Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

EXAMINING TRADITIONAL WOM INTENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR: A CASE OF TURKISH MOUNTAINEERS

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GELENEKSEL WOM NİYETİNİN PLANLI DAVRANIŞ TEORİSİ BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ: TÜRK DAĞCILARI ÖRNEĞİ

Abstract

The present research sheds light on the relationships between attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioral control (PBC) and TWOM intention (TWOMI) in the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). A survey was conducted on Turkish mountaineers to examine the extent of the influence of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control on the TWOM by utilizing a partial least square algorithm. Results show significant relationships between AT, PBC, and WOM intention, whereas SN is a non-significant predictor. Further, the result of importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) indicates that while PBC seems to be the most important predictor of

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intention to WOM, the attitude needs to be the highest priority from service providers. Accordingly, practical implications for travel agency management are recommended. Various suggestions for future research are also made.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior, Word-of-Mouth, Mountaineering, Special Interest Tourism, Partial Least Square (PLS).

Öz

Araştırma Planlı Davranış Teorisi (TPB) bağlamında tutum (AT), öznel norm (SN) ve algılanan davranışsal kontrol (PBC) ile geleneksel WOM niyeti arasındaki ilişkilere ışık tutmaktadır. Türk dağcılar örnekleminde kısmi en küçük kareler algoritmaları kullanılarak Planlı Davranış Teorisi bileşenlerinin geleneksel WOM üzerindeki yordama gücünün incelenmesi amacıyla anket uygulanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları tutum, algılanan davranışsal kontrol ve geleneksel WOM niyeti arasında anlamlı ilişkiler olduğunu göstermekte, öznel normun ise anlamlı bir yordayıcı olmadığına işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca önem performans analizi (ÖPA), algılanan davranışsal kontrolün geleneksel WOM niyetinin en önemli yordayıcısı gibi görünse de hizmet sağlayıcıların tutuma yüksek öncelik vermesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Çalışmada elde edilen sonuçlardan hareketle seyahat acentaları için uygulamaya dönük çeşitli öneriler sunulmuştur. Ayrıca gelecekteki çalışmalar için de çeşitli önerilere yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Planlı Davranış Teorisi, Ağızdan Ağıza İletişim, Dağcılık, Özel İlgi Turizmi, Kısmi En Küçük Kareler.

1. Introduction

Becoming more organized rather than an individual activity, increasing the equipment's quality thanks to the technology, and thus minimizing the possible risks make this hobby-based leisure activity more dynamic and popular (Şenol, Tokmak & Gnira, 2016). The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA, 2018) currently has a total of 3,247,968 individual members. Specifically, there are 160 active mountaineering clubs in the Turkish Mountaineering Federation (Turkish Mountaineering Federation [TMF], 2019). Moreover, Tourism Strategy-2023 has emphasized mountaineering training (Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2007) to make contribution to the development of mountaineering. Although mountaineering has received limited coverage in tourism research so far (Volgger, 2015), understanding mountaineers' behaviors may give some insight into the literature and the practical implications. This is primarily based on the idea that mountaineers' behaviors may have a different tendency in forming an intention to

participate in related leisure activity.

Though mountaineering has become an important market segment, it is still a rather new topic in the context of TPB. TPB is one of the most used models in predicting consumer behavior. TPB basically takes into account both social (i.e., subjective norm) and psychological (i.e., attitudes) factors to predict individuals' behaviors (Hsu & Huang, 2012). The TPB has been employed to predict individuals' behaviors by many researchers (e.g. Buttle & Bok, 1996; Conner, Kirk, Cade & Barret, 2001), but is seldom adopted in the context of mountaineers. However, it has been emphasized that more work is needed on this topic to examine more the predictive power of behavioral intention (Ajzen, 1991; Hsu & Huang, 2012). The present study thus proposes and tests TPB model to understand the formation of mountaineers' TWOMIs. The objectives of the study are threefold: (1) to adapt the TPB in predicting the mountaineers' TWOMIs (2) to examine the extent of the influence of attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control on the TWOM; and (3) to derive practical implications for relevant service providers.

