



## Food Tourists' Intentions Within The TPB Framework (M00, M31)

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### Abstract

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), attitudes toward behaviour (AtB), subjective norms (SN) and perceived behavioural control (PBC) affect intentions (BI). The purpose of this paper is to examine food tourists' intentions using TPB. A convenience sampling survey method was used to collect data. A social networking group of gourmets in Turkey were selected for the sampling frame and 137 usable surveys were obtained. A hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the model. The results showed that food tourists' intentions can be predicted simply through AtB and SN (adjusted  $R^2=0.29$ ). PBC did not reveal any effect on intentions. Behavioural and normative beliefs were also significant. Research model was converted to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Food tourism describes the travels of tourists to experience certain foods and drinks, to enjoy special or simply savory meals, and to participate in the production processes and festivals pertaining to these foods and drinks. The fact that tourists, who naturally have to eat during their travels, actively seek tastes that are more exquisite and authentic, even making their plans in pursuit of such these tastes and activities, is an important consideration for all destinations, regardless of whether they are directly involved in food tourism or not. In this context, determining the profile and behavioural patterns of food tourists will serve to increase the effectiveness of the marketing activities of touristic destinations.

Among the theories that attempt to describe human behaviour, those that are most frequently utilised by researchers are TRA, proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975, and TPB, developed by Ajzen in 1985. The starting point for both theories is the assumption that human behaviour can be predicted from individual intentions. In order to determine BI of individuals, it is important to first identify AtB, as well as SN, deemed to be important by these individuals. If individuals believe that they do not have full control over their own behaviours (due to considerations relating to money, time, talent, resources, etc.), the addition of PBC to this model results in the TPB.

The aim of this study was to determine the extent to which individuals' AtB, SN and PBC affected their intention to engage in food-related travel (FRT), and also to identify the beliefs underlying these factors. Food tourism has started to become more important around the world, especially in recent years, and this is the first study to consider food tourism within the context of TPB. In previous studies, Sparks (2007) investigated the intention to engage in wine tourism with the modified TPB, while Ryu and Jang (2006) and Ryu and Han (2010) investigated the intention to experience local cuisine while traveling by using the TRA. However, no previous studies have been conducted within the context of the TPB regarding the intention to engage in food tourism (or to engage in FRT). By demonstrating the factors that shape and determine travelers' intention to participate in food tourism, this study aims to serve as a guide for businesses and destinations that wish to specialise in food tourism.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES**

According to Ajzen (1991), there are three different determinants of BI: (1) *AtB*, which represents the sum of the assessments in favor of or against the behaviour in question; (2) *SN*, which is known as the social pressure that affect whether a behaviour can be carried out or not; and (3) *PBC*, which represents whether a behaviour is perceived as easy or difficult to perform.

*AtB* can be described as an individual's favorable and unfavorable assessments towards the behaviour in question (Fishbein, 2001). Ajzen (1991) described that, despite the lack of a consensus regarding the definition of attitude, there is a general agreement that attitude constitutes a summarised personal assessment, such as considering something as good – bad, beneficial – harmful, pleasant – unpleasant.

*SN* describes the social feedback perceived by an individual regarding the behaviour in question. When people who are respected by the individual expect him to behave in a certain way, or when they demonstrate this particular behaviour, *SN* will exert a (social) pressure for the actualisation of that behaviour.

*PBC* indicates whether a behaviour is part of an individual's own volition. *PBC* describes the presence or absence of resources and opportunities considered necessary for the realisation of a certain behaviour. However, the most important point regarding *PBC* is that the ease and difficulties perceived by the individual regarding a certain behaviour may be different than reality.

*TPB* is applied for tourist behaviour last two decades. Very limited studies modified TRA to tourism field, most studies used *TPB*. In the literature, very few studies used *TPB* or TRA to explain behaviour. Mostly, the aim of studies was to understand intention, especially visit/revisit intention. Only two studies researched the intentions to experience local cuisine via TRA (Ryu & Jang, 2006; Ryu & Han, 2010).

Most of the studies were Far East origin. Authors researched intentions to visit a specific destination (Lam & Hsu, 2004, 2006; Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010; Sparks & Pan, 2009; Hsu & Huang, 2012; Han, Lee, & Lee, 2011).

