

## THE PERCEPTION OF TOURISM STUDENTS OF DLSU-D ON TRAVEL DECISION MAKING DURING PANDEMIC

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**Abstract.** The COVID-19 pandemic heavily impacted the people everyday lives including traveling. Travelers had to adjust with the new normal of traveling which changed their perception in travel decision-making. This study determined the perception of Tourism students on travel decision-making during the pandemic. The existing changes demonstrated by previous studies were analyzed by determining the effects of COVID-19 on the decision-making of young travelers based on their perception of traveling during the pandemic. The study adapted the concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs following the basic needs stated, which are physiological, safety, and love & belongingness needs. Moreover, this study utilized a descriptive method with a quantitative approach using simple-random sampling. A 4-point Likert scale survey was used for the data gathering tool and the statistical treatments were Analysis of Variance and T-test. The validation process was assisted by tourism professionals from the locale of the study. The results of the study depicted that there were significant differences in the perception on love and belongingness needs, and in the overall perception on travel decision-making between male and female respondents. There was also a significant difference between the 18-21 years and 22-25 years age groups regarding safety needs. On the contrary, there were no significant differences between male and female respondents' perceptions regarding their physiological and safety needs in terms of travel decision-making; and no significant differences were found among physiological needs, love & belongingness needs, and overall perception on travel decision-making between the 18-21 years and 22-25 years age. The researchers recommended replication of this study and utilization of the conceptual framework. Finally, based on the results and conclusions, coordination with existing Tourism sectors such as transportation, lodging, food and beverage, recreation and entertainment, and travel services that implement proper preventive COVID-19 measures was implied by the researchers.

**Keywords:** *travel decision making, COVID-19, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, new norm travel*

### Introduction

The global Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a significant influence on all aspects of daily life that includes traveling (Kolarova et al., 2021). To reduce the spread of the virus, various measures focusing on limiting social contact have been implemented which caused changes on a person's travel decision making. Due to this condition, the goal of this study was to determine the perception of young travelers on travel decision-making during pandemic which is significant in the industry of Tourism for the reason that it is important to understand the current state of a traveler's perspective during global crises, as it could contribute to developing suitable plans for similar future cases. Tourism is the only business that creates foreign cash for countries without depleting natural resources or selling any material items, but they also have a big benefit in providing a route for new production and growth of infrastructure installations in this new normal. This statement supports the importance of investigating the perception of travelers on travel decision-making during pandemic since it is a factor that forms the motivation of a traveler to purchase a tourism product or services.

Due to the decrease of COVID19 cases the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Thursday, April 28, 2022, retained the Alert Level 1 classification of the entire National Capital Region effective May 1, 2022 until May 15, 2022. Some schools have started their face-to-face classes. While other universities are preparing to conduct their face to face classes including De La Salle University-Dasmariñas and as the researchers are tourism students of DLSU-D, they themselves know that the best way tourism students will be able to learn and enhance their skills is by being exposed in the field and in traveling, whether be it domestically or internationally. Therefore, the researchers have investigated the perception of the respondents in the context of traveling for the purpose of helping the Tourism Department of DLSU-D prepare for the needs of the students if they were to be exposed in traveling during their on-site learning, because despite the low cases of COVID-19, there are still some factors that concerns people for their health and safety.

The existence of COVID-19 undoubtedly challenged the industry of Tourism. A study by Zhang et al. (2021), proved that travelers were able to change their local travel preference which affects their travel decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in large cities or crowded destinations. In addition, it was also proven in a survey released by St. Christopher's Inns in the year 2020, which stated that young travelers are more eager to travel despite the COVID-19 restrictions. In this study, the researchers focused on local travel decision making within young travelers during pandemic. Travelers have different perceptions on the decisions that they make for their travel plans and it would be contingent on the things that influence or motivate them. In accordance with the data from World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), during 2018, the total number of domestic tourism trips in the Philippines was 111.4 thousand and it has been on the rise since 2010. However, in 2020, the total number of domestic tourist trips reached only 24.25 thousand, which decreased a total of 78 percent from the previous year.

