Understanding Leisure Vacation Travel Intention of Indian Vacationers Amidst Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

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Abstract

This study aimed to elicit the critical factors influencing Indian domestic vacationers' travel intention for leisure vacation destination choice amidst COVID-19. The study proposed a new model based on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), expanding it by adding contextual variables like perceived risk, perceived knowledge of COVID-19, and information search behaviour. The study used a quantitative approach using online social media platforms and emails of 312 respondents to analyze and test the hypotheses using IBM SPSS and AMOS tools. The results indicated that physical and functional risk negatively influenced attitude; whereas, psychological risk negatively influenced travel intention. Perceived knowledge of COVID-19 significantly influenced travel intention. Attitude strongly mediated subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and perceived knowledge of COVID-19 to travel intention. This explains the strong implications for travel destination marketers for marketing safer destination choices to vacationers.

Keywords : **perceived risk, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), travel intention, theory of planned behaviour (TPB), destination choice**

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The beginning of 2020 witnessed the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which changed the entire scenario for many industries. Tourism is one of the susceptible industries to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, disease outbreaks, natural disasters, terrorism, and political upheaval (Chavan & Bhola, 2014; Zenker & Kock, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed multiple travel restrictions on all the countries (travel destinations), experiencing huge losses ranging from $300 – $500 billion. The global travel and tourism industry was estimated to lose around USD 2.7 million in 2020, with 100 million job losses (Grant Thornton & FICCI, 2020). Asia & Pacific regions are most badly hit with $57 million (UNWTO, 2020) and 40 – 50 million job losses being at risk directly and indirectly in the industry. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 is one of the largest disruptions and a disastrous event of the 21st century impacting the tourism industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered the perception and behavior of leisure vacationers regarding their destination choice (Abbasi et al., 2021). Vacation travel intention and destination choice are complex, multifaceted, and dynamic processes (Decrop & Snelders, 2004). India offers unlimited unexplored domestic destinations for leisure vacations (Muthukumar, 2009). Vacationers go for their leisure vacations with

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their family and friends to escape from routine to explore new experiences through destination images (Shankar, 2020). The decision to travel for leisure vacation is currently perceived as exceedingly risky and threatening due to the uncertainty related to the external pandemic surroundings and regulatory guidelines by the government. Vacationers are anxious and worried about their safety during this time. They are concerned about hygiene factors at the destinations due to the potential fear of disease transmission. Moreover, it provokes psychological fear, preventing them from venturing out (Qiu et al., 2020).

The possible threat of transmission of COVID-19 perceived by the vacationers leads them to express their perceived risk. This is manifested in finding more information and knowledge about COVID-19 through various information sources and discovering new options to mitigate it by traveling to nearby safer domestic destinations for their leisure vacations. The various types of perceived risks identified are psychological, social, functional, financial, and physical (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). They strongly govern the decision-making processes of a vacationer and shed insights on building a specific attitude for the selection of destination choice. Moreover, these socio-psychological factors are the main constituents of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 2020).

TPB is extensively known for its strong prediction ability for a wide range of travel behavior, thereby assisting researchers to understand the traveler's decision-making process better (Hwang et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the sufficiency of TPB models has often been questioned (Ajzen, 2020). Few studies have attempted to extend this model to encompass the varied nature and external contextual influence on vacationers' decision-making process (Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016). In addition, perceived knowledge, perceived risk, and information search of vacationers are known to have a considerable impact on overall travel behaviour (Tseng & Wang, 2016). They represent the combined effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on vacationers' safer behavioral choices. Having said that, under the uncertain volatile global pandemic scenario, understanding vacationers' travel intentions and the impact of additional variables on the decision-making process is deemed crucial and is not adequately studied.

To address the above literature gap, the present study is proposed with the following objectives :

(1) To examine the influence of the TPB model on travel intention by extending the model with new variables.

(2) To investigate the influence of perceived risk, perceived knowledge of COVID-19, and information search on attitude for their leisure vacation.

(3) To explore the relationship between the TPB model and perceived risk, perceived knowledge of COVID-19, and information search on vacationers' travel intention.

(4) To investigate the mediating role of attitude between subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, perceived risk, and perceived knowledge of COVID-19 and travel intention (Figure 1).

Further, the present study is novel in the following aspects. Firstly, many studies have examined the perceived value and the perceived benefit combination, yet, examining the influence of perceived risk on travel intention and attitude (Sharifpour et al., 2014) during the COVID-19 pandemic is rare. Notably, it has become a significant travel inhibitor due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. Secondly, while other studies have emphasized the negative impact of COVID-19 and previous outbreaks on the travel intention for international tourism (Jordan et al., 2018), this study selects to examine the domestic vacationers wanting to go for their leisure vacations within India. Thirdly, the current study has attempted to examine the influence of three variables: perceived risk, perceived knowledge of COVID-19, and information search on the Indian domestic vacationers' travel intention. Lastly, the study encompasses the theory of planned behavior's (TPB) theoretical framework to extend it based on the empirical findings to incorporate the changing tourist behaviour in the pandemic context. Above all, this study is a significant academic contribution to the body of tourism knowledge.

