

THE IMPACT OF ATTITUDE AND SUBJECTIVE NORM ON AIRLINE PASSENGERS' TRAVEL INTENTION IN THE COVID-19 ERA: MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED RISK

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented effects without distinction between the public and private sectors. Service industries that have been interrelated in different ways have felt the effects more. The airline industry is the most important service-intensive sector and the COVID-19 era has important effects on the demand and supply of the industry. The demand-side analysis of the industry, which has been consisted of the passengers, is important to understand in the COVID-19 era. The travel intention of airline passengers will play a critical role in the recovery process of the industry in the pandemic process. The study aims to reveal the antecedents of airline passengers' travel intentions in the COVID-19 era. The empirical data were collected through respondents in Turkey. The PLS-SEM was employed to test the hypotheses. Findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between travel intention and trust, perceived risk, perceived value, habit. Also, the findings show that there is no relationship between travel intention and social norms. According to the mediation analysis results, it was found that the trust and social norms in airline services directly affects the air travel intention, as well as indirectly by reducing the perceived risk.

Keywords: Travel intention; Subjective norms; Attitude; Airline; COVID-19.

O IMPACTO DA ATITUDE E DA NORMAS SUBJETIVAS NA INTENÇÃO DE VIAGEM DOS PASSAGEIROS DA LINHA AÉREA NA ERA COVID-19

Resumo

A pandemia COVID-19 teve efeitos sem precedentes, sem distinção entre os setores público e privado. Os setores de serviços inter-relacionados de maneiras diferentes sentiram mais os efeitos. O setor de aviação civil é o setor de serviços intensivos mais importante e a era COVID-19 tem efeitos importantes sobre a demanda e a oferta do setor. A análise do lado da demanda da indústria, que consistia em passageiros, é importante entender na era COVID-19. A intenção de viagem dos passageiros das companhias aéreas terá um papel crítico no processo de recuperação do setor no processo pandêmico. O estudo visa revelar os antecedentes das intenções de viagem dos passageiros das companhias aéreas na era COVID-19. Os dados empíricos foram coletados por meio de entrevistados na Turquia. O PLS-SEM foi empregado para testar as hipóteses. Os resultados indicam que existe uma relação significativa entre intenção de viagem e confiança, risco percebido, valor percebido e hábito. Além disso, os resultados mostram que não há relação entre intenção de viagem e normas sociais. De acordo com os resultados da análise de mediação, constatou-se que a confiança e as normas sociais nos serviços aéreos afetam diretamente a intenção de viagem aérea, bem como indiretamente ao reduzir o risco percebido.

Palavras-chave: Intenção de viagem; Normas subjetivas; Atitude; Companhia aérea; COVID-19.

EL IMPACTO DE LA ACTITUD Y LA NORMA SUBJETIVA EN LA INTENCIÓN DE VIAJE DE LOS PASAJEROS DE LAS LÍNEAS AÉREAS EN LA ERA DEL COVID-19

Resumen

La pandemia de COVID-19 ha tenido efectos sin precedentes sin distinción entre el sector público y el privado. Las industrias de servicios que se han interrelacionado de diferentes maneras han sentido más los efectos. La industria de las aerolíneas es el sector de servicios intensivos más importante y la era COVID-19 tiene efectos importantes sobre la demanda y la oferta de la industria. Es importante comprender el análisis del lado de la demanda de la industria, que ha consistido en los pasajeros, en la era COVID-19. La intención de viaje de los pasajeros de las aerolíneas desempeñará un papel fundamental en el proceso de recuperación de la industria en el proceso pandémico. El estudio tiene como objetivo revelar los antecedentes de las intenciones de viaje de los pasajeros de aerolíneas en la era COVID-19. Los datos empíricos se recopilaron a través de encuestados en Turquía. Se empleó el PLS-SEM para probar las hipótesis. Los hallazgos indican que existe una relación significativa entre la intención de viajar y la confianza, riesgo percibido, valor percibido, hábito. Además, los hallazgos muestran que no existe relación entre la intención de viajar y las normas sociales. De acuerdo con los resultados del análisis de mediación, se encontró que la confianza y las normas sociales en los servicios de las aerolíneas afectan directamente la intención de viajar en avión, así como indirectamente al reducir el riesgo percibido.

Palabras clave: Intención de viaje; Normas subjetivas; Actitud; Aerolínea; COVID-19.



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1 INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has influenced the world since January 2020, affects consumers' habits and consumption patterns in different ways (economic, social, psychological, etc.). Because of its forward and backward linkages to the world economy, the airline industry is affected by the COVID-19 process seriously. And the low recovery rate causes deep crises for the industry.

According to International Air Transport Association (IATA, 2020a) report industry-wide Revenue Passengers Kilometers (RPKs) shrank by 94.3% year-on-year in April and the decline was across all regions (Domestic RPKs fell by 86.9% year-on-year). In the same report, it is stated that the international scale recovery will be later than the domestic recovery. It will depend on solving health challenges (e.g reducing the risk of transmitting COVID-19 from one country to the other). Air transport plays an important role in the expansion of the pandemic dangerously world-wide and nation-wide.

Therefore, the flight operations have been partially or completely stopped by public and private sectors in many countries. As a result of the first COVID-19 cases which have been seen on March 11 in Turkey, flag carrier Turkish Airlines (THY) stopped the flights firstly to China and then to other countries gradually. Although THY has continued to a few domestic flights, other Turkish registered airline companies have stopped all flights (SHGM, 2020).