After the declaration of the enhanced community quarantine in the Philippines together with the Proclamation No. 929 which declared the whole Philippines under a state of calamity for six months from the 16th of March 2020 (Calimon and Masangkay, 2020), travel restrictions began to be implemented that greatly affected the tourism industry. Thereafter, during May 30, 2020, to boost domestic tourism in the Philippines, tourist destinations under modified general community quarantine (MGCQ) were allowed to re-open travel for Tourism purposes reliant to travel restrictions implemented by the Local Government Units (LGUs). As a result, a lot of changes were applied which forced travelers to experience some adjustments that are different from the usual way of traveling. One of these restrictions was that only hotels or accommodation establishments with valid DOT Accreditation may accommodate guests and clients, subject to guidelines issued by the Department of Tourism and the IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases) written in Section 1 under the Executive Order 112 (s.2020). This became a factor that caused an effect to a traveler's decision making because accommodation is an important part in the decision-making of a traveler.

People travel for a variety of reasons and knowing the factors that influence travel can aid in the management or planning of any tourism facility or event. This can aid in the growth and profitability of tourism related businesses. However, the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines caused a huge adjustment for the system of traveling that changed a person's perception towards traveling during the pandemic. Previous studies

have found that due to the pandemic, self-protective behaviors are primarily influenced by demographic factors as well as the perceived risk of infection. In addition, it was proved that older travelers were more willing to postpone their travels than younger travelers ranging from eighteen to thirty-five years old (Abdullah et al., 2020). This leads to the general problem of this study, which was to determine the perception of young travelers on travel decision-making during pandemic ranging from eighteen to twenty-five years old, mainly focusing on the Tourism students of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas. The general problem focused on the needs of a young traveler that contributes to the decision making concerning the restrictions and necessities needed when they travel. This was done by investigating the respondents' decision making through their physiological needs, safety needs, and love & belongingness needs while considering the condition of COVID-19 in the Philippines. Specifically, this study answered the following questions:

*What are the demographic profiles of the respondents according to their: (1) age; (2) gender;*

*What is the perception of the respondents on travel decision making during pandemic in terms of their: (1) physiological needs; (2) safety needs; (3) love and belongingness needs;*

*Is there a significant difference in the respondents' perception of travel decision-making when grouped by demographic profile?*

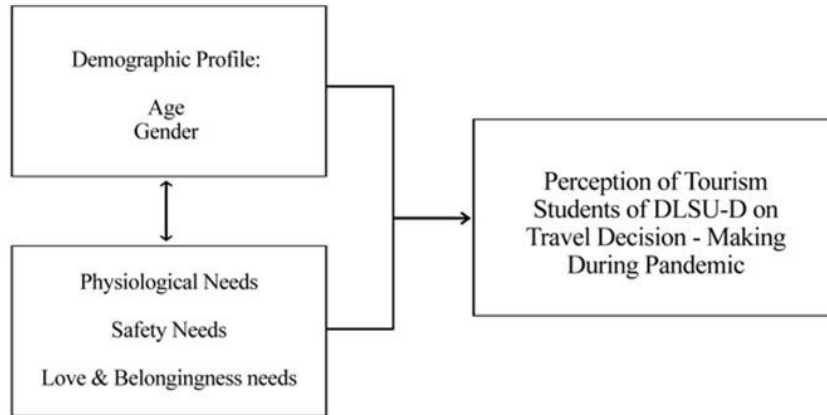
*Based on the findings of the study, what suggestions and recommendations can be proposed to help the Tourism department of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas adjust with the perception of the respondents' on travel decision-making during pandemic?*

The researchers have chosen the respondents in this study from the tourism department of DLSU-D, focusing mainly on tourism college students from 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year levels, ages ranging from eighteen to twenty-five years old. In addition, selecting tourism students was reliable for this study, since these students were more knowledgeable about tourism-related discussions for the reason that they were prepared in travel and tourism to meet and fulfill the developing demand of the travel industry. Through this, the chosen respondents have this particular knowledge not only with traveling but also with Tourism establishments which was helpful in gathering the insights of the respondents' perspective in traveling. This study mainly focused on the perception of the respondents on travel decision-making during pandemic, where the context was limited to domestic travel.

