



2023, 12 (3), 1829-1854 | Research Article

## The Effect of Death Anxiety on Hedonistic and Utilitarian Consumer Behaviours During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Sema MERCANOĞLU ERİN<sup>1</sup> Hande AYHAN GÖKCEK<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

The aim of the research is to determine how the death anxiety felt by individuals during the Covid-19 process affects hedonic consumption and utilitarian consumption.. The original aspect of this research is that it covers the period of the Covid-19 epidemic processively and includes psychology, socioalology, religion and marketing of sciences. Death anxiety, which has been widely reported to have an effect on consumer behavior in the literature, has generally been interpreted later or examined retrospectively in disaster studies. This research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic process. Although there are many studies in the literature affecting utilitarian and hedonic consumption, it is thought that its contribution to the literature is to focus on the effect of death anxiety.

E-survey with Google forms was used as the research method. Three different measurement tools were used for the data, namely "Hedonistic Consumption Scale", "Utilitarian Consumption Scale", and "Death Anxiety Scale" with demographic variables. In the research, an electronic questionnaire was applied to 403 people in the 18-64 age group residing in Istanbul using the "Snowball Sampling Method" and the data obtained were analyzed and interpreted with licensed SPSS 24 and AMOS 27 statistical programs. According to the results of the structural equation modeling used in the research, the 1st dimension of death anxiety affects (Uncertainty of Death) the 5 dimensions of hedonic consumption( hedonic effect, hedonic adaptation, passiveness, impulsive tendency and the reflection of identity) negatively, and the 2nd dimension affects(Thinking of and Witnessing Death) the 5 dimensions of hedonic consumption (hedonic effect, hedonic adaptation, passiveness, impulsive tendency and the reflection of identity) in a positive way. On the other hand, while the 1st dimension of death anxiety (Uncertainty of Death) is ineffective in 2 dimensions of utilitarian consumption (goal orientation and control orientation), the 2nd dimension (Thinking of and Witnessing Death) negatively affects 2 dimensions of utilitarian consumption (goal orientation and control orientation).

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Consumer Behavior, Marketing, Death Anxiety, Hedonic Consumption, Utilitarian Consumption, Structural Equation Modelling.

Mercanoğlu Erin, S. & Ayhan Gökcek, H. (2023). The Effect of Death Anxiety on Hedonistic and Utilitarian Consumer Behaviours During the Covid-19 Pandemic . Journal of the Human and Social Science Researches , 12 (3) , 1829-1854 . <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1238650>

Date of Submission	18.01.2023
Date of Acceptance	22.08.2023
Date of Publication	30.09.2023
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2023, 12 (3), 1829-1854 | Araştırma Makalesi

## Covid-19 Pandemi Sürecinde Ölüm Kaygısının Hedonik ve Faydacı Tüketici Davranışlarına Etkisi

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### Öz

Araştırmanın amacı, bireylerin Covid-19 sürecinde hissettiği ölüm kaygısının hedonik tüketim ve faydacı tüketimi nasıl etkilediğini tespit etmektir. Bu araştırmanın özgün yanı, süreçsel olarak Covid-19 salgın dönemini kapsamı ve psikoloji, sosyoloji, din ve pazarlama bilimlerini içermesidir. Literatürde tüketici davranışları üzerinde etkisi olduğu çokça raporlanmış olan ölüm kaygısı, afet çalışmalarında genellikle sonradan yorumlanmış veya geriye dönük bütünü incelemiştir. Bu araştırma ise Covid-19 pandemi süreci devam ederken yapılmıştır. Literatürde faydacı ve hedonik tüketimi etkileyen birçok araştırma olmasına rağmen, literatüre katkısının ölüm kaygısının etkisine odaklanması olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Araştırma yöntemi olarak google forms ile e-anket kullanılmıştır. Veriler için, demografik değişkenler ile "Hedonistik Tüketim Ölçeği", "Faydacı Tüketim Ölçeği", ve "Ölüm Kaygısı Ölçeği" olmak üzere üç ayrı ölçme aracı kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada İstanbul'da ikamet eden 18-64 yaş grubunda 403 kişiye "Kartopu Örneklem Yöntemi" ile ulaşılarak elektronik anket uygulanmış ve elde edilen veriler lisanslı olan SPSS 24 ve AMOS 27 istatistik programları ile analiz edilerek yorumlanmıştır. Araştırmada kullanılan yapısal eşitlik modellemesi sonuçlarına göre, Ölüm kaygısının 1. Boyutu (ölüm belirsizliği), hedonik tüketimin 5 Boyutunu (Hedonik Etki, Hedonik Adaptasyon, Edilgenlik Durumu, Dürtüsel Eğilim, Kimlik Yansıtma) da negatif yönde anlamlı olarak, 2. Boyutu (ölümü düşünme ve tanıklık) ise hedonik tüketimin 5 boyutunu (Hedonik Etki, Hedonik Adaptasyon, Edilgenlik Durumu, Dürtüsel Eğilim, Kimlik Yansıtma) pozitif yönde anlamlı olarak etkilemektedir. Buna karşılık, ölüm kaygısının 1.boyutu (ölüm belirsizliği) faydacı tüketimin 2 boyutunda (hedef odaklılık, kontrol odaklılık) etkisizken, 2. Boyut (ölümü düşünme ve tanıklık) faydacı tüketimin 2 boyutunu (hedef odaklılık, kontrol odaklılık) da negatif anlamlı etkilemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Covid-19, Tüketici Davranışları, Pazarlama, Ölüm Kaygısı, Hedonik Tüketim, Faydacı Tüketim, Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi.

Mercanoğlu Erin, S. & Ayhan Gökcek, H. (2023). Covid-19 Pandemi Sürecinde Ölüm Kaygısının Hedonik ve Faydacı Tüketici Davranışlarına Etkisi . *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12 (3) , 1829-1854 .  
<https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1238650>

Geliş Tarihi	18.01.2023
Kabul Tarihi	22.08.2023
Yayın Tarihi	30.09.2023
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## Introduction

Ever since the first Covid-19 case, the changes it may bring to the healthcare field and to consumer behaviors have been a topic of interest. Covid-19 or the novel coronavirus first emerged in the Wuhan province of China in December 2019 and has since affected the whole world. It was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020, by the World Health Organization. According to the report of WHO dated May 23, 2020, the pandemic has spread to 212 countries and over 5 million people killing more than 333 thousand (WHO, 2020). While in Turkey, the first case of Covid-19 emerged on March 10, 2020 and has since caused significant change in not only the field of healthcare but in every aspect of life(Yıldırım,2021) Throughout this pandemic people were encouraged to abide by the social distancing rules and stay at home. After the emergence of the first case in Turkey 31, cities declared curfews. Even though all of these central measures were aimed at decreasing the risk of infection to the minimum, it triggered death anxiety because of the increasing number of deaths.

