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RESEARCH LETTER

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The relationship between the fear of COVID-19, intention of repurchasing a vacation and subjective vitality variables

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 has prompted tourists to look for vacation options where they can feel safer. Hence, repurchasing behaviour gains importance regarding vacationing. Another widely accepted effect of COVID-19 is on people's psychological outcomes, such as decreased subjective vitality. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the interrelationships among tourists' fear of COVID-19, intention to repurchase a vacation and subjective vitality. Based on data from 654 tourists from all over Turkey and using the AMOS-SEM and PROCESS macro, the findings show (i) a positive relationship between the intention to repurchase a vacation and subjective vitality, (ii) negative associations between the fear of COVID-19 and repurchase intention, and fear of COVID-19 and subjective vitality. However, the results provide no significant evidence regarding the mediator role of the intention to repurchase.

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KEYWORDS
The fear of COVID-19; intention to repurchase vacation; subjective vitality; Türkiye

1. Introduction

The extant literature reveals that pandemics have a negative impact on destinations that are perceived to be risky (e.g. Bigne et al., 2021; Matiza, 2022; Uglis et al., 2021). For instance, Uglis et al. (2021) stated that while the pandemic significantly affected travel plans, tourists consider vacation options with which they already had positive experiences less risky. Hence, the intention to repurchase a vacation becomes a matter of concern for tourism studies. In the tourism sector, repurchase intention refers to the desire of tourists to choose a destination they have already visited, even when given two or more options (Lin & Chen, 2009, p. 35). Since COVID-19 has prompted tourists to look for vacation options where they previously had satisfying experiences, we expect a positive relationship between fear of COVID-19 and repurchase intention.

Undoubtedly, vacations contribute to increasing positive psychological outputs, such as subjective vitality (Mitas & ve Kroesen, 2020). Subjective vitality refers to a personality of positive mental energy, including liveliness and cheerfulness (Fini et al., 2010, p. 150). Ryan and Frederick (1997, p. 530) asserted that subjective vitality can be understood as a reflection of physical and psychological health. Satıcı and Deniz (2019) stated that individuals with high vitality could be more productive and cope better with stress and difficulties (Satıcı & Deniz, 2019, p. 369). Accordingly, we expect the intention to repurchase a vacation to increase subjective vitality, while the fear of COVID-19 emerges as a possible negative antecedent for subjective vitality.

Within this scope, this research examines the interrelationships between tourists' fear of COVID-19 and their intention to repurchase a vacation and the subjective vitality of touristic consumers

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throughout Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since we expect a positive relationship between fear of COVID-19 and repurchase intention, while the intention to repurchase a vacation will probably lead to an increase in subjective vitality, we also try to find out if fear of COVID-19 also increases subjective vitality through intention to repurchase a vacation as a mediator.

2. Data and method

The fear of COVID-19 Scale was developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020) to assess the fear levels of individuals caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ladikli et al., 2020, p. 74). Purchasing Intent Scale with three items, is adopted from Çetinkaya and Şahbaz (2019) was used to assess tourists' intention to repurchase a vacation. Even though a three item-scale may seem to short; Williams et al. (2009) consider three items to be sufficient for each latent variable for covariance-based SEM analysis, such as AMOS. To measure subjective vitality, we adopted a Vitality Scale, developed originally by Ryan and Frederick (1997) and translated into Turkish by Cuğ (2015).

2.1. Research model and sample

In this research, hypotheses have been formed by examining the psychological effects of the pandemic on tourists and the relationship between tourists' intention to repurchase a vacation and subjective vitality.

H1: Fear of COVID-19 is positively associated with intention to repurchase a vacation.

H2: Fear of COVID-19 is negatively associated with subjective vitality.

H3: Intention to repurchase a vacation is positively associated with subjective vitality.

H4: Intention to repurchase a vacation mediates the relationship between fear of COVID-19 and subjective vitality.

This study used convenience sampling, 654 tourists from all over Turkey were surveyed and the data, collected online, were tested using AMOS-SEM and PROCESS macro.