Lam and Hsu (2004, 2006) researched Chinese / Taiwanese visitors' intention to visit Hong Kong, and in their first study *SN* didn't affect intentions, while *SN* was the most important variable in the last one. The authors explained this situation might be because of sampling or going abroad was very new for Chinese people.

Hsu and Huang (2012) also researched Chinese people's visiting intention to Hong Kong and they revealed that *TPB* explained the intention ( $R^2=0,37$ ); but their modified model explained it better ( $R^2=0,42$ ).

Han et al. (2011) compared TRA, *TPB* and modified *TPB* on Chinese tourists' intention to visit Korea and found that these models explained BI ( $R^2=0,28$ ,  $R^2=0,30$  and  $R^2=0,45$  respectively).

Sparks and Pan (2009)'s and Quintal et al. (2010)'s studies were similar. In both studies, it was found that *SN* was the most important variable on Chinese / Chinese, S. Korean and Japan tourists' BI for visiting Australia.

Visiting a wine destination, world cultural heritage sites, state parks, theme parks and green hotel were also studied within the scope of visiting a destination (Brown, 1999; Sparks, 2007; Shrestha & Burns, 2009; Han, Hsu, & Sheu, 2010; Han & Kim, 2010; Lai, Yu, & Kuo, 2010). Sparks (2007) determined that *PBC* was the best predictor for understanding American tourists' intentions. Lai et al. (2010) researched the visitors' revisit intentions at theme parks after service recovery, and found that only *AtB* and *SN* had significant effects on BI, accordingly *TPB* was converted to the TRA.

In another study, Han et al. (2010) examined customers' intentions of staying at green hotels with both TRA and *TPB*. *TPB* explained BI better ( $R^2=0,56$ ). Han and Kim (2010) also examined customers' intentions of revisiting green hotels

with TRA, TPB and modified TPB. TRA and TPB were successful ( $R^2=0,51$ ,  $R^2=0,55$ ), but the modified TPB was the best model to explain BI ( $R^2=0,72$ ).

Ryu and Jang (2006) and Ryu and Han (2010), who utilised TRA to understand tourists' intentions to experience local cuisine, achieved similar results. In both studies, AtB had significant effects, while SN had no effects on BI.

When we look at the limited tourism studies on TPB, it is obvious that TPB (and also TRA), as a well explaining theory for both behaviours and intentions, has widely accepted by academicians.

As summarised above, in TPB, AtB, SN, and PBC determine the behaviours by shaping BI. As such, the hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

H1: AtB has a significant effect on BI to participate in food tourism.

H2: SN has a significant effect on BI to participate in food tourism.

H3: PBC has a significant effect on BI to participate in food tourism.

Just as behavioural intentions can be estimated by means of AtB, SN, and PBC within the scope of the TPB, behavioural intentions can be also estimated from beliefs, which can be defined as the antecedents of these factors. In this case, it is possible to evaluate *AtB* according to the individuals' behavioural beliefs (BB) and the evaluation of these beliefs (E); *SN*, according to the normative beliefs that reflect the judgment of persons with influence in the individuals' environment (NB), and their motivation to comply to these beliefs (MtC); and *PBC*, according to control beliefs (CB) that facilitate/complicate the behaviour, as well as the power of these beliefs (P). The other hypotheses of this study can be listed as follows:

H4a: BB has a significant effect on AtB.

H4b: E has a significant effect on AtB.

H5a: NB has a significant effect on SN.

H5b: MtC has a significant effect on SN.

H6a: CB has a significant effect on PBC.

H6b: P has a significant effect on PBC.

## METHOD

### Data Collection

The study was conducted on a social networking group (Facebook group) named the "*Nouveau Gourmets*". A total of 1575 members of this group were considered as the sampling frame of the study. Data collection was performed between May 28 and August 22, 2012 by means of a questionnaire designed on the Internet. Following a comprehensive review of the literature, preliminary information regarding FRT behaviour was collected by using the deep interview method from 10 individuals who previously took part in FRT.

An item pool of 98 was formed based on the information obtained from the literature review and the interviews. The

item pool that was formed was decreased to 81 items by eliminating certain expressions. Feedback was then obtained from a total of six faculty members (four from the discipline of marketing and two from the discipline of economy and tourism), and once the necessary adjustments were performed, a questionnaire form was designed by decreasing the item pool to 52 items. Based on the pre-test of a group of 25 students, it was determined that there were no general problems regarding the questionnaire form.