### ***Literature review and conceptual framework***

The conceptual framework used in this study was adapted from the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This is a motivational theory under psychology that includes a five-tier model of human needs, which was constantly presented as hierarchical levels within a pyramid (McLeod, 2020). For this study, the researchers used the basic needs including physiological needs, safety needs, and love & belongingness needs, to identify the factors that caused the effect of COVID-19 to the respondents' perception on travel decision making. *Figure 1* illustrates the framework structure of this study that was adapted from the study of Polas et al. (2019). The basic needs of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs are indicated in the leftmost lower part of the framework which are the

physiological needs, safety needs, and love & belongingness needs. The leftmost upper part indicates the demographic profile of the respondents in which the significant difference between the perception and profile was identified. Both directions intersected the perception of DLSU-D Tourism students on travel decision making during pandemic.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework.

The Hierarchy of Needs based on travel decision making, determines that tourists must have an access to food, acquire sleep, and a place to relax (physiological needs), it must be located in a safe tourist area, ensure security that includes health (safety needs) and it must contain a friendly environment with good customer service, and the support from friends or family (belonging and love needs). This adapted framework is relevant in the travel and leisure industry because it investigates travel decision-making factors as well as influential factors associated with travel motivations (Jenson, 2019). People are driven by addressing their needs, but these are ordered in such a way that if basic needs were not addressed initially, humans will lack the motivation to meet non-basic needs (Quinn, 2020). Basic needs are referred to as lower-order needs, while complex needs are referred to as higher-order needs.

The biological necessities for human survival are known as physiological needs (McLeod, 2020). In Tourism, Physiological needs are linked to gastronomy and accommodation (Šimková and Holzner, 2014). Gastronomy includes the motivation of traveling for food and culture while accommodation covers comfort and relaxation. This statement proves that the physiological needs are the most common needs that a traveler has because one of the prominent motives on why a person travels is for novelty seeking and relaxation. In addition, these were considered to be the most significant by Maslow because all other needs will become secondary, until these needs are met. The safety needs come after the physiological needs. The need for security and safety becomes apparent once a person's physiological needs are met. Maslow stated that people seek control, order, and predictability in their lives. According to Zheng et al. (2016), safety would cover health and well-being. Considering health related concerns affects a traveler's decision making because it helps organize a travel plan. A study claims that the perceived threat of COVID-19 affects consumers' choices and decision-making in travel domains. In addition to this, the role of safety-seeking motivations in decision-making is prominent during COVID-19 (Kim et al., 2021). In conclusion to the study of Kim et al, the link between perceived threat and extremeness aversion covers the

condition of COVID-19 wherein the safety needs of a traveler during the pandemic would be different from the safety needs in traveling before the pandemic started since that health concerns changed because of COVID-19. Following the satisfaction of physiological and safety needs is love and belongingness needs, which are the third level of human needs. In traveling, love and belongingness covers having a companion, hospitality, and good customer service (Jenson, 2019). A traveler would seek satisfaction from the personnel of Tourism establishments and the need to travel with a companion or be in a friendly environment. These needs mentioned will be used in this study to identify how a traveler adjusts to cultural differences or how one can reach satisfaction with travel services.

Travelers' perception on travel decision-making has different factors that include the environment of a destination, safety, and security regarding health matters especially in the time of COVID-19. Studies have shown that the yearly expansion in colds and influenza that triggers the infection of COVID-19, especially agrees with when the temperature outside and relative humidity inside are lower (Pitt, 2020). This proves that COVID-19 is more active in cold seasons, which could affect a traveler's decision-making, wherein they would rather travel during the summer seasons. In accordance with this, an article stated that people cannot be directly infected by COVID-19 through their clothing (Nast, 2020). Many would choose to wear a type of clothing that would cover the whole body when going outside, to protect themselves from being infected by the virus. This is also a factor that forms a traveler's decision making.

Travel decision making exists through affective forecasting wherein individuals intellectually recreate future situations, envisioning themselves in it, and from that point foreseeing how they will feel (Karl et al., 2021). According to the study by Karl et al. (2021) it is usual for travelers to visualize their travel experience for them to form a decision making stage. This was categorized in four stages that include construction of the event's mental representation (simulation), estimation of likelihood and reaction to the event (prediction), goal setting in relation to the event (Intention), and organisation of steps needed to reach the event (planning). These are stated as the prospect capacity to mentally represent the future which serves as factors affecting the formation of a traveler's decision making.

