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Attributes Attitudes and Chaordic Travel Intentions during COVID-19

Abstract

This study examines the chaordic systems influencing holidaymakers' travel intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis, it examines the perceptions of 400 UK holidaymakers travelling to Cyprus. A complementary Necessary Condition Analysis evaluates the size effects of the examined conditions. Moreover, semi-structured interviews with Cypriot industry stakeholders shed light on the relationships that describe the generated configurations. Two solutions were generated: (i) cultural and destination attributes, and (ii) travel attitudes, whereas qualitative findings revealed that industry stakeholders agree that destination attributes, especially the cultural aspects of a place, and a combination of positive and negative travel attitudes are influential on travel intentions. The results showcase the complexity upon travel intentions during uncertainty, yielding significant theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: cultural orientation; destination attitudes; travel attitudes; travel intentions; chaordic systems; Cyprus

1. Introduction

The global tourism market operates in a volatile environment, afflicted by socio-political instability, economic recessions, natural disasters and health crises.

Destinations are faced with a great deal of uncertainty, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling et al., 2020). In this context, understanding tourist decision-making processes and behavioural intentions becomes important for destination recovery (Golets et al., 2021). Attributional tourism aspects are influential on tourist decision-making and behaviour. Destination attributes, for instance, influence tourists' evaluative and cognitive attributions that affect their behavioural intentions, attitudes and expectations (Teas & McElroy, 1986). Destination attributes are a set of characteristics that describe a place as a tourist destination (Heung & Quf, 2000). According to Hu and Ritchie (1993), a tourist destination is a combination of functional and psychological attributes which influences destination attractiveness. While some attributes are common across destinations, the marketing activities of destinations try to emphasise their unique characteristics to distinguish them from others and gain a competitive advantage (Toral et al., 2017). Evidently, tourist perceptions of destination attributes emerge as important in determining travel behaviour, tourist experience and satisfaction (Kim, 2014; Moon & Han, 2018).

Generally, tourists visit destinations for which they have positive perceptions and attitudes. Tourism is an industry that carries risk (Li et al., 2020) due to the nature of the tourism product which is regarded as risky to purchase (Hasan et al., 2017). Thus, tourists frequently try to reduce perceived risks by opting for destinations for which they hold a positive image (Quintal et al., 2010; Wu & Shimizu, 2020). During uncertain times, tourists will select destinations for which they feel higher

psychological comfort, usually familiar destinations or ones perceived as safe (Karl, 2018). However, the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic entails that people may perceive travelling altogether as unsafe (Pelusa & Pichierri, 2020). Indeed, the pandemic has had negative affective reactions to risk, undermining travel intentions (Bae & Chang, 2020). Whilst there is extensive research on the effects of destination attributes and tourist behavioural responses including destination selection, revisit intention and tourist experience outcomes (Qu et al., 2021), scant attention has been paid on the impact of destination attributes and tourists' travel attitudes on travel intentions, especially during uncertainty. Additionally, pertinent literature has followed primarily a linear approach in investigating destination attributes and tourist behaviour relationship, overlooking the complexity characterizing tourists' decision-making when faced with uncertainty.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effects of destination attributes and tourist attributions on travel intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing from Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean that relies heavily on tourism, the study's focus on the behavioural aspects of British tourists during a crisis yields significant insights regarding destinations' recovery prospects (Golets et al., 2021). In light of expectations of an increase in pandemic incidences (Dodds, 2019), findings carry important theoretical and practical implications. Although several previous studies have focused on destination attributes and tourist attributions on travel intentions, the literature is silent concerning the complexity of those aspects during uncertainty. For instance, studies indicate that those severely affected by the pandemic show higher willingness to travel (Boto-Garcia & Leoni, 2021) despite indications that crises negatively impact international travel intentions (Poulaki & Nikas, 2021). Moreover,

uncertainty intolerance predisposes tourists to holiday sooner (Williams et al., 2022) highlighting the complexity surrounding travel intentions during crises.

The study adopts complexity theory that provides a suitable lens in order to examine the complex interface between attributional tourism aspects and travel intentions as it considers the complicated relationships between antecedents that influence travel intentions. Complexity theory suggests that single antecedents are not able to adequately predict an outcome and rather considers the interactions between causal antecedents (Woodside, 2017). Specifically, we use a sequential explanatory mixed-method strategy combining quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data is analysed using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) which is appropriate for the exploration of causal recipes (i.e. the combinational effects of the predictors) and Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) that allows the identification of the factors necessary to influence travel intentions. Interviews also provide supportive evidence that uncover the relationships that describe such configurations. Theoretically, the study illuminates the chaotic systems of destination attributes and travel attitudes upon travel intention, and also compares and contrasts the complex perceptions of holidaymakers with the perspectives of the industry stakeholders. Methodologically the study contributes in three parts: (i) it employs fsQCA, a method that is relatively novel in the tourism domain, (ii) it uses NCA, which is new as a complementary method of analysis, and (iii) it compares the results of the non-linear analysis with qualitative findings, something that is novel in the tourism literature. Jointly, the theoretical and methodological contributions provide several practical/managerial suggestions concerning the improvement of destination management and marketing strategies,

tailored to specific needs through the provision of different pathways. In parallel, they showcase the need to examine the chaordic systems of destination attributes and tourism attitudes, offering the appropriate tools for such evaluation.

