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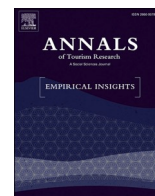
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Exploring pandemic holiday practices: Meaning, experience and aspiration

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ABSTRACT

During Covid-19 holiday travel became shorter in distance and more surface-based, presenting an unusual opportunity to explore people's experiences of less carbon-intensive holiday travel. In this paper, survey and interview data are used to investigate pandemic holiday practices, exploring how meanings and aspirations relate to travel distance and mode. The findings illustrate the complexity of modal shift and air travel reductions. Despite showing that many people gained experience in surface-based travelling during Covid-19, we also show that what is a satisfying holiday experience can be achieved to differing degrees with short-distance or flight-free travel. Therefore, changing travel demand requires exploring how 'proper' holiday experiences could be provided domestically, and how shared ideas about what a holiday entails can be altered.

1. Introduction

Covid-19 had extraordinary impacts on the transport sector, with border closures and lockdown measures culminating in extremely low levels of international aviation. By April 2020, CO₂ emissions associated with aviation had declined by 1.7MtCO₂d⁻¹, 60% relative the same period in 2019 (Grewe et al., 2021). The long-term impacts of Covid-19 on aviation and emissions are uncertain (Le Quére et al., 2020; Tauber & Bausch, 2022). Some researchers hypothesise travel rebound post-Covid (e.g. González-Reverté, Gomis-López, & Díaz-Luque, 2022; Tauber & Bausch, 2022) while others suggest lasting demand reductions and modal shift (e.g. Anwari, Tawkir, Rakibul, Hadiuzzaman, & Amin, 2021). In 2022, the European Travel Commission reported that Europe experienced "a strong tourism rebound" in 2022, with flight volumes in August only 11% lower than 2019 (ETC, 2022). Nevertheless, given a growing interest in how to reduce travel emissions, Covid-19 provides an unusual opportunity that we may use to increase understanding of how holiday travelling practices are configured and can adapt, and how a shift towards surface-based holidaying, here understood as travelling without flying, could be supported.

These insights can be used to identify possible new angles to support a transition to low-carbon travel. Aviation contributes approximately 2.5% of global CO₂ emissions and 3.5% of effective radiative forcing (Lee et al., 2021). Despite calls to curb aviation, global commercial aviation was set to increase 2.8–3.9 times by 2040 before the outbreak of Covid-19 (ICAO, 2016). Reducing emissions from aviation is therefore

crucial to meeting Paris Agreement targets (Sharmina et al., 2021) and demand reduction is vital as few technological solutions are anticipated to make meaningful differences to aviation emissions within the next decades (Franz, Rottoli, & Bertram, 2022). Without reducing demand, further decarbonisation will be required in other sectors to compensate for growth in aviation emissions if nations are to remain within their carbon budgets (Bows-Larkin, 2015). Given that, globally, most people do not fly for either leisure or business (Gössling & Humpe, 2020; Hopkinson & Cairns, 2021) and that air travel emissions are disproportionately attributed to high-income earners and countries (Ivanova & Wood, 2020), reducing flying plays an important role in fair decarbonisation (Büchs & Mattioli, 2022) and is an important area for policy and industry attention.

Directly substituting flights for surface transport is not straightforward given co-dependency of mode, destination, and meanings associated with holidaying. For instance, to some people holidaying means exotic locations, extraordinary experiences, warmth and sun, and picturesque landscapes, some of which are more difficult to achieve without flying. This paper thus aims, through a practice-theoretical lens, to investigate holiday practices during Covid-19, using exploratory survey and interview data to characterise trips made (e.g. in terms of frequency, duration, destination, mode) and explore people's experiences, future plans and aspirations. Following existing mobilities research, we examine how holidaymakers' experiences of holidaying during Covid-19 interact with shared meanings of what a holiday is and is for, with the objective to elucidate the entanglement of transport and

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holiday meanings, and to enable reflection on its relevance for decarbonising leisure travel. This research was conducted in the UK, an important case study for aviation as it ranks third in national contributions to CO₂ emissions from passenger aviation (Graver, Rutherford, & Zheng, 2020) and first in contribution to global passenger traffic (126.2 million, or 8.6% of all passengers in 2018 (Hopkinson & Cairns, 2021)).

2. Literature review

In early 2020, most countries imposed restrictions on travel, substantially reducing overseas travel possibilities and particularly air travel. Aviation was most affected, and by April 2020, the number of flight passengers departing the UK to EU destinations was only 1% of 2019 (ONS, 2020). Other international travel routes were also impacted, for example the Eurostar experienced a 77% decline in passenger numbers, and coaches using the Eurotunnel reduced by 71% in 2020 compared to 2019 (Getlink, 2021), while passengers departing on cruise ships from UK ports declined by 95% (DfT, 2021). These patterns were of interest to climate change and mobility scholars as they corresponded with large greenhouse gas emissions reductions, however, the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on travel and emissions are uncertain. Throughout 2022, despite most restrictions having been lifted, international passenger numbers remained lower than 2019. It was estimated that international tourism in 2022 reached only 63% of 2019 visitor numbers (UNWTO, 2023).

Across the literature, the pandemic has been cast as a period of disruption, in which ordinary practices – including mobility (e.g. Guillen-Royo, 2022) – have been reconfigured (Hoolohan et al., 2022). Conceptually, disruptions can be understood as moments of varying duration when previously predictable consumption patterns become destabilised (Wethal, 2020). The resulting instability creates conditions where alternative ways of doing emerge, for example Frater, Vallance, Young, and Moreham (2020) show how changes in personal travel planning are provoked following the disruption and relocation of businesses after the 2016 earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand. Furthermore, reflections on how practices are configured and change following disruption offers insights that can inform conversations about sustainability policy and practice (Chappells & Trentmann, 2018). Through this lens, Covid-19 provides a moment to learn about the reconfiguration of mobility practices that could benefit (or compromise) the transition towards low-carbon society as familiar destinations and travel modes became problematic.

This paper contributes to a practice-theoretical dialogue on holidaying, positioning holiday travel demand expressed not as a behaviour or choice, but rather as a practice (Watson, 2012), meaning it is viewed as an interplay between personal experiences, routines and capabilities, and wider cultural, institutional, and infrastructural dynamics. The following paragraphs briefly explore how the wider mobilities and holidaying literature has provided the theoretical and empirical foundations for this study.