Having been studied multiple times in the literature because of its effect on consumer behavior, death anxiety was usually analyzed in a post-disaster context. However, the data collected on the change in consumer behavior only through questionnaires also need scientific proof (Turhan,2021)

This is where the current study becomes important. Within this context, this study will try to answer the following questions to determine the effect of death anxiety on hedonic and utilitarian consumer behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic:

- 1- How does death anxiety affect hedonic consumer behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic?
- 2- How does death anxiety affect utilitarian consumer behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic?

The original aspect of this research ; it was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic process. Although there are many studies in the literature that affect utilitarian and hedonic consumption, it is thought that focusing on the effect of death anxiety contributes to the literature.

In the second part of the study, a literature review consisting of death anxiety, hedonic consumption and utilitarian consumption was made. In Chapter 3, research method and analysis are given. In the last section, there are conclusions, discussions and recommendations.

## 1.Literature Review

### 1.1. Death Anxiety

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, all our daily routines have been affected one by one while the ways that the pandemic spreads and prevention methods are circulating through social media and cleaning and consumption habits are changing (Müller-Perez,2023) While individually trying to keep up with the changes, the main emotion that lies beneath our behaviors is fear. Fear is the emotional and spiritual reaction of a person against an abstract or concrete threatening or dangerous situation, event, phenomenon, object or person that one sees, feels, thinks or perceives (Köknel, 1998, p.16).

During this period the only way to get information is digital screens. What affects people the most is the daily number of deaths caused by the pandemic. So much so that the number of daily deaths in a country has started to be interpreted as the symbol of the success of a country's healthcare system. Quarantines away from one's loved ones, not being able to arrange proper funerals, the images of people in hospital corridors, deaths caused by the lack of equipment and the number of deaths exceeding thousands have not only keeps making people face with the reality of death but also causes fear. Death is defined differently in different disciplines. Its definition in the field of healthcare is "the irreversible cessation of all functions of the circulatory and respiratory processes or the brain" ( Sakıb et al,2023, Dönmez, 2012, p.5).

The uncertainty of the situation, the number of unvaccinated people, the emergence of new variants day by day and the lack of treatment post-diagnosis are turning the fear of death into anxiety. Anxiety is an emotional condition whose source is unclear, that has no connection to reality, is about the future and is impossible to understand or explain. In addition to physiological and physical symptoms, anxiety also has emotional and cognitive symptoms (Köknel, 1998, p.16). According to Abdel-Khalek (2005), death anxiety is the conceptualization of the anxiety caused by the awareness that everyone will die one day.

The way someone understands death individually also determines one's level of anxiety. The more a person perceives a threatening situation as frightening, out of control and insurmountable, the more anxious they become. According to Yalom (2008), everyone understands death anxiety in their own way. The emotional, cognitive and motivational components of death anxiety are different in each individual, and this situation customizes people's responses to anxiety.

When a person tries to understand and adapt to the anxiety that s/he is feeling in the face of a threatening situation, s/he tries to take the anxiety under control through different defense mechanisms. Fear works like an alarm system in our body, warning us to act in dangerous situations and thereby protecting us. The function of this system is quite simple. When we become aware of a dangerous situation, we quickly and automatically move into a tense and alert state. If the distress caused by death does not make someone feel paralyzed then that means the defense mechanisms are activated on their own (Hökeleli, 1991).

When it comes to explaining how death anxiety affects our behaviors, the theory that has been researched the most is the Terror Management Theory (TMT). According to this theory, the idea of being mortal causes horror and anxiety in individuals, and in the face of the necessity of coping with this horror and anxiety, individuals cling to their cultural worldviews and produce a type of defense mechanism. This fear and horror of death that every person will experience pushes people to do something to protect themselves from death-related anxiety (Greenberg et al., 1986; Pyszczynski et al., 2004). According to this theory, an individual copes with the fear of death at two levels, on a conscious level and unconscious level (Greenberg et al., 1994). An individual who is using conscious defense mechanisms (denial, suppression, reaction etc.) also uses remote unconscious mechanisms. These are the cultural worldview and symbolic efforts to gain self-esteem by living in accordance with the values of views (Greenberg et al., 2000).

Cultural worldview is shaped by the society and includes symbolic realities and beliefs.

These are used to suppress the fear caused by the idea of death. Self-esteem, on the other hand, is the self-reflection of living in accordance with the standards specified by the cultural worldview (Pyszcaynski et al., 2004). According to the terror management theory, individuals first believe in the correctness of their own cultural worldview and then builds their self-esteem by trying to conform to its standards (Harmon-Jones et al., 1997). Individuals adopt the values of their own culture thinking that the world is a good, fair and meaningful place. They determine their lifestyle based on these values and take their place as a valuable individual who respects the rules of the world where they live. The more one adapts to the values accepted and desired in a society, the less one would experience death anxiety.(Erciş et al.,2016)

The studies on consumer behavior have shown that external situations that have the potential to threaten one's security simultaneously trigger compensatory processes and behaviors. Any fearful event can activate coping behaviors, and researchers have found that shopping behavior is one of the protective measures against the anxiety that accompanies fear (Arndt et al. 2004; Maheswaran and Agrawal, 2004). While fear may cause a negative perception of the convenience of shopping, the management of fear can unreasonably motivate shopping behaviors. In social psychology, it has often been pointed out that attitudes are not always consistent with behaviors (Kraus, 1995), which is why even though consumers with fear experience the urges to fix their emotional states at the same time.

The Death Anxiety Scale (DAS) used in this study was made by Sarıkaya (2013) and includes 20 items. It has three following dimensions: uncertainty of death, thinking of and witnessing death and suffering (Karahan et al., 2020).

#### *Uncertainty of Death (1. Dimension)*

What scares people the most is how one could die rather than the death itself. As humans are the only living things that know and realize that death is inevitable, the anxiety may become constant.

#### *Thinking of and Witnessing Death (2. dimension)*

Uncertainty, sudden changes in the emotional states of people that takes place during outbreaks or natural disasters and witnessing death make people think more about death and feel more anxious.

#### *Suffering (3. dimension)*

Being affected by uncertainty, outbreaks and natural disasters, thinking about suffering physically or psychologically affect the level of death anxiety.

### **1.2. Hedonic Consumption**

As retailers and service providers work with multiple shareholders, they do not have previously laid-out plans for natural disasters, outbreaks or similar unpredictable situations (Vencatesh et.al. 2015). For this reason, it is particularly important for the literature and the real sector to know how consumers will react to these unusual situations.

Studies have shown that the most common psychological reaction in an uncertain. The psychological state of fear is defined by a low sense of control and high levels of

uncertainty. Fear is a strong emotion that affects perception, thinking and behavior (Izard, 1991). It is a high probability that people who fear experience anxiety and behave in a way to lower the sense of threat (Insko et al. 1990).

