

# Sustainability and Holidays Plans in Covid Times: An Analysis of Portuguese Residents' Intentions

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on micro-environmental factors (Casado-Aranda et al, 2021) related to changes in consumers' travel behaviours, arising from COVID-19. It seeks to understand if risk perception associated with COVID had an impact on travel intentions of residents in Portugal and if there are changes, regarding more sustainable choices, in 2021 summer holiday's intentions. Data was collected through an online questionnaire between December 2020 and March 2021 (overlapping the first 3 months of the vaccination process, corresponding to 5% of the full vaccination of the Portuguese (Our World in Data, 2021) and reflects short-term effects (Miao et al, 2021) on the travel behaviours of residents in Portugal (n=610). Almost half of the participants (48,5%) responded positively to the probability of going on holidays in 2021. From these, the majority (64,2%) intended to travel only to domestic destinations, mostly justified by the willingness to help the country (54,5% of those who considered likely to go on holidays) and not as much as a risk perception associated to the pandemic (only referred by 26,8%). As for holiday's consumption intentions, residents expressed concerns that may have a positive impact on the socio economical sustainability of the destinations. In fact, from those who considered likely to travel, 71,6% referred that they will prefer national products, 64,5% will value more than before certified touristic services and 57,4% intends to shop mostly in small traditional business. In terms of environmental sustainability, 59,5% will have an increased concern in reserving touristic services environmentally responsible. Results emphasize the need for reflection on the effective positioning of sustainability issues concerning the tourism sector's future. COVID-19 has created an opportunity for tourism to review and relaunch itself, based on more responsible and sustainable approaches (Brouder, 2020; Casado-Aranda et al, 2021; Jones and Confort, 2020). It's important to understand to what extent consumers are willing to assume more sustainable behaviours in their future travel options. These results ask for future research regarding the importance of understanding the difference between tourists' stated intentions and effective actions when it comes to sustainable travel behaviour.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, sustainability, consumer behaviour, travel intentions

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## 1. Introduction

This study focuses on consumer travel behaviour changes arising from COVID-19. It seeks to understand whether the perceived risk associated with COVID has impacted the travel intentions of residents in Portugal and whether there are changes, regarding more sustainable choices, in summer holiday intentions in 2021. Tourism and travel consumers incorporate the tourism sector micro-environment (Casado-Aranda et al, 2021), and this consumers' behaviour is considered a microenvironmental factor of tourism performance that is influenced by COVID. In this context, the restrictions imposed and the perception of risk associated with SARS-COV-2 act as determinant elements (Donaire et al, 2021) of consumer behaviour changes in relation to travel and tourism.

Regarding sustainable travel behaviours they are related to consumption attitudes and actions that contribute positively to the sustainable development components (environment, economy and society), including paying carbon offsets, less polluting transport options (using the train to get to the destination, using electric transport/bike/public transport on the destination), sustainable accommodation, select sustainable tourism providers (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2016,) but also reduce food waste (MacInnes et al, 2022), purchase green and local products, give preference to local and traditional businesses, get involved on activities that promotes natural and cultural heritage, respect local communities, among others (UNWTO/UNDP, 2017)

The effects of COVID on the tourism sector in Portugal are evident when analysing the available official statistics (INE, 2021) and have followed the sharp falls seen worldwide (UNWTO, 2022). The year 2020 was marked by a 73% reduction in international tourist arrivals worldwide, and the economic contribution of tourism (measured in tourism direct gross domestic product) went from US\$ 3.5 trillion, in 2019, to US\$1.6 trillion in 2020 (UNWTO, 2022). Comparing the data from 2019 with 2020, in Portugal, the overnight stays decreased 63.2% (from 70.16 million in 2019 to 25.8 million in 2020); guests decreased 61.6% (from 27.1 million in 2019 to 10.4 million in 2020) and the net rate of bed occupancy from all types of accommodation has reduced 49 p.p. (INE, 2021; INE, 2020). Regarding the domestic and international markets, the falls were relatively greater in the latter, that is,