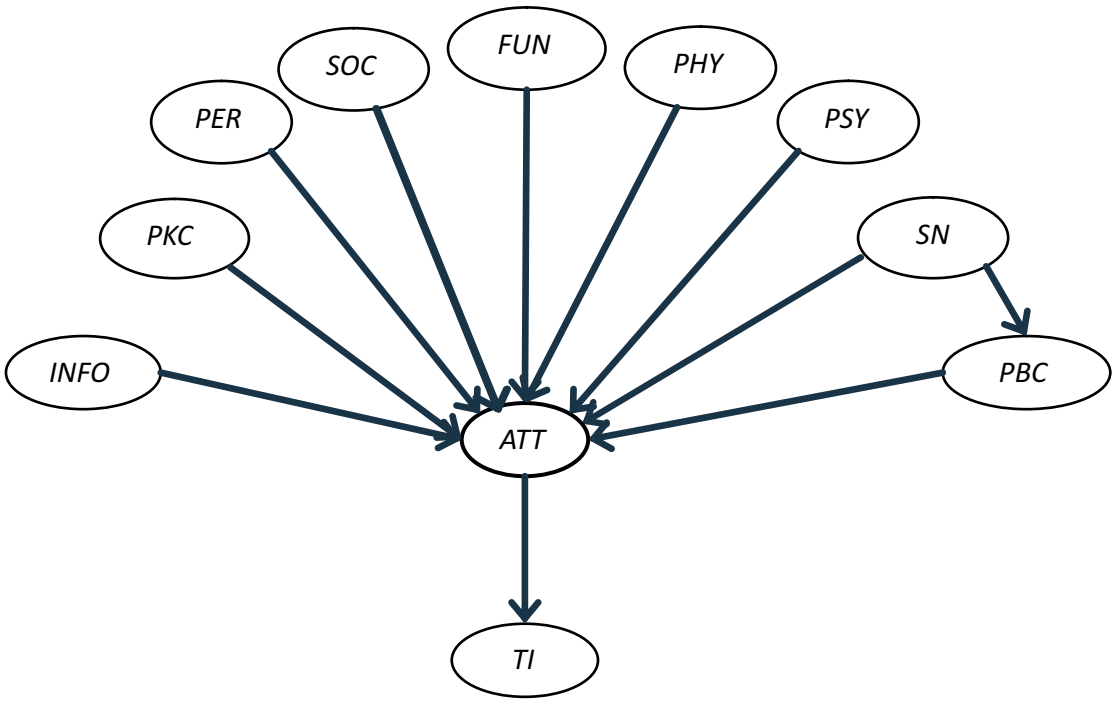
Literature Review

Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

TPB is one of the foremost socio - psychological theories that elucidates the varied nature of consumer behavior intention (Ajzen, 2001). This theory elaborately explains individuals' volitional and nonvolitional control to predict their behavioral intention (Ajzen, 2005). It confirms that an individual's intention is the primary driver of his/her behavior. The core components of the TPB model are attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The attitude and subjective norms are the volitional and the perceived behavioral control is the nonvolitional factor (Ajzen, 2020). TPB's central postulate confirms that the intention of the individual is built upon the attitude (ATT) towards the behavior, subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) (Abbasi et al., 2021). The attitude towards behavior is the major determinant in the entire model, indicating consumers' overall behavior assessment towards a particular object being valued positively or negatively (Bianchi et al., 2017). The subjective norms confine an individual's behavior conformance to family and societal pressure (Han et al., 2010). The perceived behavioral control acts as an important determinant. It is based upon their perception of their capability to either get involved or not to get involved in a specific behavior (Jordan et al., 2018). In totality, the positive affirmations of attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence the behavioral intention of an individual to take specific desired actions.

Its applicability has been widely used in literature to narrate different consumer behavior in varied contexts

Figure 1. ***Proposed Theoretical Model***



Note. *TI* - Travel Intention, *ATT* - Attitude, *PBC* - Perceived Behavioural Control, *INFO* - Information Search, *PKC* - Perceived Knowledge of COVID-19, *SN* - Subjective Norms, *PER* - Performance Risk, *SOC* - Social Risk, *FUN* - Functional Risk, *PHY* - Physical Risk, *PSY* - Psychological Risk.

such as mobile wallet banking (Hasan & Gupta, 2020), adopting information technologies, mobile payments, and online learning (Gómez-Ramirez et al., 2019).

Juschten et al. (2019) conducted a study to investigate the travel intention of Viennese citizens to summer retreat destinations wherein the core TPB model was extended by consideration of heatwaves and empirically established that climate change affects the destination choice of tourists. Similarly, in this research study, the extended TPB was again perused to understand the Indian domestic vacationers' travel intention for their vacation destination. This leads to formulating our study hypothesis related to TPB components with travel intention. The original TPB is extended using perceived risk, perceived knowledge of COVID-19, and information search variables. These additional variables were added to the hypothesized model after a detailed literature review, keeping in mind the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As suggested by several current studies, this helped add empirical evidence to the core TPB model to enhance its predictive ability for behavioral intentions. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses for Indian domestic travelers:

- **H1 :** Vacationers' leisure attitude positively affects their travel intention.
- **H2 :** Vacationers' subjective norms positively affect travel intention.
- **H3 :** Vacationers' perceived behavioral control positively affects travel intention.
- **H4 :** Vacationers' subjective norms positively affect their leisure attitude.
- **H5 :** Vacationers' perceived behavioral control positively affects their leisure attitude.
- **H6 :** Vacationers' perceived behavioral control positively affects their subjective norms.