Hedonic shopping is mostly associated with entertainment or enjoyment; however, it is also known to be a coping mechanism against stress (Atalay and Meloy, 2011; Tauber, 1972). The choices a person has while shopping is known to be helpful in decreasing one's troubles and creating a sense of control over their environment again (Rick, Pereira and Burson, 2014). Under the influence of a highly negative emotion such as fear, there can be a "common motivational shift" towards mood improvement through shopping, whether with utilitarian or hedonic intentions.

The purchasing decision-making process of a consumer is complex and structured and there are a lot of contributing external (culture, race, marketing activities) and internal factors (experience, motivation, personality) (Šramová and Pavelka, 2017).

Purchasing a product in today's world is not only about meeting needs and the decisions to meet one's needs may not always be rational (Armagan, I.Ulku;2023) The traditional ways of shopping are replaced by an experience based on enjoyment, entertainment and satisfaction (Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994).

Being based on enjoyment and entertainment, hedonic consumption is defined as a behavior including emotional stimuli based on fantasy (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982). Hedonic consumers are more interested in what a product represents rather than its benefits (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). This term was first studied in the late 1970s. Hedonic consumption is more than just having a product. Hedonic consumption embodies reality because it depends on the imagination. Since instant satisfaction is more dominant than delayed satisfaction in hedonic consumption, hedonic factors directly affect consumption processes (Odabaşı, 2013, p. 115-117).

Song and Qu (2017) found that both utilitarian and hedonic dimensions are associated with customer satisfaction and behavioral outcomes.

Hedonic services especially satisfy the enjoyment, excitement and entertainment needs of customers. As hedonic services are more inclined to reflect emotional needs ( Jang and Namkung, 2009) the role of positive emotions is extremely important.

### **1.2.1. Factors of Hedonic Consumption**

Contrary to the belief that consumers shop to purchase products and services, they actually purchase material or non-material benefits. While some consumers achieve their plans when they make their purchases, some aim to feel joy through entertainment and excitement.

Utilitarian values based on cognitive processes, critical thinking on emotions and entertainment and hedonistic values significantly affect the purchasing process (Babin et al.,1994)

The factors put forth within the study are hedonic effect, hedonic adaptation, passiveness, impulsive tendency and the reflection of identity.

### **Hedonic Effect Dimension (1. dimension)**

The positive emotional outcome of shopping is defined as the hedonic effect. From an

emotional point of view, the hedonic effect, which increases as a result of motivation and daydreaming, is more common in consumers who act with their emotions. The excitement felt for spontaneous, unplanned and sudden purchases is the most distinct feature of the hedonic effect.

### **The Hedonic Adaptation Dimension (2. dimension)**

Adaptation implies familiarity with a constantly recurring situation. People believe that with each end, there is bigger happiness to achieve and therefore they keep chasing this happiness. This shows that the hedonic effect and the effect of the reactions that people give to good or bad situations decreases in time. In terms of consumption, it is the decrease in the emotional reactions caused by owning and using a product. It is the decrease and adaptation of the hedonic reactions over time with repeated consumption of products and services or it is the adaptation and decrease of emotions towards a one-time stimulant like purchasing a luxury product.

### **The Passiveness Dimension (3. dimension)**

Passiveness is the state that is driven by external influencers. It represents how hedonic consumers are affected by promotional activities more.

### **The Impulsive Tendency Dimension (4. dimension)**

Impulsive Tendency: The impulse of individuals to purchase something is defined as shopping behavior that happens spontaneously, without thinking, suddenly and rapidly.

### **The Reflection of Identity Dimension (5. size)**

Reflection of Identity: The reflection of the sense of self onto conscious or unconscious consumption habits (Coşkun and Marangoz, 2019, p.523).

## **1.3. Utilitarian Consumption**

While hedonic values focus on entertainment, visuals, experimental and pleasure-related issues, utilitarian values focus on the ability of goods and services to meet one's needs and their practical, functional and instrumental benefits (Chitturi et al., 2008). Hedonic values make use of sensations derived from goods or services, while utilitarian values reflect their functions (Voss et al., 2003). Utilitarian goods and services are bought and consumed for their functional values; however, the primary goal of the consumer is fulfilling their basic needs, specific tasks or functional purposes (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000).

Individuals do not show completely hedonic or completely utilitarian behaviors while consuming. Many studies in the literature support the coexistence of hedonic and utilitarian values (Dhar, Wertenbroch, 2000, p.60; Sarıtaş, 2018, p.38-40). In utilitarian consumption, the functionality of a product is handled independently from rational emotions. While goods like food and clothes are within utilitarian consumption, ones like designer clothes, luxury cars or diamond jewelry are within hedonic consumption. Consumer motivation is the determining factor in differentiating between hedonic and utilitarian consumption (Liu et al, 2020 ; Khan, Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2004).

On the other hand, some argue that hedonic and utilitarian consumption are opposite things. In utilitarian consumption, shopping is an activity that fulfills responsibilities in

one way or another. It focuses on meeting needs with the most suitable product (Hopkins and Davashish, 1999, p. 280).

An online shopping environment has lots of advantages in terms of utilitarian consumption. The first and foremost of these advantages is the convenience of shopping. Through online shopping, utilitarian consumers have the opportunity to shop 7/24 without even moving (Chang and Samuel, 2006, p. 71). As consumers do not need to go anywhere for shopping, they save time on going out and traveling (Jensen, 2012, p. 59).

Online shopping focuses on the excitement of shopping and has a variety of promotional activities (Altulkari and Kesari, 2017, p. 24) such as periodic sales, paid or free shipping, shopping festivals (Black Friday or activities for special occasions), the convenience of being able to follow the release of new products or current sales easily (Arnold and Reynold, 2003).

The studies in the literature conceptualized the hedonic and utilitarian dimension of consumption. Babin et al. (1994) argue that the utilitarian dimension of consumption includes pragmatism, economic value and convenience while the hedonic dimension includes entertainment, good experiences, excitement or pleasure. Voss et al. (2003) state that hedonic consumption stems from the emotional side of consumption while utilitarian consumption is about the functions of the products and focuses on the functionality of goods and services (Jiang and Wang, 2006).

Utilitarian goods and services are mainly functional or instrumental (Batra and Ahtola, 1991). Especially services that are called short-term services with low emotional quality (Foxall, 1990).

The factors put forth within the study are goal orientation and control orientation.

**Goal Orientation:** Utilitarian goods and services are goods that are purchased and consumed for their functional value; and in turn, the most important consumption goal of consumers is to fulfill basic needs, specific tasks or functional purpose goals based on rational cognition (Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2000). Utilitarian services are mainly functional and instrumental in nature.