between 2019 and 2020, the international market fell 76.2% in guests (compared to 39.20% in the domestic) and 75.1% in overnight stays (25.6% in the domestic). Despite the decrease, it was the domestic market that took the lead in overnight stays (53% of the total) and guests (63% of the total). Analysing the overnight stays in Portugal, by urbanization level of the destination, in 2020, the demand for densely populated areas decreased by 8%, in 2020, while the medium and the sparsely populated areas experienced an increase in overnight stays of 2.5% and 6%, respectively (INE, 2021; INE, 2020). The type of accommodation chosen also changed, with hotels showing a 51% drop in the Net rate of bed occupancy (from an average annual value of 52% in 2019 to 25.5% in 2020) while rural accommodation, characterised by smaller establishments, saw a drop of only 12.5% (from an average annual value of 24.1% in 2019 to 21.1% in 2020).

These behaviours may presume changes in the travel options of domestic tourists in Portugal during the pandemic, which induce more sustainable behaviours. To understand in a more precise and detailed way the behaviour of the Portuguese in relation to their travel and tourism options, namely from a sustainability point of view, this study is developed. The use of a quantitative questionnaire allowed the identification of clusters, following a common methodology in studies dealing with the central themes of this study (Donaire et al, 2021; Karl et al, 2020; Neuburger et al, 2020; Osti and Nava, 2020; Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021), that characterise differentiated travel and tourism behaviours during the pandemic. The differentiation of this study focuses on the inclusion of sustainability behaviours as factors that determine the different clusters.

## **2. Covid-19 and changing consumer behaviour**

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 and the consequent institutional measures and restrictions imposed at national and international levels had a direct impact on people's movements. If on the one hand the fear of contact with the virus affected people's willingness to move, on the other hand the restrictions and constraints imposed drastically eliminated much of the movement, both near and far. This situation has marked all types of travel, including those related to holidays and tourist travel.

The impact of the pandemic caused by COVID-19 provokes changes in tourist travel behaviour that can be analysed in temporal terms - in the short and long term (Miao et al, 2021). Specifically in the short term (proximal behaviour), such as the one studied in this paper, four patterns of behaviours are identified: Abstinence behaviours termed "Fright-and-flight", associated with the cancellation and postponement of travel and other leisure and tourism activities, motivated by fear of contracting the virus; disruptive or disruptive travel behaviours "Invincible me" associated with those who choose to maintain their usual leisure and travel behaviours, not complying with mask wearing and social distancing protocols; "Corona light" rational travel behaviours revealing travel choices that mitigate the tourist's perceived risk of exposure to the virus; and, "Binge" compensation behaviours that occur after the lifting of severely limiting restrictions on people's movement, leading to exaggerated behaviour to make up for "lost" time and missed leisure and travel experiences (Miao et al, 2021).

According to Zhang, et al. (2020), most of the research studies on the impact of illness on tourist travel have focused on the trip planning phase (pre-trip), but changes in travel behaviour can also occur during the trip and in the post-trip phase (Page, 2009). Indeed, it is particularly important for tourism companies and destinations to understand how tourists act, which attitudes remain unchanged, and which new attitudes become a reality of the tourists' behaviours assuming themselves as a new requirement, which imposes itself to the destination, to companies and tourism businesses and the service provided.

Analysis of studies that focus on travel behaviour during the pandemic identify behavioural changes at different stages of travel and in the different options associated with travel. The Spanish population, in a questionnaire applied between 30 April and 12 May 2020 (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021), revealed a greater propensity for more local and individual travel, using the car as the preferred mode of transport. Also, in the study by Lopes et al (2021), tourists visiting the city of Porto, in the north of Portugal, in the summer of 2020, revealed to have reduced the use of public transport due to the fear of catching the virus. In terms of travel organisation and planning, respondents revealed a decrease in using the services of tourism intermediaries but are more motivated to contract more insurance (as, Sarman et al., 2020). The perception of COVID risk vis-à-vis travel attitudes shows differences between men and women, with women, and especially older women (Karl et al, 2020), being the most likely to change their travel plans due to perceived COVID risk (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021; Neuburger and Egger, 2020). Neuburger and Egger (2020) further reveal that perceived risk to COVID has more

evident effects on younger people and people who have less travel experience, and these are the ones who manifest a higher intention to change or cancel travel plans. However, in a study of tourists visiting Munich before the pandemic (Karl et al, 2020), the frequency of travel was not an influential factor in changes in travel behaviour.