As indicated by Shakibaei et al. (2021), they examined that the changes in a traveler's decision making might go on in the close and long haul as data is collected in the future. Their discoveries provided that policymakers with experience have three significant domains: commuting, social/recreational/leisure (SRL) activities, and shopping, as well as suggestions for public transit, private vehicle use, dynamic methods of transportation, and adaptable working systems. They incorporated a wide scope of ways of behaving and genuine inclinations connected with home-work travels, SRL activities, shopping, transportation modes used for these goals, and the respondents' response to the infection in progressive waves, allowing the researchers to examine changes in individuals' travel decisions. People's self-regulation and government actions to restrict travel and social interaction to "flatten the curve" in the near term both induced behavioral adjustments. To support this, a study by Zhang et al. (2021) examined that local travel traffic declined on work days, Saturdays, and Sundays, separately, because of the pandemic. Adults and senior persons decreased their travel plans. While for young travelers and students, their local travel behavior changed. The daily commute flow was decreased during the plague. Local excursions to retail centres, amusement areas, and borders declined respectively.

Understanding changes in a person's travel decision making during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic is important for evaluating the effects of travel restrictions implemented to reduce the spread of the disease. A study found that assessing the effects of COVID-19 on travel decision making prior to, during, and after travel restrictions is important for public health interventions, surveillance, and healthcare demand planning around the world (Gibbs et al., 2020). This gives an indication that there were changes in the decision making of travelers mainly because of travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, understanding these changes brought by the pandemic will aid not only to a traveler's advantage but also for the management of tourism establishments and businesses. Proven that the people's travel preferences changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a study by Wachyuni and Kusumaningrum (2020) claimed that these changes incorporate eagerness to travel after the pandemic, favored travel industry types, favored destinations, arranged visits after the pandemic, and interest in visiting destinations regardless of a background marked by impacted COVID-19 patients. These travel preferences may result in a positive outcome for the Tourism industry because it shows how people become more motivated to travel while concerning the effect of the pandemic in a person's decision-making.

Travel motivation was a prominent factor in the decision making of a traveler which came in different types and can be affected by the demographic factors of a traveler. Moreover, changes in the motivation of a traveler also occur gradually depending on the situation of a destination. This proves that the safety needs of a traveler are adequate in their travel decision because of COVID-19. In accordance with this, a study conducted by Yousaf et al. (2018) claimed that understanding the motivational forces behind a traveler's decision making could help support companies in expanding and adjusting their offerings to make them more appealing to the target tourists. With this finding, it is evident that a traveler's decision making can be influenced by motivational forces. When a person has a strong need for something, he will act in a manner that he fulfills himself so that he does not feel the absence of that specific object. Because of this, the decision of tourists will be affected, and it will cause a change in them. Another study found that safety concerns are a major factor in tourists' motivation to travel and have a significant impact on tourism demand (Li et al., 2020). This study indicates that safety concerns are a primary factor that traveler's take into consideration before traveling to a place.

Due to the implementation of only accommodation establishment with DOT (Department of Tourism) accreditation were allowed to accommodate guests and clients, travelers' decision-making was also affected by the process of choosing an accommodation for their travel plans. This was proven by the study of Rahman et al. (2021), wherein travelers highly consider the implementation of COVID-19 safety measures on different accommodation establishment. This indicates the importance of providing the proper facilities on hotels, Airbnb, motels, apartments, etc., that would ensure the safety of their guests from being infected with COVID-19 virus. It was clear with the aforementioned related literature and studies that there has been a huge effect in the decision making of travelers because of travel restrictions caused by COVID-19 which also reflected on the needs of a traveler. Furthermore, the existence of COVID-19 triggered the changes on a traveler's decision making, mainly on health related cases which would fall under the safety needs. As presented in the literature review section, many research studies have investigated what caused the changes in a traveler's decision making and what those changes are. In this study, the existing changes that

were proved by previous studies will be analyzed through identifying the effects of COVID-19 on the decision making of young travelers that would be based on their perception towards travelling during pandemic, in line with the basic needs stated which are physiological needs, safety needs, and love & belongingness needs.

