

Descriptive analysis of international deportations caused by irresponsible traveller behaviour

Ryan M Mangan^{1,2}, Gerard T Flaherty^{1,3}

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic focused public attention on the importance of responsible tourism. The purpose of this study was to characterise irresponsible tourist behaviour leading to deportation from the destination country.

Methods: A web-based search of media reports relating to deportations of tourists was conducted.

Results: The most common reasons for deportation were related to indecent exposure or physical damage to sacred monuments and violations of COVID-19-related national public health rules. Other incidents resulted from social media posts and breach of environmental regulations.

Conclusions: The results of this study may inform future research efforts and targeted public awareness campaigns.

Keywords: *responsible travel; deportation; COVID-19; cultural sensitivity; sustainable travel*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has focused public attention on the importance of responsible tourism, whereby international travellers endeavour to minimise their impact on a destination country's heritage, its communities, biodiversity, and environmental resources. The importance of this subject is underscored by the existence of an active responsible travel interest group within the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM). Departures from the principles of responsible tourism demonstrate disrespect towards host countries, threaten fragile ecosystems, and undermine efforts to cultivate harmonious international relationships.

There has been minimal coverage of this subject in the travel and international health literature. Lim *et al.* (2018) drew attention to the risks of harm associated with environmental damage, voluntourism, and sex tourism and proposed a checklist of responsible tourist behaviours.¹ The purpose of this study was to characterise high-profile examples of irresponsible tourist behaviour, which led to deportation from the destination country.

Methods

A web-based search of written media reports published in the English language, relating to deportations of tourists from any country, was conducted on the Google[®] search engine, using combinations of search terms, including “deportation”, “deport”, “deport tourist” and “deported”. Duplicate reports were removed from the analysis. For each search term used, the first 25 pages of website matches were examined. The following variables were extracted from each report and entered in a Google Drive database: host country, nationality of deportee(s), number of people involved, date of event, incident category, gender of deportees, age of deportees, alcohol or drug involvement, whether detention or incarceration occurred, and any recorded reaction from locals. Information regarding deportations that occurred due to visa issues, identity fraud, illegal immigration status, or a crime committed by a long-term resident of a foreign country were excluded from the analysis, as well as official government web pages providing information on travel to various countries. All data were validated by both researchers and analysed descriptively using frequencies, proportions (percentages), and means.

¹School of Medicine, College of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, University of Galway, Galway, Ireland

²New Vision University School of Medicine, Tbilisi, Georgia

³School of Medicine, International Medical University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Corresponding author:

Prof Gerard Flaherty, University of Galway, Galway, Ireland Email: gerard.flaherty@universityofgalway.ie Tel.: +353-91-495469.

Results

Of 780 print media articles retrieved, 22 met the inclusion criteria for our study. Table I summarises the characteristics of each deportation occurrence. Incidents leading to deportation occurred between 2012 and 2022. The most common reasons for deportation in this series were related to indecent exposure or physical damage to sacred monuments (n=6) and violations of COVID-19-related public health rules (n=6). Other incidents resulted from social media posts (n=3) and breach of environmental regulations (n=2). The region with the highest number of reported deportations was South-East Asia (68.2%, n=15), with the largest proportion of incidents reported from the island of Bali, Indonesia (45.5%, n=10). Deported tourists were residents of 18 countries. The gender of the deportees was provided in 20 cases, with males alone being involved in 35% (n=7), females alone in 20% (n=4), and both male and female tourists in 45% of incidents (n=9). Where age was specified (n=9), the mean age of deported tourists was 35.7 years.

Two media reports mentioned tourist intoxication with alcohol or recreational drugs ('magic mushrooms'). Two incidents, one in Malaysia and the other in the United Arab Emirates, led to tourists receiving monetary fines in addition to facing deportation. In three of the Bali-based deportations, the media reported negative local reactions to the deportees' actions. In the case of the American LGBTQIA+ female deported from Bali in January 2021 for posting tweets that caused offense to her hosts, there was significant outrage registered by Indonesian people online who expressed concerns that the woman's tweets would encourage an influx of "Westerners"

into the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the second incident involving two Russian tourists who took nude photographs of themselves at a sacred tree in Bali in May 2022, some local people were reported as saying that foreign visitors should be more informed about Balinese customs.

Discussion

Healthcare professionals should play an active role in promoting responsible travel behaviour, which minimises adverse impacts on the host country, its people, and their environment. While occasionally the subject of discussions at international travel medicine conferences, there is hardly any literature in this area in medical journals. A previous reflective commentary called for research to develop a better understanding of the attitudes of travellers, their travel healthcare providers, and the travel industry towards responsible tourism.¹ We have previously discussed issues in this journal around the transportation by travellers of therapeutic or controlled drugs across international borders.²

Ours is the first study to examine the issue of deportation of tourists as a result of irresponsible tourist behaviour. The media reports cited give an insight into the range of offenses that can precipitate deportation. Personal indiscretions at significant sites in more conservative destinations, physical damage to monuments, breaches of COVID-19 control measures, and posting of offensive images or comments on social media accounted for the majority of circumstances leading to deportation. A study from two decades ago found that approximately 5% of travellers arrested abroad were subsequently deported, the majority of whom were male.³ Reasons for detention were

analysed in that study but no specific information on the events leading to deportation were provided.