2.2. Findings

Considering the demographic profiles of the participants consisted of 398 (60.9%) women and 256 (39.1%) men, with an age range of 18–80 ($M = 38.34$ years, SD = 14.10). As for marital status, 50.2% ($n = 328$) were single, 45.1% ($n = 295$) married and 4.7% ($n = 31$) divorced. The participants in the research: 170 (26%) of the participants have postgraduate education, 408 (62.4%) university, 61 (9.3%) high school and 15 (2.3%) primary education. The participants regarding their occupations: 3.1% healthcare worker, 21.3% educator, 3.2% architect-engineer, 5.6% self-employed, 17% student, 7.2% retired, 6.5% civil servant, 11.6% are not working and 17.4% are other occupations. Upon tourists' vacation frequency: 12.5% do not take a holiday, 65.3% 1–2 times a year, 15% 3–4 times a year, 3.7% 5–6 times and 3.1% 7 times and more a year that they stated vacation.

2.3. Analysis and results

The reliability and validity of the given constructs are evaluated via confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) (Akgün et al., 2008; Akgün et al., 2009; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). By employing AMOS-SEM, we examined all given three constructs (involving 17 question items) in one CFA model through usage of all surveys ($N = 654$). One item from fear of COVID-19 and another one item from subjective vitality are dropped since they are high covariances amongst them. After the dropping those two items, the final measurement model fit the data quite well: $\chi^2_{(654)} = 420.863$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .94, normative fit index (NFI) = .92, incremental fit index (IFI) = .940, Tucker–

Table 1. Reliability estimates and correlations.

	Variables	1	2	3
1	Fear of COVID-19	.88		
2	Intention to Repurchase a Vacation	−.08*	.71	
3	Subjective Vitality	−.12*	.235**	.88
	Composite reliability	.91	.96	.86
	Average variance extracted	.78	.51	.78

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$.

Lewis Index (TLI) = .92, $\chi^2/df = 2.40$ and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.07. In addition, the parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) = .74, exceeding the cut-off point of .70.

Table 1 shows the reliability coefficients – average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, and AMOS-SEM originated composite reliabilities (CR) of the given measures, as well as the construct correlations. As seen in Table 1, all AVE and CR coefficients exceed the threshold levels recommended by Nunnally (1978) and Fornell and Larcker (1981). Furthermore, to test the discriminant validity, we also compared the square root values of AVE with the correlations between pairs of constructs. After conducting these tests, we have found that for all given three constructs, square root-values of AVE were higher than the factor correlations. As a result, our measures have sufficient discriminant and convergent validity (Figure 1).

2.4. Hypothesis testing

We followed the procedures recommended by Preacher et al. (2007) and used the PROCESS 4.0 developed by Hayes and Rockwood (2017). To obtain the 95% confidence interval of indirect effects, 5.000 bootstrap resamples were selected. We created a model including Fear of COVID-19 (FoC) as a predictor (X), Intention to RePurchase a Vacation (IPV) as a mediator (M) and Subjective Vitality (SV) as the criterion variable (Y). The results of the mediation test are shown in Table 2. According to the procedure, IPV was predicted by FoC. FoC predicted IPV significantly, however the nature of relationship was negative (β: −0.104, $p < 0.05$). Accordingly H1 is not supported. In the next step, FoC and IPV were entered. The beta coefficients (unstandardized) values of IPV and FoC (path c') found −0.1697 ($p < 0.05$) and for path 'b' = 0.3183 ($p < 0.01$), respectively. Accordingly H2 and H3 are suported. The next step, predicted SV by FoC without entering IPV. The indirect effect of FoC on SV – path c – found unsignificant Hence, we could not provide statistically significant support regarding the mediator role of IPV. Thus, H4 is not supported (Figure 2).

3. Discussions and conclusion

In this paper, as we expected, the findings show a positive relationship between the intention to repurchase a vacation and subjective vitality, while there is a negative relationship between the

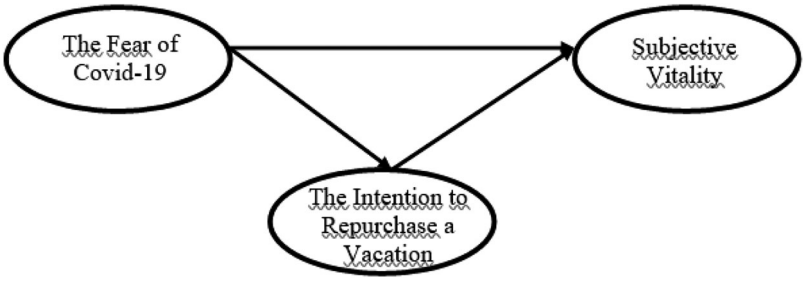


Figure 1. Research model.

Table 2. Mediation analysis.