Perceived Risk

Risk to individuals is either injury or potential loss due to any action/decision. Bauer (1960) first suggested the theory of perceived risk, suggesting that tourists' experienced perceived risk while making travel decisions. It is considered one of the critical variables influencing vacationers' anxiety related to future vacation consumption decisions and destination choices (Sönmez, 1998). As defined by Mowen and Minor (2001), perceived risk is a consumer's perception of the overall negativity of a course of action based upon an assessment of the possible negative outcomes and the likelihood that those outcomes will occur. Perceived risk influences several layers of the vacation decision-making process (travel mode, travel costs, travel accommodation, travel safety, travel party) and specifically destination choice (Fuchs & Reichel, 2006).

Extant literature has established stronger evidence relating to tourist perceived risk with vacationers' travel intention towards the destination choice (Hasan et al., 2020). Therefore, this study proposes that Indian domestic vacationers will have a negative influence on the travel intention for their vacation with higher perceived risk. Vacationers mainly perceive various types of perceived risks: psychological (PSY), social (SOC), physical (PHY), performance (PER), functional (FUN), time, financial, security, and terrorism risks (Han et al., 2010) while going for their vacations. For this study, psychological, social, physical, performance, and functional risks are deemed as related to the COVID-19 pandemic's context. Physical risk contributes to physical health, safety, and danger at destination (Lepp & Gibson, 2003); psychological risk contributes to mental wellbeing and psychological health conditions (Han et al., 2010); social risk contributes to the influence of family, friends, and other important people (Reisinger & Mavondo 2005); performance risk contributes to vacationer not being able to meet his/her vacation requirements related to his/her expectations at destinations, and finally, functional risk contributes to his/her anxiety related to either infrastructure, food, or travel-related failure at the destination.

Vacationers will always try to minimize their perceived risks to maximize the utility of the decision,

particularly in the COVID-19 pandemic context (Ritchie et al., 2017; Sridhar & Murthy, 2017). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses :

- **H7 :** Physical risk negatively affects vacationers' leisure attitude.
- **H8 :** Psychological risk negatively affects vacationers' leisure attitude.
- **H9 :** Psychological risk negatively affects vacationers' travel intention.
- **H10 :** Social risk negatively affects vacationers' leisure attitude.
- **H11 :** Functional risk negatively affects vacationers' leisure attitude.
- **H12 :** Performance risk negatively affects vacationers' leisure attitude.

Perceived Knowledge of COVID-19

Tourists' perceived knowledge contributes to their perception of concern and safety. It also relates to other environmental problems concerning the vacation destination choice. Myung (2018) considered perceived knowledge as a cognitive variable playing a critical role in tourism-related decisions like selecting products/ services/brands and destination choice. It is the vacationer's ability to identify and be aware of various tourism-related information and make related decisions.

Usually, vacationers tend to avoid visiting destinations with insufficient knowledge. Thus, they reduce the possible uncertainty of a decision by not participating in the action due to insufficient knowledge about an object or destination (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). They participate in the action when they believe that their perceived knowledge is sufficiently related to the concerned decision. Existing empirical research studies indicate that tourists perceive knowledge as an essential attitudinal and social factor in their decision formations and behavior (Verma et al., 2018). In line with this evidence, considering tourists' perceived knowledge of COVID-19 (PKC) during the current pandemic is essential to analyze their travel intention for leisure vacations. This leads to formulating the following hypothesis :

- **H13 :** Perceived knowledge of COVID-19 positively affects vacationers' leisure attitude.

Information Search

Information search (INFO) by vacationers has been meaningfully related to identifying leisure travel behavior intention (Fodness & Murray, 1997) as it helps in supporting their awareness, selection, and choice decision in competitive and turbulent markets. They rely on information search, sources, and knowledge to understand leisure vacation-related product and service decisions. According to Moutinho (1987), information search means that a vacationer consults different sources of information prior to making a final purchase decision. This emphasizes three primary factors in tourism behaviour : motives, determinants of travel, and sources of information. The primary motive for information search is to aid trip planning, optimizing vacation planning, and the decision-making process (Gursoy, 2003). The determinants of travel can be considered as travel party type, composition, previous travel experience, and value benefit analysis using various internal and external sources.

In conclusion, tourists utilize information search to enhance their quality of decisions related to tourism purchases and reduce uncertainty and perceived risk. Tourists undertake risk reduction strategies to overcome their risk behavior (Tseng & Wang, 2016). Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis :

↳ **H14 :** Information search by vacationers positively affects their leisure attitude.

Travel Intention

Moutinho (1987) suggested that behavioural intentions are antecedents of tourists' actual behaviour. This explanation supports the theory of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975), whereby an individual's actual behavior is postulated by his/her attitude towards performing a specific behavior. Travel intention (TI) is a type of behavioral intention with a similar theoretical context (Bamberg et al., 2003).

Travel intention accentuates the intent or commitment of tourists to travel (Park et al., 2017). It can be considered a self-encouragement within the travelers to form a desire to visit a place or a destination (Bandaru & Venkateshwarlu, 2020). Undoubtedly, COVID-19 would significantly impact tourists' intention to travel for their vacation. Thus indeed, it's an outcome of a cognitive process that leads to an action based on internal motives. Unfortunately, very few empirical studies have focused on examining travel intention in literature.