The perception of risk also manifested itself in the choices of holiday destinations. Preferences focused on natural settings, seen as healthy and low-density environments, usually less massified, such as mountain destinations (Osti and Nava, 2020) or natural spaces (Donaire et al, 2021). In contrast, coastal destinations, especially the most popular beaches (Osti and Nava, 2020; Donaire et al, 2021) large urban destinations (Donaire et al, 2021) and cultural cities (Osti and Nava, 2020) were the most affected by holiday behavioural changes during the pandemic. Natural areas proved to be the best option for domestic tourism in Spain, as well as for international tourists from closer origins (such as the French market). The proximity aspect is also evidenced in the study by Lopes et al (2021), with Spanish tourists representing the main provenance of international tourists visiting the city of Porto, in Northern Portugal, in the summer of 2020, even overlapping with domestic tourists.

The effect of the pandemic on travel and tourism brought about behavioural changes with different and opposite impacts on the environment and sustainability. Some of the studies already mentioned (Donaire et al, 2021; Osti and Nava, 2020; Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021) describe new attitudes that can lead to a more sustainable tourism, especially when they indicate that natural and rural destinations have become more sought after, as well as smaller accommodation establishments, some also rural. In fact, the choice of these destinations can contribute to a more effective profitability of local small businesses and a dynamization of previously less sought-after areas. However, the growth of individual holidays and the choice of own car (whether for domestic trips or between nearby destinations, in border countries) are less environmentally friendly choices.) This dichotomy is also fostered by the pandemic, when on the one hand, by restricting the movement of people, promotes improvements in air quality (Zambrano-Monserrate et al, 2020) and water quality, but on the other hand, with the imposition of mask use, sanitation and testing, contributed to the increase, on a global scale, of the production of a multitude of new waste (Rume and Islam, 2020).

### **3. Sustainable behaviours in future travel experiences**

The impacts of the pandemic on tourism have reinforced the political and institutional discourse regarding the importance of more sustainable development of the tourism industry. The United Nations (UN, 2020, p. 4) underlines the importance of "building a sustainable and responsible travel experience that is safe for host communities, workers and travellers" to accelerate the tourism sector recovery. Also, it considers that the current crisis caused by the pandemic is an opportunity to rethink tourism and transform the way it relates to natural resources, territories, communities and the economy, aiming at a more sustainable tourism. In fact, one of the priority areas for achieving that is "Fostering sustainable and inclusive green growth" (UN, 2020, p. 23).

Simultaneously, also the scientific community deepens the (new) challenges of tourism sustainability associated with the new times and the new difficulties imposed by the pandemic. In line with the afore mentioned UN indications, Casado-Aranda et al (2021) identify the six new trends on which the new tourist behaviour will be based, namely: sustainability, interest in place, technology and city intelligence, luxury services, hygiene protocols and tourist emotions.

As far as (new) consumption behaviours are concerned, it is important to understand if current behaviours associated with travel and tourism, besides having adjusted to the challenges, impositions and limitations determined by the pandemic, also present attitudes associated with environmental awareness and a concern regarding aspects related with sustainability. Ali et al (2021) and Severo et al (2021) study the impact of the pandemic on environmental awareness (EA), sustainable consumption (SC) and social responsibility (SR) and in both cases, it is shown that there has been a growing concern for socio-environmental issues and the consumption of environmentally sustainable products. Severo et al (2021) developed a comparative study with Baby Boomers (born before 1965) and generations X (born from 1965 and 1981) and Y (born after 1981), residing in Portugal and Brazil. Ali et al (2021) find that the variables Generation and Religiosity determine the relationship between COVID-19 and its impact on sustainable behaviours. Women exhibited relatively higher environmental awareness, sustainable consumption and social responsibility, confirming that their behaviour is more environmentally friendly compared to other genders. In turn, Eichelberger et al (2021) look specifically at tourists' responsible behaviour and whether (and how) it has been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. From