The study contributes to a theoretical understanding of mountaineers by adapting TPB model. First, while previous research on WOM has examined WOM as an antecedent (exogenous) (Zarrad & Debab, 2015; Abubakar, 2016; Mehmood, Liang, & Gu, 2018), the proposed model (Figure 1) uses TWOM as an endogenous construct in the context of TPB. Second, although much research has been done on WOM (Allsop, Bassett & Hoskins, 2007; de Matos & Rossi, 2008), it still seems inadequate to adapt TPB to WOM. Third, the research suggests that TWOM has a greater effect than eWOM on consumer purchase-related attitudes, on destination image, and attempt to organize the travel (Méndez, Francisco, Muñoz-Leiva & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015; Ishida, Slevitch & Siamionava, 2016; Porter, 2017). Hence, unlike past studies (Gruen, Osmonbekov & Czaplewski, 2006; Cheung & Lee, 2012), we focused solely on TWOM rather than eWOM. Fourth, given the predictions on the rapid growth of SIT tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2014: 20; Adventure Travel Trade Association [ATTA], 2019), there are studies focusing on various aspects of mountaineers (Ewert, 1985; Tsaur, Yen & Hsiao, 2013; Albayrak & Caber, 2016), but few studies have examined TWOMI in the context of the mountaineering. Fifth, to the best of authors' knowledge, no study has utilized a partial least square (PLS) algorithm to predict the TWOMI. The current research, therefore, attempts to focus on this niche market to fill this gap. It is believed that the results will help researchers better understand the travel

behaviors of the mountaineers in the context of tourism operations. Furthermore, we offer various recommendations for travel agencies' benefits to focus more on Turkish mountaineers whose activities are generally directed by the organizations of clubs/associations (C/A). We think that the findings will also be of interest to other SIT service providers aside from mountaineering.

2. Literature and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Theory of Planned Behavior

TPB is a theory designed to predict and explain human behavior in specific contexts. According to the theory, "people act in accordance with their intentions and perceptions of control over the behavior, while intentions, in turn, are influenced by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioral control" (Ajzen, 2001). The TPB has three determinants: attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Ajzen (1991) states that: "the relative importance of attitude, subjective norm, and the perceived behavioral control in the prediction of intention is expected to vary across behaviors and situations." Thus, in some applications, only attitudes may be found as an important factor that affects intentions. In others, attitudes and perceived behavioral control have the prediction power on intentions, in still others that attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control make independent contributions (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001).

In general, "the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm with respect to a behavior, and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be an individual's intention to perform the behavior under consideration" (Bamberg, Ajzen & Schmidt, 2003). For example, although with a positive attitude and a general perception of social pressure, if individuals have no enough money or skill to participate in mountaineering, he/she may not participate in that activities.

2.2. Attitude

Ajzen (1991) defines attitude as "the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation or appraisal of the behavior in question". The attitude is a function of a person's salient behavioral beliefs, which represent perceived consequences or attributes of the behavior. Attitudes are the overall evaluations of the behavior by the individual (Conner & Armitage, 1998). If an individual has a negative

attitude towards action, he/she may be less willing to do that behavior (Cheng, Lam & Hsu, 2006). The important role of attitude as a predictor of behavioral intention is well explained in research. Lee and Gould (2012) have found attitude had a significant positive effect on participation intention. Han, Hsu and Sheu (2010) have revealed attitude as an important factor in influencing intention to stay at a green hotel. The present study uses attitude as an antecedent to predict mountaineers' TWOMIs. Thus, we propose:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between attitude and traditional WOM intention.

2.3. Subjective Norm

Ajzen (1991) defined subjective norm as "the degree of social pressure felt by the person concerning the behavior". SN is the perceived opinions of others. It relates to the possibility that important referents will confirm the given behavior. (Spark, 2007; Han et al., 2010). When examining the relationship between individual's SN and behavioral intention, past research confirmed that SN impacts behavioral intention. For example, the findings of Kim, Njite and Hançer (2013) revealed that SN was the important antecedent of behavioral intentions to select an eco-friendly restaurant. Lam and Hsu (2006) found SN to be a critical variable in influencing Taiwanese tourists' intentions to visit Hong Kong. Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) have found that SN is a significant, positive predictor of the intention to travel a certain destination. Therefore, it can be argued that a mountaineer's reference group may influence intentions to partake in these activities. Accordingly, we propose that:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between subjective norm and traditional WOM intention.

2.4. Perceived Behavioral Control

PBC refers to "people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior of interest" (Ajzen, 1991). Parker, Manstead, Stradling, Reason & Baxter (1992) mentioned that including PBC helped increase explained variance in intentions. Due to the various sources may not be under the control of individuals, therefore "the more individuals can have control over the opportunities and resources to perform a specific behavior, the more likely such a behavior will be engaged in" (Chen & Tung, 2014).

