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Travel Intention and Avoidance Among Generation Z During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Behavioural Segmentation Study in Greece

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Abstract

This study examines holiday-related attitudes and heterogeneous behavioural responses among Greek Generation Z during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data originate from a broader cross-sectional survey of 2364 respondents conducted in Greece during May–July 2020; the present cohort-specific secondary analysis focuses on the 1287 Generation Z respondents, of whom 701 (54.5%) intended to take holidays and 586 (45.5%) did not. Principal component analysis was used to identify attitudinal dimensions separately for the two groups, hierarchical and k-means cluster analysis was used to derive behavioural segments, quadratic discriminant analysis was used to examine internal classification consistency, and exploratory Pearson chi-square tests were used to examine between-cluster demographic associations, with effect sizes and correction for multiple testing. Among travel-intending respondents, three factors emerged: entertainment out of the hotel, eating in the hotel, and personally organised entertainment activities; the corresponding segments were Ambivalent, Bon Viveurs, and Audacious. Among travel-avoiding respondents, the main factors concerned the perceived effectiveness of COVID-19 prevention measures, economic reasons, and other family reasons; the corresponding segments were Conscious, Provident, and Opportunists. By examining the two travel-intention groups within the same questionnaire-defined age cohort, the study identifies distinct combinations of leisure preferences, perceived safety concerns, economic constraints, and family considerations that are not separately resolved in the earlier, age-heterogeneous analyses of the parent survey. These exploratory findings concern stated intentions during the COVID-19 period rather than subsequent observed travel behaviour.

Keywords: COVID-19; Generation Z; travel intention; travel avoidance; tourism behaviour; market segmentation

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted societies, economies, and tourism systems worldwide, while also changing consumer routines and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty [1,2]. Tourism was particularly exposed because mobility restrictions, perceived

health risks, and changes in destination accessibility directly affected whether, where, and how people intended to travel [3,4]. Understanding tourist behaviour during this period therefore requires attention not only to aggregate changes in demand, but also to heterogeneity in the factors associated with travel intention and travel avoidance.

Market segmentation provides a useful framework for identifying such heterogeneous responses [5]. A generational-cohort perspective is also relevant because members of the same generation may share formative experiences, values, and information practices that shape consumption and travel behaviour [6–8]. Earlier tourism research described Generation Z as a highly connected cohort with multiple travel motivations and a strong reliance on information exchanged through both traditional and digital channels [9,10]. Cohort analysis has therefore been proposed as a useful way to examine changes in travel behaviour across generations [11,12].

The present study focuses on Generation Z respondents in Greece and examines both those who intended to take holidays during the COVID-19 crisis and those who intended to avoid them. Greece provides a relevant setting because of the economic importance of tourism and the large number of island and small-destination contexts in which health-service capacity and tourism operations were especially salient during the pandemic [13,14]. Rather than treating Generation Z as a single homogeneous group, the study investigates whether distinct attitudinal dimensions and behavioural segments can be identified within travel-intending and travel-avoiding respondents.

Subsequent research has substantially expanded the evidence on Generation Z tourism behaviour during and after COVID-19. Accordingly, the contribution of the present study is not framed as a priority in studying this cohort, but as a cohort-specific secondary analysis of data collected during 2020. By isolating Generation Z from a broader cross-sectional survey and comparing travel-intending with travel-avoiding respondents, the analysis identifies attitudinal structures and behavioural segments that may be obscured when multiple generations are analysed together. The 2020 findings can therefore be interpreted retrospectively against the later literature on pandemic-related risk perception, travel behaviour, segmentation, and post-pandemic change.

The central analytical gap is thus more specific than whether COVID-19 affected young tourists: existing studies and the earlier analyses of this survey established that tourism responses were heterogeneous, but pooling age groups can conceal how leisure-oriented preferences and different perceived constraints are organised within a single questionnaire-defined cohort. Considering travel intention and avoidance side by side makes it possible to describe both the activities favoured by potential travellers and the distinct concerns expressed by respondents who did not plan to travel. This design does not, however, establish age-group differences or causal mechanisms; its contribution is an interpretable, exploratory within-cohort segmentation.

The public-health context is also important for interpreting the avoidance responses. Decisions about travel could be influenced not only by perceived personal infection risk but also by concerns about hygiene practices at accommodation and leisure facilities and about protecting vulnerable family members. These are perceptions reported in the questionnaire, not clinically measured SARS-CoV-2 exposure or infection outcomes [15–17].