## Materials and Methods

The researchers conducted this study in a descriptive method using a quantitative approach to observe and assess the efficacy of keeping declarative information. This is the most applicable research design for this study since it was defined as a research technique that describes the characteristics of the studied population or circumstance (Bhat, 2018). The method of this study focused on the "what" of the stated topic rather than the "why." Even though the respondents' uncontrolled environment affected the study's validity from the perspective and experiences that was essential for validating this research. The study units were selected from the students of the Tourism department at De La Salle University-Dasmariñas specifically from first, second, third, and fourth-year levels. The sampling method used by the researchers was simple random sampling. This is a probability sampling method since the study was in a quantitative form. The respondents were randomly selected by using a random sample generator called dCode. For the sample size, the researchers used Raosoft to calculate the total respondents needed for this study that had a total of 220 students from an estimated population of 512 Tourism students of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas. Where the margin of error is 5% and the level of confidence is 95%. The total population of tourism students used in this study are enrolled in the school year of 2021-2022. The *Table 1* shows the projected sample size from each year level.

**Table 1.** *The sample size.*

Year level	Total population	Percentage	Total respodents
1st year students	110	21.48%	47
2nd year students	136	26.56%	58
3rd year students	144	28.13%	62
4th year students	122	23.83%	53
Total	512	100	220

The researchers used a 4 point Likert scale survey questionnaire generated by Google forms in gathering and assessing the effects of COVID-19 to the travel decision making of the respondents. The first part of the questionnaire includes the demographic profile where the respondents will comply with the basic information of their age and gender. The second part was composed of questions pertaining to the factors that concerns' the respondents on traveling during the pandemic and the basic needs of a traveler that affects their decision making in line with their physiological needs, safety needs, and love & belongingness needs. The data gathering was done by sending out the questionnaire with the consent to each of the chosen respondents through Facebook messenger, for the convenience of both the respondents and the researchers. Based on the statement of the problem, the statistical procedures that were employed in this study are frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, ANOVA, and T-test. The statistical approaches that will be used in the demographic profile of the respondents are frequency and percentage to calculate the general terms of the respondents. The

researchers will utilize mean and standard deviation to calculate the overall ratings of the Tourism students in DLSU-D from the accomplished survey. The frequency and percentage will be used to identify the observations that exist for each data point on the factors of the respondents.

The ANOVA and T-test was utilized to analyse the data in order to determine the significant relationship between the perceptions of Tourism Students of DLSU-D on travel decision making during pandemic, which were categorized according to demographic profile. The researchers retained the services of a statistician and were assisted and supervised throughout the data collection process. The Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to assess dependability. The researchers used content validity for the data validation tool. It is the process of determining how well a survey evaluates the concept being measured. This was done by consulting three professors in the Tourism department of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas.

## Results and Discussion

This section presents the quantitative method's analysis and interpretation of the study on the perception of young travelers on travel decision-making during the pandemic. The responses of the respondents were gathered using a 4-point Likert scale and were based on the specific objective of the study. Starting with the demographic profile of the respondents, particularly in age and gender, followed by the perception of the respondents on travel decision-making during pandemic in terms of their Physiological needs, Safety needs, and Love & Belongingness needs. Lastly, the significant difference on each of the perception when grouped by the respondents' demographic profile. The results primarily assessed the respondents' gender and age, identifying which group highly participated in answering the survey. It emphasized that there were more female respondents, with a value of 80.9% than male participants, with a value of 19.1%. Moreover, the majority of the respondents who participated belonged to the group of "18-21" years old.

*Table 2* specify that most of the respondents came from ages 18-21, which has a frequency value of 143 and covers 65% of the total sample size. While ages ranging from 22-25 had a frequency value of 77 that covered 35% of the total sample size. This reflects on a study by Abdullah et al. (2020), wherein young travelers ranging from 18-35 years old are more willing to travel despite the existence of COVID-19, which proves that their travel decision was more affected since they would have to adjust to the restrictions implemented for the new normal of traveling. *Table 3* indicates that the majority of the respondents belong to the item "female" that has a frequency of 178 and covers 80.9% of the total sample size. Moreover, the item "male" had a frequency of 42 and covers 19.1% of the sample size that has a total value of 220. These results reflect the study of Kim et al. (2021), wherein females are more conscious with the role of safety-seeking in travel decision-making. Females engage more in precautionary behaviors that are strongly related to perceived risk and response efficacy. The respondents' perception on travel decision-making during pandemic was assessed by the proponents through their Physiological needs, Safety needs, and Love & Belongingness needs. The respondents rated their perception using a 4-point Likert scale with a verbal interpretation of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). *Table 4* shows the results for Physiological needs wherein the highest mean was obtained by question number 3, which stated that the respondents prefer to stay in

accommodation establishments (e.g., hotels, Airbnb, motel, apartment, etc.) that provide proper facilities for COVID-19 safety measures (e.g., social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc.). This resulted with a mean of 3.8 and a verbal interpretation of “strongly agree”. This result indicates that accommodation is a prominent part of the respondents’ travel decision making and this reflects a study by Rahman et al. (2021), where he stated that travelers who choose an accommodation that provides proper preventive facilities for COVID-19 were part of the risk management on their travel plan. This proves that people would be conscious about how would an accommodation establishment ensure the safety of their clients through the system that they implement during COVID-19 since that accommodation establishment are occupied by travelers coming from different places.