The number of individuals who completed the questionnaire forms within a period of approximately three months was 140. As three of these forms were not included due to incomplete data, the analyses were performed based on 137 questionnaires. The rate of response for the questionnaires was 8%. This rate is generally reported to be between 7% and 44% for studies conducted through the Internet (Schonlau, Fricker, & Elliot, 2002).

### Reliability and Validity

The principal component analysis (PCA) was initially performed to assess the reliability of the scale. The reliability of the factors was then separately assessed with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. For a total of nine expressions within the scale developed in order to measure the main structure of the TPB, a sample of 137 individuals was available. Thus, there were 15 participants per item. This indicated a sufficient number of samples to perform a factor analysis. The KMO value, which indicates whether the sample is suitable for a factor analysis, was 0.695. This was above the lower limit of 0.60. Bartlett's test, which indicates whether there was sufficient relationship between the study variables to allow for a factor analysis, was also found to be significant ( $p<0.01$ ).

Based on the results of the PCA, three factors parallel with the theoretical framework were identified, and each variable was assigned to the relevant factor. These three factors with eigenvalues above one accounted for 68.67% of the total variance. The Cronbach's alpha values for the factors designated as AtB, SN, and PBC were determined to be 0.809, 0.825, and 0.489, respectively. A reliability analysis was separately performed regarding the belief aspect of the scale, and the Cronbach's alpha values were determined to vary between 0.640 and 0.88. With the exception of the PBC factor, it is possible to claim that the scale was generally reliable.

For studies on validity, Şencan (2005) described that the use of more than one method instead of a single method is more effective, and recommended measuring the validity of the scale with various methods until the researcher was convinced. As described above, the scale was prepared by utilising the relevant literature and the deep interview methodology, and designed according to the researchers' own judgment and the opinion of experts. Aspects of the scale that were difficult to comprehend were reviewed once, and the scale was finally administered to the selected sample group. Thus, the face and content validity of the study scale was ensured. In the ensuing stage, the researchers evaluated the construct validity of the scale.

The first method to be used for testing construct validity is the internal consistency analysis. The Cronbach's alpha

value, which indicates the reliability of the scale, is expressed as the validity coefficient of the conceptual field. For this reason, certain researchers consider the concepts for reliability and validity as one and the same. Except for the PBC, it was observed that the alpha coefficients for the AtB and SN were above 0.80. Thus, this reliability value, which can be considered as a fairly good value, is an important indication of validity.

To assess the construct validity, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results were also evaluated. Şencan (2005) described that the EFA or CFA can be utilised at this stage. In order to describe the construct validity of the factor analysis, it is necessary to obtain analysis results that are parallel to the factor structure, total explained variance, and eigenvalue. In addition, the factor loading between the same factor items must be above 0.40, while their cross loadings must be below 0.40.

During The CFA (maximum likelihood analysis) that was performed, the necessary procedures were carried out to obtain three factors. In accordance with the theoretical construct, these three factors obtained through factor analysis included the relevant variables. These three factors with eigenvalues above one accounted for 68.67% of the total variance. The TAV values in the literature varied between 50% and 75.8% , thus the TAV values in this study were similar to the results in the literature.

With the exception of the variable PBC03, the factor loadings expressing the correlation of all variables with the relevant factor were determined to be between 0.52-0.99. The factor loading of the PBC03 variable was below the recommended value of 0.40. In addition to this, Şencan (2005) described that in case the researcher suspects a relationship, the lower limit for the factor loadings can be decreased to as a low as 0.30. While the reliability of the PBC factor was low, it was considered suitable for continuing the analyses regarding its relationship with the theoretical construct. If a general assessment were to be made, it would be possible to state that the scale had construct validity.

**RESULTS**

**Individual Characteristics of the Participants**

The gender of the participants showed nearly equal distribution (48.8% were female, while 51.1% were male). The large majority of the participants were individuals between 20-40 years of age (82.7%) and university graduates (93.1%). More than half of the participants worked in the private sector (54.3%), with the majority (78.6%) earning between 1000 to 5000 TL per month. In order to evaluate traveling behaviour, the participants were asked to describe the socio-economic group they identified with, in addition to their level of income. As such, the majority of the participants identified themselves with the middle and upper-middle socio-economic group (80.9%). Of these participants, 90% worked between 4 to 12 hours a day.