2. Study context

The island of Cyprus lies in the Eastern Mediterranean basin and is considered to be a well-known sea and sun destination. Its economy relies heavily on tourism, with the industry contributing approximately 23% to the country's GDP (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2019). The economic importance of tourism was further highlighted after the collapse of Cyprus' banking sector in 2013, which forced the government to accept a €10 billion bailout from international lenders (Zopiatis et al., 2020). Despite the turbulence in its economic sector, Cyprus welcomed 3.97 million tourists in 2019, yielding €2.68 billion in revenue (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2020). Although the island's main target markets include the UK (33.5%), Russia (19.7%), Israel (7.4%) and Greece (4.3%), the UK represents the largest tourist market for Cyprus which was once a British protectorate.

Nonetheless, the industry was shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic which caused tourist arrivals to Cyprus to drop by 83.4% in 2020, leading to a subsequent 90% fall in tourism revenue (Financial Mirror, 2020). In April 2021, the island announced that it was ready to accept vaccinated tourists flying to Cyprus in the summer, aiming primarily at the UK market (BBC, 2021). The summer period has always represented an important season for Cyprus whose tourism product relies largely on sea, sand and sun. Whilst attempts have been made in the last two decades to upgrade the Cyprus tourist product and to enrich the island's destination image by highlighting cultural

and natural attractions that could be visited off season, its tourism product remains stubbornly seasonal (Farmaki et al., 2017). Sea and sun are acknowledged as leading attributes for island destinations which, in turn, influences travel attitudes and visit intentions (Alipour et al., 2020).

Thus, Cyprus offers an interesting background to study travel intentions during uncertainty. First, relevant studies indicate that during the pandemic, tourists' international travel intention have been adversely impacted at the expense of destination proximity and/or 'localism', especially in terms of novel and cultural experiences (e.g., Dedeoglu et al., 2022). Being the farthest destination in the European Union, Cyprus lends an appropriate context for examining British tourists' travel intentions in relation to travel attitudes and destination attributes as insights may be gained regarding the elements that influence international travel intentions. Second, as a small island destination, Cyprus can be seen as an important context for the examination of travel intentions during uncertainty as findings may enhance our understanding of tourists' risk perceptions and travel attitudes during a crisis (Gu et al., 2021), especially in relation to island destinations that have a vulnerable environment and limited resources (Farmaki et al., 2016).

3. Theoretical rationale

3.1 Destination attributes, travel attitudes and travel intentions

Destinations represent "amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers" (Buhalis, 2000, p. 97). Thus, destinations are perceived by tourists subjectively in accordance to certain attributes, the combination of which

includes tangible and intangible elements as well as artificial and natural aspects (Isaac & Eid, 2019). Gearing et al. (1974) identified five attribute categories including: a) natural, b) social, c) historical factors, d) recreational and shopping facilities and e) infrastructure, food and shelter. Likewise, Buhalis (2000) recognised attractions, accessibility, amenities, activities, available packages and ancillary services as core destination attributes. Extensive research has been performed aiming to develop comprehensive lists of destination attributes, with the majority of researchers using multiple destination attributes to capture perceived destination image (e.g., Hu & Ritchie, 1993; Kim, 2014). Destination attributes are, therefore, context specific and may vary depending on the destination and/or tourism form; equally, perceptions of destination attributes are influenced by tourists' personal factors such as cultural orientation (Jackson, 2019).

Whilst most destinations share common attributes, marketers attempt to emphasise their unique attributes to differentiate them from competitors (Toral et al., 2018). As such, destination attributes hold an important position in tourist decision-making as they influence perceived destination image and, correspondingly, destination attractiveness and competitiveness (Qu et al., 2021). Generally, the more positive tourist perceptions are of a destination's attributes, the more positive the attitudes towards the destination will be and, by extent, the more likely tourists will select to visit it. As tourists often lack knowledge about a destination they never visited before, they tend to rely on their perceptions of destination attributes - as drawn from various information sources - in order to make a decision about where to travel. Indeed, a burgeoning number of studies examine the effects of destination attributes on tourist decision-making and behaviour, confirming their influence not only on

destination selection but also on tourist experience and satisfaction, word-of-mouth and revisit intention among other variables (e.g., Eom et al., 2020; Gannon et al., 2017; Han et al., 2019; Kim, 2014; Moon & Han, 2018).