A recent study by Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) showed that electronic word of mouth affected tourists' attitudes; similarly, Zarrad and Debabi (2015) also investigated the relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM), tourists' attitudes towards specific destinations, and their travel intentions (Rao & Rao, 2019). Similarly, Wang et al. (2021) examined the mediating role of leisure vacation attitude between perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, perceived knowledge of COVID-19, and travel intention. Thus, we formulate the following hypotheses:

↳ **H15 :** There is a significant mediating role of vacationers' attitude between perceived behavioral control and travel intention.

↳ **H16 :** There is a significant mediating role of vacationers' attitude between subjective norms and travel intention.

↳ **H17 :** There is a significant mediating role of vacationers' attitude between perceived knowledge of COVID-19 and travel intention.

↳ **H18 :** There is a significant mediating role of vacationers' attitude between functional risk and travel intention.

↳ **H19 :** There is a significant mediating role of vacationers' attitude between performance risk and travel intention.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a robust quantitative methodology approach. A thorough literature review was performed for identifying the research variables and appropriate scale for the study. They were modified for a suitable study context and converted into a survey questionnaire form. IBM SPSS and AMOS tools were used to proceed with further data analysis. The details of the same are enlisted below.

Measures

The research questionnaire included the background of the research study, vacation characteristics, demographic information, and questions (items) related to the research constructs. All research constructs were adopted from extant travel literature studies. Finally, three items for leisure vacation attitude (Quintal et al., 2010), subjective norms, perceived behavior control (Abbasi et al., 2021), perceived knowledge of COVID-19 (Han et al., 2010),

and travel intention (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005) were finalized. As perceived risk is a multidimensional construct, it was divided into: psychological risk, physical risk, social risk, performance risk, and functional risk to remove the similarity of the components. Three items of each were finalized to add to the questionnaire. Four items were taken for the information search construct (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). All the survey items were measured on a 7 - point Likert scale (1- *strongly disagree* to 7- *strongly agree*). The details of the variable statements can be referred to in the Appendix.

Further, vacation characteristics and demographics were included to understand the Indian domestic vacationer profile. This questionnaire was then presented to academic experts and regular vacationers for any modification and feedback. Changes were incorporated to ensure the efficiency of the questions, and then it was circulated to the survey population.

Data Collection

The primary data were collected using the online survey method. The pre-tested structured survey questionnaire was sent to respondents in major Indian metros. The survey was sent randomly to all the respondents above the age of 18 to elicit their leisure vacation travel intention during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to COVID-19, direct contact with respondents was not possible. Hence, the online survey questionnaire method was adopted (Kumar et al., 2021). Further, non - representative sampling using convenience and snowball sampling was encouraged to reduce the sample bias as it required the respondents to suggest the specific peer group respondent numbers for circulation of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was then shared in email and text message format, where the link to the questionnaire was shared with the respondents. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed in October and November 2020 through various social media platforms through the network link. Out of which, 350 valid responses were recovered, and 312 were finally used for further data analysis as 38 were excluded from the dataset as deemed unfit for statistical analysis. This ensured an effective recovery rate of 90%.

Data Analysis Technique

IBM SPSS 26 software was applied to analyze the variables of the study. The result section presents the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, measurement model evaluation, and structured equation modeling analysis. AMOS 22 software was used to conduct the reliability analysis of the study questions and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to estimate the results using structural equation modeling (SEM). The model was constructed to validate the correlation between the various constructs of the study.

Analysis and Results

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

This study collected information related to the sample demographics, which are mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. ***Demographic Information of the Respondents***

Variable	Frequency	(%)
Gender		
Male	158	50.06
Female	154	49.40

Age Group (Years)		
18 – 24	96	30.8
25 – 35	82	26.3
36 – 45	58	18.6
46 – 55	47	15.1
56 – 65	23	7.4
65 +	6	1.9
Annual Family Income (Lakhs)		
<10	129	41.3
10 – 19.99	54	17.3
20 – 20.99	30	9.6
30 – 30.99	21	6.7
40 – 40.99	17	5.4
50+	61	19.6
Educational Course		
Undergraduate	23	7.40
Graduate	95	30.40
Postgraduate	194	62.2
Marital Status		
Married	160	51.3
Unmarried	152	48.7

Measurement Model Evaluation

The present study analyzes the internal reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to evaluate the measurement model as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). The reliability analysis of the constructs was established with the minimum Cronbach's alpha value of 33 items with 0.771, which is higher than the critical value of 0.70. Thus, the internal consistency was evaluated. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the most effective method for validating the reliability and validity of the scale. As shown in Table 2, the composite reliability values are greater than the minimum threshold value of 0.70. The composite reliability (CR) value of the scale was 0.87, and the average value extracted (AVE) of all the items exceeded 0.50. Thus, the study results showed a suitable internal

Table 2. *Data Quality*

Variables		Mean	*SD*	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Travel Intention	*TI1*	5.0705	1.95648	0.82	0.86	0.68
	TI2	4.8654	1.99706			
	TI3	4.7532	2.15030			
Attitude	*ATT1*	5.4359	1.64025	0.818	0.81	0.59
	ATT2	5.2564	1.66628			
	ATT3	5.4776	1.43435			
Perceived Behavioural Control	*PBC1*	5.6442	1.57911	0.605	0.70	0.45