While most of the reports in the present study made no reference to the use of alcohol or recreational drugs, a study of air rage incidents aboard commercial flights identified alcohol as a precipitating factor in over half of cases.⁴ The preponderance of COVID-19-related transgressions highlights the challenges faced by national authorities in the implementation of effective public health control measures during the pandemic. A perspective from India during an intense wave of COVID-19 disease called for tourists not to travel to pilgrimage sites to avoid the risks associated with super-spreading events at mass gatherings.⁵

Our study was subject to the limitations of web-based search strategies, including website optimisation restrictions. We restricted our internet search to a single search engine with a comprehensive global index. Additional reports may have been available in other search engines such as Bing. Relevant reports in languages other than English were not retrieved. Essential details that may have afforded useful insights into irresponsible tourist behaviour may not have been reported by the journalists concerned. This report focused on deportations, representing the extremity of sanctions applied to travellers who engage in irresponsible and offensive behaviour. We acknowledge that the threshold for deportation varies between jurisdictions and that many irresponsible acts attract penalties other than deportation, including fines and periods of incarceration.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we believe that this study of extreme irresponsible behaviour in tourists should inspire the travel medicine community to intensify its efforts to promote responsible travel. The ISTM responsible travel interest group should take a lead in publishing appropriate guidelines for international travellers. Wall posters in travel clinics, written information leaflets, social media posts and podcasts may be useful practical approaches to achieving this objective. We reiterate our call for future qualitative research in this neglected area.

Conclusions

Travel health professionals and the travel industry have an important role to play in promoting responsible tourist behaviour. This is the first study to describe deportations in travellers as the result of deviations from the principles of responsible tourism. The results may inform future research efforts and targeted public awareness campaigns.

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Data availability: The data underlying this article are available and were derived from sources in the public domain.

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Table I: Summary of specific irresponsible travel incidents leading to deportation

DATE	MEDIA ARTICLE SOURCE	COUNTRY	INCIDENT CATEGORY
November 2012	https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/irishman-gets-three-months-in-jail-for-sex-with-woman-in-back-of-dubai-taxi-28904500.html	United Arab Emirates	Public sexual indiscretion
June 2015	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/12/british-tourist-who-stripped-naked-on-malaysian-mountain-to-be-charged	Malaysia	Indecent exposure at sacred site
January 2019	https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/exclusive-unruly-tourists-speak-out-as-deportation-looms/JTPLYHXKSSNRLEDXPOYKGZFLOQ/	New Zealand	Public disorder and environmental damage
January 2020	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/15/tourists-to-be-deported-over-alleged-damage-defecation-at-machu-picchu	Peru	Environmental damage at national monument
January 2021	https://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/travel-stories/us-woman-to-be-deported-from-indonesia-over-offensive-bali-tweets/news-story/4fc0ce78a9d5cfdcd3c19ee4f1e0cfe8	Indonesia	Offensive social media posts
May 2021	https://www.traveller.com.au/bali-to-deport-influencers-josh-paler-lin-and-leia-se-after-fake-mask-prank-h1v10a	Indonesia	Breach of COVID-19 regulations
July 2021	https://eu.usatoday.com/story/travel/news/2021/07/12/bali-orders-us-tourist-leave-violating-covid-19-rules-unmasked/7934698002/	Indonesia	Breach of COVID-19 regulations
July 2021	https://www.travelpulse.com/news/destinations/four-tourists-deported-from-bali-for-covid-19-violations.html	Indonesia	Breach of COVID-19 regulations

July 2021	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/07/19/katie-hopkins-quarantine-video-australia/	Australia	Breach of COVID-19 regulations
December 2021	https://www.pattayamail.com/thailandnews/israeli-tourist-escaping-quarantine-hotel-in-thailand-will-be-charged-and-deported-384446	Thailand	Breach of COVID-19 regulations
August 2021	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/singapore-jails-briton-not-wearing-face-mask-public-2021-08-18/	Singapore	Breach of COVID-19 regulations
November 2021	https://www.timesofisrael.com/israelis-detained-for-photographing-erdogan-palace-set-to-be-deported-lawyer/	Turkey	Photography in restricted location
November 2021	https://coconuts.co/bali/news/danish-man-who-damaged-shrine-in-bali-set-for-deportation-after-serving-prison-sentence/	Indonesia	Damage to national monument
April 2022	https://www.news.com.au/travel/destinations/asia/bali/canadian-actor-faces-deportation-from-bali-over-naked-haka/news-story/b66f8756bc3ee5a46a6f6cf563c1fc54	Indonesia	Indecent exposure at sacred site
April 2022	https://balidiscovery.com/bali-deport-5-moldavians-1-russian/	Indonesia	Illegal occupation of building
May 2022	https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-05-09/foreigners-in-bali-find-themselves-in-hot-water-with-hindus/101040060	Indonesia	Indecent exposure at sacred site
May 2022	https://thethaiger.com/news/regional/video-estonian-model-faces-deportation-from-bali-for-criticizing-corrupt-police	Indonesia	Criticism of local police on social media
June 2022	https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/migrate/kuwait-to-deport-expats-who-protested-over-remarks-against-prophet/articleshow/92166479.cms	Kuwait	Unauthorised protests
August 2022	https://www.newsfirst.lk/2022/08/12/scottish-tourist-goes-to-court-against-decision-to-deport-her-from-sri-lanka/	Sri Lanka	Posting of protest footage on social media
August 2022	https://www.ttrweekly.com/site/2022/08/tourist-deported-for-not-paying-his-bill/	Indonesia	Failure to pay accommodation bill
August 2022	https://indonesiaexpat.id/featured/russian-deported-from-suspected-magic-mushroom-effects/	Indonesia	Recreational drug intoxication
August 2022	https://www.thaiexaminer.com/thai-news-foreigners/2022/08/17/dutch-tourist-arrested-for-parrot-fish-kill-roslan-bendenia/	Thailand	Illegal catching of endangered fish