3.2 Travel decision-making during uncertainty

Considering the nature of the tourism product which carries a certain degree of risk (Hasan et al., 2017), the importance of destination attributes on tourists' decisions and behaviours is not surprising. According to Karl (2018), tourists tend to rely on their subjective judgements when making travel-related decisions with the aim of minimising losses and maximising benefits. Destination attributes, in particular, emerge as important influencers on travel decision-making particularly during uncertainty, as tourists attempt to mitigate perceived risks by selecting destinations for which they hold positive perceptions and attitudes (Quintal et al., 2010). Most frequently, tourists opt for familiar destinations or destinations perceived as safe (Karl, 2018). Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted people's travel intentions, shifting concerns from questions about where to travel to whether to travel in general (Pelusa & Pichierri, 2020).

Although the tourism industry has been relatively resilient in facing challenges caused by crises (Spanaki et al., 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented situation (Pappas, 2021). Crisis management studies highlight that tourism decision-making complexifies during uncertainty (Karl, 2018; Pappas & Glyptou, 2021) with tourists modifying or cancelling their travel plans depending on the stage of their decision-making (Decrop, 2010; Mansfeld, 2006). Notwithstanding, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only complexified destination selection decisions

but has had adverse effects on tourists' holiday intentions overall (Bae & Chang, 2020; Pappas, 2021). Whilst negative effects on travel intentions are somewhat expected during uncertainty, the prolonged situation inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic complexified tourism decision-making as revealed by extant literature. Studies, for example, identify higher willingness to travel for those severely affected by the pandemic (Boto-Garcia & Leoni, 2021). Likewise, the crisis caused by the pandemic had negatively impacted international travel intentions with many tourists opting to holiday domestically or choosing destinations that have a close proximity to their home country (Poulaki & Nikas, 2021). In addition, evidence shows that intolerance to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic encouraged tourists to holiday sooner rather than delaying the holiday plans (Williams et al., 2022).

Even so, scant attention has been paid on the impact of destination attributes and tourists' travel attitudes on travel intentions. Furthermore, previous research has followed primarily a linear approach in investigating the relationship between destination attributes and tourist behaviours, overlooking the complexity characterizing tourist decision-making, especially during uncertainty. The aim of this study is, thus, to examine the relationship between destination attributes, tourists' travel attitudes and travel intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of chaos and complexity theory.

3.3 Chaos and complexity

The theory of chaos is used to analyse complex systems such as human behaviour. First introduced in 1963 (Lawrence et al., 2003), the theory rests on the tenet that complex systems consist of many components characterized by non-linear

relationships that evolve over time (Olmedo & Mateos, 2015). Specifically, the term chaos refers to “a class of dynamic behaviour of deterministic systems characterized by sensitive dependence on initial conditions, diverging but constrained trajectories that imply unpredictability, and complex organisation or structure” (Schuldborg, 2011, p. 183). Therefore, the theory suggests that behavioural patterns may not be predicted long-term due to the presence of small differences in behaviour which may yield several different outcomes (Kellert, 1993).

Chaos theory evolved into complexity theory (Pappas, 2019) due to the acknowledgement that the world is complex and full of phenomena that cannot be sufficiently explained through cause-and-effect relationships. According to Zahra & Ryan (2007, p. 855) complexity theory “deals with systems that have many interacting agents and, although hard to predict, these systems have structure and permit improvement”. Complexity theory essentially describes non-linear and dynamic interactions of components aiming to explain how a combination of antecedents may provide causal solutions for complex phenomena under study (Woodside, 2017). Hence, multiple causal solutions may predict an outcome that can be the result of random interactions without being prescribed by a deterministic cause (Kretzschmar, 2015).

The concept of a ‘chaordic system’ results from the relationship between complexity and chaos (Fitzgerald & Van-Eijnatten, 2002). The word ‘chaordic’ comes from the combination of the words ‘chaos’ and ‘order’ and it is used to emphasise the character of chaotically-ordered entities and complex systems. Complex systems are considered chaordic because the behaviour resulting from the complex and dynamic interactions

of components produces new structures (Schneider & Somers, 2006) that are based on unpredictability and pattern (Olmedo, 2011). A key characteristic of chaordic systems is that they continuously evolve as a result of unexpected dynamic changes, forming new configurations (Olmedo & Mateos, 2015). Hence, chaordic systems are impossible to plan long-term, form new complex structures in a spontaneous and endogenous manner and influence phenomena due to unexpected dramatic changes (Pappas, 2021).

Although these theories have been employed in many disciplines to explain people's motives and behaviours, they have been particularly useful in tourism research (Farmaki et al., 2021; Pappas & Glyptou, 2021). Specifically, tourism decision-making and travel intentions are characterized by complexity as they rely on many criteria, the interaction of which may generate various combinations of predictors that explain tourist behaviour. Such complexity intensifies during crises, emphasising the need for an investigation of the newly formulated chaordic system (Pappas, 2018). Therefore, a complexity focused perspective in tourism crisis examinations might prove to be valuable as it can lead to improved destination planning and management (Reddy et al., 2020). Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused unexpected and chaotic events worldwide, indicating the need for an alternative approach in analysis that considers the non-linear complex systems and tourism dynamics.