the application of an interview with 19 residents in Austria pro-sustainability behaviours associated with travel and tourism choices are identified, when they indicate that they currently prefer short-distance tourist destinations, within the country or in neighbouring countries. Furthermore, preference is given to regional destinations which is accompanied by consumption that stimulates local economies through the purchase of regional products and the choice of local, traditional restaurants. Also, in terms of accommodation, they stated a preference for small and medium-sized family hotels over chain hotels. In relation to travel and means of transport used, some interviewees mentioned avoiding air travel for short distances and others defended the option of travelling by train or, in case this is not possible, paying a CO2 compensation fee to compensate for any air travel.

These behaviours are in line with some of the results described in the previous point and, although they are not choices directly intended to be more environmentally responsible, they do contribute to the effect. Considering that tourists play a key role in the development of the tourism industry, their choices may also contribute to its more sustainable development. In a context where it is important to recover tourism dynamics and activities and to do so in a more environmentally responsible and socio-economically balanced and sustainable way, it becomes crucial to diagnose the current context in terms of travel and tourism behaviour. Considering that they already show pro-sustainability practices, in which stages of the tourist trip do they occur (Page, 2009)? In which elements of the trip (destination, transport, accommodation, food, entertainment, shopping, among others) are they most evident? And also, where is there the greatest resistance to the adoption of more sustainable practices?

The study by Eichelberger et al (2021) is the first to show this intention, focusing on the behaviour of tourists, in the current pandemic context, and understanding how they can contribute to a more sustainable tourism, naturally influenced by what they live and experienced due to COVID. It is also in this context that the current study is developed but differing in methodological terms. In this study a quantitative methodology was adopted and is described below.

Previous literature research has presented clusters analysis in order to validate tourist segmentation. Equally, clusters analysis as far as tourists' perceptions and behaviours arising from COVID-19 are concerned are flourishing (Donaire et al, 2021; Karl et al, 2020; Neuburger et al, 2020; Osti and Nava, 2020; Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021). However, despite this boom related to tourists' segmentation during pandemic times, the study of COVID's impact on travel intentions and behaviour changes, regarding more sustainable choices, has not yet been conducted or published. Table 1 presents a synthesis of the existing literature on tourists' behaviour changes frame worked by COVID-19 pandemic, using clusters analysis to identify different profiles and, therefore, better understand tourists' decision-making processes.

**Table 1:** A synthesis of the existing literature

Authors	Main aim of the study	Identified clusters
Sánchez-Pérez et al (2021)	To examine consumers' evaluation and expected behaviour changes that may arise in the wake of COVID-19 and to develop a market segmentation.	The true believers The cautious travellers The prophets of doom
Neuburger and Egger (2020)	To examine risk perception regarding travel during the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and how it influences travel behaviour in the DACH region.	The Nervous The Reserved The Relaxed
Karl et al (2020)	To explore the interplay of risk types, tourist attributes and destination characteristics. It examines if travel risks linked to nature, health, terrorism, criminality, political instability are more salient for tourists' destination choice, and how risk perceptions influence tourists in the key stages of the decision-making process.	Risk adverse Risk resilient tourists Natural risk resilient Natural risk adverse
Osti and Nava (2020)	To investigate how preferences and loyalty for different types of destinations (seaside, mountain, city) change during health emergencies.	Pessimists Optimists with reservations on cities Optimists Precautious Mountains
Donaire et al (2021)	To describe the behaviour pattern of international tourists in summer 2020 in Spain, and to determine the most important factors explaining spatial and temporal differences.	Loser destinations Winner destinations Mid-distance origin Near origin Far origin

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Survey instrument

A questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions, the adult residents in Portugal, was developed to evaluate the intentions of with their holiday traveling during the year of 2021. The questionnaire asked information about the probability of traveling, type of destinations and also characteristics of the holiday trip with longest duration, namely about the planning, the means of transport, accommodation and meals.