Different perspectives about the recovery processes of the airline industry are based on the demand-side and supply-side. The airline passenger traffic also plays an important role on two sides. The most obvious reason for the decrease in passenger traffic for the early period of the pandemic is the decisions of the aviation authorities and airlines to stop or reduce flights.

However, in the transition to the normalization process, airlines have to rethink their service strategies to increase passenger traffic. The uncertainties in passenger behavior during the normalization process causes uncertainties regarding future projections of the airline industry. In this context, the study aims to reveal the antecedents affecting airline passengers' intention to travel in the COVID-19 era, based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

TPB which provides a useful framework for explaining the mechanisms for designing interventions (environmental and psychological) in the behavior change and showing their effects on behavior (Steinmetz et al., 2016); expresses that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control are effective on behavioral intentions. While attitude

towards a behavior reflects the individual's positive or negative assessment of performing the behavior (Lien et al., 2019); subjective norms give information about the environmental conditions that affect the realization of these behaviors or not, and the perceived behavioral control gives information about how easy or difficult these behaviors will be performed (Ajzen, 1991). The sub-dimensions of TPB were adapted in the context of COVID-19 and airline travel based on the literature:

Trust, as the result of actions that place individuals in specific conditions or situations (Lee and See, 2004):

- Perceived risk, as the expected losses, the result of elections (Gardner and Gould, 1989),
- Perceived value, as the individuals' perception of the benefits they receive in terms of products or services and their perceptions about what is presented to them (Zeithaml, 1988),
- Social norms, as the perceived social pressures that affect whether individuals perform certain behaviors or not (Ajzen, 1991),
- Habit, as an automatic link between a target and certain behavior, or a behavioral script that is kept in memory (Chen and Chao, 2011).

In the last decade, the global scale of human mobility has been rising, this growth much larger than the World population growth (Recchi et al., 2019). Air travel suspension that is caused by Pandemic-related restrictive measures has been reducing mobility around the World.

As a result of reducing the air travel demand, high socio-economic impacts will occur in the short and long term (Iacus et al., 2020). The sudden changes in mobility mean that airlines alike need to rethink their short and long-term business models based on the new data sets. As a conclusion the paper aims to answer the following questions based on the TPB in the COVID-19 era:

- ✓ How does the COVID-19 process affect the passengers' travel attitudes and behaviors?
- ✓ Does the COVID-19 affect the passengers' travel intention by the perceived value, trust, social norms, habit, and perceived behavior?
- ✓ Does the perceived risk in the COVID-19 era mediate the relationship between travel intention and trust and social norms?

So, this study aims to provide a guide to the airline managers for future projections in the passenger traffic by discovering the airline passengers' behavior in the COVID-19 era, based on TPB. In the second part of the study, the hypotheses will be given based on the literature. After the literature review and the methodology, the results and findings of the analysis will be evaluated.

2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

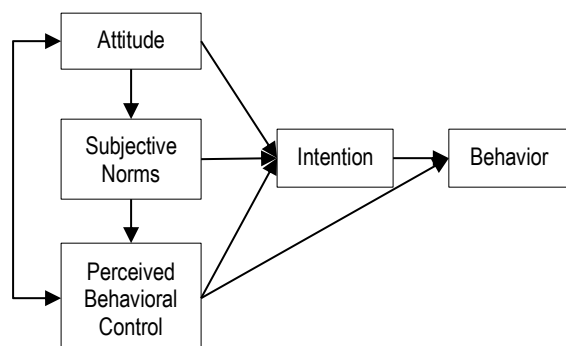
Passengers' travel motivation behavior is explained by the motivation models in the literature. These motivation models have described the motivator factors as internal and external factors. These factors also affect the passengers' travel intention by the socio-psychological motivations Crompton, 1979; Uysal ve Hagan, 1993; Lam and Shu, 2004). The perceived behavioral control, the previous behavior (habit), and non-pharmaceutical intervention play a crucial role in the epidemic processes (Foroudi et. Al, 2021).

Human behavior is mainly orientated by perceptions about the popularity of behavior in the social sphere (Lapinski and Rimal, 2005). Customer behavior in marketing literature is dealt with preferences and how these preferences occurred in the mind of the customer (Zanoli and Naspetti, 2002).

TPB, which explained the customer behavior with antecedents affecting behavioral intention, states that the main driving force of the behavior is the intention to realize the behavior. Behavioral intention is a function of motivational variables of its determinants (Steinmetz et al., 2016). Behavioral intention is defined as "the motivating factor that expresses how much people are willing to exhibit a behavior" (Ajzen, 1991). Generally, Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control are used in behavioral intention prediction (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Figure 1).

While attitudes are expressed behavior-oriented positive or negative approaches (Ajzen, 1985); subjective norms are the opinions of individuals about the effects of individuals on the behavior of people who are important to them (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Perceived behavioral control is defined as the individual's perception of how easy or difficult it will be to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Figure 1. Theory of Planned Behavior.



Source: (Ajzen, 1985; 1991).

2.1 Hypothesis

The trust which is among the precursors of both

attitude and perceived behavioral control (Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006) and added to the model, is conceptualized as the belief in reliability and integrity between the parties (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

The trust which is an extremely important antecedent, especially in situations of uncertainty that affect the interactions that occur in the social context (Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, 2014; Luhmann, 1979) is the behavioral intention of willingness.

