The Effect of Perceived Benefits of E-Commerce Platforms on Online Purchase Intentions in The Context of the Pandemic Covid-19

Begüm Şahin¹ and Murat Güler²

Abstract

E-commerce is an emerging market for every business and it has been started to discuss whether the new pandemic context changed the dynamics of this platform. The aim of this study is to investigate how pandemic anxiety has influenced the relationship between the perceptions of e-commerce platforms and purchase intentions. This study examines the moderation effect of pandemic anxiety on the relationship between the effectiveness and economic benefits of e-commerce platforms and online purchase intention. 513 individuals participated in the cross-sectional research survey in which, the perceived effectiveness of e-commerce platforms, economic benefits, pandemic anxiety, and online purchase intentions were measured. The quantitative analysis revealed that pandemic anxiety negatively moderates the relationship between the economic benefit and online purchase intention. Pandemic anxiety seems to alter the economically oriented customer choices and intentions. Our findings reveal that pandemic anxiety negatively moderates the economic benefits and purchase intentions relationship in e-commerce. Individuals in the face of the pandemic threat, seem to choose to invest their material resources to save biological entities and withdrawal from seeking cost reduction in e-commerce activities. We think that the priority of economic benefit in e-commerce changed to saving health due to the pandemic context.

Keywords: Effectiveness of e-commerce platforms; economic benefits; pandemic anxiety; online purchase intention; Covid-19

Jel Codes: M310, M190, L81

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has been influencing the conventional way of life on a global scale since its first occurrence in China, in December 2019. The side effects of the pandemic besides the health hazard, include social, economic, and psychological concepts. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Output Report, 2020 has ended with global growth of %–4.4, and unemployment rates were elevated (IMF, 2020). Besides the economic destruction, human beings are faced with social distance and lockdowns that gained them new habits to handle this unexpected and disturbing situation (Sheth, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has raised uncertainty and if it has the chance to turn to e-commerce sites as an alternative to conventional markets and risk. These issues cause fear that directly effects conventional consumption tendency negatively (Chatterjee et al., 2019).

Before the pandemic era, the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms has become the focal point in the literature for two decades. Many different factors related to the effectiveness and

¹ Begüm Şahin, OSTiM Technical University; Turkey. E-mail: begum.sahin@ostimteknik.edu.tr
² Murat Güler, Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, Turkey. E-mail: murat_guler@ohu.edu.tr
the performance of e-commerce platforms such as online banking systems (Ho and Wu, 2009), e-retailing companies (Lu and Hung, 2011), e-commerce websites (Wen et al., 2003; Chen et al., 2004; Yang et al., 2016), marketability, profitability, strategic profiles, and quality in e-commerce (Cao and Yang, 2011; Yang et al., 2014; Apigian et al., 2006), website design and management (Liu and Arnet, 2000; Benslimane and Yang, 2007) have been examined in previous researches. Besides effectiveness, e-commerce platforms also offer economic benefits to customers due to reduced costs (Wigand, 1995), which enhances satisfaction (Kumar and Petersen, 2006) and motivates people to purchase in e-commerce.

On the other hand, in pandemic days, other new factors entered into the equation predicting the consumers' purchase behaviors in e-commerce. Tran (2021) suggests that pandemic fear positively moderates the relationship between effectiveness, economic benefits of e-commerce platforms, and sustainable consumption depending on his research findings in the Vietnamese sample. But expected fear reactions (Lazarus, 2001) and cost-saving intentions seem to dissociate from each other rather than positively interact, according to the reasoning behind the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). In order to understand how the online purchase process evolves during the pandemic, there is a need for a more comprehensive theoretical explanation that uses gratification (UGT) theory (Katz et al., 1973) provides. In this manner, this study aims to examine the role of pandemic anxiety on the relationship between perceived effectiveness and economic benefits of e-commerce platforms and online purchase intentions.

**Theoretical Background**

**Perceived Effectiveness of E-commerce Platforms**

As the internet has become a part of our lives, marketing solutions also changed their way. Companies promote their products and services not only traditionally but also via online platforms to reach the target customers (Kotler, 2017). As a result, market orientation creates value (Narver et al., 2004; Kumar and Reinartz, 2016) which is now flowing through social media and company websites as the digital marketing strategies improved in high concern (Kannan and Li, 2017; Tiago and Verissimo, 2014; Gazal, 2016). Value creation increases the effectiveness of a firm based on the value chain model (Porter, 1985). Providing rich availability of information, reaching distant consumers, a wide range of networks and customer installation are all generated by marketing alliances to create value in e-commerce (Park et al., 2004) and thus enable the firm to become more effective.

With the widespread and convenience of internet usage, online purchasing from e-marketplaces has become more efficient compared to traditional channels (Ghose and Yao, 2011). The cost-saving business model is the strength of e-commerce platforms as marketing managers prefer to use it for decreasing the marketing budget (Tiago and Verissimo, 2014). On the other hand, customers still have questions to trust the online purchasing steps especially related to transactions. Security risk takes the first place in this doubtful manner. Because of the possibility of serious problems such as the violation of the transaction process or fund losses (Yu et al., 2020) pessimistic point of view derives from facing leakage of personal data as well. (Hubert et al., 2017; Groß 2015).
Economic Benefits of E-commerce Platforms

The huge new economy directly leads the companies to e-commerce solutions. On the other hand, the consumers also take advantage of this new type of shopping. Trendyol, one of the largest e-commerce platforms in Turkey, offered different types of promotions and discounts during November 2020 for Black Friday. The number of visitors arrived at 1.5 billion, the active members reached 25 million, and 60 million products are sold because of this campaign (Webrazzi, 2020). As the duration of spending time at home increases worldwide, people tend to consume health products and food 500% much more than before. Also, sales volume in sports materials, books, electronic tools, and glassware products has raised at a rate of %100 (Economist, 2020).