PPC comprises two factors: first, control beliefs, reflecting the perceived difficulty (or ease) with which the behavior may be performed (Ajzen, 1991), related to some available resources. The second concerns the perceived facilitation of the individual's assessment of these resources' importance to get expected results (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

PBC has been shown to be an important antecedent of travel intention (Martin, Ramamonjiarivelo & Martin, 2011). Han et al. (2010) applied the TPB in a green hotel setting and found PBC affected intention to stay at green hotel. Cheng et al. (2006) found that PBC was related to consumer's negative WOM communication intention. In this context, giving the various resources such as physical and mental competence; time, monetary resources, and others, essential for mountaineer, it may be thought to impact the intention of behavior, and this may also have an impact on the traditional WOM intention. Thus, the current study proposes:

H_3: There is a positive relationship between perceived behavioral control and traditional WOM intention.

2.5. Traditional WOM as Behavioral Intention

Behavioral intention is a central component in the TPB. Ajzen (1991) pointed out that "behavioral intention is an indication of an individual's likelihood to undertake a particular behavior, and is an immediate antecedent of behavior". The intention is the individual's motivation in his/her important plan or an attempt to act. If there is an opportunity to act, intention probably leads to a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Cheng et al., 2006). The intention is created based on behavior, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. However, Beck and Ajzen (1991) highlight that the TPB predicted intentions with a high degree of accuracy, and that it is moderately successful in predicting actual behavior.

In this study, TWOMI, one of the most effective factors affecting consumer behavior (Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014), is utilized as an endogenous construct. It refers to informal communication between the people concerning the evaluations of a product or service (Anderson, 1998). As WOM is communicated by people known (e.g. friends, family members, or co-workers), this form is assumed to be more reliable and trustworthy than marketer-provided information (East, Hammond & Lomax, 2008; Weitzl, Weitzl & Berg, 2017; Solomon, 2018).

Owing to services are difficult to evaluate prior to buying, this influence is also important for tourism businesses (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Satta, Parola, Penco and Persico (2015) have emphasized that the nature of inseparability between the presentation of service and consumption strengthens the importance of interpersonal relationships and mutual influence. Despite much attention on WOM, other than the study conducted by Cheng et al. (2006), few research has been undertaken on mountaineers' TWOMIs. To address this literature gap, this study extends the TPB by adding the TWOMI as an endogenous variable.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Survey Instrument

While the exogenous variables in this study are attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, traditional WOM intention is endogenous in the context of TPB (Ajzen, 1991). The variables were measured using a total of thirty-one items. Before collecting the data, the opinions of five tourism academicians were taken to express the items and travel behavior-related questions in the questionnaire. The experts reported to useful being reverse coding of some items. A pilot test was then applied to the two hundred mountaineers, in August 2014 by means of snowball sampling. As a result of the pilot study, it was seen that the data did not meet the normal distribution assumptions.

The questionnaire developed through literature, expert opinions and pilot study consists of TPB scale, TWOMI and information about the participants. The first part is composed of items that include AT, SN and PBC to predict TWOMI. SN was measured by fourteen items inspired from previous research (e.g. Bamberg et al., 2003; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Cheng et al., 2006; Sparks, 2007; Sparks & Pan, 2009). The sample items for the subjective norm are 'People whose ideas I care about supporting my plans to participate in mountaineering', 'People whose ideas I care about agree with my decision to participate in mountaineering'. The PBC scale was measured with seven items adapted from studies of Bamberg et al. (2003), Sparks (2007), Sparks and Pan (2009), and Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). Sample items related to this scale are 'I have sufficient technical knowledge about mountaineering', 'I have enough time to participate in mountaineering'. Just like the PBC, attitude items consisted of seven items. Items were developed by adapting from previous studies such as Andrew Smith and Biddle (1991), Bamberg et al. (2003), Lam and

Hsu (2006), Sparks (2007), Sparks and Pan (2009), and Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). Sample attitude items are 'bad-good, 'positive-negative'. Finally, the intentions to TWOM were measured with three items using the study of Harrison-Walker (2001). Items are "I generally recommend others to experience the mountaineering activities", "In general, when I return from mountains, I do not like to share my experiences with others", "In general, I convey positive things about the experience of mountain sports to others". While a 5-point Likert scale was used in PBC, SN and TWOMI scales (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree), the 5-point semantic scale was used in the AT scale. The second part of the questionnaire was composed of 21 questions related to demographic characteristics and the participants' travel behaviors.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

Active mountaineers who have been members of mountaineering clubs in Turkey were the target respondents in the research. It was thought that TMF, which has 412 clubs and 19,366 active mountaineers, could be an appropriate data source in collecting data (TMF, 2019). But it has not been possible to access up-to-date data on how many climbers in each club. It was therefore decided that it would be more appropriate to collect data through convenience and snowball samplings. To do that, initially, one of the authors of this study contacted six mountaineers over the phone and collected the first six questionnaires via email in September 2014. Then the researcher got into touch with the directors of the active clubs in the Aegean region. Out of twenty-four clubs reached out, six club directors responded positively.