The questionnaire also included a group of questions about how the residents considered that the pandemic would influence the adoption of more sustainable choices in the preparation of their trips and during their traveling in 2021. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with a set of sentences (Table 2) in a 5-point Likert scale.

**Table 2:** Variables used to measure the intention of adopting a more sustainable behaviour in the 2021 trips

I will choose smaller scale accommodation company.
I will be more reluctant to travel by plane.
I will preferentially shop from small scale and traditional business on my holiday trips.
I will give preference to national products/services, to help the country.
I will give greater consideration to tourist services that are certified (for example, Clean&Safe, environmental certificates).
I will give greater consideration in booking tourist services that are environmentally responsible.
I will give more preference (than previously) to booking ecological accommodation.

### 4.2 Data collection

Following previous studies, data was collected using a snowball approach (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021), through an online questionnaire, shared through various channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, e-mail) and with the primary recipients being asked to forward the questionnaire. The survey between December 2020 and March 2021 (overlapping the first 3 months of the vaccination process, corresponding to 5% of the full vaccination of the Portuguese population (Our World in Data, 2021) and reflect short-term effects (Miao et al, 2021) on the travel behaviours of residents in Portugal (n=610). The sample satisfies the condition of more than 200 to 400 valid cases (Hair Jr. et al., 2013, cited by Severo et al, 2021). A summary of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in table 3.

**Table 3:** Socio-demographic profile of the respondents (n=610)

	N	%
Gender		
<i>Female</i>	424	69,5
<i>Male</i>	183	30,0
<i>Undifferentiated</i>	3	0,5
Age		
<i>18-24</i>	256	42,0
<i>25-34</i>	103	16,9
<i>35-44</i>	90	14,8
<i>45-54</i>	100	16,4
<i>55-64</i>	34	5,6
<i>65 or more</i>	27	4,4
Highest level of education achieved		
<i>Less than secondary school</i>	54,0	8,9
<i>Secondary school or equivalente</i>	195,0	32,0
<i>Higher education degree (except PhD)</i>	340,0	55,7
<i>PhD</i>	20,0	3,3
<i>Other</i>	1,0	0,2
Household income per month		
<i>No income</i>	91	14,9
<i>&lt;500€</i>	30	4,9
<i>500€ - 999€</i>	154	25,2
<i>1000€ - 1999€</i>	209	34,3