**Control Orientation:**

Utilitarian consumption is expected to be a more conscious and controlled process compared to hedonic consumption. Utilitarian consumption is thought to be as rational as how hedonic consumption is emotional. Thus, people who have hedonic shopping tendencies and the ones with utilitarian shopping tendencies are different in terms of the meaning they place on consumption. People who have more utilitarian tendencies are more prone to postpone enjoyment and better at managing or controlling their budget (Coşkun and Marangoz, 2019, p.524)

#### **1.4. Relationship Between Death Anxiety And Hedonic & Utility Consumption**

Research shows that death anxiety can affect consumer behavior. It can give these examples: Solomon et al. (2009) found that death anxiety leads people to be more cautious and conservative in their brand choices. Mandel et al. (2011) found that reminders of death lead people to spend more. However, death anxiety can sometimes negatively affect consumer behavior as well. For example, death anxiety may lead to a



tendency to avoid consumption rather than an increased desire to consume. Pyszczynski et al. (2006) found that death anxiety can distract people from consumption and lead them to focus more on intangible values. This can happen at a time when consumers are trying to find meaning in their lives and seek deeper meanings.

**Death Anxiety and Hedonic Consumption:** Hedonic consumption refers to pleasure and pleasure-oriented spending. Studies show that hedonic consumption may increase in relation to death anxiety. People with high death awareness may be more interested in products and experiences for instant pleasure, entertainment, and emotional satisfaction. This type of consumption is thought to contribute to alleviating death-related anxieties or seeking meaning (Mandel and Heine, 1999, p:527-533).

**Death Uncertainty and Hedonic Consumption:** Death uncertainty refers to the uncertainty and anxiety of individuals about death. Studies show that the uncertainty of death can increase hedonic consumption. Individuals experiencing death uncertainty may turn to more hedonic consumption patterns with the desire to enjoy pleasant experiences. This type of consumption can help reduce the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty that death brings (Routledge et al., 2004, p. 541-560)

**Death Thought and Hedonic Consumption:** Death thought may be a factor that can affect hedonic consumption. Research shows that with increased awareness of death, people tend to gravitate towards pleasurable experiences. The thought of death may cause people to develop an awareness of the shortness of life and thus give more importance to meaningful and enjoyable experiences (Arndt & Goldenberg, 2004, p.133-142).

**Witnessing Death and Hedonic Consumption:** Experiences of witnessing death can be associated with hedonic consumption. Research shows that people tend to gravitate towards pleasurable and pleasurable experiences following death-related experiences. For example, individuals who have had a near-death experience may appreciate their surviving moments more and therefore focus more on enjoyable activities (Hekkert, P., & van den Hoven, E., 2003, p. 489-506)

**Death Anxiety and Utilitarian Consumption:** Utilitarian consumption refers to spending that meets needs and provides practical benefits. Studies show that utilitarian consumption may also be affected in relation to death anxiety. People with high death awareness may focus more on basic needs and practical solutions, such as safety, health, or longevity. This type of consumption may reflect the need to avoid death-related risks and strengthen the sense of control (Ruvio & Gurău, 2016, p. 3044-3053)

**Death Uncertainty and Utilitarian Consumption:** Death uncertainty can be among the factors affecting utilitarian consumption. Utilitarian consumption refers to consumption patterns based on practical and functional needs. Research shows that individuals experiencing death uncertainty seek security and control. For this reason, it is thought that as death uncertainty increases, individuals may tend to tend towards utilitarian consumption patterns. Preferring practical products can make individuals feel more secure (Burke et al., 2010, p. 155-195)

**Death Thought and Utilitarian Consumption:** Death thought may be a factor that can affect utilitarian consumption. Studies show that with increased awareness of death, people may seek security, control and functionality, and therefore they may turn more towards utilitarian forms of consumption. The thought of death may cause individuals

to develop an awareness of the shortness of life and therefore to emphasize practical and functional needs (Van Tilburg & Igou, 2011, p. 956-969).

Witnessing Death and Utilitarian Consumption: Experiences of witnessing death can be associated with utilitarian consumption. Research shows that individuals who have a near-death experience may be more likely to turn to practical and functional consumption patterns. For example, these experiences may push individuals to seek security and control, thus causing them to be more interested in utilitarian products and services (Routledge et al., 2012, p.452-460).

## 2.Methodology

This section includes information about the data collection method, scales, research model and hypotheses, frequency analysis, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, reliability analysis and structural equation modeling and path analysis. Analyses were made using SPSS 24 and AMOS 27.

### 2.1. Data Collection Method

The population of the study consists of people who shop online and live in İstanbul. The questionnaires were made online using google drive. Out of non-probability sampling methods, snowball sampling was used. The study used 3 scales in addition to 7 demographic questions and 1 question about online shopping frequency. These scales are:

*Death Anxiety Scale:* It consists of three sub-factors: “uncertainty of death”, “thinking and witnessing death” and “suffering”. The whole scale consists of 20 questions. The Cronbach alpha coefficient and the reliability of the scale were found to be .95 and .82 respectively (Sarıkaya Y, Baloglu M. 2016). The death anxiety scale was grouped into 2 dimensions in this research’s exploratory factor analysis.

*Hedonic and Utilitarian Consumption Behaviors Scale:* The scale has a five-factor structure for hedonic consumption behavior: Hedonic Effect, Hedonic Adaptation, Impulsive Tendency, Passiveness and the Reflection of Identity. Utilitarian consumption has two factors which are goal orientation and control orientation. The whole scale consists of 42 questions (Coşkun T. and Marangoz M., 2019)

### 2.2. Preliminary Testing and Results

In order to test the comprehensibility of the expressions, a preliminary questionnaire was first conducted with 30 participants. A preliminary evaluation was made by performing reliability analysis and factor analysis on the results obtained from 30 people. The reliability of the scales was checked first. Cronbach’s Alpha model was used in the reliability analysis of the scales. The results of the analysis are as follows:

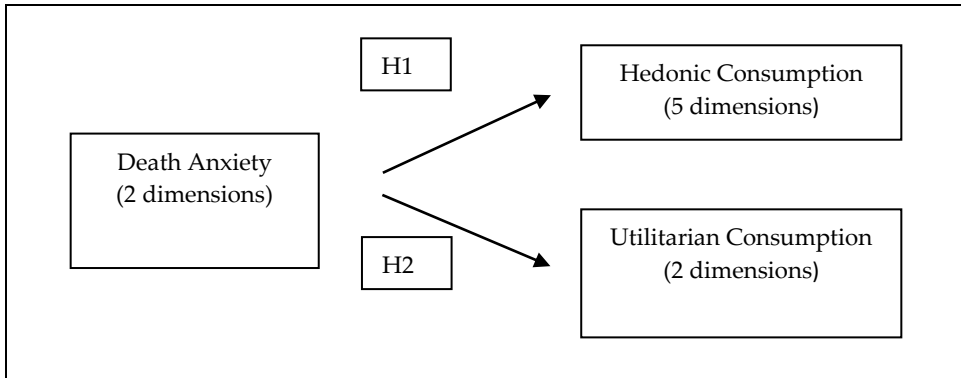
Hedonic Consumption Scale Alpha Coefficient = **0.928 (32 questions)**

Utilitarian Consumption Scale Alpha Coefficient = **0.777 (10 questions)**

Death Anxiety Scale Alpha Coefficient= **0.962 (20 questions)**

The Cronbach’s alpha values of all the scales are above 0.70 indicating that the research is reliable.