This behavioral intention is one of the critical points of the conceptualization of trust. Trust will be limited when one of the actors believes it is reliable without being "willing" to trust the other (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Trust, which is effective for people to adapt to complexity in different ways (Lee and See, 2004), is important for all kinds of firm-customer transactions and reflects the belief that there are favorable conditions to facilitate the success of the customer (Mou et al., 2017; Pavlou and Gefen, 2004). Therefore, the first hypothesis of the study is:

H₁: Trust has positive effects on travel intention in the COVID-19 era.

The uncertainty of the outcomes related to changes leads the customers to manage these uncertainties. The perceived risk, as another determinant of the attitude, added to the model to give information about the perceptions of customers and the changes that they have determined, and the methods of reducing these perceived risks (Mitra et al., 1999).

The perceived risk factor, which is also conceptualized as a risk assessment, based on the simultaneous identification of losses, significance, and uncertainty Boksberger et al., 2007; Cho et al., 2018; Yates and Stone, 1992). The uncertainty associated with the possible negative consequences of using a product and/or service is thought to be (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003).

Perceived risk is in a structure that includes various risk dimensions and is handled in different dimensions in the literature (Cho et al., 2018). The perceived risk resulting from the uncertainty of the outcome of a decision leads to unpredictable and sometimes even negative consequences due to the uncertainty of the customers' behavior (purchase and/or selection decision) (An et al., 2010). Personal risk perception leads to high motivation for behavioral changes (Few, 2007).

Studies related to perceived risk reveal that uncertainty in service purchases are more than uncertainty in purchasing goods (Carter, 1998; Cossens and Gin, 1995; Guseman, 1981; Lepp and Gibson, 2003; Mitra et al., 1999; Murray and Schlater,

1990). While passengers can predict an airline experience due to their previous experience, each experience may differ and carry risks (Cunningham et al., 2005) because of different circumstances.

Although experiences related to airline transportation for the passengers are the same approximately, the practices that emerged in the extraordinary processes, such as the pandemic, lead to the differentiation of this situation. In this context, the second hypothesis of the study is:

H₂: Perceived risk has negative effects on travel intention in the COVID-19 era.

The perceived value, which has different measurements and definitions in the marketing literature; is defined as the difference between the customers' total costs and benefits (McDougall and Levesque, 2000). The perceived value, which is discussed based on benefit and cost, is also defined as the benefits that customers receive in terms of product or service and their perceptions about being presented to them (Zeithaml, 1988) and it was added to the model as a determinant of attitude.

The perceived value that focuses on profit or loss in the process of exchanging between perceived benefits and perceived costs (Lovelock, 2008) differs from the concept of satisfaction, which focuses only on benefit. The perceived value, which can increase by increasing benefits and/or reducing costs, causes the perceptions of customers about benefits and cost to be cognitively linked (Jen et al., 2011). The behavioral model structure is also supported by perceived value, which defines the process that enables a client to retain strong ties with a provider over time (Forgas-Coll et. al, 2016).

Customers seek value in exchange for each unit they pay in their intentions (decisions) to repeat their relationship with the service provider. When this perspective is evaluated in terms of airline companies; providing value-added services to create a competitive advantage by creating long-term relationships with passengers can lead to increased perceived value (Park et al., 2006).

The understanding of benefits and costs, which differ during the pandemic period, will also change customer demands and behavior. It will also be effective in differentiating the intentions of the airlines to increase the perceived value by the passengers and the behavior they will develop through the changes they will make in the COVID-19 oriented application. Accordingly, the services that airline companies can offer to the passengers in the pandemic process will have an impact on the perceived value and thus the behavioral intention of the perceived value will be positively affected:

H₃: Perceived value has positive effects on travel intention in the COVID-19 era.

Social norms emphasize the perception of social pressure for a person to perform or not to perform a certain action (Ajzen, 1991). A subjective norm is also a function of beliefs. So, beliefs as to whether social circles affecting individuals' behaviors will approve of this behavior are also effective (Lien et al., 2019).

In other words, personal decision or behavior is greatly influenced by the references he/she feels close to (Han et al., 2011). While Lapinski and Rimal (2005) distinguish between collective and perceived norms on norms, they state that these two definitions are conceptually distant from each other but relationally similar. Meanwhile, the perceived norms are realized at the psychological level as a result of the structural processes of individuals; collective norms are formed to include the entire social system.

Also, injunctive norms that tell individuals what to do and descriptive norms that tell what is done by most people in the individual's social group are evaluated under the umbrella of the subjective norm. Besides, injunctive norms that tell individuals what to do and descriptive norms that tell what is done by most people in the individual's social group are evaluated under the umbrella of the social norms (Lapinski and Rimal, 2005).

The logic of the direct effect of the social norms on intention is that individuals can choose to act on the behavior or its consequences, even if it is not suitable for them, and adapt to the references significantly (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). Besides individual references, norms that are among the external influencers and arise with the influence of mass media and information and communication technologies are also effective on intention. Past studies indicate the importance of using mass media in crises (Ho, 2012).

According to Loges (1994) and Lowrey (2004), when people perceive the presence of threats in social crises, they tend to be more dependent on mass media (television, newspapers, and radio). However, new media play an increasingly important role in disseminating information about health or the environment during public health crises, especially in digitalized societies (Lin and Bautista, 2016).

In the COVID-19 process that could be defined as a public health crisis, mass media has been becoming an important tool for the flow of information to society. Thus, it is estimated that social norms in this process will affect the determination of current and potential passengers' intention to travel by air:

H₄: Social norms have positive effects on travel intention in the COVID-19 era.