2. Related Work

Research on Generation Z tourism behaviour has developed considerably since the early literature that described this cohort as highly connected, information-intensive, and difficult to retain as tourists [9,10]. During the COVID-19 period, this research stream increasingly focused on perceived risk and safety. Seabra et al. [18] examined acceptance of pandemic restrictions and risk perceptions among younger generations, while

Rončák et al. [19] documented changes in Generation Z travel behaviour in relation to safety concerns. Subsequent studies examined more explicitly the relationship between COVID-19 perceptions and Generation Z travel intentions. Jiménez-García et al. [20] analysed perceived COVID-19 risk, non-pharmaceutical interventions, travel intention, and willingness to pay for additional safety measures, whereas Li and Huang [21] examined the effect of health- and psychology-related risk perceptions on wellness-tourism intentions among Chinese Generation Z. In the post-pandemic context, Morrone et al. [22] identified information quality, flexibility, and health-related considerations among the factors affecting Generation Z accommodation choices, while Nguyen and Le [23] showed that risk perception remained relevant to adaptive travel intentions among Generations Y and Z in the "new normal". Digital communication is closely connected to this cohort's tourism behaviour: Liu et al. [24] examined the effects of social-media marketing activities on Generation Z travel behaviour, and Alhemimah [25] linked travel-health information seeking with tourists' travel intentions during the pandemic.

A broader body of COVID-19 tourism research has established perceived health risk, fear, uncertainty, trust, and travel constraints as important correlates of travel intention and avoidance. Neuburger and Egger [15], using data collected at two points during the early pandemic in the DACH region, showed marked changes in COVID-19 risk perception and travel behaviour. Chua et al. [16] examined how health-risk perception contributed to avoidance of international travel. Shin et al. [26] integrated tourist trust, travel constraints, perceived health risk, and attitudinal variables to explain travel decisions during and after COVID-19. Similarly, Zheng et al. [17] highlighted the role of trust in mitigating perceived threat, fear, and travel avoidance, while Nazneen et al. [27] applied protection motivation theory to examine perceived COVID-19 impacts and travel avoidance. This literature provides a relevant framework for interpreting the concerns over hygiene measures, infection, vulnerable family members, and economic insecurity observed among respondents who avoided holidays in the present study.

A parallel research stream has used segmentation and clustering to capture heterogeneity in pandemic-related tourism behaviour. Sánchez-Pérez et al. [28] used market segmentation to examine heterogeneous changes in tourist evaluations and behavioural intentions in Spain. Scuttari et al. [29] combined principal component analysis and cluster analysis to identify different COVID-19-driven mobility patterns among rural tourists. Köchling et al. [30] identified distinct tourist segments according to travel-risk perceptions and the perceived importance of travel, while Brida et al. [31] used cluster analysis to distinguish travel-risk and behavioural profiles during the pandemic. Jin et al. [32] likewise profiled consumers in relation to post-COVID-19 travel. These studies demonstrate the value of segmentation for identifying heterogeneous responses to a common crisis; much of this work, however, concerns age-heterogeneous tourist populations rather than a direct within-cohort comparison of Generation Z respondents who intended to travel and those who intended to avoid holidays.

Evidence from Greece is also directly relevant. Pappas [33] examined holiday intentions during the pandemic, Poulaki and Nikas [34] studied behavioural intentions in the Greek market after the first outbreak, and Metaxas et al. [35] examined Greece as a safe tourist destination. Later longitudinal evidence showed that pandemic effects on tourism purchasing intentions and tourist perceptions should be interpreted dynamically rather than assumed to represent permanent behavioural shifts [36,37]. The dataset used in the present paper originates from a broader cross-sectional survey that has also supported two earlier aggregate analyses. One study analysed respondents from the full survey who intended to take holidays and identified aggregate attitudinal factors and tourist segments [38]; another analysed respondents who intended not to take holidays and pro-

filed aggregate avoidance-related segments [39]. The present study differs from those analyses by restricting the sample to Generation Z and by placing travel-intending and travel-avoiding members of the same cohort within one comparative analytical framework. Its contribution is therefore a cohort-specific secondary analysis that reveals factor structures and segmentations that can differ from those obtained when multiple generations are analysed together.