Y = SV (Subjective Vitality, X = FoC (Fear of COVID-19), M = IPV) (Intention to Repurchase a Vacation) SAMPLE SIZE = 654						
			Outcome = IPV			
Model Summary	R	R-sq	F	df1	df2	*P*
	.0827	.0068	4.3337	1.0000	630.0000	.0378
Model	Coeff	Se	T	*P*	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.5338	0.1433	24.6673	.0000	3.2525	3.8151
FoC	−.1044	.0502	−2.0818	.0378	−.2029	−.0059
Outcome = SV						
Model Summary	R	R-sq	F	df1	df2	*P*
	.2541	.0646	21.7018	2.0000	629.0000	.0000
Model	Coeff	Se	T	*P*	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.9930	.2730	14.6257	.0000	3.4569	4.5291
IPV	−.1697	.0684	−2.4808	.0134	−.3041	−.0354
FoC	.3183	.0542	5.8773	.0000	.2119	.4246
TOTAL EFFECT MODEL						
Outcome = SV						
Model Summary	R	R-sq	F	df1	df2	*P*
	.1148	.0132	8.4131	1.0000	630.0000	.0039
Model	Coeff	Se	T	*P*	LLCI	ULCI
constant	5.1177	.1998	25.6095	.0000	4.7253	5.5102
FoC	−.2030	.0700	−2.9005	.0039	−.3404	−.0656
TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS						
Total effect of X on Y						
Effect	SE	T	*P*	LLCI	ULCI	
−.2030	.0700	−2.9005	.0039	−.3404	−.0656	
Direct effect of X on Y						
Effect	SE	T	*P*	LLCI	ULCI	
−.1697	.0684	−2.4808	.0134	−.3041	−.0354	
Indirect effect of X on Y						
Effect	Boot	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI		
IPV	−.0332	.0177	−.0710	−.0009		

fear of COVID-19 and subjective vitality. However, contrary to our expectations, the findings also reveal that as the fear of COVID-19 increases, the intention to repurchase a vacation decreases. This result may be attributed to the timing of the data-gathering process. The data were gathered

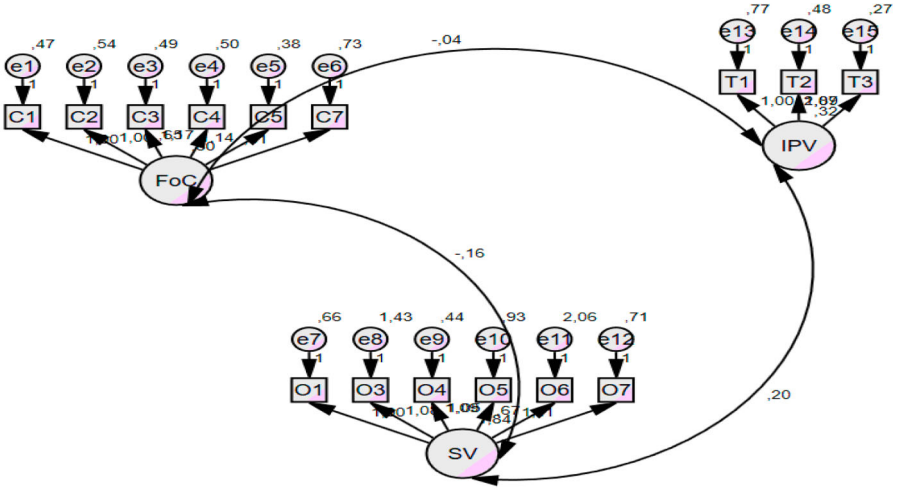


Figure 2. Factor analysis.

at the beginning of the pandemic when fear and anxiety were the highest. Therefore, results may differ for data gathered at sooner times, for instance, after the vaccinations are started.

Moreover, the results provide no empirical evidence regarding the mediator role of the intention to repurchase a vacation on the relationship between the fear of COVID-19 and subjective vitality. This finding indicated that fear of COVID, as a strong feeling, directly affects subjective vitality without any mediators. So, it is necessary to take the necessary steps to decrease the fear of COVID-19. For instance, taking hygiene measures against COVID-19 in touristic destinations may reduce the fear of COVID-19 felt during the vacation to increase subjective vitality. The accommodation industry may also consider evolving to smaller turn to smaller and independent facilities such as bungalows, villas and tiny houses instead of large-scale hotels can also reduce the fear of COVID-19.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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