**Table 2.** Age of the respondents.

Gender	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Female	178	90.909
Male	42	19.091
Total	220	100

**Table 3.** Gender of the respondents.

Age	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
18-21	143	65
22-25	77	35
Total	220	100

**Table 4.** Physiological needs.

Physiological needs	Mean	Verbal interpretation	Ranking
1. I prefer to have my food delivered at my hotel prom than dining outside.	2.605	Agree	5
2. When traveling domestically I make sure to have a sufficient amount of sleep to strengthen my immunity against COVID-19.	3.545	Strongly agree	2
3. I prefer to stay in accomodation establishments (e.g. hotels, Airbnb, motel, apartment, etc.) that provide proper facilities for COVID-19 safety measures (e.g., social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc.)	3.832	Strogly agree	1
4. When traveling, I prefer to wear clothes that would cover my whole body to protect me from COVID-19 (e.g., long sleeve shirts, pants, jackets, joggers, sweaters, etc.)	2.659	Agree	4
5. I prefer to spend leisure with limited number of people due to COVID-19 pandemic.	3.4	Agree	3
Overall perception on physiological needs	3.208	High	

In *Table 5*, the results for the respondents’ Safety needs show that the highest mean was obtained by question number 1, which stated that the respondents’ need for hygiene

and safety while traveling changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc.). This resulted in a mean of 3.7 and a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree”. This result justifies a study by Gibbs et al. (2020), which stated that a traveler’s decision-making changed because of travel restrictions implemented to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Therefore it is evident that the need for hygiene and health safety during travel would be more prioritized by a traveler since it is a way to prevent being infected by COVID-19. Moreover, this result proves that the facilities for COVID-19 safety measures (e.g., social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc.) are still being considered by young travelers in their perception of travel decision-making despite easing the COVID-19 restrictions in the Philippines during the current year (Elemia, 2022). In addition, the most prominent safety need on travel decision-making according to the respondents’ perception would be the systematic implementation of COVID-19 safety measures. This indicates that the management of different Tourism establishment affects the travel decision-making of the respondents depending on the establishment’s provided system that would ensure the safety of their customers.

**Table 5.** *Safety needs.*

Safety needs	Mean	Verbal interpretation	Ranking
1. My need for hygiene and safety while traveling changed because of COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc.).	3.768	Strongly agree	1
2. I prefer to use online platforms for purchasing tickets, booking hotels, and buying tour packages.	3.614	Strongly agree	3
3. I prefer to travel in places with low COVID-19 cases.	3.668	Strogly agree	2
4. I prefer to use credit cards, ATM, debit cards, or E-money than holding cash when I’m paying for something at different establishments (e.g., malls, restaurants, coffee shops) to avoid physical contact and to practice social distancing.	3.086	Agree	5
5. I look forward to taking COVID-19 health protocols before traveling (like RT-PCR test, Swab Test or Vaccination Card Status).	3.441	Agree	4
Overall perception on safety needs	3.515	Very high	

In *Table 6*, the results for the respondents’ Love & Belongingness needs show that question number 4 obtained the highest mean, wherein the respondents strongly agreed on choosing a tourist destination that has a responsible environment. This section obtained a mean value of 3.9 and a verbal interpretation of “Strongly Agree”. This result reflects the study by Jenson (2019), which stated that people adjust well into a destination that has a responsible environment and great hospitality. This proves that the existence of COVID-19 made this perception highly considered by the respondents in making a travel decision, which conclude that the proper implementation of COVID-19

safety measures and preventive facilities should concur with a destination’s responsible environment. Therefore, in traveling this would include people (e.g., locals, employees, tourists, etc.) who consistently follow the COVID-19 preventive measures when in a destination (e.g., wearing of mask, sanitizing, social distancing, etc.). In addition, a study by Abdullah et al. (2020) stated that the local system of a destination affects the condition of a responsible environment. Thus, this would include the local governance and socio-economic conditions. This proves that having a good government would also reflect the locals in a destination. As a result, the respondents’ perception in seeking a responsible environment would cover the system of a destination’s local governance.