Individuals' feedback from previous experiences may affect their various beliefs and future behavioral performance (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2005). Because of its perceptual structure that reflects the results of

previous experiences (Venkatesh et al., 2012) the habit factor is added to the model. Habits are defined as automatic behaviors in the subconscious (Limayem and Hirt, 2003). Habits that reflect the automatic behavioral tendencies developed in the individual's past emerge through certain stimuli and cause the behavior to occur even when the individual does not instruct itself to realize.

As a behavior becomes routine, it will appear under the influence of habits, under the influence of behavioral intentions before it is routine (Triandis, 1980). Habits are represented as links between a goal and actions that are effective in achieving that goal, and the strength of such links depends on frequent co-activation of the target and relevant past actions.

If the activation of a target generally leads up to the same action under the same conditions, the habit (the link between the target and the action) will be stronger (Aarts and Dijksterhuis, 2000). Most habits are characterized by a lack of awareness and conscious intention: It is difficult not to do, it is mentally effective and allows the individual to multitask (Verplanken and Orbell, 2019).

Therefore, as long as conditions remain relatively constant, past behavior selections can easily affect subsequent behaviors (Chen and Chao, 2011). It can be stated that psychologically, the choice of travel mode can be caused only as a deliberate process but also as a behavioral habit (Thøgersen and Møller, 2008). As a result, the intention to travel by air in the COVID-19 era could be affected by the past habits of the passengers:

H₅: Habit has positive effects on travel intention in the COVID-19 era.

Perceived risk is defined as a consumer's perception of the possibility of unknown bad consequences from a purchasing transaction (Kim et al., 2007). Because perceived risk is a person's skewed evaluation of a risk scenario, it is greatly influenced by the person's psychological and environmental factors (Cho and Lee, 2006).

Consumers' subjective perceptions of risk have been validated as having a negative influence on their desire to embrace purchasing. In circumstances when one must take risks but has limited control over the result, trust and social norms are important (Kim et al., 2008; Iconaru, 2012).

Based on this information, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₆: Trust has a negative effect on the perceived risk.

H₇: Social norms has a negative effect on the perceived risk.

The extended travel perceived risk refers to the

perceived uncertainties and the possibility of negative consequences when booking a trip and at the destination, including feelings, perceptions, notices, memories, inductions, imagination, anticipation, plan, decision, problem-solving, and communication (Chiang, 2009).

As a conclusion, for the mediating role of the perceived risk on the relationship between travel intention with trust and social norms on following hypotheses are proposed:

H₈: Perceived risk mediates the relationship between trust and travel intention.

H₉: Perceived risk mediates the relationship between social norms and travel intention.

3 METHODOLOGY

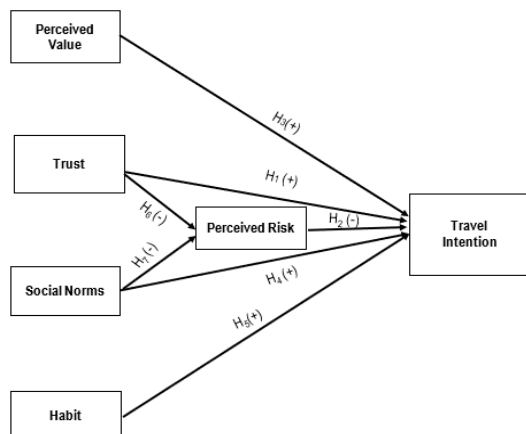
IATA (2019) estimated that the air transport market in Turkey will grow by 109% in the next 20 years. If the COVID-19 crisis had not occurred, this would have resulted in 91 million additional passenger journeys by 2037. Even so, this situation shows that Turkey has a great market in terms of passengers. Therefore, empirical data for this study were collected from passengers in Turkey with an internet-based questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section covers questions prepared with the 5-point Likert scale to measure the constructs of the study, and the second section covers questions aimed at understanding the demographic characteristics of the participants. In order to ensure the content validity of the construct in the questionnaire, a detailed literature review was made and reliable measures were selected.

Also, the content of the questions was reviewed with five passengers and three academicians. The source of all the variables in the research model is the theory of planned behavior. All variables have been operationalized in previous studies, but in this study these variables were adapted by the authors for COVID-19 conditions.

The data of the study were collected between the dates of 24.05.2020-5.05.2020. In this study, a convenience sampling method was employed. The target participants of the study are passengers who have at least 1 flight experience. The participants were prevented from filling in multiple questionnaires on the same computer using IP restriction. A total of 468 returns were received. With the exclusion of the uncompleted and incoherent questionnaires, 395 questionnaires for analysis remained. Descriptive statistics about the participants'; gender, age, education, revenue, airline travel frequency, and airline travel reason are shown in Table 1.

Figure 2. Research Figure Model.



Source: own elaboration.

There are a total of five major hypotheses in the research model and the constructs involved are trust, perceived risk, perceived value, social norms, habit, and travel intention. In this study, trust reflects passengers' confidence about air travel in the COVID-19 era. An increase in the total score obtained from this construct shows that confidence in air travel has increased. Trust was measured with three items consistent with the study of Lee and Turban (2001).

The perceived risk reflects the passengers' perceived risk from air travel during the COVID-19. The increase in the total score obtained from this construct shows that the risk perceptions of the passengers regarding the airline travel that will take place during the COVID-19 increase.

The perceived risk was measured with three items consistent with the study Amaro and Duarte (2016). The perceived value reflects the passengers' perceived value from air travel during the COVID-19 era. An increase in the total score obtained from this construct shows that the perceived value of airline travel increases. The perceived value was measured four items consistent with the study Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002).