Holidaying has been termed a *liminoid* experience (Jacobsen, Farstad, Higham, Hopkins, & Landa-Mata, 2021; Selännemi, 2016), where everyday practices, expectations, and responsibilities are suspended (Gram, 2005). Travel also affords connectedness in an increasingly disconnected society (Gössling, Cohen, & Hibbert, 2018). Cohen and Gössling (2015) argue that in recent decades, hypermobility – synonymous with frequent long-distance travel – has become associated with social status and is glamorised in public imaginaries (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2006). O'Garra and Fouquet (2022), highlight the problematic association with affluence and hypermobility given that affluent people are more likely to be hypermobile, but no more inclined to reduce emissions than others. Furthermore, while participation in long-distance travel remains confined to a few, Cohen and Cohen (2015) showed increasing participation across middle-classes and emerging economies prior to the pandemic – while this research focuses on the UK,

its findings may thus become increasingly relevant beyond.

Holidaying can also carry associations to relaxation, gaining new experiences and memories, and meeting new cultures (Crompton, 1979). Such associations and meanings are collective, in that they are often shared culturally, but what exactly is a 'proper holiday' differs between people (Chen, 2015). Previous research has characterised different forms of holiday, for example early research by Cohen (1972) plotted tourists on a novelty-familiarity spectrum, identifying clusters such as *the organised mass tourist* and *the explorer*. This research explores how links between travel mode and holiday meanings affect travellers' experiences and future aspirations, identifying different patterns of practices and meaning between participants.

In addition to differing holiday meanings – if it symbolises suspension of the mundane, relaxation, and/or adventure etc. – these may also shift over time. Fox, Hitchings, Day, and Venn (2017) research on UK 'later life travellers' highlights that meanings associated with travel frequency, destination, and travel mode change between generations and over the life course. Their research shows how infrastructure developments, personal financial resources, and physical capacity have increased the accessibility of long-distance mobility, particularly for older people, and fed an association between travel, exoticism and adventure that popularises and normalises longer distances (Fox et al., 2017). In the context of this paper, this research serves as a reminder of the fluidity of meanings and practices involved in holidaying. Here, it is interesting to examine whether participation in alternative holiday practices during the pandemic have had implications for the meanings associated with holidaying, and people's aspirations for future travel.

Trends and preferences continuously change in the tourism sector. For example, the 'package' holiday was popularised in the UK in the 1960's, followed by budget travel providers popularising accessible tourism later in the twentieth century (Yeoman & McMahon-Beattie, 2020). More recently, self-catered holidaying, for example campervan ownership, has become more common, and was less affected by Covid-19 restrictions (Colomb & Gallent, 2022). Trends also link to public discourse – for example, during the pandemic there has been evidence of growing public acceptance of the need to reduce air travel (CAST, 2024), adding to the anti-aviation movement that was picking up pace prior to 2020, including *flight shame* (Gössling, Humpe, & Bausch, 2020). More broadly however, this further reinforces the fluidity of what it means to holiday, fuelling curiosity about trends post-Covid.

Covid-19 could have provided a window in which travellers gained experience to aid future low-carbon holidaying. However, there has been limited qualitative research into travellers' experience of domestic and surface travel during this period. In 2022, a survey of UK travellers showed widespread reluctance to travel internationally post-Covid, with air travel and cruises being most affected (DfT, 2022). This finding is echoed in European studies, where travellers express uncertainty around safety and care if getting sick overseas, and desire to support local tourism (Morar et al., 2021; Williams, Chen, Li, & Baláz, 2022). Another characterising shift is the preference for travelling by private transport, allowing greater degree of self-containment (Poulaki & Nikas, 2021; Tauber & Bausch, 2022). Additionally, in a survey of UK travellers, O'Garra and Fouquet (2022) found widespread willingness to reduce travel consumption in support of a low-carbon 'new normal'.

Simultaneously, there is potential for rebound travel as people seek to compensate for two years of restricted movement (Schulte-Fischedick, Shan, & Hubacek, 2021). Roncák, Scholz, and Linderová (2021) find eagerness to resume travel in young travellers, as the absence of travel opportunities emphasised the positive effect of travel on life quality. González-Reverté et al. (2022) and Tauber and Bausch (2022), highlight the absence of value change as a result of Covid-19, and suggest that pre-pandemic forms of travelling will resume. The presence of contradictory findings and uncertainty regarding how to enable such reductions calls for further effort to understand peoples' experiences of holidaying during Covid-19. To summarise, this paper investigates pandemic holiday practices, showing how experiences of holidaying

during this time interact with meanings and memories, and how this affects aspirations for future travel. In doing so, we address the gaps identified above, as well as further clarify the complexity of air travel reductions.

3. Method

An online survey and 21 interviews were conducted in the UK, an interesting case study due to its high rates of outgoing passenger kilometres and carbon emissions (Büchs & Mattioli, 2022). Data was collected between March and June 2022, with participants asked to reflect on their holiday experiences since the Covid-19 outbreak compared to pre-pandemic experiences, and on plans and aspirations for future travel. Throughout this research, we refer to ‘during Covid-19’ as the 22-month period March 2020–December 2021. During this time there were global restrictions on travel followed by country-specific restrictions related to vaccines and short-term transmission rates, and enduring uncertainties around the safety and feasibility of travel. The UK experienced three ‘lockdowns’ during this period (IfG, 2022), with holiday travel severely restricted (House of Commons, 2022). This study therefore includes periods when holidaying was prohibited and when holidaying was possible but limited given the changing nature of Covid-19 measures. Data was collected in a time of multiple disruptions, post-Brexit, at the start of Russian-Ukrainian war, and the cost-of-living crisis. However, no survey respondents and only one participant mentioned these other factors.

The survey was advertised on social media, targeting UK residents aged 18+ with interests in travelling. A separate identical survey was circulated via mailing lists and Twitter to increase sample size. Overall, 872 responses were received, with 406 removed as they were insufficiently complete (<50%), leaving 466 responses. Of the 466 survey respondents, 400 had holidayed between March 2020–December 2021, with several respondents making multiple trips. Data on origin, destination, transport modes, duration, companions, experiences, and comparisons with previous trips (where appropriate) were collected for every trip reported, generating data on 1220 trips. At respondent level, people’s general experiences of holidaying during Covid-19, travel aspirations in the next 12 months, pre-pandemic holidays, sociodemographic characteristics and views on climate change policies were surveyed. Though the pandemic, with restrictions, lasted 22 months, pre-pandemic travel and aspirations were queried on 12-month bases, for recall and outlook purposes. To ameliorate as much as possible effects of possible biases resulting from self-report data, e.g. social desirability or recall bias, the survey was designed with open-ended questions and prompts to facilitate recall.