	PBC2	5.0224	1.56822			
	PBC3	5.2692	1.59922			
Subjective Norms	*SN1*	4.6122	2.08661	0.868	0.86	0.66
	SN2	4.9231	1.87225			
	SN3	5.0385	1.78015			
Information Search	*INFO1*	1.8365	1.22758	0.574	0.75	0.5
	INFO2	2.4391	1.57640			
	INFO3	2.0801	1.49705			
Perceived Knowledge of COVID-19	*PKC1*	5.0833	1.36779	0.829	0.88	0.71
	PKC2	4.9071	1.30335			
	PKC3	4.6859	1.48217			
Psychological Risk	*PSY1*	5.0865	1.70931	0.897	0.92	0.78
	PSY2	4.9263	1.83684			
	PSY3	4.6955	1.88757			
Performance Risk	*PER1*	3.8429	1.70991	0.795	0.78	0.54
	PER2	3.1859	1.71734			
	PER3	2.8910	1.69953			
Functional Risk	*FUN1*	3.7308	1.66425	0.835	0.84	0.64
	FUN2	4.3718	1.68869			
	FUN3	3.6506	1.61874			
Physical Risk	*PHY1*	3.6186	1.66254	0.785	0.80	0.57
	PHY2	3.4487	1.71355			
	PHY3	4.3205	1.67058			
Social Risk	*SOC1*	3.6795	1.92124	0.858	0.87	0.69
	SOC2	3.8429	1.95060			
	SOC3	3.5224	1.78583			

Table 3. ***Discriminant Validity***

	TI	***INFO***	***ATT***	***PBC***	***SN***	***PKC***	***PSY***	***PER***	***FUN***	***PHY***	***SOC***
Comp	1.000										
INFO	0.116	1.000									
ATT	–0.142	–0.254	1.000								
PBC	–0.145	–0.158	0.458	1.000							
SN	–0.039	–0.040	0.247	0.249	1.000						
PKC	0.219	0.328	–0.113	–0.125	–0.022	1.000					
PSY	–0.272	–0.105	0.357	0.320	0.111	–0.126	1.000				
PER	0.204	0.371	–0.027	–0.034	0.076	0.285	–0.096	1.000			
FUN	0.117	0.336	0.017	0.037	0.151	0.448	–0.007	0.400	1.000		
PHY	–0.104	0.214	–0.264	0.011	–0.084	0.149	–0.097	0.010	0.146	1.000	
SOC	–0.036	0.000	0.338	0.228	0.399	0.016	0.183	0.189	0.241	–0.199	

consistency level, as suggested by Hair et al. (2019). This postulates that the research variables considered in the scale could significantly impact the latent variables. This research study used the maximum likelihood estimation method to estimate the validity and reliability of the scales. It also confirms that the model fitting indices of CFA results meet the minimum requirements along with the goodness of fit measurement of the model being $\chi^2 = 934.334$, $df = 459\ldots$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.036$, RMSEA = 0.058, CFI = 0.904, IFI = 0.906, and TLI = 0.89, indicating that the model is statistically accepted. The aggregate validity of each variable is also good.

Apart from ensuring that the convergent validity of all the variables is distinguished in Table 2, the square root of AVE values is higher than the standardized correlation coefficient of the study variables. This shows that all the variables have good discriminant validity, as shown in Table 3 (as suggested by Fornell & Larker, 1981). Thus, the proposed measurement model is illustrated to have satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity.

Structural Equation Model Analysis

The proposed model (Figure 1) and Table 4 present the model estimation and results of the SEM done for this study. Based on the estimation results of the structural model, 14 paths in the structural equation model with invariably negative path coefficients and significant at the 5% confidence level were received. Therefore, hypotheses H1, H4, H5, H6, H7, H9, H11, and H13 are supported and verified by the present study's empirical research. The hypotheses H2, H3, H8, H10, H12, and H14 are not supported, and hence, are rejected.

Based on the hypotheses, it can be observed that perceived risk has a negative impact on attitude. It is evident from the results of the SEM that physical risk (β *PHY – ATT* = –0.157, $p<0.032$) and functional risk (β *FUN – ATT* = 0.216, $p< 0.014$) have a significant negative relationship with attitude. Thus, it implies that vacationers perceived greater physical threat and danger coupled with the need for safer accommodation, infrastructure, and hygiene-related to their functional risk. While comparing the coefficient value of perceived knowledge of COVID -19 *(PKC)* (β *PKC – ATT* = –0.137, $p<0.076$ at the 90% confidence level) and information

Table 4. ***Path Analysis***

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficients	*p* - values	Decision
H1	*ATT > TI*	0.49	***	Supported
H2	*SN > TI*	0.115	0.158	Not Supported
H3	*PBC > TI*	0.151	0.051	Not Supported
H4	*SN > ATT*	0.554	***	Supported
H5	*PBC > ATT*	0.285	0.007	Supported
H6	*PBC > SN*	0.395	***	Supported
H7	*PHY > ATT*	–0.157	0.032	Supported
H8	*PSY > ATT*	–0.051	0.396	Not Supported
H9	*PSY > TI*	–0.243	***	Supported
H10	*SOC > ATT*	–0.044	0.53	Not Supported
H11	*FUN > ATT*	0.216	0.014	Supported
H12	*PERF > ATT*	–0.168	0.803	Not Supported
H13	*PKC > ATT*	–0.137	0.076	Supported
H14	*INFO > ATT*	–0.054	0.498	Not Supported

Note. *$p < 0.10$; **$p < 0.05$; ***$p < 0.01$.

search *(INFO)* (β *INFO – ATT* = –0.054, *p* < 0.498), it is confirmed that PKC has a considerable effect on attitude; whereas, information search has an insignificant effect.