### 2.3. Research Model and Hypotheses



**Figure 1.** The Research Model

The research hypotheses:

H1: The effect of death anxiety on hedonic consumption behavior during COVID-19 is statistically significant.

H2: The effect of death anxiety on utilitarian consumption behavior during COVID-19 is statistically significant.

### 2.4 Frequency Analysis

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the study. The 60.3% (243) of the participants are women while 39.7% (160) are men. The number of married and single participants is 197 and 193 respectively. With 33.5% (135), most of the participants are aged between 35-44. 65% (262) of the participants have bachelor's degrees which constitutes the biggest group in terms of education. Finally, in terms of income, people with an income of 2300 and less constitute the biggest percentage with 28.5% (115).

**Table 1.** Frequency Analysis for Demographic Variables

	Categories	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Woman	243	60.3
	Man	160	39.7
Marital Status	Married	197	48.9
	Single	193	47.9
	Other	13	3.2
Age	aged 18-24	108	26.8
	aged 25-34	84	20.8
	aged 35-44	135	33.5
	aged 45-54	63	15.6
	aged 55-64	13	3.2
Education Level	Primary Education	8	2
	High school	46	11.4
	Bachelor's Degree	262	65
	Graduate (Master's Degree & PhD)	87	21.6

Income Level	2300 TL and below	115	28.5
	between 2301-3500 TL	49	12.2
	between 3501-5000 TL	82	20.3
	between 5001-6500 TL	75	18.6
	between 6501-7500 TL	26	6.5
	7501 TL and above	56	13.9
Total		403	100

## 2.5. Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analyses and Reliability Analysis Results

Table 2 presents the KMO values, Bartlett test significance values, total variance explained values and Cronbach's Alpha reliability values obtained as a result of examining the suitability of the variables for Exploratory Factor Analysis.

For the exploratory factor analysis results, the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett sphericity test were determined first as they are the prerequisites of this analysis. The values of the scales are as follows; death anxiety scale (KMO= ,938; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square = 1840,679; df=28 ; Sig=0,00), hedonic consumption scale (KMO= ,926; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square =7338,551; df=496; Sig=0,00), utilitarian consumption scale (KMO=,871 ; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square =1694,669; df=45; Sig=0,00). KMO values of all variables were above 0.50 and the p significance values of the Bartlett sphericity tests were significant for each variable which revealed that it was appropriate to perform factor analysis for these variables.

The exploratory factor analysis results show that death anxiety has 2 dimensions, hedonic consumption has 5 dimensions, and utilitarian consumption has 2. The factor loadings of the 18th and 20th questions of the death anxiety scale were found to be 0.35 and 0.42, respectively, and only these 2 questions were excluded from the analysis. Total variance explained values were 71.183% for death anxiety scale, 59.147% for hedonic consumption scale and 58.077% for utilitarian consumption scale. Additionally, the results of the reliability analysis performed after the factor analysis show that the Cronbach's Alpha values of all variables were higher than 0.70.

**Table 2.** Cronbach's Alpha Values and KFA results of the variables

	KMO	Bartlett's test sig	Total Variance Explained	Cronbach's Alpha
Death Anxiety Scale	0.938	0.000	71.183	0.968
Hedonic Consumption Behavior Scale	0.926	0.000	59.147	0.942
Utilitarian Consumption Behavior Scale	0.871	0.000	58.077	0.787

The factor loading distributions of the death anxiety variable are shown in Table 3, of the hedonic consumption variable in Table 4, and of the utilitarian consumption variable in

Table 5.

	Component	
	1	2
da6	,811	
da7	,810	
da2	,785	
da1	,765	
da11	,756	
da9	,715	
da10	,698	
da5	,675	
da15	,670	
da3	,665	
da17	,637	
da14		,849
da13		,833
da19		,782
da16		,781
da12		,733
da8		,687
da4		,685

**Table 3.** Factor Loadings Distribution of the Death Anxiety Scale

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
hed11	,784				
hed13	,750				
hed14	,716				
hed12	,692				
hed9	,602				
hed18	,572				
hed17	,551				
hed19	,548				

hed15	,544			
hed20	,472			
hed10	,456			
hed16	,448			
hed4		,829		
hed6		,786		
hed7		,767		
hed2		,707		
hed3		,686		
hed1		,644		
hed5		,587		
hed23			,686	
hed25			,684	
hed22			,680	
hed24			,672	
hed21			,670	
hed26			,669	
hed8			,461	
hed31				,731
hed29				,685
hed32				,477
hed28				,810
hed27				,801
hed30				,472

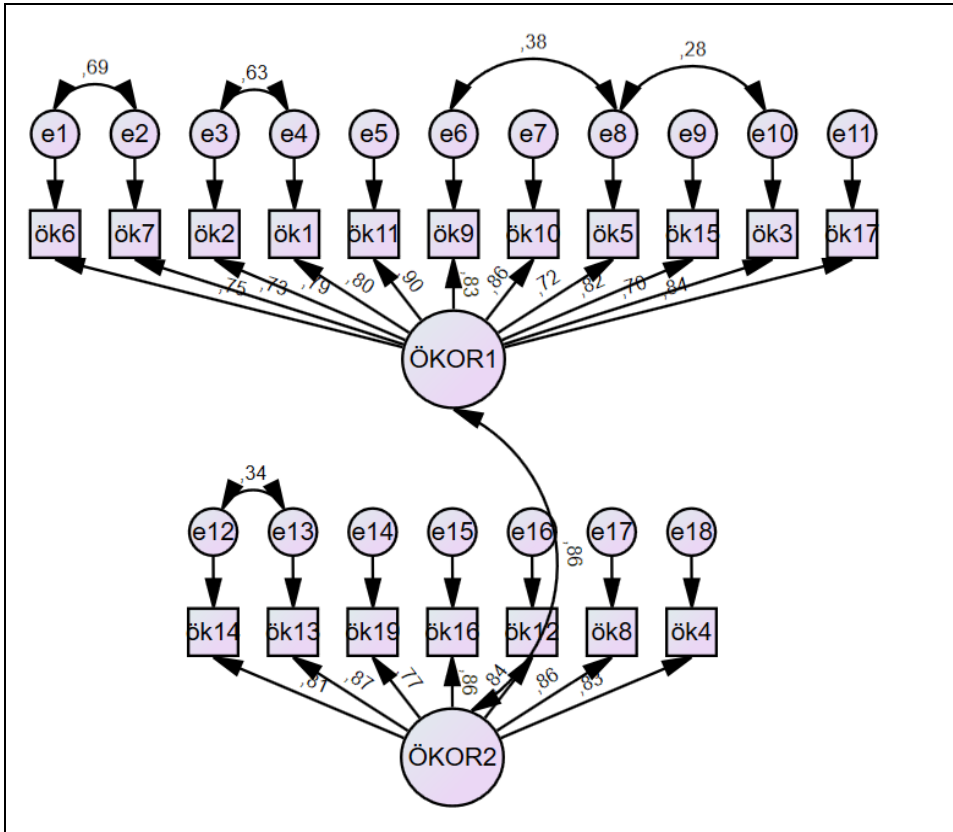
**Table 4.** Factor Loadings Distribution of the Hedonic Consumption Scale