**Regression Analysis for BI**

A multivariate hierarchical regression analysis was preferred for testing the study model. This analysis method was selected in order to identify the model that would best

explain the dependent variable. Prior to performing the regression analysis, it was necessary to first determine whether there was any multicollinearity between the variables. The method most commonly used for the identification of this problem, indicating whether there is any correlation between the independent variables, is performing an analysis the variance inflation factors (VIF) and the tolerance values (TOI) (Hair et al., 2006). As value for the VIF becomes smaller and the TOI becomes larger ( $VIF = 1 / TOI$ ), the probability of multicollinearity between the variables decreases. According to Hair et al. (2006), VIF values below ten and tolerance values above 0.10 indicate no correlation between the variables. In this study, no multicollinearity was identified between the variables (AtB, SN:  $VIF=0.999$ ,  $TOI=1.001$ ; PBC:  $VIF=1$ ,  $TOI=1$ ).

When the results of the regression analysis in Table 1 were considered, it was observed that model number 2 was the construct that provided the best explanation of BI. In this case, H1 and H2, which describe that AtB and SN towards participating in food tourism have significant effects on their intention to participate in food tourism, were accepted and considered as valid. H3 was rejected due to the lack of a significant relationship between PBC and BI ( $t=1.713$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). With the removal of PBC from the model, the study model was converted from TPB to TRA.

**Table 1. Results of the Regression Analysis for BI**

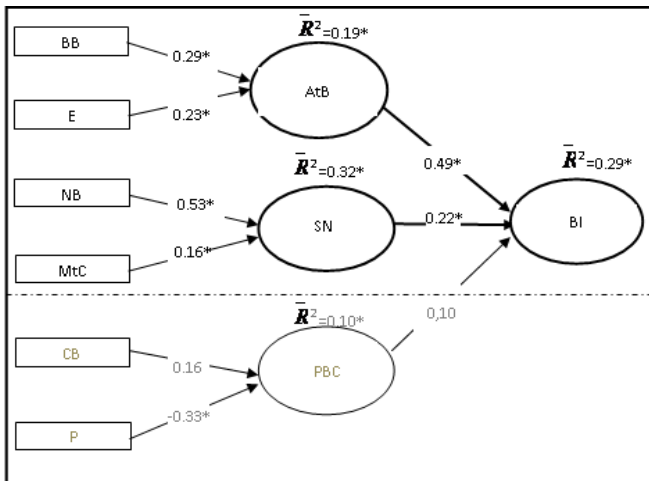
Model Dependent variable: BI	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Standard Error	F
1 (AtB)	0.253	0.248	0.719	45.482*
2 (AtB,SN)	0.305	0.294	0.697	29.134*
3 (AtB,SN,PBC)	0.320	0.304	0.692	20.683*

\* p<0.01

When Table 1 was considered, it was observed that AtB and SN accounted for 29.4% (adjusted R<sup>2</sup>= 0.294) of BI. Although this ratio appears to be low, according to Cohen (1988), 1% indicates a small effect, 9% a moderate effect, and 25% a large effect within the context of studies conducted in behavioural sciences. Even if an R<sup>2</sup> value of 25% does not indicate a large effect as described by Cohen (1988), it is still considered as a significant value in behavioural sciences. To the contrary, due to the possibility of high similarity between the variables, high R<sup>2</sup> rates of 80-90% are viewed with suspicion. Thus, although the scale needs to be further developed, the independent variables' explanation rate of dependent variables can be considered acceptable. When beta coefficients were reviewed, AtB (0.497) was more significant than SN (0.226) in describing BI.