With respect to travel intention, leisure vacation attitude has a significant relationship (β *ATT – TI* = 0.049, *p*<0.01) with it, suggesting consistency with the theoretical hypothesis of the proposed model. It is also found that psychological risk negatively influences travel intention (β *PSY – TI* = –0.243, *p*<0.01), indicating its strong direct influence on travel intention. This concludes that vacationers are worried, anxious, and nervous while deciding on their vacation destination. Vacationers sought additional knowledge of Covid to reduce their perceived risk for better vacation planning with safer destination choices. This confirms our premise that lower perceived risk with additional knowledge of COVID-19 influences vacationers' travel intention.

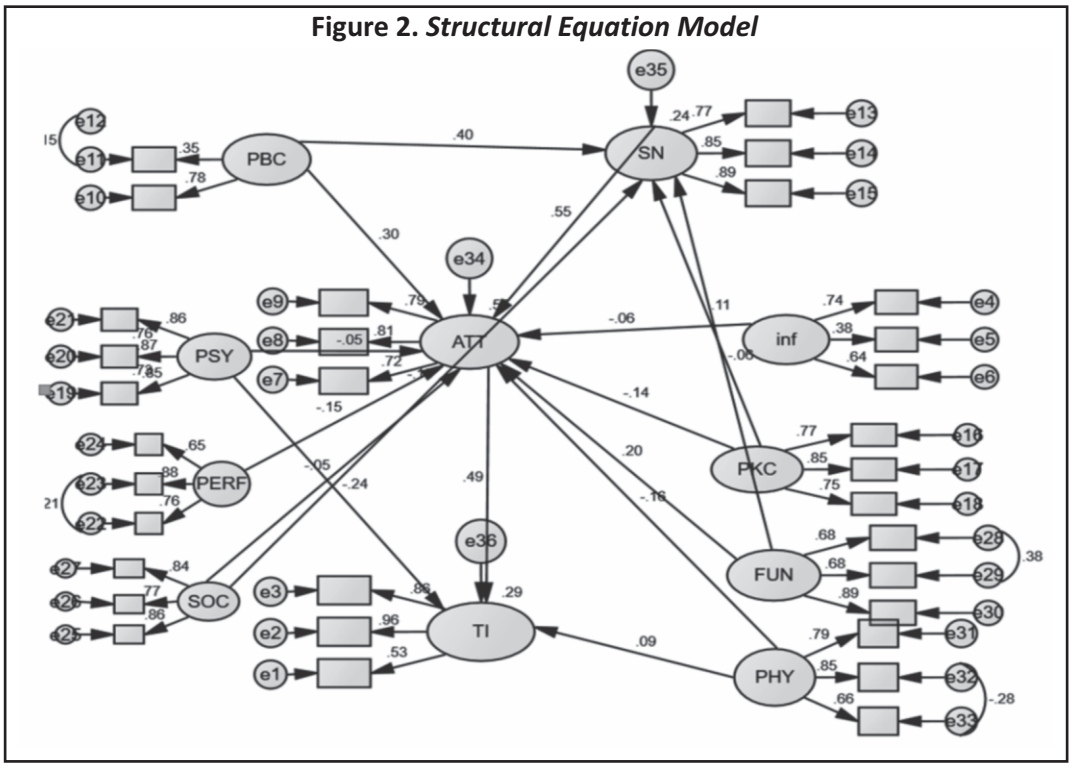
Analysis of the Mediating Effect

One of the objectives of the current study is to examine the mediating relationship between the study variables. As inferred from Table 5, five hypothesized mediating relationships were investigated. The mediating effect results of

Table 5. ***Mediation Analysis***

Hypothesis	Relationship	*p* - values	Relationship	*p* - value	Decision
H15	*PBC > ATT > TI*	0.002	*PBC > TI*	0.124	Full mediation
H16	*SN > ATT > TI*	0.001	*SN > TI*	0.224	Full mediation
H17	*FUN > ATT > TI*	0.05	*FUN > TI*	0.617	Full mediation
H18	*PHY > ATT > TI*	0.04	*PHY > TI*	0.311	Full mediation
H19	*PSY > ATT > TI*	0.44	*PSY > TI*	0.001	No Mediation

Figure 2. ***Structural Equation Model***



five single paths are relevant. Of the proposed five paths, hypotheses H15, H16, H17, and H18 are significant, with a 5% significance level and H19 is insignificant.

This result indicates that perceived behavioral control and subjective norms are significantly mediated by leisure attitude and travel intention. Both hypotheses support the attitude of vacationers and their travel intention for a leisure vacation. The results also showcase that attitude mediates functional and physical risk and travel intention. It demonstrates the mediation behavior concerning perceived knowledge of COVID-19, information search, and travel intention, as shown in Figure 2 . All things considered, attitude towards leisure vacation proves to be one of the most important mediating variables.