These strands of evidence point to related, but not interchangeable, questions. Risk-perception studies examine correlates of intended or avoided travel, while segmentation studies group respondents with similar combinations of attitudes or motivations. The present survey cannot test the causal mechanisms proposed in other designs, nor can separately estimated factor structures establish formal differences between age cohorts. Its more limited contribution is to compare the internally heterogeneous profiles of intending and avoiding respondents aged 18–25 and to show how the age-restricted descriptions relate to, but do not duplicate, the previously published aggregate segmentations.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Analytical Framework and Research Questions

The present study is exploratory rather than confirmatory. Established approaches to consumer and tourist behaviour provide conceptual context for the variables included in the survey. Behavioural decision perspectives and the Theory of Reasoned Action and Theory of Planned Behaviour emphasise decision processes and behavioural intentions [40–42], while tourism-motivation models address the motives underlying travel choices [43–45]. In addition, the Health Belief Model highlights perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy in risk-related behaviour [46]. Tourist information-search research further underlines the importance of information channels in travel decision-making [47].

These perspectives are used here to motivate an exploratory analytical framework rather than to specify or test a causal structural model. The empirical analysis first identifies attitudinal dimensions separately among Generation Z respondents who intended to take holidays and those who intended not to take holidays; it then derives behavioural segments within each subsample and describes those segments using demographic, holiday-preference, and information-use variables where available. The analysis is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What attitudinal dimensions characterise Generation Z respondents who intended to take holidays and those who intended not to take holidays during the COVID-19 period?

RQ2: What behavioural segments emerge within the travel-intending and travel-avoiding Generation Z subsamples?

RQ3: What demographic profiles characterise the behavioural segments identified among travel-intending Generation Z respondents?

RQ4: What demographic profiles characterise the behavioural segments identified among travel-avoiding Generation Z respondents?

RQ5: What holiday and travel preferences characterise the segments identified among travel-intending Generation Z respondents?

RQ6: What social-media and destination-safety information-source patterns characterise the segments identified among travel-intending Generation Z respondents?

3.2. Survey and Statistical Methodology

The present study is a cohort-specific secondary analysis of data from a broader cross-sectional survey of 2364 respondents conducted in Greece between May and July

2020. The survey was administered electronically through Google Forms using a non-probability convenience-sampling design, which was practical under the mobility and contact restrictions prevailing during the COVID-19 period [48]. A structured questionnaire was developed using variables derived from the literature review and preliminary consultation with tourism and public-health experts. A pilot survey with 100 respondents was conducted before the main data collection, and 87 volunteer enumerators from the thirteen Regions of Greece distributed the questionnaire through their social networks. The instrument employed a branching question on holiday intention; the travel-intending and travel-avoiding groups subsequently answered different sets of attitudinal questions. The questions used in the component analyses employed five ordered response categories (from "not at all" to "very much"). The items reproduced in Tables 1 and 2 are English translations of the original Greek-language questionnaire.

Table 1. Attitudinal dimensions identified among Greek Generation Z respondents who intended to take holidays during the COVID-19 period.

Attitudinal Dimensions Among Generation Z Respondents Who Intended to Take Holidays	Factor Loadings
Entertainment out of the hotel	
V1: I will visit a bar for entertainment at my holiday destination	0.864
V2: I will go to a beach bar outside the hotel	0.857
V3: I will visit a café for entertainment at my holiday destination	0.825
V4: I will go to an organised beach	0.812
V5: I will eat at a restaurant or taverna outside the hotel	0.721
V6: I will have a meal at a fast-food restaurant	0.660
V7: I will go shopping	0.504
Eating in the hotel	
V8: I will have lunch/dinner at the hotel	0.854
V9: I will have breakfast at the hotel, apartment, room or bed and breakfast	0.796
Entertainment: personally organised activities	
V10: I will go swimming at an unorganised beach using my own equipment	0.802
V11: I will visit museums or cultural monuments	0.680

The parent dataset comprised 1260 respondents who stated that they intended to take holidays and 1104 respondents who stated that they did not. Aggregate analyses of these two groups have been reported previously [38,39]. In the original questionnaire, age was recorded using predefined age-cohort categories; respondents who selected the category "18–25 years (Generation Z)" were operationally classified as Generation Z. This classification reflects the predefined age category of the original questionnaire rather than a universally accepted birth-year definition of Generation Z. The present paper addresses a distinct cohort-specific question and therefore focuses on the 1287 respondents aged 18–25 years in the parent dataset. Of these, 701 (54.5%) stated that they intended to take holidays during the COVID-19 crisis, whereas 586 (45.5%) stated that they did not. The two Generation Z subsamples were analysed separately and then compared at the level of the resulting attitudinal dimensions and segment structures. The selection of the Generation Z subsample and its division into travel-intending and travel-avoiding respondents are illustrated in Figure 1.

