

Chapter 10

A Qualitative Study on Determination of Consumer Behavior in the Axis of Civil Aviation Enterprises During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

As a result of impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the whole world, it has also affected civil aviation enterprises. In this regard, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been many situations such as stopping the flights, reducing the passenger capacity, and taking the necessary hygiene measures. In this study, it is aimed to determine the issues faced by the individuals who have to travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, with the determination of individuals' preference or non-preference towards airlines during the pandemic period, it will be determined how and in what way consumer behaviors are during the pandemic period. Hence, it is aimed to provide a perspective on what measures should be taken in terms of gaining target audiences, along with maintaining crisis management and recognizing the consumer behaviors in aviation enterprises.

INTRODUCTION

With the spread of globalization and the development of technology, air transport has grown rapidly and played an important role in both passenger and cargo transportation, both nationally and internationally. However, with the negative developments in the world, significant shocks have occurred in air transportation. For example, negative situations such as global economic crises, wars, oil crises and epidemics have also affected airline transportation. The Covid 19 pandemic, which started to be seen in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and affected almost the whole world over time, is one of the

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most important problems that reduce the passenger carrying capacity in airline transportation. For that reason, as a result of people being in close contact with each other, the virus that is transmitted to others increases the risk of infecting others in airports and airplanes where hundreds of people have to be together. As it is known, on March 11, 2020, Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Travel restrictions were imposed to prevent the spread of the disease, and both domestic and international flights were stopped or restrictions were imposed. With the epidemic under control, travel restrictions were relaxed and domestic and international flights were allowed again. Although the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic has been brought under control, the spread of the disease continues. This can cause a healthy passenger to catch the disease or even die (Uzun, 2020, p. 1692). Therefore, various practices, including state sanctions, required airline companies to follow various policies during the Covid 19 pandemic. These policies have been taken to prevent the spread of the virus with policies such as hepa filters, cleaning, online check-in operations, postponing tickets to a later date, implementation of curfews, hygiene, mask and distance practices.

In general terms, as the pandemic increased its impact in the world and started to spread from one country to another, the first of the measures taken by the countries was to ban travel by plane. Restrictions were imposed not only on international flights, but also on domestic flights. This situation has caused a crisis and stagnation that may not have been experienced before in the history of civil aviation (Duran & Acar, 2020, p. 59) since, despite all attempts, the virus spread rapidly to different countries and affected many people. The transcontinental expansion of air transport, the consequent travel restrictions and the decline in consumer demand has also led to a dramatic and unprecedented decline in passenger flights across Europe (Budd, Ison & Adrienne, 2020). This situation was not only limited to Europe and showed similarity in various countries of the world. Also, in Turkey, during the period of Covid 19, the number of passengers in air transport, both in domestic and international travel, experienced the greatest decrease between 2011-2020. (<https://www.dhmi.gov.tr>). In this respect, it can be stated that the feelings, thoughts and expectations of the passengers are quite remarkable if they do not prefer the airline companies.

The aim of this study is to determine the problems experienced by individuals who had to make transportation during the Covid 19 pandemic. For this purpose, the case study model, one of the qualitative research designs, was used and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants who had to travel to a different region or country during the Covid 19 pandemic in Turkey, with the criterion sampling method among the purposeful samples. The interviews were held between 23.07.2021 and 23.08.2021 and the data were presented with descriptive analysis. With this study, it has been revealed what kind of expectations the passengers have when they prefer air transportation, together with the Covid 19 pandemic, and important information has been obtained in order to meet the expectations of the target audience. Therefore, this study plays an important role in terms of revealing the wishes and expectations of the target audience in air transportation during the global crisis or pandemics.

BACKGROUND

In the study of Taşdemir and Aydın (2020), deep crises in the aviation sector such as the OPEC oil embargo, September 11 events, SARS, MERS, Bird flu epidemics were mentioned, and in response to these, the exit strategies of the airlines from the crisis were examined. In the study, the losses of the aviation industry due to the Covid-19 pandemic were examined and the size of the crisis was presented

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