	N	%
Gender		
2000€ - 2999€	83	13,6
3000€ - 3999€	29	4,8
4000€ or more	14	2,3

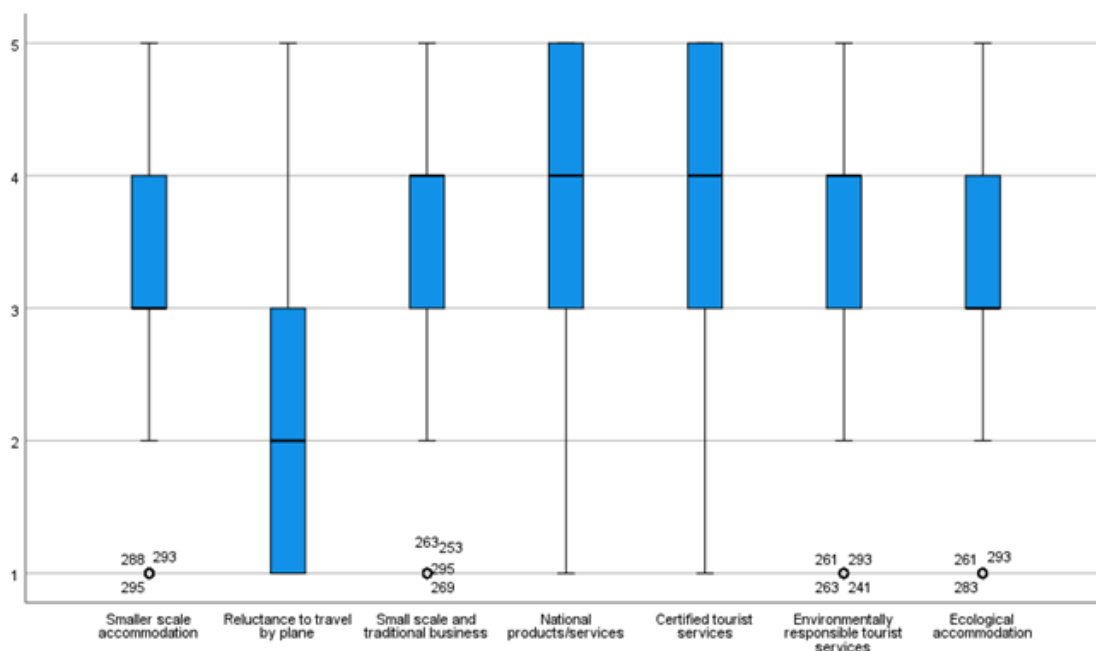
### 4.3 Data analysis

Chi-square tests were conducted to test for relationships between socio-demographic characteristics and the travel intentions. Cluster analysis was performed to develop a typology for the intentions for sustainable tourist behaviours. The clusters were calculated using the 7 variables presented in table 1. It was applied a Wards's (1963) hierarchical cluster analysis with squared Euclidean distance. Like Karl et al (2020), the validity of the segmentation obtained was tested using multiple discriminant analysis. After these procedures, the resulting clusters were compared based on socio-demographic characteristics and traveling plans, using chi-square tests (as in Seabra et al 2013; Karl et al, 2020). In the cluster analysis only the respondents that replied positively to the probability of traveling on holidays in 2021 were considered (n=296).

## 5. Results

Almost half of the participants (48,5%) responded positively to the probability of going on holidays in 2021. There is a significant relationship between age and the likeliness of traveling in 2021 ( $\chi^2(16)=41,971$ ;  $p<0,001$ ), with the respondents with 55 years old or more responding less frequently positively (34,4%) and the age groups 25-34 and 35-44 being the groups with more frequency of positive replies (57,3% and 60%, respectively).

From the respondents who responded positively to the probability of traveling on holidays in 2021, 64,2% only consider domestic destinations, also with statistically significant differences between age groups ( $\chi^2(4)=16,270$ ;  $p=0,003$ ). The respondents in the age group 35-44 years revealed a higher tendency to travel only in Portugal (81,5%) and the respondents with 25-34 years old a lower tendency to choose only domestic destinations (49,15%). Respondents that intended to choose only national destinations mostly justified this choice by the willingness to help the country (54,5% of those who considered likely to go on holidays) and not as much as a risk perception associated to the pandemic (only referred by 26,8%). Figure 1 represents the responses to the questions about the intention to adopt a more sustainable behaviour while traveling (Table 2). It stands out the question concerning more reluctance to flight, as we can see that most respondents did not consider that they would hesitate in traveling by plane. Only 23% replied positively to this question.

