confidence and motivation to book a journey by air, airlines have to reform their refund policies and establish procedures, which give passengers peace of mind when booking a flight.

5.3 Limitations of the research

The study that was conducted researched a new and recent phenomenon. It can even be said that a phenomenon like the Covid-19 pandemic is an event of such magnitude, that research results gained from previous, similar events does not necessarily apply. Also, a pandemic event of comparable scale and severity has not occurred in Europe for over 100 years. Initially, the intention was to gather primary data by conducting interviews with individuals working in aviation. Due to the very exceptional situation however, access to people with the necessary knowledge was completely restricted, and all attempts to reach out to them went unanswered. The severity and scale of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a significant amount of research being conducted on the topic in a relatively short period of time, which further encouraged the author to base his research on academic literature.

The author has paid special attention to the issue of internal validity. As internal validity is based on the rigorous application of a meticulous research methodology, the author has made a significant effort to ensure exactly that. The methodology being used has been planned carefully and thoroughly, in order to ensure the most accurate results possible. Furthermore, the collected data has been examined multiple times and by means of various stages throughout the research process. Especially because the research is based on academic literature only, the author has had to

ensure that the research question has been answered correctly. Due to the thorough selection process, which helped in assessing the quality of the data used, it was possible to ensure a high level of internal validity.

In addition to internal validity, external validity was considered as well. By external validity, the extent of generalizability of the research results is evaluated. Since the research was focusing on European airline passengers, it is very limited in terms of applicability to populations in other regions of the world. Even within Europe, circumstances can be substantially different depending on the country, which imposes a further limitation on the generalizability of the research results. Due to the scope and geographic limitation of the research, the results cannot be generalized.

To achieve the highest possible reliability of data, the author has implemented a thorough and rigorous protocol for the selection of his data. This is especially important, since the research is based on academic literature only, and a lack of a proper data collection protocol could compromise the research effort. In addition, with the Covid-19 pandemic being a highly popular research topic at time of data collection, a substantial number of articles that were published did not satisfy the inclusion criteria established by the author. This further highlighted the need for a rigorous data collection process in order to being able to attain the most accurate data of the highest quality.

From the very beginning of the research process, the author was aware of his potential bias, as he has a strong relationship with the aviation industry due to his professional background. This potential bias was acknowledged by the author throughout the research process, and by implementing a meticulous and rigorous methodology, the highest possible degree of accuracy and reliability of the data was ensured. However, despite all the measures that have been implemented to reduce bias, it cannot be ruled out with absolute certainty.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

Due to the extent and recentness of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are many important issues and questions which require further inquiry. In the context of Europe, follow-up studies could be conducted on the same populations which were subject of inquiry in the studies used in this research.

The studies could assess whether there are new channels through which Covid-19 exerts its influence on the population. Such a comparison could be best achieved by means of a longitudinal study, which would facilitate the observation of potential changes in travel behavior and travel motivation, especially since the initial fear factor of the pandemic is receding, and other issues such as rising inflation and the energy crisis in Europe are a bigger concern.

A second research recommendation concerns the comparison of different cultures, and to what extent the Covid-19 pandemic influences travel motivation depending on the cultural background. A suggestion would be the comparison between a European and an Asian country, since Asia has frequently experienced regional pandemics in the past decades, whereas the influence of said pandemics has had almost no influence of European air travelers. This would offer two interesting viewpoints on the same issue from two very different cultural backgrounds. Also, such research would directly contribute the aviation industry, as it would help to understand how different nationalities experience such a health crisis. Therefore, the industry could tailor their communication better, and reach a wider audience in a specific region of the world.

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