4. Study tenets

When we use the term 'tenet' we talk about testable principles that are able to identify the examined complex/chaordic conditions (Papatheodorou & Pappas, 2017). The examination of those conditions entails that consistency metrics and statistical

hypotheses are not important, since the scores of outcome are the ones that signify the efficiency of the generated solutions (Wu et al., 2014). The configuration theory indicates that the same causal factors can lead us to different solutions (Ordanini et al., 2014). This means that this study evaluates the effect of the combinations of simple conditions when they are present or absent with special reference to people going to Cyprus for holidays, and they are originated from the United Kingdom.

Considering all the above, the following tenets have been formulated:

T1: When the interaction of a specific condition with other attributes changes, it can determine a different decision for the holidaymakers.

T2: Recipe principle - The outcome of a complex configuration (a solution including at least two attributes) can consistently produce high scores.

T3: The complex solutions are able to influence the effects of destination attributes and travel attitudes on travel intention.

T4: When the simple attributes are combined with a different way they can have appositive or negative influence upon the travel and destination attitudes and attributes.

T5: Equifinality principle - An adequate effect of destination attributes and travel attitudes on travel intentions does not necessarily produce high outcome scores.

T6: The generation of high Y scores for a given recipe concerning the effects of destination attributes and travel attitudes on travel intentions cannot be applied in all cases.

5. Methods

This study includes two researches. The first one is a mixed research employed to British tourists that have selected Cyprus for holidays. The second research is based on semi-structured interviews with Cyprus tourism key informants evaluating the extent they support the perspectives of the holidaymakers.

5.1 Mixed research

The mixed research was conducted at the Manchester International Airport (UK) during September 2020. All the respondents were adults that have selected Cyprus for their holidays, and were contacted in the airport's communal areas (train station; bus station; parking areas). The study used random sampling. First, the respondents were asked whether they were travelling to Cyprus (exclusion question), and then if they were willing to participate in the research. Afterwards, self-administered structured questionnaires were distributed to the holidaymakers. The average completion time was 10 minutes. Although there was a low missing data proportion, list-wise deletion (exclusion of the whole questionnaire) was employed, since this is considered as the most versatile way to handle missing data (Allison, 2001).

Following Akis et al. (1996), the mixed research has assumed that 50 percent of the examined population will be positively expressed, and the rest 50 percent will have negative perspectives. The same study suggests that a valid research is necessary to

have a 95 percent minimum confidence, and a statistical error of no more than five percent. Therefore, the sample calculation is:

$$N = \frac{Z^2(\text{hypothesis})}{S^2} \Rightarrow N = \frac{1.96^2(0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2} \Rightarrow N = 384.16$$

The sample was rounded to 400, and was stratified by gender (200 men; 200 women).

In order to achieve the set stratification and the requested sample size, 487

holidaymakers were approached. As a result, the response rate is at 82.13 percent.

The research tool (questionnaire) includes 28 Likert scale statements (1 for strong disagreements; 5 for strong agreements). Those statements were adopted from previous studies (seven statements for cultural orientation adopted from Shrihadi et al. [2016]; nine statements for destination attributes derived from Celotto et al. [2015]; six statements for positive travel attitudes and three statements for negative travel attitudes taken from Bloey et al. [2018]; three statements for travel intentions adopted from Chaulagain [2019]). The simple condition of cultural orientation has also been used in the study of Farmaki and Pappas (2022). The questionnaire also embeds gender, which was also used for the stratification of the sample.

The literature suggests that the use of fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) is considered as the most versatile method for the examination of the chaotic dimensions of tourism and the respective complexity (Olya and Al-ansi, 2018; Pappas and Glyptou, 2021). fsQCA is considered a mixed method due to the fact that includes quantitative empirical testing (Longest & Vaisey, 2008) and qualitative inductive reasoning (Ragin, 2000) in order to analyse numerous specific

cases. According to Woodside and Zhang (2013), the study also evaluates the inclusion or exclusion of each of the examined simple conditions (negated sets), and uses the symbol “~” when highlighting its absence. The study also employs Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) as a complementary method for the evaluation of the size effects of the conditions under examination. An important aspect for using fsQCA is that the correlated values of the coefficients that were under examination are less than .6 (Skarmeas et al., 2014), something that reveals that general asymmetry exists. Table 1 confirms the existence of a general asymmetry in all the examined relationships of the study, hence the research can apply fsQCA.

Please insert **Table 1**

The mixed research examines the generation of high membership scores from the evaluated causal recipes. The mixed research was calibrated by using 37 randomly selected cases. For the evaluation of the effect of the holidaymakers’ attitudes upon the travel intention (f_{ti}), the calibrated fuzzy-sets were ‘f_g’ for gender, ‘f_{co}’ for cultural orientation, ‘f_{da}’ for destination attributes ‘f_{pta}’ for the positive travel attitudes, and ‘f_{nta}’ for the negative travel attitudes.