According to the multivariate hierarchical regression analyses performed on the antecedents of TPB, it was determined that BB and E had significant effects on AtB (adjusted R<sup>2</sup>= 0.20), while NB and MtC had significant effects on SN (adjusted R<sup>2</sup>= 0.33). Only P was determined to have a significant effect on PBC (adjusted R<sup>2</sup>= 0.10). The results of the regression analyses are provided in the research model in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Final Study Model (TRA) (\*p<0.01)



DISCUSSION

Based on the multivariate hierarchical regression analyses, it was determined that AtB and SN had significant effects, whereas the PBC had no significant effect on BI. In the study model, BI to participate in FRT was considered within the context of TPB. In addition to having an effect on BI, PBC has an even more significant effect on behaviour. Moreover, if PBC were to actually become a real behavioural control, the behaviour of the individuals would be described more accurately. On the other hand, if individuals believe that they have complete control over their behaviours, then the theory would become TRA. The large majority of the participants (72%) expressed that the decision to participate in FRT depended entirely on themselves. This situation can be considered as the underlying cause of why PBC does not have any effect on BI. In addition to this, in the literature, PBC cannot always successfully explain BI.

For example, in Lai et al. (2010)'s study, evaluating the intention of Taiwanese tourists to revisit theme parks, it was determined that AtB and SN had effects on BI, while PBC had no effect. Lai et al. (2010) described that this observation stems from the fact that individuals do not consider resources such as time, money, and energy as significant during short vacations. In other words, individuals do not express any concern regarding the lack of such resources during travels of short duration.

Reddy et al. (2010) evaluated the intention of students to participate to medical tourism, and similarly determined that AtB and SN had significant effects on BI, while PBC had no significant effect whatsoever.

As emphasised by Lai et al. (2010), the underlying reason for no effect of PBC on BI may be associated with individuals' indifference towards the resources in question due to the short-term and sometimes spontaneous nature of food tourism (which is often effectuated as a one-day trip); or with the fact that they travel for purely hedonistic reasons, despite knowing the significance of the necessary resources. In both cases, the control of the behaviour rests on the individuals themselves. In addition to this, the fact that PBC scale was not deemed reliable may have also precluded this variable's effect on BI from being significant. In future

studies, it would be more appropriate to develop this scale and to retest this model.

As PBC was determined to be insignificant, TRA was used to describe the intention to participate in FRT that was considered within the context of TPB. Ryu and Jang (2006) and Ryu and Han (2010) have also evaluated tourists' intentions to experience local cuisine within the scope of the same theory. In this theory, it is known that only AtB and SN have an effect on BI. When the results summarised in Figure 1 are considered, AtB and SN account for 29% of the change in BI. While this ratio is not high, a review of the literature also reveals similar numbers. Within the scope of this study, 30 different studies evaluating tourism-related intentions (and behaviours) were considered within the context of TRA and TPB, and it was determined that the explanation ratio remained below 40% for one out of each three studies.

For example, in the studies of Lam and Hsu (2006) and Hsu and Huang (2012), the relevant study variables regarding the intentions of Taiwanese/Chinese visitors to travel to Hong Kong were described respectively as 35% and 37%. In the studies of Sparks and Pan (2009) and Quintal et al. (2010), tourists' intentions to visit Australia were respectively described as 26% and 21%-44%. In the study of Han et al. (2011), the intention of Chinese tourists to visit Korea was described as 28% by TRA variables, and as 30% by TPB variables.

Philips (2009, 2012) identified that the study variables within the context of TPB described the intention to gamble ratio of 37% among individuals aged 65 years or above. While the intention to visit state parks of US citizens was explained as 32% by PBC alone (Shrestha & Burns, 2009), tourists' intentions to visit theme parks in a study conducted in Taiwan was determined to have the same ratio with variables other than PBC (Lai et al., 2010).

In the studies of Lee et al. (2012), TPB variables were determined as 28% regarding Japanese tourists' intention to participate in health tourism, and as 31% regarding their intention to participate in beauty tourism. In studies evaluating the intention of local communities to support community-based tourism within the context of TRA, as well as the independent travel behaviour of Taiwanese citizens by means of TPB, the relevant explained rates were determined as being below 10% (Tsai, 2010; Chen & Raab, 2012).

As demonstrated by the findings in the literature, and especially by studies conducted in behavioural sciences, it is not possible to obtain high explanation rates in most cases within the context of intention due to the complex nature of consumer behaviours. In this study conducted on FRT, AtB and SN accounted for 29% of BI. Considering the other studies in the literature, this ratio can be accepted as satisfactory, since this study constitutes the first evaluation of TRA/TPB within the context of food tourism and possesses an exploratory nature.