Because the original survey used convenience sampling and the region of origin of each completed questionnaire could not be independently verified, the sample size should not be interpreted as establishing statistical representativeness of the entire Greek population. Rather, the relatively large sample provides an empirical basis for exploratory cohort-specific analysis, while the convenience-sampling design and the inability to verify the

geographic distribution of responses limit population-level generalisation. Study design, participant selection, measurements, analyses, and limitations are reported with reference to the relevant STROBE recommendations for cross-sectional observational studies [49].

Table 2. Attitudinal dimensions identified among Greek Generation Z respondents who intended not to take holidays during the COVID-19 period.

Attitudinal Dimensions Among Generation Z Respondents Who Intended Not to Take Holidays	Factor Loadings
Concerns about COVID-19 prevention measures	
V12: I do not trust the cleanliness or implementation of hygiene measures in hotels and hostels because of COVID-19	0.896
V13: I do not trust the cleanliness or observance of hygiene measures by other hotel guests because of COVID-19	0.892
V14: I do not trust the cleanliness or observance of hygiene measures in restaurants and cafés because of COVID-19	0.885
V15: I do not trust the cleanliness or observance of hygiene measures at beach bars and organised beaches because of COVID-19	0.862
V16: I am afraid of contracting COVID-19	0.754
V17: I avoid crowds and maintain physical distance from others.	0.743
V18: I will need to follow hygiene measures more frequently than at home	0.716
V19: I need to protect vulnerable members of my family	0.629
Economic reasons	
V20: My income has fallen because of the COVID-19 crisis	0.847
V21: I am experiencing general financial difficulties	0.808
V22: A family member has lost their job because of the COVID-19 crisis	0.760
V23: I will save money in case of another COVID-19 lockdown	0.644
V24: There are other family obligations	0.450
Other family reasons	
V25: There is another health problem	0.777
V26: I or another family member have been infected by COVID-19	0.583
V27: I experience psychological distress due to the effects of COVID-19	0.544

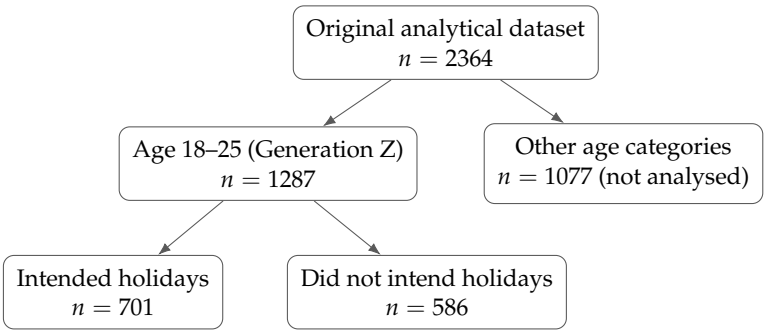


Figure 1. Selection of the Generation Z subsamples from the original analytical dataset.

Following the methodological approach used in the original research [50], multivariate analysis was conducted separately for the 701 travel-intending and 586 travel-avoiding Generation Z respondents. Principal component analysis (PCA) was used to identify attitudinal dimensions. The original analysis retained components using the latent-root criterion (eigenvalue equal to or greater than 1) together with the proportion of variance and factor interpretability [51]. The original SPSS (version 29.0) PCA procedure used a correlation matrix and orthogonal Varimax rotation. KMO sampling adequacy, Bartlett's test of sphericity, the retained eigenvalues and explained variance were evaluated separately for the two questionnaire branches (Supplementary Table S1). The travel-avoidance

PCA used all 17 questionnaire items; Table 2 lists 16 reported salient loadings, with one professional-obligations item omitted from that display. Hierarchical and k-means cluster analyses were then applied to the resulting factor scores to derive behavioural segments, and quadratic discriminant analysis (QDA) was used to examine the internal consistency of cluster classification. The QDA classification used leave-one-out cross-validation and equal prior probabilities for the three clusters, based on the original factor-score variables. All group profiles and cross-cluster comparisons reported here use the original cluster-membership variables saved in the SPSS dataset, rather than independently regenerated partitions. Internal consistency for the complete item batteries was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (0.861 for the 11-item travel-intending battery and 0.872 for the 17-item travel-avoiding battery). Because the individual PCA dimensions comprise different sets of items, these whole-battery coefficients should not be interpreted as evidence that all extracted dimensions are internally consistent. Dimension-specific reliability coefficients are supplied in Supplementary Table S1.

