

Nothing to look forward to: The effects of vacation cancellation on anticipatory emotions

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a stark effect on many individuals' vacation planning and travel behavior. The contribution of vacationing to quality of life is widely recognized (Mitas and Kroesen 2019; Nawijn et al. 2010; Uysal et al. 2016). While long-term effects on life satisfaction and short-term effects on emotions are well-documented (Mitas et al. 2017; Gilbert and Abdullah 2004), the positive emotional anticipation of vacationing in the near future also plays a substantial role in quality of life (Mitas et al. 2012; Nawijn et al. 2013). COVID-19 has cast doubt on many people's vacation hopes and plans, especially for the summer of 2020. The goal of the present study was to examine the effect of planned vacation status on anticipatory emotion valence, and to determine if this relationship was moderated by perceived risk of traveling.

Students of the Bachelor of Science in Tourism in Breda and Wageningen, Netherlands, used social media to distribute an online questionnaire to a convenience sample of 624 participants (66% female; 85% residents of the Netherlands). Findings showed that, on average, participants felt slightly negative about the upcoming vacation they had previously planned. Participants with cancelled vacations reported more negative valence than participants whose vacations were still planned to go ahead. While this effect was significant at levels of risk perception one standard deviation above and below the mean, it was stronger at low levels of risk perception. Thus, individuals who perceive more risk from traveling during the pandemic experience less negative anticipatory emotions about canceled vacation plans.

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