5.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research was performed using semi-structured interviews with industry stakeholders and policymakers in Cyprus. The interviewees were selected using purposive sampling by taking into consideration participant position, expertise and background in the industry. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique where participants are selected based on pre-determined criteria in order to include in the

sample people that the researchers (based on their a-priori knowledge of the topic) regard important given their knowledge on the topic studied (Robinson, 2014). Data saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 2017) was reached at 15 interviews when no new information was observed in the data (Fusch and Ness, 2015). At that point, the researchers were confident that adequate evidence was obtained to reach conclusions (Saunders et al., 2018). Informed by the mixed method findings, the interviews were performed from November 2020 to January 2021 and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. The interviews were conducted in Greek and then translated by a professional translator into English. Each interview began with general questions that aimed to break the ice and establish the profile of the participant. Then, the interviews proceeded with predetermined questions that aimed at examining participant views of destination attribute influences on travel intentions. Data were analysed by both researchers using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and following three rounds of coding as prescribed by Gioia et al. (2013). First, the interview transcripts were read by each researcher independently to identify key themes. In this way, analytical integrity was increased according to investigator triangulation (Flick, 2000). Second, the initial findings were combined and compared to allow for a more objective interpretation of the data. Then, emerging topics were categorized into interrelated themes and refined to allow for sub-categories to emerge (Goulding, 1999). Last, sub-categories were combined with the initially identified themes to validate relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

6. Results

The list of informants and their characteristics are presented in Table 2, whilst Table 3 includes the descriptive statistics of the research held in the UK holidaymakers.

Please insert **Table 2**

Please insert **Table 3**

6.1 Results from the UK holidaymakers

As highlighted above, the 28 selected statements have been derived from the existing literature. Thus, the research used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). In order to achieve a higher efficiency, all loading less than .5 have been excluded from further analysis due to low commonality. Table 4 presents the factor, validity and reliability analysis. In all cases Cronbach A was higher than .7 (according to Nunnally [1978] this is ideally the minimum acceptable level). Since the research has employed CFA, it also had to examine the Average Variance Explained (AVE) and the Composite Reliability (CR). As the findings showcase, in all cases AVE was higher than .5, whilst CR was higher than AVE. These findings confirm the validity and reliability of the study.

Please insert **Table 4**

Table 5 presents the fsQCA findings. This analysis has generated two sufficient configurations. The first solution (f_g,f_co,f_da,~f_pta,~f_nta) includes the demographic of gender and high outcomes concerning cultural orientation and destination attributes. This solution has the higher consistency (.837) and coverage (.443) of the two sufficient configurations. The second sufficient configuration (~f_g,~f_co,~f_da,f_pta,f_nta) appears to generate high outcomes in the positive and

negative travel attitudes. Since only two solutions have been generated, this configuration respectively has the lower consistency (.817) and coverage (.428).

Please insert **Table 5**

Table 6 illustrates the size effects of the combinations of the examined simple conditions. Accordingly, the NCA plots are presented in Figure 1. The findings indicate that two of the four cases (destination attributes; positive travel attitudes) have a small ($0 < p < .1$) size effect, whilst the other two (travel orientation; negative travel attitudes) generate a medium ($.1 \leq p < .2$) size effect. The expression of the ceiling's middle parametric group is made by *ce_fdh* and *cr_fdh*, and the specification of X and Y values is provided by their display (Dul, 2020). As a result the NCA findings confirm the acceptability of both generated solutions derived from fsQCA.

Please insert **Table 6**

Please insert **Figure 1**

6.2 Results from informants

Informant views provide support to the results of the mixed method research. In terms of the influence of destination attributes on travel intention, informants agreed that key characteristics of a place such as cleanliness, hospitality and attractions among others are significant factors predisposing people to travel. As P7 stated, “*destination attributes are the alpha and omega of travelling*”. In relation to this point, the

informants emphasised the importance of cultural destination attributes in influencing travel intentions. The following extracts showcase such views:

“Culture is one of the most fundamental attributes that a destination can ‘sell’ to tourists...culture does not only offer uniqueness to a destination but it can also extend the tourist season so it is very important.” [P8]

“Culture can mean many things to different people...it can be the historical sites tourists visit, the gastronomy or events taking place in a destination. In any case, culture represents the main reason people travel, to meet new people, new tastes, new ways of life...” [P13]

Whilst agreement existed over the importance of destination attributes in travel intentions, some informants pointed to the variance between different types of tourists which in turn influences their decision to travel accordingly. As P14 suggested, *“different tourists look for different things in a destination...a characteristic that may bother one person may not negatively affect another depending on the age or nationality of the tourist”*. In particular, informants highlighted the emerging significance of safety as a key destination attribute in the post-COVID19 era. In the words of P12, *“lack of safety and hygiene in a destination will become a major demotive discouraging people to travel to that destination or even travel at all, opting to holiday domestically”*. Interestingly, informants argued that the increasing importance of safety post-COVID19 will offset tourists’ wish for cost-effective holidays. *“People will avoid crowded places such as large hotels and cruises and choose more exclusive or secluded destinations or travel options”* said P2.