Within the scope of the study, not only the effects of AtB, SN, and PBC on BI were investigated, but also the effects of beliefs, which are described as the antecedents of these variables, were assessed. Based on the multivariate hierarchical regression analyses that were performed, it was observed that BB and E were successful in describing AtB

(adjusted  $R^2=0.19$ ), while the NB and MtC were successful in describing SN (adjusted  $R^2=0.32$ ). Only P was determined to have any effect on PBC, which was negative.

In TPB, BI is described by means of three fundamental variables without using the belief aspect. In addition to this, the belief aspect is significant in terms of allowing the identification of factors underlying BI. Based on an analysis of the belief aspect, it was understood that BB and NB had significant effects on BI through AtB and SN. As such, the views that FRT is exciting, that it represents the opportunity to spend quality time and to discover new tastes, and that it provides a chance to learn about the local cultures had statistically significant effects on individuals' attitudes towards FRT. It was determined that the family and friends of the participants also had effects on their intention to engage in FRT.

Only P was determined to have a significant yet negative effect on PBC. To identify the underlying cause of this observation, the correlation between the variables was evaluated. The correlations of both CB and P with PBC and BI were generally negative and of a low value. The participants described that aspects such as money, time, and the fatigue associated with traveling affected their decisions; on the other hand, they also expressed that nothing could prevent them in their decisions to participate in such travels. Even if PBC was identified as having no significant effect on BI, the relationship between the two was positive. In other words, the participants expressed, on one hand, that their decision to travel rests entirely on them and that they have an intention to participate in FRT; while, on the other hand, they expressed that resources such as money and time are important, and that they also have effects on their decisions.

A similar situation was observed in Philips' (2009) study. In the study investigating the intention of individuals 65 years of age and older to gamble, it was identified that CB had an effect on PBC that was negative and statistically not significant. The author commented not on the negative effect, but on the observation that CB was not significant, describing that there might have been problems regarding the scale. The same situation is also valid for the intention to participate in FRT. As CB and P did not, as whole, have a significant effect on PBC, the negative relationship between the two cannot be sufficiently evaluated. Thus, it would be appropriate to repeat the analyses by further developing scales for both PBC and CB.

Within the context of the abovementioned results, it is possible to provide the following advices to businesses and destinations that are engaged in food tourism: (1) When determining a target market, they can utilise the demographic characteristics and traveling features described above. (2) They can perform promotional activities that specifically target the attitudes and behavioural beliefs of such individuals. For example, they can emphasise that "food tourism is the most savory means to experience a new culture and to discover new things." (3) Another important point regarding promotion is about the environment of the target market. The close family and friends of individuals interested in FRT are, unfortunately, not favorably disposed towards such journeys, and although these individuals might be reluctant to admit, this disposition may somewhat affect

their intention to travel. Thus, to foster a more favorable opinion among these individuals' close family and friends, the influence of the media can be used to encourage FRT.

In this study investigating the behaviour patterns of individuals who participate in FRT within the context of TPB, only AtB and SN of the individuals had any effect on their intention to participate in FRT. For this reason, an attempt was made to describe the observation with TRA. However, this study had limitations.

First, despite an attempt to include all members from a community of gourmets consisting of individuals who participate in FRT, response rate of only 8% was achieved during a period of three months. This low rate of participation renders it difficult to generalise the study results to the group members or individuals who participate in FRT. Further developing the scale regarding FRT; conducting face-to-face surveys not only with groups of gourmets, but also with individuals taking part in tourism-oriented travel; and performing random sampling and comparing the obtained results will ultimately contribute to food tourism literature, and also to destinations that plan to focus on food tourism.

Secondly, this study only considered Turkish citizens who engaged in FRT. However, food tourism is actually an international form of tourism. Conducting a similar study on tourists of different nationalities will not only provide the opportunity to perform a comparison of the results, but will also serve as a guide for touristic destinations by allowing a better understanding of the nature of FRT.

Another important point is regarding the research model. As it is known, it is the behaviour that is actually estimated by TRA/TPB model. Thus, it is necessary to analyze whether the intention to participate FRT becomes a behaviour. To achieve this, the behaviour aspect must also be investigated within the scope of FRT.

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