The social norms reflect the social factors' effects on an individual's behavior, such as mass media and experts' views on COVID-19. An increase in the total score obtained from this construct shows that the presence of positive social norms regarding airline travel in the COVID-19 era on the passenger increased. The social norms were measured four items consistent with the study Hsu and Chiu (2004).

The habit reflects the individual's past travel habits by air. An increase in the total score obtained from this construct shows that the passenger's habit of air travel is increasing. The habit was measured four items consistent with the study Venkatesh et al., (2012).

The travel intention reflects the travel intention of passengers by air during the COVID-19 era. An increase in the total score obtained from this construct shows that

the intention of passengers to travel by air is increasing. The travel intention was measured with three items consistent with the study Venkatesh et al. (2012).

All items covered by the constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The internal consistency of constructs was evaluated by reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha (α) values of all constructs exceed the threshold level of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014). All items included in the constructs and their Cronbach's alpha values are given in Table 3.

Table 1. Participants demographic characteristics.

	F	%
Gender		
Male	207	52,4
Female	182	46,1
Unresponded	6	1,5
Total	395	100
Age		
18-25	60	15,2
26-35	141	35,7
36-45	123	31,1
46-55	56	14,2
56-64	8	2,0
65 and over	3	0,8
Unresponded	4	1,0
Total	395	100
Travel Frequency		
Less than 1 per year	28	7
Once a year	75	19,0
More than 2 times per year	195	49,4
Once a month	50	12,8
More than 2 times a month	36	9,1
Once a week	5	1,2
Unresponded	6	1,5
Total	395	100,0
	f	%
Education		
Primary education	1	0,3
High school	25	6,3
Associate's degree	35	8,9
Bachelor's degree	199	50,4
Master's degree	90	22,8
Doctor of philosophy	41	10,3
Unresponded	4	1,0
Total	395	100
Revenue		
4.000 TL and less	84	21,3
4.001-8.000 TL	151	38,2
8.001-12.000 TL	81	20,5
12.000-16.000 TL	33	8,4
16.001 and more	41	10,4
Unresponded	5	1,2
Total	395	100
Travel Reason		
Vacation	203	51,4
Business	142	35,9
Others	33	8,4
Unresponded	17	4,3
Total	100	100

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2. Variables and References.

Variable	Item Number	Reference
Trust	3	Lee and Turban (2001)
Perceived Value	4	Sirdeshmukh et al. (2002)
Habit	4	Venkatesh et al. (2012)
Social Norms	4	Hsu and Chiu (2004)
Perceived Risk	3	Amaro and Duarte (2016)
Travel Intention	3	Venkatesh et al. (2012)

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3. Construct and Cronbach's alpha Alpha.

Trust	α
TRUST1- I trust that necessary precautions will be taken to protect me from the virus during air travel in the COVID-19 era. TRUST2-I believe that priority will be given to addressing my concerns about the virus during air travel in the COVID-19 era. TRUST3*- Overall, I think that air travel is reliable in the COVID-19 era.	.909
Perceived Value	
PVAL1- Compared to the fee I need to pay, air travel offers value for money. PVAL2- Compared to the effort I need to put in, air travel is beneficial to me. PVAL3- Compared to the time I need to spend, air travel is worthwhile to me. PVAL4- Air travel delivers me good value.	.894
Habit	
HABIT1-Air travel has become a habit for me. HABIT2- I am addicted to air travel. HABIT3-I must air travel. HABIT4-Air travel has become natural to me.	.868
Perceived Risk	
RISK1- I think that air travel is risky in the COVID-19 era. RISK2- I feel apprehensive about air travel in the COVID-19 era. RISK3-I think that there is too much uncertainty associated with air travel in the COVID-19 era.	.916
Social Norms	
SNORM1- I have read/saw reports that I will not have problems with COVID-19 when I travel by air. SNORM2- social media depicted a positive sentiment for air travel in the COVID-19 era to me. SNORM3*- Mass media reports prepared on COVID-19 convinced me to air travel. SNORM4-The opinions of experts about COVID 19 depicted a positive sentiment about that I could travel by air.	.866
Travel Intention	
T11- I intend to continue using the airline during my travels during the COVID-19 era. T12- I will always try to use the airline during my travels during the COVID-19 era. T13- I plan to use the airline more frequently during my travels during the COVID-19 era.	.921

*Items are eliminated according to EFA results.

Source: own elaboration.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed firstly to determine the constructs and to eliminate the unsuitable items. The measurement model and hypotheses were then tested.

For this purpose, PLS-SEM method was used to test the relationships between the variables in the research model (Ringle et al., 2015). PLS-SEM applies principal component analysis and ordinary least squares regression to predict the path model's regression relationships to maximize the explained variance and minimize the error terms of the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2017).

There are two main reasons for using PLS-SEM in this study. The first is that there are endogenous variables in the study and all hypotheses are tested together. The second reason is to test mediation relationships while other variables are in the model.

The results of EFA are provided in Table 3. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, resulting in KMO = 0.924, which was well above the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity = 6263,702, $p < .001$, indicating that the correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. According to EFA results SNORM3 and TRUST3 were eliminated because of multiple factors overlapping.

Table 4. Results of exploratory factor analysis.

Item	Factor Loadings
TRUST1	,751
TRUST2	,761
RISK1	-,786
RISK2	-,792
RISK3	-,787
PVAL1	,714
PVAL2	,815
PVAL3	,814
PVAL4	,672
SNORM1	,792
SNORM2	,637
SNORM4	,572
HABIT1	,859
HABIT2	,839
HABIT3	,891
HABIT4	,749
T11	,652
T12	,777
T13	,742

Source: own elaboration.