All the mediating effects of the test pass the test of significance of 5%, confirming that physical and functional risks and perceived knowledge of COVID-19 are significant factors in predicting travel intentions. Thus, the structural equation model established in this study stands reasonable.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the Indian domestic vacationers' travel intention during the global COVID-19 pandemic. The study extends the original TPB model with the addition of relevant variables. The study's findings reveal that vacationers' perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, functional risk, and physical risk substantially impact leisure vacation attitude and travel intention. Interestingly, on the other hand, the study results report that psychological risk directly impacts travel intention. This successfully determines the extension of the original TPB by improving it empirically with contextually relevant variables.

Further, the present study broadens the perspective of the vacation decision-making process and contributes positively to the existing tourism literature. It employs the new theoretical framework to incorporate the contextual variables to explain the critical understanding of leisure vacationers' travel intention. It further highlights that successful handling of perceived risk and intelligent usage of existing knowledge of COVID-19 helped vacationers make decisions. Vacationers engaged themselves in curating accurate medical knowledge about the disease. They tried to increase it through social interaction and exploring the available media options. Additional knowledge of COVID-19 reduced the perceived risk of vacationers. It suitably encouraged them to think about favorable vacation destinations with minimum risks and a safe destination image (Chew & Jahari, 2014; Wen et al., 2021). The results of the present study demonstrate that all the proposed hypotheses are significant with the leisure vacation attitude except for the hypotheses for psychological, social, and performance risks and information search exhibiting complex associations between them.

The study results demonstrate that leisure vacation attitude has a significant relationship with travel intention. This implies that destination marketing organizations should identify factors influencing tourists' travel intentions. It has been previously confirmed that the cognitive evaluation component of attitude (destination attributes) and affective evaluation of attitude in terms of feelings towards a destination have been employed to influence vacationers' behavioral intentions. It will help them to build a positive attitude towards specific behavior. This result is in line with the findings obtained by Quintal et al. (2010) for predicting travel intentions. Surprisingly, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control have also shown a stronger relationship with attitude through which it influences travel intentions. This is similar to earlier studies' results (Yuzhanin & Fisher, 2016).

Moreover, the study also observes the positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and subjective norms. This explains the strong influence of family, friends, and self-control of the situation on attitude formation. They are prominent antecedents of attitude for specific behavior. This result is in line with the findings of current studies like Ulker- Demirel and Ciftci (2020).

Another key finding of the study indicates that physical and functional risk negatively influence attitude and travel intentions. Any disease risk is directly related to the individual's overall health and wellness. COVID-19

being a disastrous pandemic, it is assumed to have severe health implications on vacationers' minds. Vacationers try to avoid these risks by acting rationally and mitigating them by finding more knowledge. This result is in line with the findings obtained by Joo et al. (2021). Even though physical and functional risk negatively influence attitude, psychological risk influences travel intentions directly, as Han et al. (2020) also observed. Other risk results are found to be insignificant. Understanding the risk can induce behavioral willingness (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021), which is of major importance to tourist organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the perceived risk of vacationers, thus indicating major conclusions for future researchers and industry practitioners to conduct detailed research in a similar area and build conceptual models to unfold tourists' decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is necessary to enhance the safety aspect of the destination and cover all functional aspects related to the vacation destination (Ritchie et al., 2017). Our study also reveals a significant relationship between perceived knowledge of COVID-19 and attitude. This indicates that tourists' perceived knowledge of COVID-19 contributed to fortifying the influence of other sociological variables while predicting travel intentions. Vacationers seek knowledge of the disease to form their attitude and support their understanding of the situation for making their travel decisions. This relationship is rarely examined in previous tourism literature, though our study findings align with the results obtained by Han et al. (2020). Hence, this research is unique and meaningful, contributing empirically to the relevance of perceived knowledge of COVID-19. This elucidates its contribution by adding one of the vital dimensions to the extant tourism literature.

Lastly, the present study has established the significant mediating relationship effect of attitude on perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, physical and functional risk with travel intention. The present study results are similar to previous studies (Park et al., 2017; Reitsamer et al., 2016). Thus, it proves that attitude is the most significant in predicting leisure vacationers' travel intention. It also confirms that forming a positive attitude is a precondition for destination attractiveness.

Theoretical Implications

The present study results furnish theoretical contribution to the tourism literature and industry practitioners. It contributes theoretically in multiple ways. First, it utilizes the original TPB model to study the factors that drive travel intentions. It is one of the foremost studies to examine these factors in the COVID-19 context. It also highlights their decision-making process and factors influencing their travel intention. Previous literature in tourism has examined tourist revisit intention (Das & Tiwari, 2020), but no study has investigated these factors together to examine their influence on travel intention.

Secondly, the present study incorporates the new variables to expand the TPB model, enhancing the tourism literature and body of knowledge. The new proposed model throws light on new contextual factors which can govern the tourist decision-making process and resultantly could open new research opportunities. The inclusion of the above elucidates tourist travel behavior and decision-making in the current COVID-19 pandemic context.