When discussion shifted to Cyprus, several informants agreed that the island has much to offer to tourists especially in terms of culture. As P8 commented “*the rich history of Cyprus means that we can invest on different products including religious tourism, archaeological tourism and so we can target different tourist markets*”.

Nonetheless, other informants pointed out to the fact that not all tourists are interested in the cultural attributes of the destination. As P11 said, “*the key is to offer a combination of attributes to specific groups of tourists depending on their needs and wants*”. Overall, the informants argued that the island is regarded as a safe European destination to visit in terms of hygiene, quality of service and accommodation and such perceptions positively influence travel attitudes. As P8 stated, “*compared to non-European, neighbouring destinations Cyprus is regarded by our target markets as safe, clean, hospitable and of good value....so they’ll choose to travel to Cyprus*”.

Notwithstanding, P13 warned that “*fear of travelling and perceptions of unsafety will create negative travel attitudes in the near future at least as long as this pandemic [COVID-19] settles down...destination planners must think of not only what makes people travel but also of their negative attitudes [to travel] and market their destinations accordingly*”.

7. Discussion

7.1 Sufficient configurations

The study results generate an interesting discussion. Concerning research on British holidaymakers, the two solutions identified appear to be the mirror opposites since the simple conditions included in the first sufficient configuration (gender; cultural

orientation; destination attitudes) are not included in the second one. More specifically, the first solution focuses on cultural orientation and destination attributes. Past research examined the effect of personal factors including cultural orientation and gender on travel intentions in the context of uncertainty, confirming a positive influence (e.g., Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). For instance, gender has been previously found to impact travel intentions as females generally carry more travel anxiety (Neuburger & Egger, 2020). The relationship between cultural orientation and destination attributes was also highlighted by Jackson (2019), indicating that destination attributes are influenced by tourists' personal factors such as cultural orientation. However, this research further expands this rationale by revealing the bilateral influence (also with the inclusion of gender) of cultural orientation and destination attributes upon travel intentions which insofar was not considered. The qualitative findings support this solution as stakeholders in the Cyprus tourism industry have clearly outlined the importance of cultural orientation and destination attributes on travel intentions in general and on travelling to Cyprus specifically. Even if Cyprus is the farthest away destination from the UK, British holidaymakers may still choose to visit it during the pandemic due to the cultural affiliation felt for this previously British colony.

The second sufficient configuration is related to travel attitudes since it includes both, the positive and negative attitudes. As it is revealed, the combination of these attitudes consists of a pathway that affects the travel intentions of holidaymakers. The solution reveals that travel intentions are substantially influenced by the subjective judgements of the holidaymakers, a finding similar with Karl's (2018) study. Nevertheless, in this study the findings reveal that just the combination of positive and negative travel

attitudes are enough to create a sufficient pathway leading to travel intention, leaving aside a potential influence of destination attributes. Studies on travel during the uncertain time of the pandemic generally highlight the influence of negative travel attitudes on international travel intentions (Poulaki & Nikas, 2021); however, the prolonged situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has complexified tourism decision-making. As mentioned in the literature review section, studies examining travel decision-making during the pandemic reveal higher willingness to travel for those severely affected by the pandemic (Boto-Garcia & Leoni, 2021) as well as interest to travel sooner than later in fear of further disruptions and restrictions (Williams et al., 2022). Hence, both negative and positive travel attitudes are relevant in examining travel intentions during times of uncertainty. Findings from the qualitative research also support this argument. Industry stakeholders, for instance, suggested that destination planning and management approaches should consider tourist perceptions and, specifically, both positive and negative travel attitudes as these can act as significant influencers on travel intentions, especially in the post-COVID19 era.

7.2 Confirmation of tenets

The findings confirm all six set tenets. More specifically, each attribute appears to have a high outcome in one of the two generated solutions, leading to the same outcome (travel intention). As a result, the first tenet (T1) is confirmed. Moreover, both sufficient pathways include two of the simple conditions under evaluation. (1st pathway: cultural orientation [f_co] and destination attributes [f_da]; 2nd pathway: positive [f_pta] and negative [f_nta] travel attitudes). These results lead to the confirmation of the second set tenet (T2). The study suggests the existence of two

solutions leading to travel intention (S1: cultural and destination attributes; S2: travel attitudes). Hence, the third tenet (T3) is also confirmed. The fourth tenet (T4) concerns the contrarian case analysis. This tenet is also confirmed since all four of the set simple conditions are included in at least one of the two generated solutions, whilst none of them appears in both pathways. The outcome score for the both pathways is relatively low, suggesting the confirmation of the equifinality principle (T5), which ultimately leads to the confirmation of the sixth set tenet (T6) for the moment that each recipe includes a sup-total of the sum of cases.