Follow-on interviews were conducted online with 21 survey respondents, selected from a sample of 88, who had provided their email and consent for further research participation. Participants were sampled to capture a diversity of people (in terms of age, gender, constituent country, disability, etc.) and experiences (e.g. destination, mode of transport, number of holidays, etc.) based on survey responses. Interview data was inductively coded and analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to capture a more detailed account of people’s experiences of holidaying and post-pandemic travel aspirations. The thematic analysis was informed by practice-theoretical literature, coding for evaluation, experiences, meanings, and aspirations, in addition to emerging themes, to enable identification of practice patterns across participants. These patterns were organised along a temporal axis, connecting past experiences and meanings of holidaying, with pandemic experiences and evaluations, through to aspirations for future travel.

Using social media to recruit respondents enabled access to people that had travelled during the study period, however social media use and holiday travel are not even across the population (Alegre, Mateo, & Pou, 2009). Our sample is, therefore, convenient and purposive. It is not representative of the UK population, but reflects an expected sample of holiday-makers and planners. Survey respondents were mainly female

(90%), white (96%), 45 years old or above (83%), and living in England (85%, with 7% in Wales, 7% in Scotland, and 1% in Northern Ireland). Socio-demographic characteristics were diverse on income, political preferences, and disability. Existing research shows that women are more often travel bookers (Mottiar & Quinn, 2004) and more likely to participate in research (Porter & Whitcomb, 2005). Similarly, holidaying is a privilege practiced by those with sufficient disposable income (Alegre et al., 2009), which may correlate with income inequalities for ethnically diverse communities (DWP, 2020), as well as the under-representation of younger segments of the population, who were more likely to have become unemployed during Covid-19 (particularly ages 18–24) (Eurostat, 2020).

The survey data enables the holiday patterns of respondents to be characterised and provide foundations for subsequent qualitative analysis. This is important as holidaying during this period was unusual, both in being uncommon and more geographically limited than was the case pre-Covid-19. As such, the quantitative data presented in this paper should be viewed as context for the qualitative data and analysis.

As an island nation, modal shift is particularly challenging in the UK, making it an important case study of holiday travel. However, in other ways (socio-economic profile, cultural value of holidaying, infrastructure investment), the UK is similar to other Global North countries. Therefore, this study offers insights beyond the immediate case.

4. Results and analysis

4.1. Patterns in holiday practices during Covid-19

Our findings show that Covid-19 had implications for the character of holidaying, affecting frequency, destination, and mode. This section presents headline findings from the survey and describes the characteristics of holidaying during Covid-19, reflecting on how these changes compared to holiday practices pre-Covid-19. Our findings largely align with tourism statistics (see Section 2), showing a decline in frequency, a movement towards more domestic holidaying, and a shift from air travel to private transport (particularly cars).

In terms of frequency, making one trip for holiday purposes during the pandemic was the most common response (27.0%) compared to three trips in the twelve months prior to Covid-19 (23.8%) (see Fig. 1). While the range in responses is large, overall, this indicates that respondents took fewer trips during Covid-19 than pre-pandemic. Considering the relative change in trip frequency to different geographic regions (within the UK, within Europe, outside of Europe), Fig. 2 shows that holidays to destinations outside of the UK were most affected, with most respondents reporting taking fewer holidays in Europe (81.3%), and outside of Europe (73.8%). The frequency of holidaying in the UK presents a more complex picture, with some respondents reporting a decrease and others an increase. This finding implies that some respondents holidayed less frequently altogether, and for others there was a shift from overseas destinations to domestic.

Looking at these responses relative to respondents’ aspirations for future travel, our data suggests that, in general, respondents are planning to increase the number of holidays, reporting an average of 2.8 planned trips in the next 12 months compared to 1.7 trips per year during the pandemic (950 trips planned over 345 respondents over 12 months, compared to 1220 pandemic trips over 396 respondents over 22 months). For destination during Covid-19, domestic holidays were the most common (61.6% of 1220 trips reported, inside Europe 30.2% and outside Europe 7.4%) (see Fig. 3). Our findings are supported by others’ in showing a return to familiar destinations first when travelling overseas. The most frequently reported overseas destinations were Spain, Greece, and France, largely aligning with Shepherd, Atherden, Chan, Loveridge, and Tatem (2021), and suggestions that familiarity was important in pandemic holidaying. Additionally, Fig. 3 also highlights that fewer respondents plan to take holiday in the UK, compared to during the pandemic, and instead intend to go abroad with 18.7% and

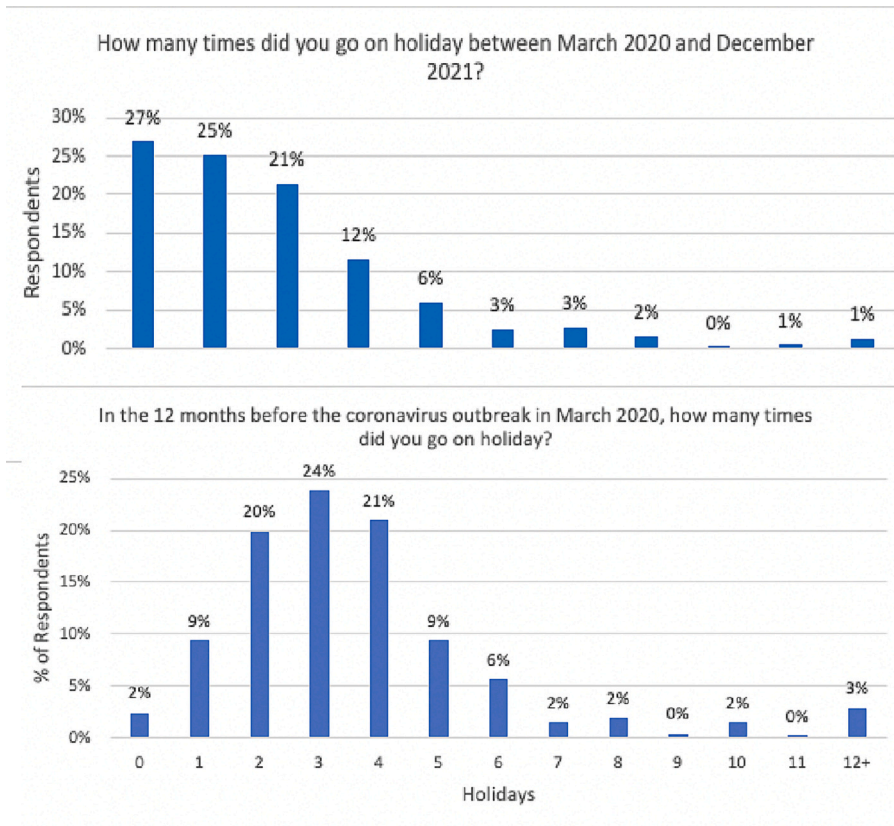


Fig. 1. Frequency of holiday trips made pre-Covid and during Covid. Note that answers refer to time periods of different duration, and that normalised to 12 months, the reported effect of reduced trip frequency is amplified.