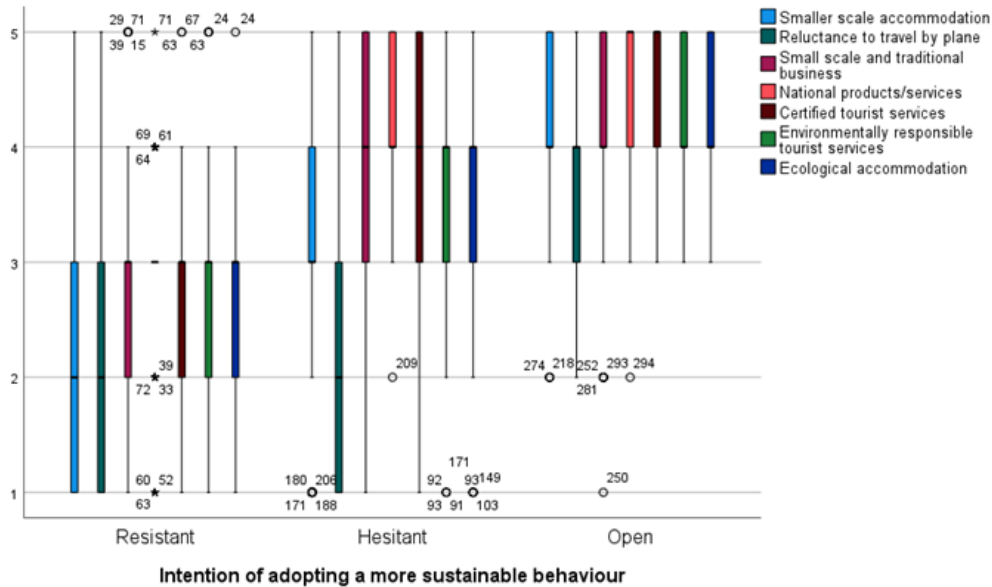


**Figure 1:** Impact of the pandemic in the intention to adopt more sustainable behaviour while traveling

Conversely, most respondents revealed the intention to change the behaviour with respect to consuming preferably national products and services (71,6%), to giving greater consideration to tourist services that are

certified (64,5%), to giving greater consideration in booking tourist services that are environmentally responsible (59,5%) and to preferentially shopping from small scale and traditional business (57,4%). A considerable number of respondents expressed the intention of giving preference to ecological accommodation (48,3%) and to smaller scale accommodation companies (44,3%).

The results from a final cluster solution, extracting three distinct tourist types, are presented. The discriminant analysis of this cluster solution resulted in a high percentage of correctly classified cases (93%). The results show that three different tourist groups can be identified. These segments can be named *open to change* (i.e. high levels of agreement to sentences about the intention to adopt more sustainable behaviour; n=87), *resistant to change* (with low levels of agreement with the intention of adopting more sustainable behaviours; n=73) and *hesitant to change* (i.e. somewhere between the two previous groups; n=136). This information is presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Description of intention of adopting more sustainable behaviours by segment

The results indicate that there are significant differences between the three segments with respect to openness to adopt a more sustainable behaviour as a tourist with respect to some socio-demographic characteristics (Table 4), namely gender, age and education level. Just the income did not influence the intention of adopting a more sustainable behaviour. In the three segments, there are more women than man, but the percentage of female respondents increases with the more openness to change behaviour, with 58,3% of females in the “Resistant” group, 68,1% in the “Hesitant” one and 77% in the “Open” group.

**Table 4:** Results of the analysis of influencing intention to adopt more sustainable behaviour typology

	$\chi^2$	df	p
Gender	6,361	2	0,042
Age	15,719	8	0,047
Education level	10,218	2	0,006
Income	4,563	8	0,803
Domestic vs intern. destinations	6,189	2	0,045

In the case of the education level the data suggest that the more educated are more reluctant to change, since 79,5% of the “Resistant” respondents have some higher education degree, considerable more than in the “Hesitant” group (58,8%) and in the “Open” one (58,6%). With respect to age, the age groups with more differences in the segments are 25-35, corresponding to 30,1% of the “Resistant” tourists, 20,6% of the “Hesitant” ones and 10,3% of the “Open”. The “Open” group is the one with more percentage of the tourists with less than 25 (42,5%) and of the tourists with 55 or more (12,6%). There is a higher percentage of “Resistant” tourists (42,5%) that considered international destinations in 2021 (39% - “Hesitant”; 25,3% - “Open”).

