

A Qualitative Interpretive Model of Climate Anxiety, Health Risk Perception, and Travel Constraints and Travel Adaptive Responses among Senior Tourists

Abanti Tiwari

Amity University Kolkata, Kadampukur, West Bengal, India

Dr. Vandita Hajra

Amity University Kolkata, Kadampukur, West Bengal, India

Abstract

The tourism industry has grown internationally as a result of people's habit of travelling both domestically and internationally for business, pleasure, and medical reasons (Gurunathan & Lakshmi, 2024). Travel has been impacted by COVID-19, and as we adapt to life going forward, it will surely have an impact on how people perceive travel and their plans to travel in the future (Erul et al., 2023). Even when the pandemic is under control, assessing perceived risk and uncertainty is crucial for guiding decisions about tourism policy and management (Zhang et al., 2023; Erul et al., 2023). The resurgence of travel has suggested that people's wants to travel and interact with others may have increased (Vogler, 2022; Meenakshi et al., 2025). In the context of a turbulent global tourism industry, understanding the impact of risk perception on travel decision-making has emerged as a crucial research focus (Grigoriadis et al., 2025).

Climate change is affecting all countries across every continent, disrupting national economies and jeopardizing lives (Siddiqui et al., 2022). Climate patterns are shifting, sea levels are elevating, and weather occurrences are becoming more extreme (UNSD, 2022). Tourism is a heavily climate-dependent sector (Huynh et al., 2019), and tourism activities are intricately linked to climatic resources (Ibragimov et al., 2022). Shifting climatic conditions also possess the potential to significantly reshape the nature and rhythms of travel (Gühnemann et al., 2021). Tourists are not a uniform group and may react differently to variations in weather and climate (Wilkins et al., 2020). In certain cases, tourists may reevaluate their travel plans and behaviours in light of the implications of climate change (Mosia et al., 2022). Tourism, one of the world's fastest-growing industries, is especially vulnerable to climate change due to its reliance on the environment and climate (Sharma et al., 2025). The tourism system and the climate crisis continuously influence one another's futures (Demiroglu et al., 2024). Weststrate et al. (2025) predicted that climate change is expected to have significant ecological repercussions that could impact tourist behaviour.

The well-being of senior citizens is a concern due to demographic shifts and climate change (Sajjad et al., 2025). Climate change poses a significant risk to vulnerable populations, notably the elderly (Gumabay et al., 2023). Nearly every nation is witnessing a rise in both the count and percentage of elderly individuals within their populations, indicating a global trend of an ageing populace (Dashper et al., 2021). Travel enhances quality of life and encourages active ageing (Otoo et al., 2020). Senior travellers often encounter additional challenges and concerns due to deteriorating physiological and psychological abilities compared to younger generations (Lu, 2021). Research suggests that elderly travellers often adopt a "live for today" mindset, believing they are still fit enough to travel despite health issues (Patterson et al., 2021). For senior tourists, their purchasing decisions are more heavily swayed by their emotions than by financial factors (Bulut & Nazli, 2023).

There has been a recent increase in public interest regarding senior tourism. Senior tourism creates avenues for older adults to participate in pleasurable activities, establish significant relationships, discover personal values, and fulfil travel-related objectives (Robina-Ramírez et al., 2023). In recent years, there has been a notable increase in tourism among older individuals, attributed to the growing percentage of older adults who are enjoying longer and healthier lives (Kolos & Kenesei, 2023). In contrast to the prevalent notion that older individuals experience less anxiety regarding ageing due to their familiarity with it, research indicates that this fear may persist or even intensify as individuals grow older (Chee, 2024; Mackenstadt & Adams-Price, 2024).

Climate psychology is a contemporary field of study that emerged in response to the numerous catastrophic climate changes experienced globally (Arnout, 2023). Eco-anxiety is a growing psychological phenomenon characterised by chronic fear of environmental doom (Sharma & Palazzo, 2024). Climate anxiety is a component of eco-anxiety (Pihkala, 2020). According to The Handbook of Climate Psychology (2020), climate anxiety is defined as heightened emotional, mental, or bodily distress caused by harmful changes in the climate system. Climate Change Anxiety refers to the feelings of worry and apprehension about the effects of climate change, marked by uncertainties about their exact nature, timing, and locations (Heeren et al., 2023). Climate change anxiety is increasingly recognised as a mental health impact of climate change (Soutar & Wand, 2022).