8. Implications

8.1 Theoretical implications

The mixed research findings held on British tourists have revealed two pathways focusing on: (i) the cultural orientation and destination attributes and (ii) the travel attitudes. The qualitative research findings based on the perceptions of Cyprus key tourism stakeholders have showcased that industry policymakers and practitioners support the mixed method results. Specifically, they believe that destination attributes and in particular the cultural aspects of destinations are significant influencers on travel intentions during periods of uncertainty. In addition, stakeholders acknowledge the emerging importance of both positive and negative travel attitudes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to travel concerns amongst many tourists. Whilst past research identified personal factors including cultural orientation and gender as influential on travel intentions during crises, this study advances existing knowledge on the theoretical background related to crisis management by highlighting the importance of destination attributes in addition to personal factors on travel intentions.

In addition, this study emphasizes the complexity with which travel intentions are formed during periods of uncertainty (such as that that has emerged because of COVID-19) by revealing that both positive and negative travel attitudes are influential on travel decision-making.

Moreover, this study contributes to extant literature methodologically as it used fsQCA that allows for better understanding of the complex interrelations between the various elements shaping the tourism decision-making at times of uncertainty. In so doing, the examination of travel intentions during COVID-19 was not restricted by linear analytical approaches as the focus was to identify the combinations of factors that influence travel intentions of people. Considering that an increase in the incidences of pandemics is expected in the near future, this study shares significant insights that may inform crisis management theory and enable tourism researchers to better understand travel behaviour at times of uncertainty.

8.2 Practical implications

Destination planners and marketers can use the above generated solutions or a combination of both as a guide for improving destination management and marketing strategies. For example, destinations can emphasise the first solution which prescribes the influence of cultural orientation and destination attributes on travel intentions in their marketing efforts and highlight in promotional activities the cultural aspects of the destination alongside other attributes they deem significant and desirable. In other words, destinations can follow a more targeted marketing approach that will enable them to withstand the challenges emerging from the pandemic crisis. In addition, destinations may consider the second solution which is focused on the

combination of both positive and negative travel attitudes and adjust their marketing strategies and campaigns accordingly. In particular, considering the dual influence of positive and negative travel attitudes, destinations can incorporate in their marketing strategies attributes that may elicit positive travel attitudes whilst minimising or compromising negative travel attitudes. Indeed, the qualitative research findings support these solutions. On the one hand, destination attributes and the cultural orientation of tourists were emphasised as key in driving travel intentions by the interviewees. On the other hand, it was mentioned in the interviews that both positive and negative travel attitudes should be considered by destination planners and managers, particularly in the post-COVID19 era where many people are afraid to travel due to feelings of insecurity, contamination and/or simply concerns of the 'unknown'. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a complex and chaotic environment for destinations. Hence, the findings from this study can illuminate understanding of destination planners and marketers with regard to how a more refined, targeted marketing approach can be implemented to improve destination resilience to crises and inform more efficiently crisis management strategies, particularly for destinations like Cyprus which rely heavily on tourism.

9. Study limitations and future research

The study is not free of limitations. First, fsQCA and NCA has been restrictively used in tourism research entailing that further research is required so as to fully understand the combinational potential of these two methods. Moreover, this study used a combination of mixed research findings and qualitative research which is relatively new in tourism research, implying that any generalization of findings should be made with caution. Another limitation of the study comes from the focus on a specific

group of travellers (from the United Kingdom) and a specific destination, namely Cyprus. Each destination may have a different tourist flows which in turn influences different destination attributes and travel intentions. Therefore, further research on the topic considering different national and cultural backgrounds of tourists and different destinations may result in different results. Hence, any future research should take into consideration the specific characteristics of tourists (including the examination of more socio-demographics such as age, marital status, and disposable income for tourism) along with the attributes unique to a destination and formulate accordingly the research framework.

Whilst there is extensive research on the effects of destination attributes and tourist behavioural responses, scant attention has been paid on the impact of destination attributes and tourists' travel attitudes on travel intentions. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic which has intensified concerns over travelling due to unsafety risk perceptions (Pelusa & Pichierri, 2020), this study aimed to investigate the effects of destination attributes and tourists' travel attitudes on travel intentions with special reference to British tourists travelling to the island of Cyprus. In so doing, the study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method strategy combining quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

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Table 1: Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Cultural Orientation	1				
2 Destination Attributes	.032	1			
3 Positive Travel Attributes	.005	.027	1		
4 Negative Travel Attributes	-.001	-.025	-.060	1	
5 Travel Intention	.048	-.062	-.124	-.086	1

Table 2: Characteristics of the informants

Id. No.	Gender	Position	Organisation
1	Female	Senior Tourism Officer	Deputy Ministry of Tourism
2	Male	Senior Tourism Officer	Deputy Ministry of Tourism
3	Male	Chairman	Cyprus Sustainable Tourism Initiative (NGO)
4	Male	Academic	Cyprus University of Technology
5	Male	Former member of Board of Directors	Cyprus Tourism Organisation
6	Male	President	Cyprus Hotel Managers Association
7	Female	Senior Officer	Larnaca Tourism Board
8	Male	General Director	Cyprus Hotels Association
9	Female	Senior Officer	Limassol Tourism Board
10	Female	Senior Cultural Officer	Municipality of Ayia Napa
11	Female	Academic	University of Central Lancashire, Cyprus
12	Male	Senior Officer	Pafos Tourism Board
13	Female	Academic	University of Nicosia
14	Female	General Manager	Association of Cyprus Tourism Enterprises
15	Male	Academic	Cyprus University of Technology