Furthermore, one of the authors actively participated in several climbing organizations. While some questionnaires were collected from the event participants who volunteered at resting times, the others were handed over to the club directors. As a result, a total of 292 questionnaires were collected between August 2014 and September 2015, but 36 of them were excluded from the assessment because they contained incomplete data. Finally thus 256 questionnaires were obtained.

3.3. Data Analysis

SPSS 22.0 was used for analyzing descriptive statistics, and Smart PLS 3.0 was used to evaluate the outer and inner models based on PLS. PLS-SEM is increasingly becoming a widely used method for evaluating structural models in many disciplines (Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell &

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Gudergan, 2018). PLS algorithm was used in this research for a couple of reasons. First, we are concerned with testing the mountaineers' TWOMIs from a prediction perspective. Second, lack of normality was a concern. We checked the normality of the data prior to analyses. Skewness and kurtosis were ranged from -0.387 to -2.739 and −0.027 to 9.635, respectively. Therefore, the vast majority of the data did not meet the cut-off value of 3, as suggested by Kline (2015). Third, we collected data from a small population through non-probabilistic sampling techniques - convenience and snowball. Thus, it can be argued that the reasons are in line with the recommendations (Hair, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019b) regarding the objectives of the use of PLS.

The use of self-reported questionnaires has recently increased common method variance (Ali, 2016). Thus, the Harman single factor test (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003) was used to examine explained total variance to check the threat of common method bias (CMB). Given the factorial structure, out of total variance (59.81%), the largest variance explained by the first factor was 26.47 percent in the dataset. Thereby they were below less than the suggested cut-off value, 50 percent. CMB is thus not an important issue in the dataset. Aside from this, we assessed missing data by replacing it with series mean.

4. Findings

4.1. Respondents Characteristics

Table 1 depicts demographic characteristics and travel behaviors of the mountaineers.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics and Travel Behaviors of the Mountaineers

Variables		%	Variables		%
Age	18-25	21.6	**Membership to mountaineering C/A**	Yes	57.4
	26-35	14.8		No	42.6
	36-45	21.2			
	46-55	28.0	**Average membership**	Less than 1year	13.6
	56+	14.4		1-3 year	56.8
				4 +	29.5
Gender	Female	45.0			
	Male	55.0	**Training for mountaineering?**	Yes	28.5
				No	71.5
Number of children	No	51.7			
	1	20.7	**Participation decision time**	1 week	46.8
	2	22.0		1 month	9.4
	3	4.7		1-6 month	6.9
	4 +	.9		7 +	1.7
				Depends on conditions	35.2
Education	Elementary	4.3			
	High school	29.0	**Experience level in mountaineering**	Inexperienced	3.4
	Undergraduate	58.0		Beginner	22.3
	Graduate	8.7		Getting experienced	68.1
				Expert	5.5
				Beyond expert	.8
Occupation	White-collar	37.7	**With whom did he/she attend the events the most?**	Individual	3.4
	Owner	14.7		C/A members	55.7
	Retired	20.3		Close friends	25.5
	Student	23.4		Family/relatives	4.3
	Unemployed	3.9		Other	11.1
Household income	Very low	3.0			
	Low	8.9	**Organization type**	Self-organization	5.6
	Middle	57.0		Friends	21.0
	Upper middle	27.4		Travel agencies	.4
	High	3.8		Partly individual/partly package tour	.9
				Organization of C/A	58.8
				Other	13.3

Note: C/A: Clubs/associations

As can be seen in Table 1, apart from the demographic characteristics, respondents' salient profile shows that they are getting experienced (68.1%), partake in events with C/A members (55.7%), organize the activities through C/A (58.8%), use the C/A as an information source (50.8%) and as service type (73.6%). Therefore, it can be said that the travel behavior profile in this study is similar to the previous research participants (Çakıcı, Yavuz & Çiçek, 2014; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016).

4.2. Measurement Model

PLS-SEM was used to identify four reflective constructs (SN, PBC, AT

and TWOM) in the structural model. We thought that TPB-related constructs could be identified as reflective models considering the definition that "relationship progresses from the construct to the indicators, suggesting that indicators are correlated" (do Valle & Assaker, 2016).