## **5.1 Discussion**

Approximately half of the respondents still not considerate probable to travel in holidays during the year of 2021 and this was especially frequent in the elder age groups, which is consistent to previous studies in which it was identified a relationship between age and risk perception in the pandemic context (Neuburger and Egger, 2020). Most of those who considered likely to travel in 2021 plan to do it to domestic destinations, emphasizing the fact that domestic tourism can provide relief for national tourism industries, affected by the measures to contain the spread of the Covid-19 (Arbulú et al, 2021). Respondents demonstrated intention to adopt some changes in their consumer patterns, as tourists, especially in terms of giving preference to certified and national products/services. Conversely, they generally did not show much openness to reduce the traveling by plane as a consequence of the pandemic, which differs from the conclusions obtained by Sánchez-Pérez et al (2021), for the more pessimist segment of their study.

In this work, there were identified three segments with respect to the intention on adopting more sustainable behaviours while traveling in 2021, as a consequence of the pandemic: those that are open to adopt more sustainable behaviours, those who are not and those that are somewhere in between. There were statistically significant differences between these groups with respect to age, gender and education level. Female respondents were more frequent in the group more open to become more sustainable tourists, which is in line with previous studies that revealed that women tended to show higher levels of risk perception and intention of changing travel behaviour (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021; Karl et al, 2020; Neuburger and Egger, 2020; Lepp and Gibson, 2003). The Resistant group had significantly more respondents with a higher education degree than the others, which seems to contradict previous works that concluded that the education can have an effect in the perceptions and attitudes concerning sustainability (Felgendreher and Löfgren, 2018). The Resistant group also had more frequency of respondents with the intention of traveling abroad, a fact that could partially explain the lower intention to change behaviours, which seems to be connected with the idea of helping the country.

## **6. Conclusions**

The change in travel and tourism consumption during the COVID is an undeniable reality, strongly documented by official statistics (national and international) and by scientific studies published in the last two years. Due to the restrictions on people's mobility, the limitations imposed on access to certain destinations, spaces and tourist establishments and the perceived risk of catching the SARS-COV-2 virus people have changed their traditional ways of travelling. These changes take place in the pre-travel phase (including changes in the means used to plan the trip - with the use (or not) of intermediaries - but also in the different choices in terms, for example, of destination, means of transport, type of accommodation) and during the trip, at the chosen destination.

At the same time, COVID-19 has created an opportunity for tourism to review and relaunch itself, based on more responsible and sustainable approaches (Brouder, 2020; Casado-Aranda et al, 2021; Jones and Confort, 2020). According to Casado-Aranda et al (2021) the new normal will place greater importance on more sustainable and inclusive forms of tourism based on the circular economy that rewards the social and environmental well-being of all tourism stakeholders, including residents, tourists, tourism organisations and businesses. Regarding tourists' role, they have the potential to contribute to economic, environmental, socio-cultural and institutional sustainability (Eichelberger et al, 2021) so, it is important to understand to what extent consumers are willing to assume more sustainable behaviours in their (future) travel options.

The identification of a behaviour pattern that will distinguish profiles of tourists regarding sustainability provides empirical evidence and practical implications for destinations when managing tourism aiming its sustainable development. By understanding different profiles of tourists' behaviour intentions, within the pandemic framework, regarding their consciousness and propensity for a more sustainable tourism experience, tourism supply and destination development policies can adjust themselves to these needs.

Future research lines of previous studies stress the need for further evidence from longer research periods in order to better understand the impact of COVID-19 (Sánchez-Pérez et al, 2021) or to carry out longitudinal studies or data collection at multiple points of time during the pandemic framework (Neuburger and Egger, 2020). The obtained results in this study emphasize the need for reflection on the effective positioning of sustainability issues concerning the tourism sector's future and it is also important to put forward a longitudinal study that will allow us to confirm (or not) them. These results ask for future research regarding the importance

of understanding the difference between tourists' stated intentions and effective actions when it comes to sustainable travel behaviour and collecting further evidence on a longitudinal basis or at varied moments in the medium term will be advisable to confirm them.

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