**Table 6.** Love & belongingness needs.

	Love & belongingness needs	Mean	Verbal interpretation	Ranking
1.	I prefer a destination with a friendly community.	3.836	Strongly agree	2
2.	I strictly require employees to attend to my needs as a customer while following the COVID-19 safety measures. (e.g., restaurants, hotels, transportation terminals, shopping malls, souvenir shops, etc.).	3.614	Strongly agree	4
3.	I prefer traveling with someone I know (e.g., family/friends) during the pandemic to guide me in following the COVID-19 safety measures.	3.75	Strogly agree	3
4.	I would choose a tourist destination with a responsible environment.	3.864	Strongly agree	1
5.	I prefer if my parents or any siblings that can legally drive to send me and pick me up than commuting by myself using public transportation.	3,605	Strongly agree	5
Overall perception on love & belongingness needs needs		3.734	Very high	

The *Table 7* show the respondents' assessed level of significance when classified by their respective profiles, specifically their age and gender. *Table 7* shows that there is a significant difference in the perception on the safety needs of travel decision-making of the 18-21 and the 22-25 year-old respondents since the t-value of 3.021 has a p-value less than 0.05 of the significance level. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. This implies that 22-25 year-old respondents have higher level of perception regarding the safety needs of travel decision making. However, there is no significant difference in the perception on the physiological and love and belongingness needs of travel decision-making of the 18-21 and the 22-25 year-old respondents since the t-values of 0.484 and 1.849 have a p-values greater than 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is not rejected. This implies that 18-21 and 22-25 year-old respondents have the same level of perception regarding the physiological and love and belongingness needs of travel decision making. Lastly, there is no significant difference in the overall perception on the travel decision-making of the 18-21 and the 22-25 year-old respondents since the t-value of 0.979 has a p-value greater than 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is not rejected. This

implies that 18-21 and 22-25 year-old respondents have the same level of overall perception regarding the travel decision making.

**Table 7. Grouped by age.**

Needs	Age (Mean)		t-value	p-value	Interpretation
	18-21	22-25			
Physiological	3.199	3.226	-0.484	0.629	Not significant
Safety needs	3.452	3.634	-3.021	0.003	Significant
Love & belongingness	3.762	3.681	1.846	0.066	Not significant
Overall	3.471	3.513	-0.979	0.329	Not significant

Table 8 shows that there is a significant difference in the perception on the love and belongingness needs of travel decision-making of the male and female respondents since the t-value of 2.205 has a p-value less than 0.05 of the significance level. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. This implies that female respondents have higher level of perception regarding the love and belongingness needs of travel decision making. However, there is no significant difference in the perception on the physiological and safety needs of travel decision-making of the male and female respondents since the t-values of 1.7 and 1.847 have a p-values greater than 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is not rejected. This implies that male and female respondents have the same level of perception regarding the physiological and safety needs of travel decision making. Lastly, there is a significant difference in the overall perception on the travel decision-making of the male and female respondents since the t-value of 2.368 has a p-value greater than 0.05 of the significance level. The null hypothesis of no significant difference is rejected. This implies that female respondents have higher overall perception regarding the travel decision making.

**Table 8. Grouped by gender.**

Needs	Gender (Mean)		t-value	p-value	Interpretation
	Female	Male			
Physiological	3.23	3.114	1.7	0.091	Not significant
Safety needs	3.542	3.405	1.847	0.066	Not significant
Love & belongingness	3.756	3.638	2.205	0.028	Significant
Overall	3.509	3.386	2.368	0.019	Significant

## Conclusion

It was evident that COVID-19 had an impact on the travel decision-making of Tourism students. Traveling is a prominent contributor to educating tourism students, and the pandemic became a challenge for the whole industry that affected the management of institutions in giving the proper training for Tourism students. Considering the student's perception of traveling during COVID-19 would contribute to the institutions for managing travel-related educational systems. With this being deeply investigated, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas represent the study's objectives as it is an institution that provides a quality education that implements travel-related activities for Tourism students. To further attain the study's objective, it went through various processes. First was to determine the demographic profile of the respondents according to their age and gender to identify if there's a significant difference between the

respondents' perception of travel decision-making when grouped by demographic profile. In terms of age, the highest participating range came from the group of 18-21 years old. Moreover, the value frequency of 178 and 80.9% indicated that the highest number of respondents who answered the survey were females.