Frequency (%)	In the UK	In Europe	Outside Europe
Considerably fewer	23%	46%	52%
Fewer	26%	35%	21%
About the same	18%	16%	25%
More	23%	2%	1%
Considerably more	10%	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Fig. 2. Reported change in frequency of trips to different destinations. Note that ‘About the same’ may mean that a respondent normally does not travel to a certain region, and that this did not change during the pandemic. N(In the UK) = 456, N(In Europe) = 442, N(Outside Europe) = 416.

16.5% increases in trips planned within and beyond Europe respectively.

Existing research shows the impact of Covid-19 on aviation, however, given that many respondents were still travelling for holiday purposes, holidays were clearly being made without flying. We sought to understand these trips and therefore asked respondents explicitly about holidays where they had replaced a trip for which they otherwise would have flown (N = 397), enquiring about travel mode (N = 106), destination (N = 164), and experiences of their replacement trips (N = 168)

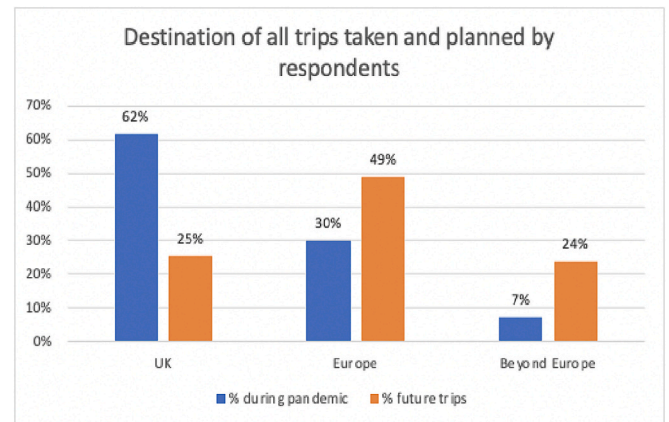


Fig. 3. Destination of trips taken during the pandemic, and that are planned, divided into UK, Europe and Beyond Europe. N(during pandemic) = 1220, N (future trips) = 950.

(see Fig. 5). Our findings show 53.1% of respondents had taken a holiday that replaced a flight, of which 92.7% had holidayed within the UK instead of an international trip (only 6.1% had travelled to Europe and < 1% outside of Europe). For travel mode, there was an extensive modal shift towards private car (79.9% of total trips), with a smaller shift towards trains (10.9% of total trips).

In terms of respondents’ future plans, our results show that respondents are planning to increase the number of flights (29.5%), with a similar reduction in travel by car for holiday (30.2%). Other transport modes appear to remain on a relatively similar level. Fig. 4 shows the percentage of trips for main mode of transport for holidays, during the

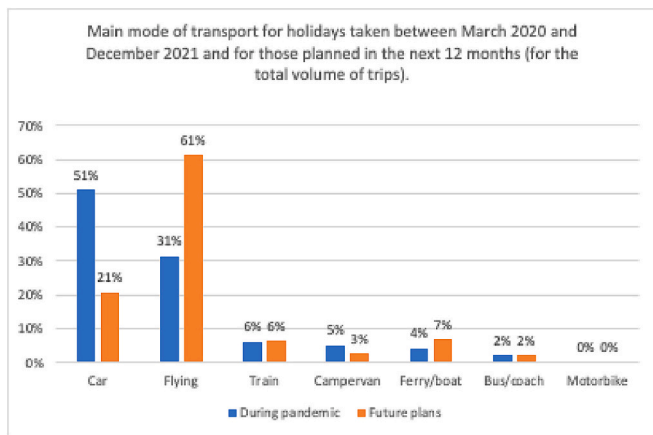


Fig. 4. Main mode of transport for pandemic holidays and for planned holidays. N(pandemic) = 1026, N(future) = 827.

pandemic and for the next 12 months.

In summary, these findings show that respondents continued holidaying during Covid-19, adapting through increasing domestic travel and a modal shift from flights to cars. As Fig. 5 shows, for respondents who had replaced a flight for a surface-based holiday, these trips were found to be easy and convenient by most (66.0% and 59.5% of respondents answering positively to these prompts). Though the enjoyment of these trips was more divisive, and while 35.7% people agreed, or strongly agreed, that the trip was more enjoyable than a flight would have been, the largest number of respondents were ambivalent (28.1%) and 36.2% disagreed, or strongly disagreed.

Our findings broadly support the suggestion that pre-Covid holiday travel patterns will resume, with many respondents reporting an aspiration to resume flying to travel overseas, regardless of their Covid-19 travel experiences. However, our findings also show that respondents did replace flights for surface travel and have travelled shorter distances during Covid-19, and that the experiences of these were varied. Given this variation, and that modal shift and distance reduction are vital for decarbonising leisure, the next section proceeds to examine qualitative data to understand peoples’ experiences of these holidays further, and implications for their aspirations for future travel.

4.2. Experience and outlook

The survey data paints a picture of recovery of pre-pandemic holidaying, while simultaneously indicating that the trips taken by

respondents that replaced a flight were more or equally convenient, enjoyable, and affordable compared to a trip involving a flight would have been. Moving on from overarching patterns in respondents’ pandemic holiday travel practices, the interview data presents a more complex picture, offering nuanced perspectives on the survey results. Participants described how travelling without flying had prompted reflection on previous holiday experiences and aspirations for future travel. However, whether, or not, and to what extent, participants’ reflections support the reconfiguration of holiday practices varied. By tracing commonalities in responses, we identify how varied past, and pandemic, experiences of holidays (mode, destination, experience) combine with different shared meanings of what ‘going on holiday’ should involve, shape the degree of enjoyment and satisfaction derived from holidaying during Covid-19, and future travel aspirations.

