

Abstract

Since the emergence of low-cost carriers, flying has become accessible for a lot of people. Yet, pollution from aviation is a not to neglectable contributor to climate change by heavy greenhouse gas emission. Undeniable, climate change poses one of the major risks for our society in the upcoming years.

Cultural Theory of Risk offers a comprehensive framework to measure risk perception of people by predicting different cultural biases. In a quantitative survey, at German Frankfurt International Airport, 110 questionnaires were completed. The surveys incorporated item sets to categorize people after their ways of life according to Cultural Theory, their general risk perception for environmental threats and climate change and their flying behavior. Moreover, sociodemographic factors were included. In course of evaluation, correlation and regression analysis between item sets and ways of life were performed. Lastly, sub-groups were formed, divided into business and leisure travelers, to examine whether they differ in their risk perception.

Most participants could be matched to the Egalitarian way of life, followed by the Hierarchist and Individualist. Data were not sufficient to identify the Fatalist way of life. Risk perception for climate change and environmental problems were mostly in accordance with the predictions as described by Cultural Theory. This is also true for sociodemographic factors, which were largely compatible with what CT predicts. Yet, Individualist type did not feel represented by most of the traditional parties. This also applied on Hierarchists, who additionally showed a tendency for more right-wing parties. As for the sub-group division, among business travelers Individualists prevailed, followed by Hierarchists, showing a correspondingly less marked, environmental risk perception. Those participants appeared to be mainly young and middle-aged male with rather high incomes. A majority of leisure travelers could be subsumed under Egalitarians, followed by Hierarchists. Environmental risk perception was accordingly more distinct. This group was characterized by a more evenly stratification over both age and income, and predominantly female.