The original within-cluster chi-square goodness-of-fit results were not suitable tests of association between cluster membership and demographic characteristics, and they are therefore not reproduced as evidence of between-cluster differences. For the present descriptive re-examination, Pearson chi-square tests were calculated from the original SPSS-saved cluster assignments and the observed cross-cluster contingency tables. The analyses report degrees of freedom, Cramér's V and Benjamini–Hochberg-adjusted p-values across ten exploratory demographic comparisons (five variables within each travel-intention branch). Categories with small expected cell counts are flagged for cautious interpretation. Respondent-level generalisation and confirmatory significance are not claimed. The underlying within-cluster frequencies and percentages are provided in Supplementary Tables S2–S4, and the exploratory demographic tests in Supplementary Table S5.

4. Results

4.1. Attitudinal Dimensions of Travel-Intending and Travel-Avoiding Generation Z Respondents

For the travel-intending Generation Z subsample, PCA identified three attitudinal dimensions using the retention criteria described above [51]. The three dimensions identified among respondents who intended to take holidays are presented in Table 1.

For the travel-avoiding Generation Z subsample, PCA likewise identified three attitudinal dimensions. These dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Taken together, Tables 1 and 2 answer RQ1: the travel-intending and travel-avoiding subsamples were characterised by different sets of attitudinal dimensions. The corresponding PCA diagnostics and dimension-specific reliability coefficients are reported in Supplementary Table S1. In particular, the small two-item and three-item components exhibit lower internal consistency than the larger prevention and leisure factors and should be interpreted as exploratory dimensions rather than established psychometric scales.

4.2. Behavioural Segmentation Within the Two Generation Z Subsamples

Hierarchical and k-means cluster analysis was applied separately to the factor scores of the 701 travel-intending and 586 travel-avoiding respondents [51]. The resulting segments are described below.

For the travel-intending subsample, three clusters were interpreted from their factor-score means and sizes and were labelled (a) Ambivalent, (b) Bon Viveurs, and (c) Audacious (Table 3). Ambivalents constitute the largest segment, about 48%, of those who intended to take holidays during the COVID-19 crisis. This group has comparatively low scores on the factors identified by PCA. The Bon Viveurs comprise approximately 30% of the Generation

Z respondents who intended to go on holidays and are particularly interested in the factors "entertainment out of the hotel" and "Entertainment: personally organised activities". The Audacious constitute about 22% of those who intended to take holidays and score most strongly on the factor "Eating in the hotel".

Table 3. Behavioural segments among Generation Z respondents who intended to take holidays during the COVID-19 period.

Attitudinal Factor Scores Used to Characterise Travel-Intending Generation Z Segments	Means for Groups (Grouping Variable)			
	Ambivalent	Bon Viveurs	Audacious	*p*-Value
Entertainment out of the hotel	−0.80084 [a]	0.86866 [b]	0.59332 [c]	0.001
Eating in the hotel	−0.14675 [a]	−0.72849 [b]	1.35737 [c]	0.001
Entertainment: personally organised activities	−0.27217 [a]	0.41845 [b]	0.02831 [c]	0.001
Number of persons (n = 701)	340	211	150	

Group means are shown for the factor scores used to characterise the clusters. Within each row, means that do not share the same superscript differ at $p < 0.05$ according to the Tukey post hoc comparisons reported in the original analysis. Because these factor scores were also used to derive the clusters, the comparisons are descriptive of cluster separation and are not treated as independent validation of the segmentation.

The cross-validated QDA classification results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Internal cross-validated QDA classification of the travel-intending Generation Z segments.

Predicted Classification	Actual Classification		
	Ambivalent	Bon Viveurs	Audacious
Ambivalent	332	4	4
Bon Viveurs	5	202	1
Audacious	3	5	145
Total N	340	211	150
N correct	332	202	145
Proportion	97.6%	95.7%	96.7%
Number of respondents (n = 701)	N correct = 679	Proportion Correct = 96.9%	

For the travel-avoiding subsample, the same segmentation procedure produced three clusters, labelled (a) Conscious, (b) Provident, and (c) Opportunists according to their factor-score patterns (Table 5).

Table 5. Behavioural segments among Generation Z respondents who intended not to take holidays during the COVID-19 period.

Attitudinal Factor Scores Used to Characterise Travel-Avoiding Generation Z Segments	Means for Groups			
	Conscious	Provident	Opportunists	*p*-Value
Concerns about COVID-19 prevention measures	0.67071 [a]	0.94252 [b]	−0.59014 [c]	0.001
Economic reasons	0.02604 [a]	0.48425 [b]	−0.22863 [a]	0.001
Other family reasons	1.91094 [a]	−0.71676 [b]	−0.11798 [c]	0.001
Number of persons (n = 586)	81	159	346	

Group means are shown for the factor scores used to characterise the clusters. Within each row, means that do not share the same superscript differ at $p < 0.05$ according to the Tukey post hoc comparisons reported in the original analysis. For Economic reasons, the Conscious and Opportunists means share the same superscript because their pairwise difference was not statistically significant (p = 0.078). Because these factor scores were also used to derive the clusters, the comparisons are descriptive of cluster separation and are not treated as independent validation of the segmentation.