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

		Std. D.	Overall	Means Male	Female
Statements					
<i>Cultural Orientation</i>					
CO1	I like exploring a different culture.	.694	3.83	3.71	3.95
CO3	I am interested in experiencing a different way of life.	.771	4.05	3.94	4.15
CO3	I often go to cultural events (exhibitions, concert, opera, theatre).	1.054	3.37	3.20	3.54
CO4	I enjoy meeting new people.	.924	3.59	3.53	3.64
CO5	I like spending time with my good friends.	.677	4.27	4.26	4.27
CO6	I frequently visit friends and relatives.	1.198	3.09	2.89	3.30
CO7	I am full of enjoyment and discover a challenge every day.	.992	3.79	3.65	3.93
<i>Destination Attributes</i>					
DA1	Transportation (referred to local transportation)	.562	3.99	3.99	4.00
DA2	Safety	.636	4.46	4.43	4.50
DA3	Cheapness	.745	3.75	3.71	3.79
DA4	Entertainment (theatres, cinemas, recreation parks, festivals, and so on)	.743	3.91	3.89	3.92
DA5	Attractions (historical, artistic and natural attractions)	.803	4.13	4.18	4.09
DA6	Accommodation (variety and quality of accommodations)	.760	4.09	3.96	4.23
DA7	Eating and drinking (variety and quality of dining and drinking opportunities)	.792	4.24	4.15	4.33
DA8	Welcome (host population and environment warmth)	.860	3.87	3.74	4.00
DA9	Services for tourists (quality and variety of information services)	.711	4.27	4.19	4.36
<i>Positive Travel Attributes</i>					
PTA1	Travelling to Cyprus would be enjoyable	.611	4.32	4.45	4.19
PTA2	Travelling to Cyprus would be pleasant	.506	4.22	4.28	4.15
PTA3	Travelling to Cyprus would be worthwhile	.842	3.94	4.05	3.83
PTA4	Travelling to Cyprus would be satisfying	.720	4.32	4.62	4.02
PTA5	Travelling to Cyprus would be fascinating	1.061	3.58	3.58	3.59
PTA6	Travelling to Cyprus would be authentic	.852	4.24	4.33	4.15
<i>Negative Travel Attributes</i>					

NTA1	Travelling to Cyprus would be scary	.561	2.20	2.14	2.25
NTA2	Travelling to Cyprus would be uncomfortable	.645	2.33	2.23	2.42
NTA3	Travelling to Cyprus would be risky	.752	2.47	2.44	2.50
<i>Travel Intention</i>					
TI1	I intend to travel to Cyprus in the future	.699	3.21	3.19	3.24
TI2	I predict that I should travel to Cyprus in the future	.802	2.94	2.94	2.94
TI3	I am willing to visit Cyprus in the future	.718	3.38	3.39	3.36

Table 4: Factor and reliability analysis

	Loadings	A	AVE	CR
Cultural Orientation		.813	.506	.875
CO1	.864			
CO2	.871			
CO3	.658			
CO4	.640			
CO5	.597			
CO6	.599			
CO7	.693			
Destination Attributes		.830	.501	.873
DA1	.768			
DA2				
DA3	.508			
DA4	.618			
DA5				
DA6	.868			
DA7	.776			
DA8	.697			
DA9	.663			
Positive Travel Attributes		.821	.561	.884
PTA1	.855			
PTA2	.750			
PTA3	.806			
PTA4	.733			
PTA5	.655			
PTA6	.674			
Negative Travel Attributes		.742	.633	.837
NTA1	.854			
NTA2	.787			
NTA3	.741			
Travel Intention		.846	.644	.844
TI1	.851			
TI2	.749			
TI3	.804			

Table 5: Complex configurations

Complex Solution	Raw Coverage	Unique Coverage	Consistency
Model: $f_{ti}=f(f_g, f_{co}, f_{da}, f_{pta}, f_{nta})$			
$f_g, f_{co}, f_{da}, \sim f_{pta}, \sim f_{nta}$.44294	.12485	.83691
$\sim f_g, \sim f_{co}, \sim f_{da}, f_{pta}, f_{nta}$.42847	.13834	.81703
<i>Solution Coverage: .43594</i>	<i>Solution Consistency: .82482</i>		

f_g: Gender

f_co: Cultural

f_da: Destination

Orientation

Attributes

f_pta: Positive Travel

f_nta: Negative Travel

f_ti: Travel Intention

Attributes

Attributes

Table 6: Size effects

	ce_fdh	cr_fdh
Cultural Orientation – Travel Intention	.176	.126
Destination Attributes – Travel Intention	.017	.008
Positive Travel Attributes – Travel Intention	.056	.028
Negative Travel Attributes – Travel Intention	.107	.054

Figure 1: NCA plots