	Component	
	1	2
uti3	,778	
uti8	,709	
uti4	,703	
uti5	,639	
uti2	,631	
uti1	,548	
uti7		,813

uti9		,763
uti6		,702
uti10		,553

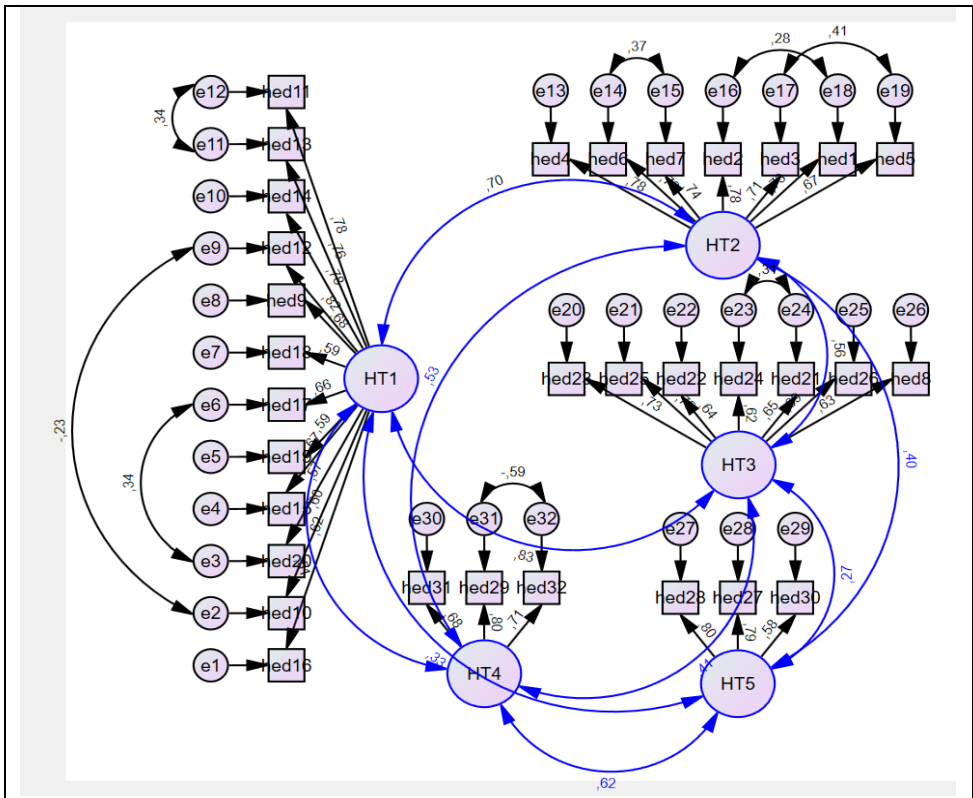
**Table 5.** Factor Loadings Distribution of the Utilitarian Consumption Scale

AMOS27 was used for Confirmatory Factor Analysis. Figure 2 shows the program image of the confirmatory factor analysis of the death anxiety variable. The goodness of fit values are CMIN= 693,701, df=129, CMIN/df= 5,378, GFI=0,838, RMSEA= 0,104 and NFI = 0,907.



**Figure 2.** AMOS Model for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Death Anxiety Variable

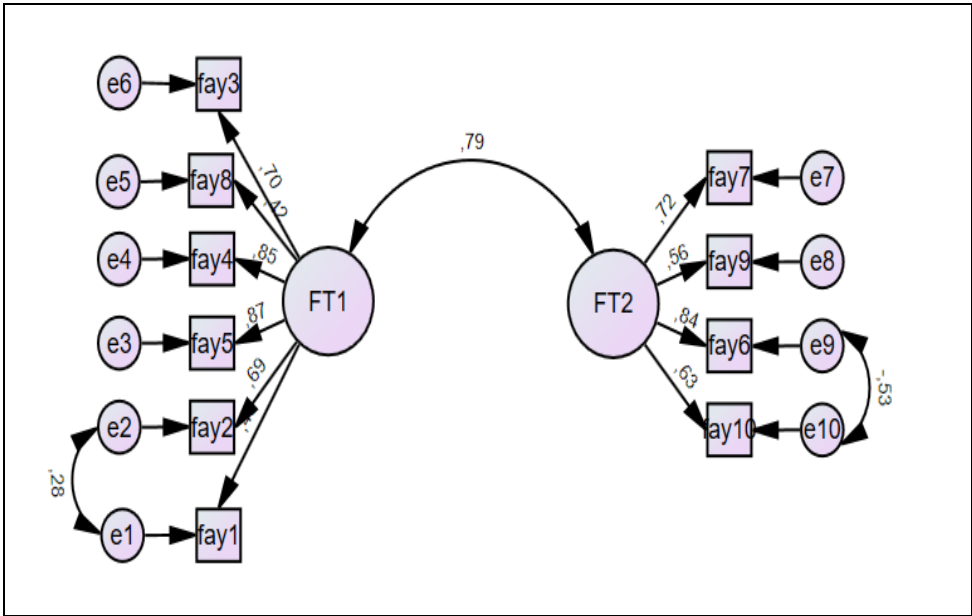
Figure 3 shows the program image of the confirmatory factor analysis of the hedonic consumption variable. The goodness of fit values are CMIN= 1289,51, df=446, CMIN/df= 2,89, GFI=0,839, RMSEA= 0,069 and NFI = 0,827.



**Figure 3.** AMOS Model for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Hedonic Consumption Variable

Figure 4 shows the program image of the confirmatory factor analysis of the utilitarian consumption variable. The goodness of fit values were found to be CMIN= 103.302, df=32, CMIN/df= 3.228, GFI=0.952, RMSEA= 0.074 and NFI = 0.940.



