

Academic Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management



Travel and Covid-19 risks, uncertainties and ambiguities

Covid-19 presents unprecedented global challenges for tourism as individuals face shifting infection threats, health care responses, and travel regulations. Their responses to these are influenced by their willingness to engage with risks, uncertainties and ambiguities which are highly variable and can have contradictory effects. Allan Williams, Jason Chen, Gang Li and their colleague Vlado Baláž conducted a research council -funded project to examine these effects on individuals' travel intentions in five countries.

Risk, uncertainty and ambiguity amid Covid-19: A multinational analysis of international travel intentions

Prof Allan Williams, Dr Jason Chen & Prof Gang Li

Covid-19 has radically changed how tourist intentions are formed in the face of deeply intensified awareness of health and regulatory challenges. As part of a research project funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), this major empirical study identifies how these challenges influence the timing of future travel plans. It analyses a sample of almost 9000 individuals drawn from the world's top five tourism source markets: China, USA, Germany, UK and France. In understanding tourist intentions under these exceptionally challenging conditions, it is necessary to look beyond socio-demographic differences and examine the different impacts of known versus unknown risks.



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Individual intolerance of risks
versus uncertainty have very
different impacts on tourism
intentions
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The willingness of individuals to take (known) risks has six main components: intolerance of, versus competence to manage, risks across three different dimensions - in general, in the travel domain, and in the Covid-19 context. Intolerance of Covid situational risk, intolerance of general risk, and perceived competence to manage Covid situational risk have the strongest impacts on individuals delaying their tourism travel. In contrast, intolerance of unknown risks - the inherent uncertainty of the future and ambiguity about present conditions and information - has contrary impacts, leading to intentions to take holidays relatively sooner rather than delaying the holiday plans.

These findings not only advance how we theorise risks and uncertainties during tourism crises but also highlight the need for subtle and carefully targeted communication to tourists. Government and individual firms' messaging and marketing need to address the contrasting impacts of different forms of risk and uncertainty.

Further Reading:

Williams, A.M., J.L. Chen, G. Li and V. Baláž (2022). Risk, uncertainty and ambiguity amid COVID-19: A multi-national analysis of international travel intentions. *Annals of Tourism Research*.

Link: bit.ly/3Acnzwj