The reflective constructs were used in the model. Thus we only examined the outer model to assess the convergent validity by means of item loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT), Composite Reliability (CR), pA, and Cronbach's alpha (Hair et al., 2019b). Item loadings exceeded the cut-off value of 0.708, ranged from 0.737 to 0.875. Some items have been extracted from the measurement model due to their low values. Given the internal consistencies of constructs; apart from PBC and WOM, remaining were above of 0.70 Cronbach's alpha (CA), and AVE values were greater than 0.50, ranged from 0.575-0.661. Again, PBC and WOM showed less pA reliability than cut-off value of 0.70, but AT and SN passed the threshold value. All constructs yielded satisfactory results of composite reliability, ranged from 0.802-0.921. Thus results indicate that no value revealed below of cut-off points as suggested by Hair et al. 2019b), Ringle and Sarsredt (2013), thereby internal reliability and convergent validity were satisfactory for the model (Table 2).

Table 2: Convergent Validity

Constructs	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
AT	0.898	0.909	0.921	0.661
PBC	0.630	0.630	0.802	0.575
SN	0.783	0.794	0.858	0.602
TWOMI	0.676	0.677	0.822	0.606

Note: AT: Attitude, PBC: Perceived behavioral control, SN: Subjective norm, TWOMI: Traditional word-of-mouth intention, CA: Cronbach's alpha, rho A: Jöreskog's rhô, CR: Composite reliability, AVE: Average variance extracted.

As for the discriminant validity, "which is the extent to which a construct is empirically distinct from other constructs in the structural model" (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019a), we used HTMT analysis, which has recently introduced (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). We used HTMT as it is more suitable for discriminant validity assessment (Hair et al., 2019b). HTMT results indicate that no constructs exceeded the threshold value of .90 as proposed by Henseler et al. (2015); thus it did not seem to be an issue for assessing the structural model. Table 3 shows HTMT results.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Constructs	AT	PBC	SN	TWOMI
AT				
PBC	0.149			
SN	0.179	0.740		
TWOMI	0.302	0.866	0.540	

Note: HTMT: Heterotrait-monotrait, AT: Attitude, PBC: Perceived behavioral control, SN: Subjective norm, TWOMI: Traditional word-of-mouth intention.

4.3. Structural Model

As a rule of thumb, PLS based algorithm requires several assessments. Hair et al. (2019a) suggest the coefficient of determination (R^2), the blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy measure (Q^2), and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients should be included in the assessment procedures. To do that, we used a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples. Hair et al. (2019a) highlight that "before assessing the structural relationships, collinearity must be examined to make sure it does not bias the regression results". Thus, the present research initially assessed this issue through Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Recommended threshold is 3 and lower, particularly the latent variable scores of the predictor constructs (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 4, neither outer nor inner VIF values exceed the cut-off point of 3-5.

Table 4: Factor Loadings and VIF Results

Indicators	Factor loadings	Outer VIF values	Inner VIF values (TWOMI)
AT1	0.740	1.633	
AT2	0.773	2.094	
AT3	0.875	3.281	
AT4	0.782	2.727	
AT5	0.843	3.128	
AT7	0.856	2.728	
AT			1.026
PBC2	0.760	1.280	
PBC3	0.777	1.285	
PBC6	0.737	1.182	
PBC			1.378
SN1	0.768	1.381	
SN12	0.755	1.652	
SN13	0.762	1.732	
SN9	0.817	1.755	
SN			1.397
WOM1	0.764	1.237	
WOM2	0.802	1.418	
WOM4	0.771	1.354	

Note: VIF: Variance inflation factor, AT: Attitude, PBC: Perceived behavioral control, SN: Subjective norm, TWOMI: Traditional word-of-mouth intention.

"If collinearity is not an issue, the next step is examining the R^2 value of the endogenous construct(s)" (Hair et al., 2019a). Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics (2009) suggest R values of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 can be considered substantial, moderate and weak. In this study, three exogenous constructs (AT, PBC and SN) explained the variance in TWOMI with the R^2 value of 0.36, thereby can be regarded as a moderate model. But Raithel, Sarstedt, Scharf and Schwaiger (2012) point out that acceptable R^2 values are content-based, and in some disciplines, a R^2 value as low as 0.10 can be considered sufficient. Thus this value may be regarded as sufficient since there has yet no consensus on such cut-off points in the field of tourism and hospitality.