The "Conscious" comprise approximately 14% of the travel-avoiding Generation Z subsample and are characterised mainly by "other family reasons" and concern regarding effective prevention measures against COVID-19. The "Provident" comprise about 27% of the subsample and are characterised by concern over the effectiveness of COVID-19 prevention measures together with economic reasons. Finally, the "Opportunists", the largest group at about 60%, have comparatively low scores on the factors identified by PCA.

The cross-validated QDA classification results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Internal cross-validated QDA classification of the travel-avoiding Generation Z segments.

Predicted Classification	Actual Classification		
	Conscious	**Provident**	**Opportunists**
Conscious	81	2	7
Provident	0	156	19
Opportunists	0	1	320
Total N	81	159	346
N correct	81	156	320
Proportion	100.0%	98.1%	92.5%
Number of respondents ($n = 586$)	N correct = 557	Proportion Correct = 95.1%	

These results answer RQ2: distinct three-segment solutions emerged within both subsamples, but the composition and interpretation of the segments differed between travel-intending and travel-avoiding respondents. The segment names are descriptive labels inherited from the original analysis and should not be interpreted as independently assessed personality traits. In particular, the labels "Audacious" and "Opportunists" refer only to the configurations of observed factor scores in Tables 3 and 5.

4.3. Demographic Profiles of the Behavioural Segments

The demographic profiles were recalculated from the original SPSS-saved cluster membership for all 1287 Generation Z respondents. Supplementary Table S2 reports the observed *n* (within-cluster percentage) for the full set of recorded categories; Supplementary Table S5 reports exploratory between-cluster contingency-table statistics, rather than the within-cluster goodness-of-fit results presented in the earlier analysis.

Among those intending to take holidays, the Ambivalent ($n = 340$), Bon Viveurs ($n = 211$), and Audacious ($n = 150$) segments were predominantly female (61.5%, 62.6%, and 62.0%, respectively). Their gender distributions showed little evidence of between-cluster differences ($\chi^2(2) = 0.066$, $p = 0.968$). Annual household holiday budget differed among these segments ($\chi^2(6) = 23.853$, unadjusted $p < 0.001$, BH-adjusted $p = 0.0056$, Cramér's $V = 0.130$), although the association was small. Income differences were also modest (Cramér's $V = 0.101$) and did not remain significant under the ten-test multiple-comparison adjustment. These results provide quantitative descriptions for RQ3, not confirmatory evidence of distinctive demographic types.

Among the travel-avoiding respondents, women comprised 64.2% of the Conscious ($n = 81$), 68.6% of the Provident ($n = 159$), and 61.6% of the Opportunists ($n = 346$). Across the five demographic characteristics examined, none of the Benjamini–Hochberg-adjusted cross-cluster tests reached the 0.05 level. Some education and occupation categories had small expected frequencies, further restricting conventional asymptotic interpretation. Supplementary Tables S2 and S5 provide the corresponding frequencies and test diagnostics for RQ4.

4.4. Holiday and Travel Preferences of the Travel-Intending Segments

Holiday and travel-preference questions were answered only by respondents who intended to take holidays. Using the original saved clusters, Supplementary Table S3 now gives frequencies and valid-response percentages for destination, accommodation, intended nights, Airbnb use, and selected travel modes. Domestic destinations were preferred in all three groups (91.5% of Ambivalent, 97.6% of Bon Viveurs, and 94.0% of Audacious respondents), while islands were favoured by 58.8%, 61.6%, and 70.0%, respectively. The largest single nights category was 2–3 nights among Ambivalent respondents (40.3%), versus 4–7 nights among Bon Viveurs (47.4%) and Audacious respondents (47.3%). Non-use of Airbnb was more common than use in all groups. The travel-mode question permitted multiple selections; mode-specific percentages are therefore not mutually exclusive. These observational profiles are descriptive, and no previous within-cluster goodness-of-fit statistic is interpreted as a between-cluster association. Because travel-avoiding respondents did not answer these questions, no corresponding profile can be constructed for that subsample. These patterns address RQ5.