After an evaluation of the participants' responses, all of the projected results from the second objective emphasized the study's highlights as it determines the respondents' perception of travel decision-making during the pandemic in terms of their Physiological needs, Safety needs, and Love & belongingness needs. The value obtained from the response for the physiological needs was 3.2 that was interpreted as "high" where it specifically pertains that the need for having access to food, acquiring sleep, and a place to relax are immensely considered in the respondents' travel decision-making. For the safety needs, it acquired a value of 3.5 while the love & belongingness needs obtained a value of 3.7. Both values are interpreted as "very high" which conclude that the safety needs and love & belongingness needs is more considered by the respondents' travel decision-making than physiological needs.

In conclusion, this present study affirms the statement of the study by Abdullah et al. (2020) which claimed that young individuals tend to have more willingness to continue their travel plans despite the ongoing pandemic. It is also important to note that more than half of the sample belong to the 18 to 21 years old age group. In addition, based on the gender of the respondents, it can also be concluded that females tend to make more informed decisions as compared to their male counterparts. In terms of the perception of the respondents on travel decision-making, it was categorized in three parts. Firstly, it can be deduced that in order to meet their physiological needs, they prefer to stay in accommodation establishments. These include but are not limited to hotels, Airbnb, motel, and apartments; with the consideration that the establishments provide proper facilities for COVID-19 safety measures such as social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc. Secondly, their safety needs were met when they changed their hygiene and safety practices while traveling due to the pandemic (e.g., social distancing markings, sanitation areas, contact tracing, etc.). Lastly, in order to satiate their love and belongingness needs, the respondents prefer a tourist destination with a responsible environment. This implies that they desire an environment where the establishments, its staff, and travellers alike follow the COVID-19 protocols in place.

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions: the respondents' perception with regards to their physiological, safety, and love and belonging needs show that they consider staying in an accommodation establishment; opt to change their hygiene and safety practices to adapt with the current COVID-19 conditions; and prefer destinations with responsible environment in their travel decision-making. Moreover, it was identified that with regards to travel decision-making, there is significant difference in the perception on the safety needs of travel decision-making of the 18-21 and the 22-25 year-old respondents; hence the latter respondents have higher levels of perception as compared to the former. In contrast, 18-21 year-old and 22-25 year-old age groups have the same levels of perception in terms of physiological and love and belongingness, and overall perception. Meanwhile, there are significant differences in the perception on love and belongingness needs, and in the overall perception on travel decision-making of male and female respondents. Based on the findings, it can be inferred that female respondents have a higher level of perception with respect to love and belongingness needs, as well as overall perception regarding travel decision-making. On the contrary, there is no significant difference between male

and female respondents which implies that they have the same levels of perception regarding their physiological and safety needs in regard to travel decision-making.

In light of the findings and conclusion just presented, the present study could contribute to developing suitable plans for cases similar to the pandemic that may occur in the future. For instance, travel destinations whose target travellers are young individuals, especially aged 18-23 years, may take into account the findings of this study. In consideration of the physiological, safety, and love and belongingness needs of the respondents, the researchers recommend that accommodation establishments in tourist destinations ensure that they have strict implementation of hygiene and sanitation practices. This includes a responsible environment where other travellers or visitors also follow the health protocol in place. In cases where there is no protocol in place, the researchers suggest that accommodation establishments adopt one instead. Moreover, since this study focused on the Tourism students of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas (DLSU-D), it is suggested that this study is replicated. The results of the study implies that the institution may coordinate with existing Tourism sectors such as transportation, lodging, food and beverage, recreation and entertainment, and travel services that implements proper preventive measures on COVID-19 based on the perception of the respondents. In addition, future studies may utilize the conceptual framework of the current study and it is recommended that they gather respondents who are professionals in the Tourism industry. Lastly, the current researchers recommend that future researchers consider other demographics such as marital and socioeconomic statuses as these may also contribute to the perception and travel decision-making of the respondents.

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### **Conflict of interest**

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest with any parties involved with the study.

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