The evaluation of PLS-SEM results was carried out in a two-step process by first assessing the measurement model by confirmatory factory analysis and then the structural model. The assessment of the measurement model includes outer loadings, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Outer loadings of the constructs are above the threshold value of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2014). Table 5 posits that the composite reliability value of all constructs is above the threshold value of 0.70 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Table 5 represents that the AVE values of all constructs are well above the required threshold of 0.50, which indicates a good level of convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 5. Measurement model statistics.

Items	Loadings	T stats.	CR	AVE
TRUST1	0.933	31.694	0,910	0,836
TRUST2	0.895	43.807		
RISK1	0.923	106,424	0,918	0,789
RISK2	0.911	124,168		
RISK3	0.828	53,456		
PVAL1	0.634	13.054	0,898	0,691
PVAL2	0.884	32.878		
PVAL3	0.844	36.562		
PVAL4	0.930	36.265		
SNORM1	0.737	21.577	0,871	0,694
SNORM2	0.831	26.760		
SNORM4	0.921	43.261		
HABIT1	0.786	10.802	0,868	0,621
HABIT2	0.786	9.554		
HABIT3	0.807	11.716		
HABIT4	0.772	9.212		
TI1	0.946	60.196	0,921	0,795
TI2	0.857	41.751		
TI3	0.870	46.045		

Source: own elaboration.

To enable discriminant validity, both Fornell and Lacker Criteria and the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) were verified. Table 6 posits that the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlation with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 6. Construct correlations and the squared roots of AVE.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	(0,831)					
2	0,246	(0,788)				
3	0,753	0,215	(0,914)			
4	-0,662	-0,185	-0,685	(0,888)		
5	0,774	0,233	0,723	-0,801	(0,833)	
6	0,774	0,364	0,755	-0,768	0,747	(0,892)

Note: Diagonal elements are the squared roots of the AVE scores.
1-Perceived Value; 2-Habit; 3- Trust; 4-Perceived Risk; 5-Social Norms; 6-Travel Intention

Source: own elaboration.

Furthermore, it is seen that the correlations were below the HTMT ratio threshold of 0.9 in Table 7 (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 7. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

	1	2	3	4	5
2	0,249				
3	0,764	0,216			
4	0,663	0,185	0,687		
5	0,775	0,235	0,724	0,804	
6	0,771	0,365	0,753	0,769	0,747

Note: 1-Perceived Value; 2-Habit; 3- Trust; 4-Perceived Risk; 5-Social Norms; 6-Travel Intention

Source: own elaboration.

For the structural model assessment, the value of the variance inflation factor (VIF) generated for all the independent variables in the model is below < 5 (Hair et al., 2014), which means that collinearity did not reach a critical level in the predictor constructs (Table 8).

Table 8. Inner VIF values of the structural model.

	Perceived Risk	Travel Intention
Travel Intention		-----
Habit		1,071
Perceived Risk		2,984
Perceived Value		3,124
Social Norms	2,094	4,043
Trust	2,094	2,758

Source: own elaboration.

The bootstrapping technique (5,000 resamples) was applied to calculate the T statistic which measures the significance corresponding to this model's path coefficients. Table 9 presents the results of the hypotheses testing. In H1 it was proposed that trust affects the intention to travel by airline in the COVID-19 era.

The direct effect of trust on travel intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.225, p \leq 0.01$).

In H2 it was proposed that perceived risk affects the intention to travel with the airline in the COVID-19 era. The direct effect of perceived risk on travel intention is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.370, p \leq 0.01$).

In H3 it was proposed that perceived value affects the intention to travel with the airline in the COVID-19 era. The direct effect of perceived value on travel intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.312, p \leq 0.01$).

In H4 it was proposed that social norms affect travel intention with the airline statistically in the COVID-19 era. The direct effect of the social norms on

travel intention is not significant ($\beta = 0.007, p \geq 0.01$).

In H5 it was proposed that habits affect travel intention with the airline in the COVID-19 era. The direct effect of habit on travel intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.169, p \leq 0.01$).

In H6 it was proposed that trust affect perceived risk for air travel in the COVID-19 era. The direct effect of trust on perceived risk is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.223, p \leq 0.01$).

In H7 it was proposed that social norms affect perceived risk for air travel in the COVID-19 era. The direct effect of social norms on perceived risk is negative and significant ($\beta = -0.639, p \leq 0.01$).

The guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986) were followed to test the mediation effects in the research model (H₈, H₉). In H₈, it was proposed that perceived risk mediates the relationship between trust and travel intention. In order to test the mediating effect, the total effect of trust on travel intention was tested firstly.

The total effect of trust on travel intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.308, p \leq 0.01$). Subsequently, the indirect effect of trust on travel intention through the perceived risk is also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.083, p \leq 0.05$).

The existence of full or partial mediation was assessed by examining the direct effect. The path coefficient for the direct effect of trust on travel intention, after the inclusion of the mediating variable, was found to be positive and significant ($\beta = 0.225, p \leq 0.01$) (H₁). Thus, partial mediation was concluded.

In H₉, it was proposed that perceived risk mediates the relationship between social norms and travel intention. In order to test the mediating effect, the total effect of social norms on travel intention was tested firstly. The total effect of social norms on travel intention is positive and significant ($\beta = 0.243, p \leq 0.01$).