The effect size (f^2) was also assessed in the structural model. It calculates the effect of predictors on endogenous construct's R^2 value when remove of a given predictor constructs in the model (Hair et al., 2019a). Cohen (1988) classified effect ranges of f^2 values as small (0.02), medium (0.15), and high (0.35). While AT and SN had small effect, PBC had a medium effect size (Table 6).

As for assessing the PLS path model's predictive accuracy, we used the blindfolding procedure by means of Stone–Geisser's Q^2. It replaces the single points, of which earlier removed, with the mean in the matrix, thereby estimates the model parameters (Sarstedt, Ringle & Hair, 2017). Should the Q^2 value is higher than zero, it indicates predictive accuracy of the model, but as a guideline, in a given PLS-path model; zero, 0.25 and 0.50 show small, medium and large predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019a). In this study, path model's predictive accuracy analysis yielded a satisfactory result, exceeding the minimum value of zero (Q^2=0.20), thus the structural model can be considered had a sufficient predictive relevance.

Furthermore, we employed PLS Predict to examine the predictive power of the model, also called as out-of-sample prediction. To do that, the root means squared error (RMSE) and the mean absolute error (MAE) were used to make comparisons to linear regression model (LM) (k: 10; number of repetitions: 10). According to the guideline, developed by Hair et al. (2019a), Table 5 depicts that the $Q^2_{Predict}$ values were positive. Also, all of indicators of the endogenous in the PLS-SEM analysis yielded higher prediction errors compared to the naïve LM benchmark construct. Therefore, it can be argued that the model had medium predictive power.

Table 5: PLS Predict

PLS	RMSE	MAE	Q² predict
WOM4	0.686	0.511	0.176
WOM2	0.760	0.530	0.179
WOM1	0.891	0.721	0.242
LM	**RMSE**	**MAE**	**Q² predict**
WOM4	0.696	0.523	0.150
WOM2	0.801	0.557	0.087
WOM1	0.915	0.737	0.199

Note: PLS: Partial least square, RMSE: Root-mean-square deviation, MAE: Mean absolute error,

Q² predict: Stone-Geisser's Q² value, LM: Linear regression model.

The standardized root means square residual (SRMR) value was also used to assess model fit (Henseler, 2017). The SRMR value (0.067) was below of the recommended threshold value (0.08). Further, NFI value showed an acceptable fit (0.773). Finally, we assessed the structural paths between exogenous and endogenous variables in the structured model to see the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients. Table 6 shows the results of the structural path.

Table 6: Structural Model Results

Hypotheses	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T Statist.	P Values	Decision	f^2
AT-TWOMI	0.175	0.059	2.990	0.003	Supported	0.047
SN-TWOMI	0.121	0.073	1.659	0.097	Rejected	0.016
PBC-TWOMI	0.488	0.063	7.699	0.000	Supported	0.274

Note: f^2: Effect size

Figure 1 shows the structural model with R^2 value of endogenous construct along with path coefficients (inner model) and item loadings (outer model). So, out of three exogenous variables, two constructs (AT, PBC) had a positive significant influence on TWOMI, thereby hypotheses 1 and 3 supported, whereas SN was a non-significant predictor of endogenous variable, thus H_2 was not supported.

Figure 1: Structural Model
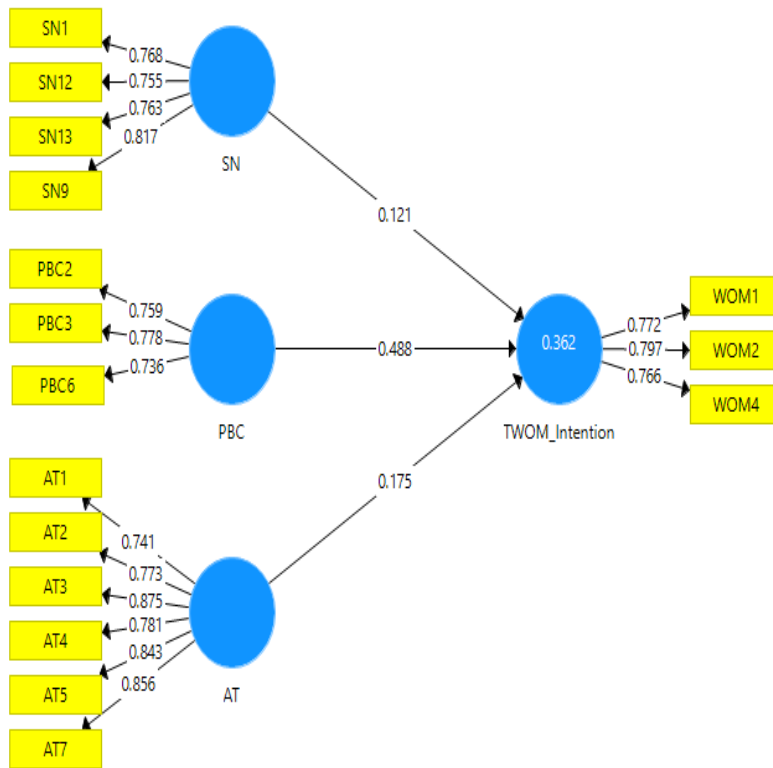
4.4. Importance- Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