We organise our findings around three patterns of practice, reflecting commonalities in past practices, different meanings associated with holidaying, different experiences of travel during the pandemic, and different aspirations towards future holiday travel. Their responses show how past practices, pandemic practices, and aspirations are entangled, with implications for how travel patterns in these groups could continue to evolve post-Covid-19. The short-hand names for these practice patterns are Committed Globetrotting, Land-Curious Holidaying, and Cautiously Converting, reflecting dispositions towards future travel. The practice patterns provide a way of connecting pre-pandemic preferences and meanings, to experience of surface travel during the pandemic, and future aspirations. Each pattern also has a longer, more specific name (see Table 1). Maritime travel was not commonly reported within this sample (one trip), meaning that this paper’s perspective on surface travel is centred on land-based travel modes. Table 1 outlines the characteristics of each pattern, before expanding below.

4.2.1. Committed globetrotting

The first identifiable pattern, named ‘Committed Globetrotting’, describes a mode of pre-pandemic holidaying centred around long-haul flights and cruises. Participants described how, prior to Covid-19, they would travel to overseas destinations (including beyond Europe) multiple times per year, by flying, cruising or organised coach trips (often a combination of these). Unlike others, their holidays included all-inclusive or package tours, using third parties (e.g. tour companies) to organise travel and support them while overseas. Their responses show that “proper” holiday experiences contrast starkly with everyday life at home, providing opportunities to experience different climates, cultures, foods, locations, and landscapes, suggesting that a holiday means to have a liminoid experience (Selänniemi, 2016). UK-based trips occurred, but are described as “breaks” punctuating time between “proper” holidays. For example, one participant, who normally flies

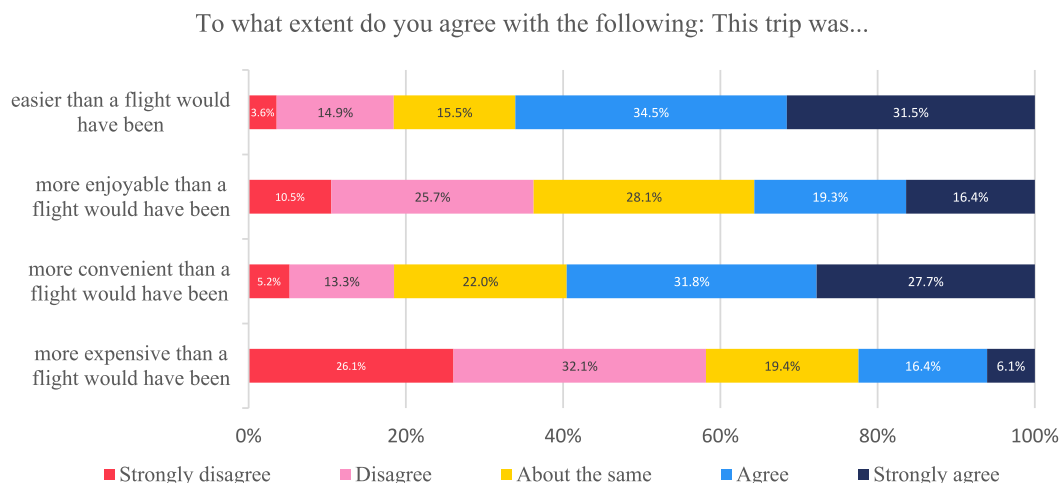


Fig. 5. Experience of ease, enjoyment, convenience, and cost of replacement holidays compared to the one in which respondents would have flown. (N = 168).

Table 1

Overview of patterns of holidaying and reflections on experiences, meanings, and aspirations, generated through thematic analysis of interview responses. These are exemplified with interview quotes in each section below.

	Committed Globetrotting	Land-Curious Holidaying	Cautiously Converting
Short Long	Committed to continuous globetrotting through flying and cruising	Curious about more surface-based holidaying, but will also fly	Cautiously converting to surface-based travel, but not fully committed
Pre-pandemic	Holidays involve travelling abroad annually, often beyond Europe by flight or cruise, and shared meanings are associated with novel experiences, high degree of comfort and convenience (e.g. all-inclusive and package tours). Holidays within the UK, typically by car, are framed as 'breaks' rather than holidays.	Holidays involve travelling annually to European destinations e.g. the Mediterranean by flight, and also within the UK by car or train. Shared holiday meanings are associated with sun and warmth, and the aesthetics of surroundings are important.	Similar to Land-Curious Holidaying, except participants express a stronger concern about the impact of flying, as well as a budding interest in travelling without flying.
During Covid-19	Mainly travelling by car within the UK. Experiences of surface travel during Covid-19 were unsatisfactory and adequate, and were not felt acceptable replacements for pre-pandemic pattern.	Mainly travelling by car in the UK (in addition to a small number of flights to familiar locations e.g. the Mediterranean). Holidaying without flying nevertheless provided opportunities to experience sun and beauty in the UK.	Mainly travelling by personal vehicle (car and motorhome) and train, within the UK and Europe (in addition to a small number of flights). Experience of surface travel were highly positive and satisfactory.
Future plans	Convey a sense of wanting to compensate for missed trips, returning to destinations beyond Europe. Strengthened in their perception that UK holidays are not real holidays as they lack novelty and/or comfort.	Express Covid-19 holiday experiences as moments of realisation that what is possible within the UK and/or by land. Travellers describe being open to travelling more by land, but will continue to fly to predictably sunny locations, and also to see friends and family.	The pandemic expedited plans or inclinations, e.g. wanting to fly less. Travellers report a strong commitment to travel more by land, both by train and personal vehicle, both within and outside the UK, but not a commitment to completely forgo flying.

outside of Europe on all-inclusive holidays, explains the purpose of UK trips:

"We go abroad a couple of times a year, we would probably have a weekend break away as well in this country. It would be an extra, not instead-of. [...] We would go maybe somewhere, stay in a hotel somewhere for a night or two normally, because it might be my birthday, [...] just to break up the time in between going on holiday." (Jessie).

As this quote exemplifies, UK trips are not seen as real holidays, as they are comparatively familiar. Consequently, participants describe their UK-based pandemic holidays unfavourably. During Covid-19, trips were organised independently, travel occurred in private vehicles, and accommodation was self-catered. While these holidays were described as providing a degree of escapism, with participants describing how they felt a need to get away from usual surroundings and routines, the contrast between pre-pandemic holidaying practices and associations on the one hand, and pandemic experiences on the other, meant that UK-centric holidays during this time compared poorly to past experiences and expectations of holidaying overseas:

"We would never have dreamed of [going on holiday in the UK] a few years ago, [because] holidays were going somewhere hot, warm and totally different, where we could have a completely different experience from the one we have the rest of the year. So that was what we required or looked for in a holiday. Suffolk or Devon did not provide that." (Adele).