4.5. Social-Media and Destination-Safety Information Profiles of the Travel-Intending Segments

Information-use questions were also answered only by respondents who intended to take holidays. Supplementary Table S4 distinguishes general social-media platform use from the separate yes/no questions about sources consulted for destination safety. Instagram was used by 94.4%, 94.8%, and 97.3% of Ambivalent, Bon Viveurs, and Audacious respondents, respectively, while Facebook use was 90.3%, 89.6%, and 92.7%. Television was the most frequently reported destination-safety information source in all three groups (71.8%, 73.5%, and 68.0%, respectively); newspaper and Twitter reports were comparatively uncommon. These figures describe observed within-cluster patterns but are not presented as evidence of statistically significant cross-cluster differences. Respondents who did not intend to take holidays did not answer the social-media and destination-safety information questions, so no corresponding profile is available for that subsample. These patterns address RQ6.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of the Main Findings

This study provides a cohort-specific view of how Greek Generation Z respondents described holiday-related intentions and concerns during the COVID-19 period. Among respondents who intended to take holidays, the PCA identified three attitudinal dimensions centred on entertainment outside the hotel, eating at the accommodation, and personally organised activities. These dimensions were used to characterise three behavioural segments—Ambivalent, Bon Viveurs, and Audacious. Among respondents who did not intend to take holidays, the identified dimensions concerned confidence in COVID-19 prevention measures, economic reasons, and other family reasons, producing the Conscious, Provident, and Opportunists segments. Because the two subsamples were analysed separately rather than through a formal between-group factor-comparison procedure, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of different descriptive structures rather than as a statistical test that travel intention and avoidance are opposite or equivalent constructs.

The segment profiles further indicate heterogeneity within Generation Z. Travel-intending respondents differed in the relative importance of leisure, accommodation, and self-organised activities, whereas the travel-avoiding segments differed in the salience of safety, economic, and family-related considerations. The demographic, holiday-preference, and information-use results provide exploratory descriptions of these segments. New descriptive tables and exploratory contingency-table analyses based on the original saved

cluster labels are provided in Supplementary Tables S2–S5. The modest demographic associations and relevant multiple-testing and sparse-cell limitations caution against interpreting cluster membership as a fixed demographic identity.

The two analytical branches also represent different types of judgement: among those intending to travel, the dimensions describe possible holiday activities, whereas the avoidance branch captures the importance assigned to safety, economic, and family considerations. Therefore, neither the factor scores nor the group labels should be interpreted as directly comparable measures across branches. The observed profiles point towards different configurations of stated preferences and perceived barriers, not towards fixed personality types or observed post-survey travel choices.

5.2. Comparison with Previous and Subsequent Evidence

An important point of comparison is provided by the earlier aggregate analyses of the parent survey. In the full sample of respondents who intended to travel, three segments—Audacious, Cautious, and Ambivalent—were identified [38]. Restricting the analysis to Generation Z yields a different three-segment structure—Ambivalent, Bon Viveurs, and Audacious. A similar distinction is evident among respondents who did not intend to travel: the aggregate no-holiday analysis identified two broad groups [39], whereas the Generation Z subsample produced three groups—Conscious, Provident, and Opportunists. The differences suggest that the age-restricted analysis can make particular combinations of attitudes more visible. However, the change in cluster count or nomenclature is not itself a statistical demonstration that generations differ: the parent and cohort-specific partitions were estimated separately and no formal measurement-invariance or between-cohort cluster-comparison test was performed. The additional insight is therefore descriptive and conditional on the study sample and the selected segmentation procedure.

The travel-avoidance findings are also consistent with later international evidence linking perceived health risk, uncertainty, fear, and trust to travel avoidance [16,17,27]. Subsequent studies focusing specifically on Generation Z similarly reported heterogeneous responses to pandemic-related risk and safety concerns [19–21,23]. The information-use patterns observed in the 2020 survey can likewise be read alongside later work on social-media communication, information quality, and travel-health information seeking among younger tourists [22,24,25]. In this sense, the dataset provides a contemporaneous record of a specific phase of the pandemic that can now be interpreted against a substantially larger body of subsequent evidence. In particular, studies focusing on risk and travel avoidance offer an interpretative comparison for the prevention-related dimension, while work on digital information and destination decision-making provides context for the travel-intending respondents' reported information sources. These comparisons are thematic rather than direct replications, because the studies differ in sample composition, measurement, country, and pandemic period.

5.3. Contribution and Practical Implications

The contribution of this study is not that it provides the first evidence on Generation Z tourism during COVID-19. Rather, it lies in the cohort-specific comparative design: the analysis isolates Generation Z within a broader cross-sectional survey and considers both travel-intending and travel-avoiding respondents within the same generational cohort. The cohort-specific partition makes it possible to examine how leisure-oriented preferences, perceived hygiene concerns, financial pressures and family considerations occur within one operationally defined age group. Although its three-segment solutions differ from the previously reported age-heterogeneous partitions, the separate clustering exercises cannot establish that cohort membership caused those differences. The added value is a more

focused exploratory description rather than a novel dataset or a formally demonstrated generational effect.