Thirdly, this study has novel results relating the TPB as having a significant relationship between attitude and subjective norms and subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. These results contribute substantially to enhancing the tourism knowledge in the context of Indian tourism, with India being one of the important markets in the Asia - Pacific region with a diverse social and cultural approach. Therefore, this study showcases the new paradigm of applying the extension of TPB to research travel intention in the COVID-19 context.

Practical Implications

The present study has meaningful implications for domestic and international tourists, destination marketers, and destination management organizations. Exploring factors that influence their travel intentions are vital to enhance and improve the destination image, attractiveness, and competitiveness during the COVID-19 context and ensure

that tourists feel safe and relaxed at the destination. Understanding tourists' perceived risk and knowledge of disease will lead them to make safer leisure vacation destination choices during COVID-19. It has direct implications for confirming that destinations should care for vacationers' physical and psychological wellbeing. It should add attributes and amenities to make vacationers' experiences safe, encourage them to visit the destinations, and spend quality time. Destination marketing organizations should make strategies to make destination image safer with better knowledge and information for vacationers to instill confidence in them.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

In conclusion, the present study proposes a robust theoretical framework with significant results, exhibiting attitude as the most important predictor of travel intention. Some of the study's limitations are its geographic context limiting it to India. The study could use only a few variables to check its impact on travel intention. Other critical variables like past experience and destination image are excluded from the study.

Future studies can take on the results obtained in the present study and try out more intense research in the field of vacation decision making with the application of the TPB model with other variables like destination image, past experience, and studies that are longitudinal in nature.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Sujata Joshi conceived the idea and developed the preliminary quantitative research design to undertake the empirical study. Kshitija Pandey extracted relevant research papers from the Scopus database, filtered these based on keywords, generated concepts, and finalized the important research constructs for the study design. Dr. Sujata Joshi verified the analytical methods and supervised the study. The detailed questionnaire and empirical data were developed and collected by Kshitija Pandey. The data analysis was performed using SPSS 25 and AMOS 20 to verify the structural equational modeling of the proposed theoretical model. Kshitija Pandey wrote the manuscript in consultation with Dr. Sujata Joshi.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Appendix

Variable Statements

S. No.	Variable Name	Item Statements	Scale Adopted from Paper
1.	**Subjective Norms**	1. My family thinks I should travel to a domestic destination which is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak for my next vacation.	Abbasi et al. (2021)
		2. My friends want me to travel to a domestic destination which is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak for my next vacation trip.	
		3. People whose opinions I value prefer that I choose a domestic destination which is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak for my next vacation trip.	
2.	**Perceived Behavioural Control**	4. Whether I travel to a domestic destination which is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak is entirely up to me.	Abbasi et al. (2021)
		5. I am confident that I can travel to a domestic destination that is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak if I want to.	
		6. I have sufficient resources, time, and opportunities to visit a domestic destination that is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.	
3.	**Perceived Knowledge of COVID-19**	7. Compared to the average person, I know more facts about COVID-19.	Han et al. (2020)
		8. Compared to my friends, I know more facts about COVID-19.	
		9. Compared to people who have taken vacations recently, I know more facts about COVID-19.	
4.	**Psychological Risk**	10. I feel nervous about traveling to (domestic) destinations during the COVID-19 outbreak.	Reisinger & Mavondo (2005)
		11. I feel anxiety about traveling to (domestic) tourist destinations during the COVID-19 outbreak.	
		12. I feel worried considering traveling to (domestic) tourist destinations during the COVID-19 outbreak.	
5.	**Physical Risk**	13. I may face man-made violent events, earthquakes, tsunamis, other natural disasters, and infectious diseases at (domestic) destinations.	Reisinger & Mavondo, (2005)
		14. I may face some physical threats during my domestic vacation.	
		15. I may get sick on vacation because of COVID-19 or other diseases.	
6.	**Functional Risk**	16. Domestic tourist attractions have poor infrastructure.	Reisinger & Mavondo (2005)
		17. Domestic tourist attractions have poor sanitation & hygiene.	
		18. Accommodation and stay are inconvenient at domestic destinations.	
7.	**Social Risk**	19. Actual travel costs will exceed expectations during a trip.	Reisinger & Mavondo (2005)
		20. The money spent on domestic tourism might not be worth it.	
		21. Other people will think negatively of me if I take a vacation to a domestic destination.	
8.	**Performance Risk**	22. At domestic destinations, food and entertainment arrangements are not as expected.	Reisinger & Mavondo (2005)
		23. Vacations at domestic destinations do not enhance family bonds.	
		24. Domestic destinations are unable to meet the requirements of relaxation.	

9.	**Information Search**	25. I make my travel decisions based on what I already know. 26. I make my vacation decisions without gathering any information from any information sources. 27. Before I start planning my vacation, I am likely to search extensively for information related to it.	Gursoy & McCleary (2004)
10.	**Attitude**	28. Traveling to a (domestic) destination that is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak for my next vacation trip is (Bad – Good). 29. Traveling to a (domestic) destination that is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak for my next vacation trip is (Foolish – Wise). 30. Traveling to a (domestic) destination that is not seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak for my next vacation trip is (Unpleasant – Pleasant).	Quintal et al. (2010)
11.	**Travel Intention**	31. I am willing to take a vacation in the next six months. 32. I am considering taking a vacation in the next six months. 33. I will not be taking a vacation in the next six months.	Reisinger & Mavondo (2005)

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