As Adele explains, the UK trips during the pandemic were insufficiently different, as well as not being hot or warm, and were less of a holiday as a result. While possible to experience something new in the UK, the degree and extent of novelty in language, culture, food, nature, of UK holiday destinations was not felt to provide the kind of "totally different" experience seemingly sought by participants such as Adele. Similarly, having to organise logistics oneself - what to see, where to eat, what to pack, how to get around - does not, for this pattern, fulfil the holiday expectations. In other words, the holidays that were available during the pandemic were not liminoid enough to replace the pre-pandemic experience of globetrotting (Selänniemi, 2016). This lack of fulfilment is supported by remarks made by participants on a sensation of 'missing out' on holidays during Covid-19 and aspiring to return to long-haul locations post-pandemic:

"To be honest, we both felt that we were kind of deprived of travelling during the pandemic." (Jessie).

For this participant, multiple trips to destinations beyond Europe were cancelled as a result of Covid-19. Others described deferring plans

(or having had trips postponed by tour operators) to 2022 or 2023, making this sense of 'missing out' more tangible.

For participants performing this practice pattern, the pandemic further strengthened pre-existing dispositions towards globetrotting, as experiences of travelling within the UK prompted reflection on what elements of a holiday are crucial for enjoyment. Feeling that the UK did not provide sufficiently different experiences, and unable to relinquish responsibility as they would on a longer distance trip, participants reflected on a sense of dissatisfaction, and little intention of continuing after the pandemic.

"[We don't have any UK holidays planned], there's just nothing we want to see." (Liza).

The pandemic did not result in a reconsideration or reconfiguration of holidaying for people practicing this pattern. Indeed, if anything, it strengthened the commitment to continued globetrotting, and may further even result in rebounded air miles, because of deferred trips and efforts to compensate for missed experiences. This practice pattern was the only one where a common sociodemographic characteristic was identifiable – participants that holidayed in this way were, on average, older (median 71 years old, range 50–82) and several reflected on how age factored into their experiences and aspirations. As Phoebe explains, for some participants this pattern of practice enables them to make the most of travelling whilst they still felt able to do so:

"I want to travel, I'm in a position and at an age where I have freedom to travel, and I want to make the most of the health that I have at my age." (Phoebe).

For others, their choice of holiday travel mode (particularly cruising) was made as these modes provide opportunity for a "proper" holiday, without compromising on comfort or convenience. The pandemic, having resulted in missing out on one or more proper holidays, contributed to a sense of urgency, to go on these forms of holiday whilst they still felt able to do so.

Committed Globetrotting reflects those survey responses that had gone on multiple trips pre-pandemic, had gone on car holidays during the pandemic, and who planned to fly and cruise abroad, in Europe or beyond, post-pandemic. While finding their trips relatively affordable, they did not find them comfortable or enjoyable. The interview data further explains that the meanings associated with holiday for those practicing this pattern were not possible to realise through the pandemic holidays. As such, those in this cluster will seemingly retain a commitment to travelling far and wide post-pandemic.

4.2.2. Land-curious holidaying

The second pattern identified, 'Land-Curious Holidaying', describes a more mixed pattern of holidaying, with weaker associations with long-haul destinations and novel experiences. Here, participants describe holidays as involving flying abroad for sun and warmth, for example to Spain or Greece, and also for visiting friends and family in remote places, such as Australia. The former were more frequent and regular, annually, whereas the latter occurred only occasionally. Pre-pandemic, UK trips by land were common and some considered these trips as holidays, rather than breaks: "We've always been happy to go on holiday in the UK" (Nicole). Additionally, seeing beautiful places, scenery, and quaint villages and towns is an important aspect of what it means to holiday:

"[Dorset] is very nice, a bit middle-class, retired people-ish, but it's very pretty, and where we stay actually overlooks the sea, so even if the weather is poor, you can just look at the sea, which is lovely." (Laila).

The importance of good weather was highlighted, and the unreliability of weather was seen as worrisome on UK holidays, but for Laila and others, did not exempt holidays to more proximate destinations.

Like for others, holidaying became more car-centric and UK-oriented during the pandemic. However, unlike those who had previously Globetrotted, where Covid-19 holidays were unfulfilling, participants more often described their holiday experiences positively, with sunny weather, and opportunities to visit beautiful places.

"[Going to Durham was] excellent, yes. Good weather, discovering parts of the UK, it was great." (Kim).

"The UK is a beautiful place, when the sun is shining it's amazing." (Nicole).

The experience of the journeys themselves, mostly by car, were also typically positive. Participants do not aspire to be catered for, and being self-reliant was not problematic. Many participants described driving as convenient, providing greater control over the trip and a degree of flexibility once in the destination compared to other transport modes. This was sometimes also reflected on as a discovery, a new insight gained, for those less accustomed to driving for holiday.

In general, the pandemic holidays that this cluster had were positive experiences, to the extent that participants described how holidaying during Covid-19 prompted reflection on past experiences and sparked interest in both domestic holidays and travel without flying in the future. The holiday meanings that were mentioned by this cluster seemingly fit well with a willingness to (partially) continue holidaying by land. Even though UK holidays were practiced pre-pandemic, the pandemic provided a moment of discovery, with participants describing how they had found the UK to have beauty, nature vistas, and character sufficient for a 'proper' holiday, signifying that the meanings bound up in holidaying were, at least partially, possible to realise with surface-based transport. As such, these experiences added to stocks of knowledge – that good weather and beauty can be had without international travel and/or flying. This time also gave rise to an interest in further discovery and exploration, post-pandemic. This was most often directed at continuing to explore in the UK or by land into Europe, as the quotes from Cheryl and Lottie indicate:

"We've never been to Worcestershire before 2020, and it's beautiful, and that's the sort of thing I'm interested in now. For example, I've never been to Manchester, other than Manchester airport, so I'd like to see more places in the UK." (Cheryl).

"I would think we're really lucky - we've got loads and loads of places that we haven't explored in Britain, and I mean, we never been to Ireland, [...] there are plenty of options [where] you can go." (Lottie).

Participants' aspirations for future holiday travel thus characterise Land-Curious Holidaying, as most participants expressed some commitment to continue travelling by car or rail to visit places they have never been to in the UK for holidays, or to take the train to Europe. As their experiences of pandemic holidaying were positive, participants in this cluster are curious about flying less, but will continue to take longer-distance flights (e.g. to southern Europe), and for visits to friends and family in other parts of the world:

"I am very climate aware, which is why it's hard for me, because I like the planes to be grounded, but then I wouldn't be able to see the kids, so it's sort of a double-edged sword." (Irene).

