

## **Risk perception during the COVID-19 pandemic: A generational approach**

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**Keywords** | Risk perception, COVID-19 pandemic, Travel, Generations

**Objectives** | It is estimate that Covid-19 has been responsible for almost 7.000.000 deaths in the World (WHO, 2023). The tourism industry was the most affected one with unprecedented impacts on travel consumer behavior. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the risk perception among the general population worldwide, with differences between the several generations.

Within this context, the main purpose of the present research is to measure risk perception among Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z generations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This work attempts to contribute to the academic literature by looking at the travel risk perception from generations' perspective.

**Methodology** | The risk perception considered three dimensions related to COVID-19 pandemic: knowledge, beliefs, and fear. In order to measure risk perception among different generations, a quantitative approach was undertaken through a questionnaire applied to people of different generation cohort who want to make a national or international trip during the next months. The empirical collection was conducted from October 1st to December 15th of 2022 and data were obtained by launching and e-questionnaire with a group of questions related to travel risk perceptions and sociodemographic information's.

The population under study consists of residents in Portugal territory who intends to be (national or international) travelers in the short/medium term.

A total of 960 useable questionnaires was collected.

**Main Results and Contributions** | These findings show how differently COVID-19 pandemic affected the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z, regarding to risk perception.

Knowledge is significantly influenced by generation. Generation Z has a significantly lower level of knowledge than the other generations (Baby Boomers, X and Y). Generation Y also has a significantly lower level of knowledge than Baby Boomers. Also, the level of beliefs is significantly influenced by generation. The Baby Boomers Generation has a significantly higher level of beliefs than the

remaining generations (X, Y and Z). Likewise, the level of fear is influenced by generation. The Generation Z has a significantly higher level of fear than the other generations (Baby Boomers, X and Y). Generation Y also has a significantly higher level of fear than Generation X.

The study seeks to provide valuable indications, both at the theoretical and managerial level, for the tourism sector due the tourism industry recovery. Moreover, studies on each generation are necessary to respond effectively to the needs and demands of each generation regarding travel and tourism (Jiménez-García et al., 2023).

**Limitations** | The present study has some limitations that should be undertake. Despite the reliability of the structured techniques, there is still the risk of not have been considered other important dimensions for the respondents regarding travel risk perception during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also, the research relies on a convenience sample collected through social networks and Portuguese travel forums, so it may not be representative of the entire population. Finally, the study was carried out in the final of 2022 with the possible prospect of the pandemic ending soon, which may influence the perception of inherent risk.

**Conclusions** | In this study risk perception was measure through three dimensions regarding COVID-19 pandemic: knowledge, beliefs and fear. The findings suggest that risk perceptions differ between generations, resulting in variance in people's behavior. The fact that the study was held in the final of 2022, within a different pandemic context not so apparently risky, could justify a lower risk perception among all the generations which was not confirmed. Moreover, the Generation Z has a significantly higher level of fear than the other generations, which is somehow surprising. Maybe because the concern with the health of others is one of the top two concerns of this generation (cf. Azimi et al., 2021).

Therefore, the study may contribute to a new approach to COVID-19 pandemic risk perception consider generations. Finally, and related to future research, and since lockdowns during the outbreak period had a significant impact on perceptions (Zhan et al., 2022), it could be interesting to cross these results with the lockdown experiences.

## References

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