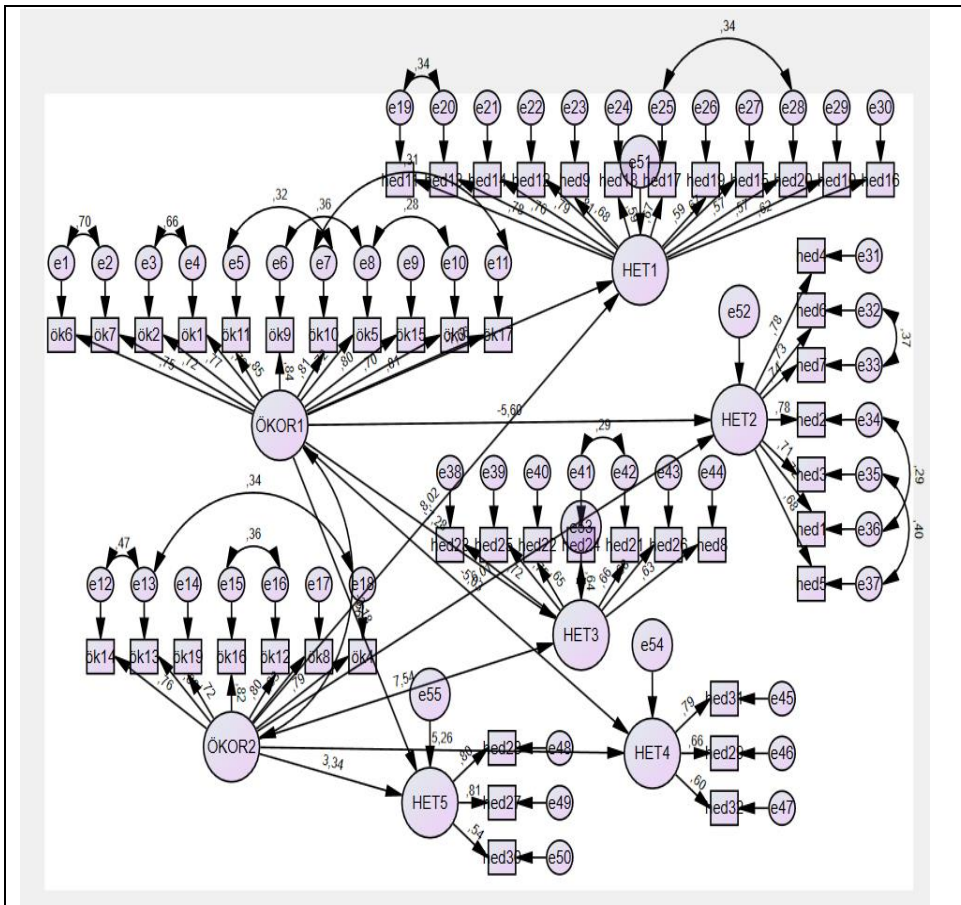


**Figure 4.** AMOS Model for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Utilitarian Consumption Variable

## 2.6. Structural Equation Modeling and Path Analysis

The first step was to measure the effect of the 2 dimensions of the death anxiety scale on the 5 dimensions of hedonic consumption behavior. Afterwards, the effect of death anxiety on 2-dimensional utilitarian consumption behavior was analyzed. The AMOS 27 statistical program was used for the analyses.

The goodness of fit values of the first structural equation modeling were found to be CMIN= 3456,504,  $df=1149$  CMIN/ $df= 3,008$ , GFI=0,750, CFI= 0,846, RMSEA= 0,071 and NFI = 0,787.



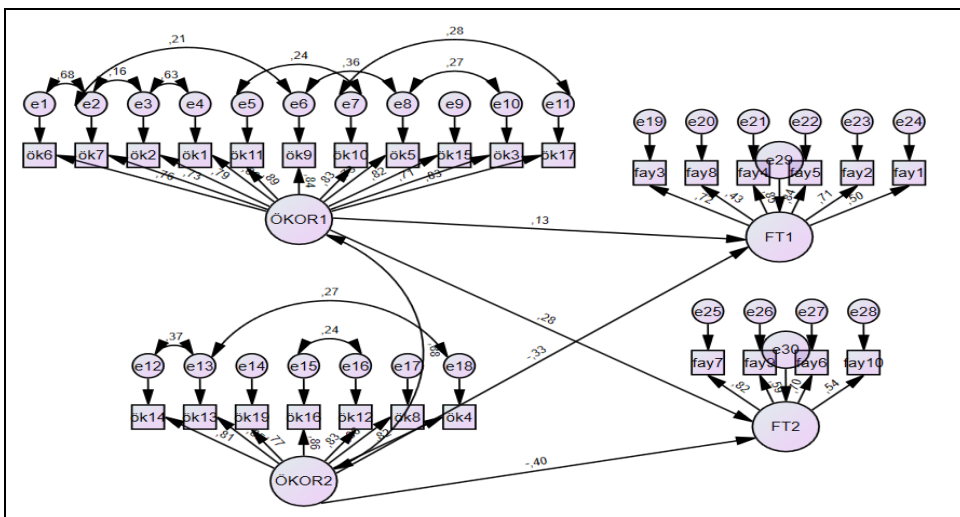
**Figure 5.** Standard Regression Coefficients – Structural Equation Modeling - AMOS Model of the effect of 2 dimensions of Death Anxiety on 5 dimensions of Hedonic Consumption Behavior

The results of the analysis show that all the standard regression coefficients of the 1st model were found to be significant. Another important result is that ÖKOR1, the 1st dimension of the death anxiety scale, has a negative significant effect on all 5 dimensions of hedonic consumption behavior, while ÖKOR2, the 2nd dimension of death anxiety, has a positive and significant effect on all 5 dimensions of hedonic consumption behavior. Table 6 shows all the standard regression coefficients and their significance for modeling.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P Significance
HET1	<---	ÖKOR1	-7.663	1.241	-4.400	***
HET2	<---	ÖKOR1	-5.595	1.248	-4.231	***
HET3	<---	ÖKOR1	-7.281	1.048	-4.376	***
HET4	<---	ÖKOR1	-5.026	1.170	-4.116	***
HET5	<---	ÖKOR1	-3.177	,680	-3.611	***
HET1	<---	ÖKOR2	8.025	1.280	4.610	***
HET2	<---	ÖKOR2	6.007	1.289	4.538	***
HET3	<---	ÖKOR2	7.536	1.081	4.533	***
HET4	<---	ÖKOR2	5.255	1.207	4.307	***
HET5	<---	ÖKOR2	3.339	,701	3.797	***

**Table 6.** The Effect of Death Anxiety Dimensions on Hedonic Consumption Behavior Dimensions – Standard Estimate Values and Their Significance

Secondly, the effect of the 2 dimensions of the death anxiety scale on the 2 dimensions of utilitarian consumption behavior was measured. After the analysis, the goodness of fit values of the second structural equation modeling were found as CMIN= 1288,148, df=334 CMIN/df= 3.857, GFI=0.826, CFI= 0.896, RMSEA=0.084 and NFI = 0.865.