Irene highlights here the environmental impact of flying as concerning, but will not compromise on flying to visit family members who live abroad in Central and Southern Europe. The awareness mentioned by Irene above is, also for others, thus only translated into a partial future commitment:

"I can take the train over to Europe, which I have done, and I am looking at that for next year, so yeah, I'll probably be flying less, but I won't not fly, but I do appreciate that I'm not doing anything good." (Cheryl).

This participant framed *flying less* as intentional and part of their existing efforts to reduce their environmental and climate impact. This sentiment was relatively common for land-curious travellers, like Irene and Cheryl, who expressed recognition of the environmental benefits of travelling without flying or the environmental harms of flying. Participants in this pattern were generally younger than those who globetrot, nevertheless age was still described by some as a contributing factor to the unwillingness to fully commit to not flying. Hannah speaks about flying in the context of age and generational difference:

"In one sense I feel that I should be cutting back on air travel, but in another I feel that I missed out when I was young, which was a time when people didn't jet around the world. And I didn't travel much at all until I was older, so this is my sort of gap year - gap years - of travelling. I didn't do it earlier, so I do it now." (Hannah).

In this quote it becomes apparent that age has a complex relationship with flying, supporting findings by Fox et al. (2017). Here, age is also supporting a continuation of flying post-pandemic, however it is bound up in a different set of aspirations and meanings compared to participants who globetrot, e.g. concern for the environment, which was stronger for the land-curious travellers. Unlike the globetrotters, land-curious travellers express aspirations and plans for a combination of flight and surface-based holidays in the future:

"I've done a Spain holiday since the pandemic finished, and I'm doing a Dorset [holiday] again. So it'll be a mix [of flying and going by land] really." (Laila).

In terms of planned holidays, both land-based and flight holidays were booked, building on experiences of travelling during the pandemic which resulted in more domestic and land-based travel than would have otherwise been usual. As such, Land-Curious Holidaying reflects those in the survey data that went on various holidays pre-pandemic (but fewer compared to Committed Globetrotting), car holidays during the pandemic, and will continue both flying and going on more surface-based and/or domestic trips post-pandemic. They found their pandemic travels to be affordable, convenient, and enjoyable. Through the interview data, this is explainable through attention to what a holiday means for this cluster – beautiful vistas and nice weather, something which is possible to have by surface-based transport in/from the UK. As such, from their pandemic experiences, they may bring with them new knowledge on how to have 'proper holidays', without flying.

4.2.3. Cautiously converting

In some respects, this pattern of practice is similar to Land-Curious Holidaying, but is distinct in particularly one aspect, which is a stronger commitment to continue travelling by without flying that explicitly stems from experiences of land-based travel during the pandemic. In most other respects, this holiday practice and its performers were generally similar to Land-Curious Holidaying. Pre-pandemic, participants describe a pattern that combines domestic and overseas trips. Holidays were (partially) similarly about warm and sunny weather, and not particularly about accessing new experiences or exotic locations.

During the pandemic, these participants had positive and impactful experiences that were seemingly transformative, changing their outlook on holidaying and providing an opportunity to realise pre-existing dispositions towards travelling without flying. Participants that describe

this pattern of practice generally travelled more than others during the pandemic, and travel mode was varied, including campervans, cars, flights, and trains.

The experience of pandemic holidays and travel were very positive, and found to be more convenient than flying. Furthermore, as for Land-Curious Travellers, participants also had the realisation that, for example, the weather can be good in the UK. One participant, who habitually went to Spain or other locations along the Mediterranean pre-pandemic, describes her realisation:

“I think we went for a lot of places that we probably wouldn’t have visited before, if that makes sense, because it was always ‘Oh let’s go to Spain’, because the weather in Spain [is more certain], but sometimes you can get the weather here, [and] it’s really changed my mindset.” (Jasmine).

The realisation and change in mindset that this participant mentions recur in others in this cluster. As Jasmine says, the pandemic broke a habit of travelling to Spain, and prompted consideration of other locations where there would be opportunity to achieve similar ends that a trip to Spain provides (here, improved weather). Furthermore, amidst recognition for the hardship the pandemic brought, these travellers also celebrated what they had been forced to discover:

“We live in a beautiful country, I mean Wales is the most beautiful, but the UK is beautiful. [...] We’ve seen places we never would have seen. I’ve lived in this area all my life [...], but there are things ten miles down the road that I didn’t even know was there, so that’s one of the big bonuses of Covid, it made us reassess our lives, and look at what’s available, not at what’s not available.” (Erica).

This quote exemplifies Cautiously Converting well - impactful and positive realisations, communicated with a sense of wonder and discovery (for example “*We’ve seen places we never would have seen*” - Erica; “*Our country is just lovely*” - Jasmine), are what sets these travellers apart. Where the Land-Curious Travellers also included positive realisations, these were weaker and appeared as less transformative compared to those Cautiously Converting. As the name Cautiously Converting indicates, the experiences of holidaying during the pandemic led some to tentatively re-evaluate their holiday routine. This re-evaluation did not result in an absolute commitment to avoid flying, but there were stronger interest- and know-how-driven aspirations present in the future outlooks of this pattern. These aspirations can in turn be traced backwards in time, through impactful and positive holiday experiences during the pandemic, to the pre-pandemic inclinations towards, and thoughts about, surface-based travel modes. For example, one participant in this cluster bought a campervan when Covid-19 broke out, instead of waiting a few more years, as was planned; another had begun thinking about holidaying without flying pre-pandemic, and was now ‘forced’ to try it out:

“I know personally that we would have never been to the places we’ve been to, because we would have just gone and done a city break, but our country is just lovely. We are gradually going to other places in England, you know, because we were forced to do it, and now we want to do it. We were forced to do it when we couldn’t fly, and now we actually want to do it, so that’s good. Because we’ve got a beautiful country, but we just go somewhere else, and we shouldn’t.” (Jasmine).