The present study further conducted IPMA (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). This analysis helps particularly industry professionals identify salient areas of improvements within the context of mountaineering operations. For instance, if performance is low, but importance is considered relatively high, administrators will likely use several business models to increase performance of relevant business areas. In this study, out of three constructs, PBC showed the largest unstandardized total effects (i.e. importance) (0.467), while other two constructs were low levels of importance (0.210, 0.104 respectively). Given the performance values, AT placed (90.639) in the first rank, followed by PBC (76.915) and SN (74.147). The results indicate that even though PBC seems to be the most important predictor of TWOMI, AT needs to be the highest priority from service providers. Figure 2 shows importance-performance map by three constructs.

Figure 2: IPMA Results
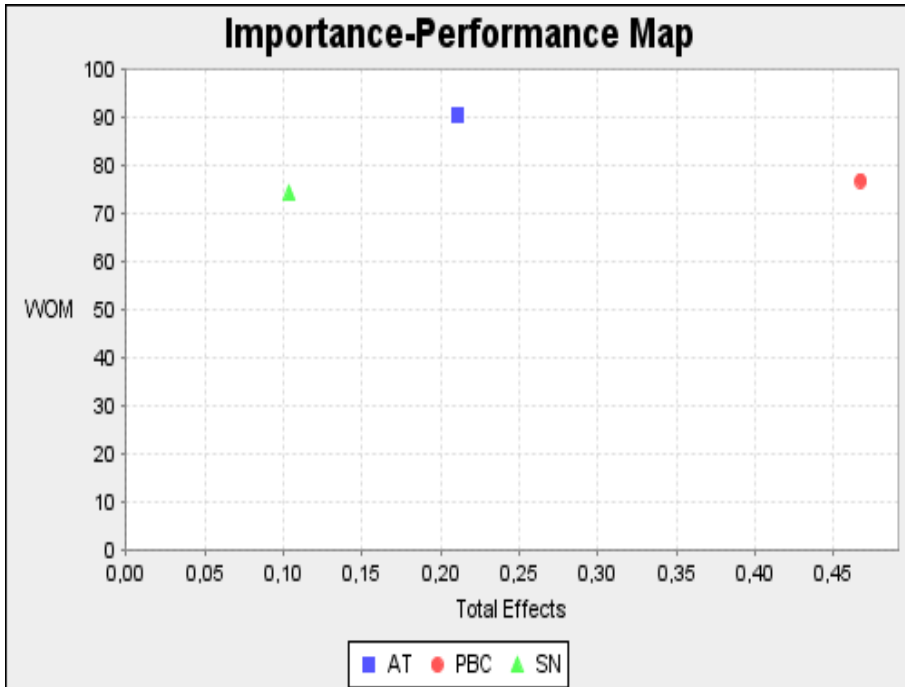
Note: AT: Attitude, PBC: Perceived behavioral control, SN: Subjective norm, WOM: Word-of-mouth.

5. Discussion and Implications

There exists research using TPB to explain eWOM intention (Gruen et al., 2006; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Soliman, 2019), however it seems still unclear how mountaineers behave in the context of TWOMI in tourism research. Although this research focuses solely on mountaineers, it can be argued that the results can provide insight into the literature by considering TWOM as endogenous construct in the context of TPB. The results show that AT and PBC have positive effect on mountaineers' TWOMI, thereby H_1 and H_2 are supported. But SN is not effective on TWOMI, thereby H_3 is rejected. The results seem to be consistent with previous research (Chau & Hu, 2001; Lewis, Agarwal & Sambamurthy, 2003).