**Figure 6.** Standard Regression Coefficients – Structural Equation Modeling - AMOS

## Model of the effect of 2 dimensions of Death Anxiety on 2 dimensions of Utilitarian Consumption Behavior

The results of the analysis show that two of the four coefficients of the 2. model were significant and two were insignificant. While the effect of ÖKOR1, the 1st dimension of the death anxiety scale, on both dimensions of utilitarian consumption behavior is insignificant, the 2nd dimension of death anxiety, ÖKOR2, has a negative significant effect on both dimensions of utilitarian consumption behavior. Table 7 shows all the standard regression coefficients and their significance for modeling.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
FT1	<---	ÖKOR1	,126	,091	,926	,354
FT2	<---	ÖKOR1	,278	,083	1.912	,056
FT1	<---	ÖKOR2	<b>-.333</b>	,090	-2.416	<b>,016</b>
FT2	<---	ÖKOR2	<b>-.403</b>	,082	-2.750	<b>,006</b>

**Table 7.** The Effect of Death Anxiety Dimensions on Utilitarian Consumption Behavior Dimensions – Standard Estimate Values and Their Significance

### 3. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The phenomenon of death affects life in many different ways. The anxiety that is experienced by people who turn to consumption to prove their existence in the face of death is reflected on their different attitudes as well. In order to understand the effects of death and contribute to the literature, this concept should be studied within the limits of measurability.

This study aims to find out how Covid-19 related death anxiety on an individual and a social level affects the utilitarian and hedonic consumption behaviors of people whose shopping habits mostly shifted to online shopping. Although there are many studies in the literature on the effects utilitarian and hedonic consumption, analyzing the effect of the fear of death variable provides new findings for the literature.

People who are experiencing high levels of fear can be more susceptible to hedonic shopping even when they use utilitarian shopping as a coping mechanism. While more instrumental behaviors aimed directly at addressing or mitigating a problem are more overt responses to threatening conditions, shopping for diversion occurs particularly in response to an emotionally stressful event. Under the influence of highly negative emotions such as fear, there can be a "common motivational shift" towards restoring one's mood through shopping whether with utilitarian or hedonic intentions. Considering that shopping is used as a means of coping with fear, Larson and Shin (2018) found that those who experience higher levels of fear about natural disasters are more likely to engage in both utilitarian and hedonic shopping behavior during those times.

Odabaşı (2017) concluded that utilitarian consumption-oriented individuals generally prefer to postpone the pleasure they will get from shopping to another moment that they think will be more happy or benefit more. However, in the research conducted, the fear of death gives meaningless results in the dimensions of utilitarian consumption.

The result of the study that the first dimension of death anxiety has a negative significant effect on all dimensions of hedonistic consumption is similar to the study of Özdemir and Yaman (2007). For individuals who are afraid of death, their time is limited, so they do not prefer utilitarian consumption and show more hedonic behaviors. Arnold and Reynolds (2003) reached the same results as the research and explained that getting away from negativities is "shopping for relaxation".

Emiroğlu and Aktaç (2023) study, research result; It is parallel to the conclusion that the fear of death positively affects hedonic and utilitarian consumption. Impulsivity , especially in fear and anxiety situations ; Uncontrolled and excessive behaviors reveal themselves more and contribute to the development and continuation of consumption addiction . Increased impulsivity is predicted to increase the power of environmental influencers, making it harder to resist. Evidence for the role of different components of impulsivity , such as dietary habits, has increased in recent years.

Baumann (2013); The consumer can do everything in moments of fear and stress. Believing that he deserves it , he believes that he can be happy only by consuming it, and it is in line with the research and supports it. However, this situation disrupts the psychology of the individual and as consumption takes place, the desire to consume more instead of happiness develops.

In conclusion, having examined the effects of death anxiety on hedonic and utilitarian consumption behaviors, this study found that death anxiety had a significant effect on hedonic and utilitarian consumption behaviors. The first dimension of death anxiety (Uncertainty of Death ) was found to have a negative significant effect on all dimensions of hedonic consumption, while the 2n dimension of death anxiety (Thinking of and Witnessing Death) had a positive significant effect on them. In the 2nd model of the study from the perspective of utilitarian consumption, the effect of the 1st dimension of death anxiety on all dimensions of utilitarian consumption was insignificant, while the effect of the 2nd dimension of death anxiety (Thinking of and Witnessing Death) was negative. Two hypotheses of the research have been accepted.

Uncertainty, danger, epidemics and natural disasters cannot be completely controlled. However, product and service providers and retailers must prepare their strategies in advance. Because after such challenging times, it is extremely important to be sensitive in marketing strategies. While it some customers will shop hedonically to relieve stress or after a difficult time, this does not mean that product and service providers should target stressed people or present shopping as a coping mechanism. The steps taken without considering the emotional state of consumers not only deem the emotional experiences of the victims unimportant but may also lead customers to perceive these companies as exploitative. For this reason, instead of focusing on sales, companies can consider these moments as times to build trust with customers with anxiety, as gaining the trust of the consumer can be much more valuable in the long run. In line with these inferences, uncertainties and the marketing campaigns consumers respond more to in tough times are among the important issues that can be investigated in future research. In addition, the research focuses on the behavior of the consumer with the mood before shopping. However, in future studies, consumer satisfaction and next purchase behavior can be examined after shopping for fear of death, and predictions can be made for companies that offer products and services.

Peer-Review	Double anonymized - Two External
Ethical Statement	* It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.  *(IGU, Istanbul Gelisim University, Ethics Committee Chairman was taken with the decision dated 17.07.2020, numbered 2020/19 of the Presidency of the Publication Ethics Committee.)
Plagiarism Checks	Yes - Ithenticate
Conflicts of Interest	The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare.
Complaints	<a href="mailto:itobiad@itobiad.com">itobiad@itobiad.com</a>
Grant Support	The author(s) acknowledge that they received no external funding in support of this research.
Author Contributions	Design of Study: 1. Author (%30), 2. Author (%70) Data Acquisition: 1. Author (%50), 2. Author (%50) Data Analysis: 1. Author (%50), 2. Author (%50) Writing up: 1. Author (%70), 2. Author (%30) Submission and Revision: 1. Author (%70), 2. Author (%30)

Değerlendirme	İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Köreme
Etik Beyan	*Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.  * (İstanbul Gelişim Üniversitesi, Etik Kurulu Başkanlığının 17.07.2020 tarih ve 2020/19 sayılı kararı ile Etik Kurul KARarı Alınmıştır.)
Benzerlik Taraması	Yapıldı – Ithenticate
Etik Bildirim	<a href="mailto:itobiad@itobiad.com">itobiad@itobiad.com</a>
Çıkar Çatışması	Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Finansman	Bu araştırmayı desteklemek için dış fon kullanılmamıştır.
Yazar Katkıları	Çalışmanın Tasarlanması: 1. Yazar (%30), 2. Yazar (%70) Veri Toplanması: 1. Yazar (%50), 2. Yazar (%50) Veri Analizi: 1. Yazar (%50), 2. Yazar (%50) Makalenin Yazımı: 1. Yazar (%70), 2. Yazar (%30) Makale Gönderimi ve Revizyonu: 1. Yazar (%70), 2. Yazar (%30)

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