The findings also have historically bounded implications for crisis communication and tourism management. During the 2020 survey period, travel-intending Generation Z respondents commonly reported Facebook and Instagram use and frequently reported television news as a source of safety-related information. These observations should not be treated as permanent platform preferences; rather, they illustrate the importance of matching crisis communication to the information channels used by a target cohort at a particular time. More broadly, the segmentation suggests that uniform crisis messages may not address all young travellers equally: safety concerns, economic constraints, family circumstances, and activity preferences can be salient in different combinations across behavioural segments. For instance, in a comparable future disruption, tourism organisations could distinguish information about destination hygiene and health-service access from practical information on cost, booking flexibility and low-density activities. These are illustrative, segment-sensitive communication strategies, not interventions tested by the present cross-sectional survey.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered. First, the data are cross-sectional and were collected during a highly unusual phase of the pandemic; the identified segments should therefore be interpreted as context-specific behavioural configurations rather than stable Generation Z typologies. Second, the parent survey used convenience sampling, which limits population-level generalisation despite the relatively large sample. Generation Z was operationally defined according to the predefined questionnaire category of 18–25 years; consequently, this study-specific age definition may not coincide exactly with all generational boundaries used in the international literature. Third, the present paper is a secondary cohort-specific analysis of a dataset used in earlier aggregate studies [38,39]; its added value lies in isolating Generation Z and considering travel-intending and travel-avoiding respondents together, rather than in presenting a new data collection. Fourth, the results concern stated intentions and preferences and cannot establish subsequent observed travel behaviour or causal effects of the pandemic. The dataset's relatively large within-cohort sample and the inclusion of both holiday-intending and holiday-avoiding branches are strengths for exploratory description, but neither compensates for non-probability recruitment or constitutes longitudinal follow-up.

A methodological limitation concerns validation of the derived segments: the reported QDA classification uses the same factor-score space from which the clusters were constructed. The resulting classification percentages indicate internal recoverability of the assigned labels, not external predictive validity or stability in independent populations. No independent resampling-based stability assessment of the original cluster partitions is reported; accordingly, their robustness to alternative partitions should not be inferred. Some exploratory demographic comparisons also have sparse expected cell counts, and even the stronger associations are modest in size. Some PCA dimensions, particularly the two-item personally organised activities dimension and the three-item family-related dimension, have low internal-consistency coefficients, limiting their interpretation as measurement scales.

Future research could examine the persistence of the identified segments using post-pandemic or longitudinal data, test comparable cohort-specific structures in other national contexts, and use confirmatory association models or preregistered segmentation procedures to evaluate demographic and behavioural differences across segments. Longitudinal evidence already indicates that tourism purchasing intentions and perceptions evolved

as the pandemic progressed [36,37], reinforcing the need to treat the present results as evidence from a specific historical period rather than as permanent behavioural effects.

6. Conclusions

This cohort-specific secondary analysis shows that Greek Generation Z respondents did not form a behaviourally homogeneous group during the COVID-19 tourism disruption. Among those who intended to take holidays, the segmentation was structured around leisure, accommodation, and personally organised activity preferences; among those who intended not to take holidays, the dominant dimensions concerned confidence in prevention measures, economic constraints, and family-related considerations. The resulting Generation Z segment structures differed from those previously obtained from the age-heterogeneous parent samples, demonstrating the analytical value of examining a generational cohort separately.

The study should be read as a contemporaneous record of stated intentions and attitudes during 2020 rather than as evidence of permanent post-pandemic behaviour or a causal estimate of the effect of COVID-19. Within those limits, it provides a useful historical benchmark for subsequent research on tourism risk perception, travel avoidance, crisis communication, and generational differences in travel behaviour. Its principal contribution is the side-by-side examination of travel-intending and travel-avoiding respondents within the same Generation Z cohort and the identification of distinct behavioural configurations within each group.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/covid6110193/s1: Table S1, principal component analysis diagnostics and reliability in the original Generation Z subsets; Table S2, demographic profiles of the six original Generation Z clusters; Table S3, holiday preferences of the three travel-intending Generation Z segments; Table S4, social-media use and destination-safety information sources among the travel-intending Generation Z segments; and Table S5, exploratory association tests for demographic differences among the original clusters.

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