Here, Jasmine emphasises how initially more domestic holiday destinations were “forced” on travellers, however this has led to positive experiences such that their family will now explore the UK in ways they would not have done pre-Covid. For these travellers, the pandemic provided an opportunity to break habits, to expedite plans, to act on inclinations, and to learn and realise - that travelling without flying can be both possible and enjoyable. Cautiously Converting, as such, represents those in the survey data, which would have gone on car, campervan, or train holiday during the pandemic, and which would have enjoyed these enough to report plans to take fewer flights post-pandemic. This kind of realisation and nuanced knowledge generation are what define both Land-Curious Holidaying and Cautiously Converting. Similar to the previous cluster, those Cautiously Converting

gained insights into how to shift one’s holiday travel, without compromising what the holiday is for.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This paper investigates the configuration and adaptation of holiday travel practices with a view to identifying ways to support low-carbon holidaying based on people’s experiences of predominantly domestic car-centric tourism during Covid-19. Overall, our findings suggest there is value in recognising Covid-19 as a moment of change (e.g. Marsden & Docherty, 2021). Our findings support others in showing tendencies to travel less frequently, over shorter distances, and by private transport. Many respondents who had replaced a flight for a holiday without flying found these to be easier and more convenient than a flight would have been, and often more enjoyable (though the latter was more divisive). However, when asked about future plans, our findings support others (e.g. González-Reverté et al., 2022; Tauber & Bausch, 2022) in showing that travellers intend to travel more frequently, by air, to long-haul destinations post-Covid, irrespective of their experiences. These are problematic findings in the context of reducing and shifting demand, and show the extent to which air travel, long-haul travel, and ideas of holidaying are entangled. Beneath these headlines there is evidence of variation in responses and our qualitative analysis draws out differences by reflecting on participants’ experiences, and how these connect to meanings and aspirations.

For most participants, Covid-19 did not result in changed holiday meanings, but instead tested prior meanings and associations in new locations and, for some travellers, experiences of holidaying during Covid-19 reinforced pre-existing preferences for long-distance travel rather than enabling transition towards low-carbon holidaying. For some, going on holiday *means* long-haul travel to places where they might be exposed to novel languages, food, and experiences with minimal personal effort expended to enable the suspension of usual routines (Selänniemi, 2016). For these people, a satisfactory ‘real’ holiday was difficult to attain during Covid-19 and could continue to be difficult in a future with less air travel given the challenges with travelling far. Here, without considerable effort to increase and market the diversity of proximate destinations, there appears limited potential to enable a voluntary shift away from flying, and risk of retaliation against implications that holidaying should differ from present practices. Local and regional tourism policy efforts to support local languages and dialects, independent and local businesses, and accentuate place-based menus and activities might all contribute to increasing the sense of variety and novelty of locations. Targeted marketing to domestic or short-range tourism markets may further be effective.

For others, the pandemic was a moment to experience alternative ways of achieving the ends that holidays serve, leading to reflection on the necessity of long distance/air travel. These participants reflected on how a sense of escapism was achieved even in more localised and car-focused holidays, as these nevertheless provide freedom from usual commitments. The realisation that good weather and beautiful destinations could be found within the UK, and the ease of reaching these destinations contradicted previous assumptions about the necessity of distance to attain sufficient holiday experiences. In these cases, Covid-19 provided a chance to experience alternative ways of holidaying, adding to stocks of knowledge and embodied experiences to facilitate future travel. Here there may be opportunities to facilitate voluntary shifts towards short-distance and surface travel with policy support to increase marketing of alternative destinations, improve infrastructure linkages and reduce costs.

While a shift away from flying is paramount, a shift towards private cars rather than public transport is problematic, as the emissions (CO_2 passenger⁻¹ km⁻¹) are similar for a short-distance flight and a car with single occupancy (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2022). However, as people typically holiday with others, therefore multiple occupancy is likely, and the distances travelled by car are likely smaller

than when flying, switching a flight for a car holiday is likely to result in considerable emissions reduction. Even so, this substitution highlights a need for further research to understand how to shift demand towards public transport (e.g. ferry, coach, train), as well as how to shift away from flying. To complement this, additional research into the practice of car (and van)-centric holidaying would be worthwhile as the present findings highlight the importance of the teleo-affective qualities of practices, that infuse different modalities with normativity, purpose and meaning (Volden & Hansen, 2022). In addition to practical understandings and infrastructures, these meaningful elements of holiday travel affect how different travel modes are understood and experienced, as well as how distance intersects with mode.

Participants' accounts show the impossibility of disentangling experiences of holidaying during Covid-19 from everyday experiences, reflecting the challenges with conducting research during Covid-19. Firstly, all travel was substantially reduced during the study period with implications on identifying and accessing participants, exacerbating usual sampling challenges (as discussed in Section 3). Secondly, the framing of the pandemic in media and public discourse changed during the research, with early discourse framing emergent lifestyles as a 'new normal' (e.g. Jamaludin, Azmir, Mohamad Ayob, & Zainal, 2020), and later a rush to 'get back to normal' (e.g. Kitchlew, 2022). Participants' holidays, experiences, and recollections coalesce with these public imaginaries, with implications for responses. Similarly, while the extended temporal scope of this study was invaluable in portraying a variety of holiday experiences, participants will have been affected by other disruptive events, including e.g. travel strikes. Further research to investigate the separate and cumulative effects of different forms of disruption would be worthwhile. Additionally, the samples here were large enough to indicate patterns, but future research may benefit from testing said patterns with even larger samples. This may also uncover the role of sociodemographic characteristics further.

Modal shift increasingly underpins decarbonising strategy in the transport sector, however this research illustrates the complexity of realising such a change. Despite our findings showing that many gained experience in travelling without flying during Covid-19, and many of these people found the experience to be easier and more convenient than a flight, our findings also indicate a resumption of pre-pandemic holiday patterns. Simultaneously, what makes a holiday satisfying varies and can be achieved to differing degrees with surface transport. Although possible to travel far without flying, the time, cost and convenience reduce the feasibility and accessibility, making it more challenging for some travellers to experience a "proper holiday" without flying. As such, modal shifts require not only advocacy and enabling action in transport infrastructure, but also policies designed to enhance the experience of domestic holidaying. Avoiding or shifting air travel demand for recreational purposes requires engaging with meanings associated with travel, the amenities provided in proximate destinations, and the infrastructure that enables travellers to reach destinations by low-carbon modes.

The persistence of any changes identified here is unknown, and further research is needed to understand the medium- to long-term legacies of the pandemic on holidaying. While recuperation of passenger numbers is indicative of a resumption in pre-Covid travel patterns, the focus in this research on holiday practices has revealed how demand for aviation is (partially) produced and reproduced through meanings, experiences, and aspirations. By challenging the idea that holidays need to involve flying to be proper holidays, the pandemic has offered a glimpse into what makes a trip a holiday. These insights support conversations about demand and modal shifting, and are important complements to future research.

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The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sara Skarp: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Claire Hoolohan:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

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