It can be argued that such unique characteristics of mountaineering among the reasons why SN could not impact on TWOMI. First, mountaineering is a long-term adventure predicated on physical activity, adrenaline, challenge, and voluntary risk-taking (Smith, 1998; Beedie & Hudson, 2003). Mountaineers thus take measures to minimize the risk or negative outcomes (Brymer, 2010). It may be therefore, participants did not pay attention enough to the TWOM due to their normative beliefs. Second, mountaineering is also generally perceived as risky activity, therefore, requires intensive training (Koç, 2018). It is important to get support from experts and trainers in this process. Third, given the skills; hard tasks/skills (e.g., walking on hard grounds, practicing first aid, using of rope and knots) and relatively easy/soft skills (e.g., time management, communication, empathy) are of both crucial in mountaineering (Shooter, Sibthorp & Paisley, 2009; UIAA, 2015; Leister, 2019). As such, it is hard to say for everyone to participate in mountaineering activities, and thus, it appears difficult for a mountaineer, who has reached a certain competence, to advise others with peace of mind.

From a theoretical perspective, the current study suggests that there needs to seek a relationship between TPB and eWOM to make a comparison with the results of this research. It would be worthwhile to examine this gap, taking into account several differences, such as the real-time, positive impact on reliability, and slow-spreading between TWOMI and eWOM (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). In a recent study of Lai (2020) testing the TPB model on switching intention to travel agencies, WOM and Word of Web's effect as a variable explaining SN is determined. Another study reveals that traditional WOM is more influential than eWOM when an individual is in an attempt to organize his/her travel program (Méndez,

Francisco, Muñoz-Leiva & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015). More importantly, the issue of information/content source reliability in online WOM platforms needs be examined closer to how SN impacts traditional WOM.

From a practical point of view, the results show that few participants take mountaineering training. The participants consider themselves gaining experience over time. Also, very few of the participants directly benefit from travel agencies. Therefore, travel agencies should focus on this niche market by keeping in touch with mountaineering C/A since mountaineers have a high commitment to such organizations. Mountaineering is a sport that requires special attention in terms of equipment and time, and thus it may be possible to increase the effect of PBC on the TWOMI through developing specific products by the travel agencies for the mountaineers (Kaplan & Ardahan, 2013). Besides, although PBC is found to be the most important predictor of TWOMI, the travel agencies should also consider mountaineers' attitudes. It can be argued that this subsequently may have more impact on positive TWOM.

6. Conclusions

This research reveals that PBC and AT are likely to predict TWOMI in the context of TPB. It appears clear that mountaineers cannot resist significant others' pressures in the context of SN if travel agencies and mountaineering NGOs do not concentrate on climbers. So, given the fact that the evolving mountaineering market in Turkey, it would be advisable for travel agencies to take more initiatives to develop this market. Mountaineering also involves various grading scales – e.g. Yosemite Decimal System (The American Scale), indicating the route's degree of difficulty (Mandelli & Angriman, 2019). Providing the necessary conditions for a mountaineer is of critical importance and therefore it is not logical directing or recommending someone who does not have such resources and abilities. Resources, skills, and perceived difficulty within the scope of PBC refer to psychological variables that have an important and central role in such risky activities. Further, a vast majority of the participants in this research carry out their mountaineering activities within the framework of organizations such as C/A. Therefore, such NGOs are of importance for the development of mountaineering and for inexperienced individuals to get experienced. Accordingly, the development of business models for different mountaineering experiences (e.g. virtual reality, simulations, augmented reality, thematic parks) can create more positive AT, SN and PBC toward positive WOM. Furthermore, providing training and workshops by expert climbers,

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particularly for inexperienced individuals interested in mountaineering, may encourage them to mountaineer and create more positive WOM intentions.

As with any research, the current study has some limitations. The first is that the sample could not be selected using the probabilistic sampling methods. This is because, as mentioned earlier, it could not be possible to use sufficient, reliable and up-to-date database related to special interest travelers in general and mountaineers. Although support was received from mountaineering clubs and one of the research authors was received from mountaineering clubs and one of the research authors attempted to collect data by partaking in some of the mountaineering organizations, attention should be paid to generalizing the results. Second, only the TWOMI was attempted to be predicted using the TPB constructs. Although the intention is seen as strong predictor in terms of its actual behavior, the results should still be considered cautiously. Therefore, undertaking mixed research method designs to reveal the actual behavior of mountaineers would likely yield more valid outcomes. Third, the proposed model is limited to measuring the relationship of AT, SN, PBC with TWOMI, and thus can be regarded as a fairly plain model. Therefore, it could be attempted to predict WOM by adding various latent variables, constructs – e.g., risk perception, desired level of adrenalin, cultural differences - into the model. The researchers should therefore check those latent variables in the model's developing process whether those fit together.

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