Subsequently, the indirect effect of social norms on travel intention through the perceived risk is also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.236, p \leq 0.01$). The existence of full or partial mediation was assessed by examining the direct effect. The path coefficient for the direct effect of social norms on travel intention, after the inclusion of the mediating variable, was found to be not significant ($\beta = 0.007, p \geq 0.01$) (H₄). Thus, full mediation was concluded.

The results have revealed that all hypotheses are supported except H₄. The R² value for travel intention is 0.762 which means trust, perceived risk, perceived value, social norm, and habit together explain 76 % of the variance of travel intention. The R² value for perceived risk is 0.667 which means trust and social norms together explain 67 % of the variance of travel intention.

For effect size (f²), values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are accepted small, medium, and large, respectively

(Hair et al., 2017). As a result of testing the structural analysis model, f² values for travel intention were examined. It was revealed that trust (0.077), perceived value (0.131), habit (0.112) had a small effect on travel intention and perceived risk (0.193) had a medium effect on travel intention. f² values for perceived risk were examined. It was revealed that trust (0.071) had small effect on perceived risk and social norms (0.582) had large effect on perceived risk.

Table 9. Direct effects and hypothesis tests.

Hypothesis	Paths Coefficients	STDEV	T statistics	P Values
TRUST→TI	0.225	0.070	3.210	0.001
RISK→TI	-0.370	0.067	5.526	0.000
PVAL→TI	0.312	0.078	4.020	0.000
SNORM→TI	0.007	0.083	0.082	0.935
HABIT→TI	0.169	0.036	4.659	0.000
TRUST→RISK	-0.223	0.078	2.874	0.004
SNORM→RISK	-0.639	0.077	8.254	0.000
TRUST→RISK→TI	0.083	0.032	2.559	0.011
SNORM→RISK→TI	0.236	0.053	4.426	0.000

Source: own elaboration.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study has been one of the pioneering studies investigating the factors affecting the airline travel intention of passengers during the COVID-19 disease period.

There are few studies on the subject in the literature. Song and Choi (2020) confirmed that self-isolation, destination, preventive measures combating infectious diseases in the aviation industry, and social perceptions influence the decision to resume air travel during COVID-19. Lamp et al. (2020) revealed that perceived threat, agreeableness, affect, and fear from COVID-19 had an affect the desire to fly on both business and leisure travel.

In this study, theoretical contribution was made by finding different antecedents of travel intention (trust, habit, social norms, perceived risk and perceived value) from previous studies and focusing on the mediating effect of perceived risk.

Due to the global COVID-19 crisis, most countries and airlines have taken restrictive measures by stopping or reducing international and national flights to limit the pandemic and control the number of casualties.

In the airline industry, which was damaged by the cancellation of flights, the speed and width of COVID-

19's impact created uncertainty for the future in the normalization process. Understanding the antecedents that affect airline passengers' travel intentions during the normalization process will play a critical role in reducing this uncertainty in the industry's recovery process.

The airlines in Turkey launched its flight on June 1. The data of this study were collected close to the starting date of airline flights. This study aimed to reveal the antecedents that will affect the flight intention of Turkish passengers based on TPB when the flights start.

There are many empirical studies in the literature on TPB. However, in an unpredictable period such as COVID-19, it is important to determine the antecedents affecting behavioral intention based on TPB. Thus, it allows for revealing new information about consumer behavior in the context of COVID-19.

The study was concluded that the variable having the highest impact in explaining the intention of air travel is perceived risk, followed by perceived value, trust, and habit, respectively. It was found that social norms had no statistically significant effect on travel intention.

However, mediation analysis results reveal that positive social norms indirectly affect flight intention by reducing the covid-19 risk perception of passengers regarding air travel. The results revealed that the most dominant variable affecting airline passenger's travel intention in the new normal period was the risk perception regarding air travel. The factors that reduce the risk perception of passengers regarding air travel are positive social norms and trust in airline services, respectively.

Trust, which stems from a consumer's exchange partner and the structures facilitating the exchange (Mou et al., 2017), was also handled in the study as one of the antecedents of attitude and the perceived behavioral control.

As seen in the findings of the literature studies (e.g. Jarvenpaa et al., 2000, McKnight and Chervany, 2002) trust impacts the intentions by creating positive attitudes, and reduces all unforeseen contingencies (social uncertainty) (Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006).

Trust helps passengers to accept complexity in different situations and several ways. In this study, according to the mediation analysis results, it was found that the trust in airline services directly affects the air travel intention, as well as indirectly by reducing the perceived risk.

The findings showed that perceived risk has a negative and statistically significant effect on passengers' re-flight intention. Services feature typical characteristics (e.g. intangible, non-standardized, sold without guarantees) so the customers have to make

choices virtually alike service alternatives and providers (Cunningham et al., 2005). The airline services are intangible, and the risk perceived by passengers in the COVID-19 era can cause them to postpone or avoid flight plans entirely.

The degree of the perceived risk by passengers varies because of the international expanse of pandemic and health problems. The causal relationship between air travel and health in the pandemic increases the perceived risk. Because of the increased perceived risk, passengers separate all countries on their international flights as dangerous or safe.

The perceived value added to the model as the determinant of attitude affects the passengers' air travel intention in the COVID-19 era. The value concept is related to service quality and that is often determined by experience-linked customer perceptions. And value-added services sometimes be achieved by new concepts, but over time, these new concepts may be 'expected' and become the norm (Fulmer and Goodwin, 1988).

As the results of the COVID-19 pandemic process, the normal life procedures and the customer behaviors have been changing and these changes cause the differentiation in the perceived value by passengers. In the COVID-19 era, the firms could gain a competitive advantage from these differences, such as readiness and process newness for future threats.

The findings show that the social norms, that are affected by the close and distant environments and directly or indirectly affect the decisions of the passengers, haven't affected the air travel intention in the COVID-19 era. The paper used social norms as external influencers (e.g. mass media, social media, reports). Past literature expresses the effects of mass media and research reports on the adoption process (Ho, 2012).

According to Manzoor and Safdar (2020) media, as the media spends a lot of time on the media, it develops the fear of COVID-19 among people with upper and middle socio-economic backgrounds. According to them, the role of social media in developing fear among users is the most destructive because social media is a platform where everyone can share their opinions. Zheng et al., (2020) claim that misleading and discriminatory media reports affect travelers' mental well-being during the global COVID-19 outbreak. The reason for the conclusion that there is no direct relationship between social norms and air travel intention in this study is that social norms indirectly affect airline travel intention by reducing risk perception.

Past flight habits of the passengers have statistically and positively influenced the air travel intention in the pandemic process. The psychological

concept shows that the cause of travel mode choice could be perceived as not only a planned process but also originating from past habits (Thøgersen and Møller, 2008). Transport mode choices are affected by habitual behaviors, because of its automatic repetitiveness without deliberate thinking (Fu and Juan, 2017).

The habit is defined as the targeted automatic behavior (Aarts and Dijksterhuis, 2000), even if the intention to perform a certain behavior occurs habitually, the facilitating conditions may not arise when it does not allow it (Limayem and Hirt, 2003). Habitual behaviors cause a lack of motivation to change the passengers' ongoing behavior (Zhang et al., 2017) so the past habits of the passengers will increase the demand for air travel in the COVID-19 era.

The Covid-19 has already had different and significant impacts on the global travel industry than previous health crises in a greater geographical extent. It leading to the widespread implementation of travel bans and lockdowns affecting domestic travel and has caused major declines in travel and financial challenges for the global travel industry (Richards and Morrill, 2021).

And also, it has various impacts on the aviation industry. These impacts have forced governments and airlines to take precautions about their workflows. According to the IATA report (2020b), the COVID-19 pandemic crisis will drop airline passenger revenues by US\$314 billion in 2020. This means the revenue would represent a 55% decline compared to 2019. This extraordinary decline will also impact the other service industries such as tourism, hospitality. This passenger-oriented study was analyzed the travel intention in the COVID-19 pandemic. And the results show that the pandemic has changed passengers' practices compared to normal conditions.

Since trust that refers to one's belief in a positive hope regarding what others would do based on earlier interactions (Setiawan et al., 2020) has the greatest impact on travel intention, governments and airlines should give priority to implementing measures that will increase passengers' trust in air travel.

One of the most important factors affecting air travel intention in the new normal period is the perceived risk of air travel. It is important that airlines and governments provide a safe flight experience, such as vaccinations, mask-wearing policies, and aircraft disinfectant procedures, to reduce the risk perception of passengers.

Especially airline managers should focus on measures that will increase trust in order to increase airline passengers' travel intention. Also, the passengers have different perceives about the risk and the value of their travel.

Perceived risk, which is differentiated from the

normal, has negative effects on travel intention and these negative effects cause to change the travel mode in the short and long time. Barnett (2020) estimated that if all seats are filled in an airplane, it would cause the COVID-19 infection about 1 in 4300, but if middle seats are kept empty in an airplane it would cause the COVID-19 infection about 1 in 7700.

As a result, the passengers also do not want to have any risk related to health and perceive that it would be better if they avoid visiting destinations which have high COVID-19 cases (Faisal and Dhusia, 2021). Airline managers should also make a decision based on the research to understand the passengers in the COVID-19 era.

Because of the uncertainty about the pandemic process, these risks have to be prevented by hard and fast rules. Besides that, the passengers' perceived value has a positive impact on travel intention, this impact arises due to has the speed and less contact than other modes. The past experiences of the passengers are one of the important antecedents of the travel intention.

As an antecedent of the travel intention, the habit significantly effects on mode choice behavior (Fu, 2020). Especially in business travels, the passengers have to use air travel, because of different reasons (firm rules, costs, time). And the norms play an important role in travel intention for a normal life, except for extraordinary situations. Social norms sometimes do not affect the behavior significantly because the perception that "everyone is not doing it" (Kahan, 2014).

Because of the extraordinary situation, the COVID-19 era has some uncertainties related to norms. The news and reports could provide different misleading information about the process. Especially social media could cause chaos for the process with anonymous information.

According to the findings, it was found that social norms do not have a direct effect on travel intention, but social norms positively affect travel intention by reducing risk perception. Therefore, it is critical for airline management to effectively manage mass media and social media in the COVID-19 era, especially in terms of personalized service providing (Arica, 2019).

One of the limitations of this study is the focus on the effect of a limited number of variables (trust, perceived risk, perceived value, habit, social norm) on travel intention in the light of the TPB.

There may be other variables that affect the travel intention of the passengers, which cannot be uncovered in the research (eg.; age, gender, individual norms, benefit, attitude, ticket price). Future research that will focus on different variables can provide information not provided here.

Another limitation of this study is that the participants are only Turkish passengers. The cultural dissimilarity of the passengers might make a difference for the antecedents that affect travel intention.

Conducting a similar study based on this study on passengers from different nationalities may enable comparing the effects of cultural differences on the antecedents affecting travel intention.

Moreover, this study, which draws attention to the importance of passenger behavior by revealing what antecedents are effective in the travel intention of the passengers, will be a guide for the airline industry managers and aviation authorities for future projections of the industry.

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