Furthermore, first-time users of e-commerce platforms have promisingly increased (Deloitte, 2020). The economic benefit of e-commerce is the perceived benefit of consumers gained by promotions or other consumer preferential activities (Liu et al, 2019), in other words, the degree of cost reduction in commerce. Discounts, offerings for new sign-ups, or referral bonuses all improve customer engagement and through these activities, customers yield economic benefits from e-commerce platforms (Ray et al, 2019). When benefits exceed costs then the activity is accepted to be efficient (Weisbrod et al., 1980). E-commerce including the socializing impact enhances the economic benefit (Wang and Herrando, 2019) especially because of lockdown and social distancing during the pandemic. Activities creating economic benefits in e-commerce also generate positive influences increasing consumers’ pleasure (Liu et al., 2019).

Pandemic Anxiety

Fear is a response of consumers derived emotionally to the occurrence of danger or threat and directly effects the motivation of consumer behavior (LaTour and Rotfeld, 1997). Anxiety, on the other hand, is an emotion that overlaps with uncertain, existential future threats and has the potential to lead individuals to healthy adaptation (Lazarus, 1991). In this study, we prefer to use the term pandemic anxiety rather than pandemic fear since the scope of the pandemic threat is uncertain and it is not a sudden danger for the physical entity of individuals.

Every day, the brief information regarding the current situation is revealed by the media as the destruction of Covid-19. The current situation seems like a third world war as there are uncertainty and economic threat on a global basis. Risk also directly effects conventional consumer behavior negatively as Covid-19 is a type of Force Majeure event and causes fear (Chatterjee et al., 2019). When consumers face fear, they become more risk-averse and pessimistic (Dunn and Hoegg, 2014). However, because of the contagion of the pandemic, consumers seem to choose an alternative consumption platform and react to increase purchasing at home. It is called “IN-Home everything” as many companies deliver to satisfy the customers’ needs and wants. Convenience and personalization take into consideration entirely by the online retailers as the store comes home (Sheth, 2020:281). This shift between the commerce platforms highly leans on the healthy adaptation function of pandemic anxiety.
Online Purchase Intention

Since purchase intention is defined as the willingness or intention of the consumer to make a transaction with the retailer, online purchase intention can be explained in the context of online transactions (Pavlou, 2003; Zwass, 1999). Customers’ readiness to purchase via the Internet (Meskaran et al., 2013) can be defined as online purchase intention. George (2004) defines online purchase behavior as the frequency of purchases made over the Internet. Purchase intention is a measurement for the prediction of customer active buying behavior (Ariffin et al., 2018; Peña-García et al., 2020) however consumers’ behavior can be in a positive or negative direction (Li and Fischer, 2020). Previous research revealed that consumers’ perceived risks, including privacy risks and security risks negatively effect purchase intention in online shopping (Almousa, 2011; Masaoud, 2013; Belanger et al., 2002; Meskaran et al., 2013; Delafrooz et al., 2011). So, trust is accepted as part of the brand/consumer relationship and brand equity (Ambler, 1997). While brand equity generates purchase intention and consumer preferences (Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995) it is also important to generate trust to effect consumer online purchase intention positively. Ku et al. (2002) concluded that trust is an important influence on the behavioral intention for online purchasing. Trust in the online store influence the user’s intention to purchase from the online store (Everard and Galletta, 2005). Trust is accepted as a good predictor of purchase intention (Gefen, 2000). Doney and Cannon (1997) regarded trust as an order qualifier of purchase decisions.

Uses and Gratification Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory

Uses and gratification theory (UGT) enables to understand the consumer choice of a specific medium to satisfy their needs (Katz et al., 1973). The first development of the theory extends to mid of the 1940s based on radio communication research. Afterward, scholars in the field of mass communication have utilized the theory for many other studies (Li et al., 2015). Each individual satisfies their needs in different ways according to their sociological and psychological wants (Haman, 2020). According to UGT, people select a specific medium over others as that particular media inspires them to use it for psychological needs’ satisfaction (Cheung et al., 2011). Weibull (1985) pointed out the media usage experience that effects further behavior.

UGT has been utilized by many researchers in traditional media such as newspapers (Elliott and Rosenberg, 1987) and television (Babrow, 1987). While technology has been developing, UGT has been also continuing to be utilized for subsequent studies. For new media of the digital age, UGT is applied for the research on internet usage (Dhir et al., 2015), mobile social network sites, and applications (Kim et al., 2019; Dhir et al., 2018), Instagram (Bui, 2014) and Facebook (Dhir et al., 2017) usage and also particular behaviors like photo sharing (Malik et al., 2016), photo tagging (Dhir et al., 2017) on Facebook and online gaming (Li et al., 2015). Some recent research started to borrow some aspects of the UGT to explain e-commerce behaviors (Lim & Kumar, 2019; Kaur et al., 2020; Tran, 2021). In this regard, this study also utilizes UGT to explain consumer behavior and why they intend to increase online shopping in the pandemic.

Based on what has been told so far, components of PEEP such as safety of privacy and trust seem to be the predecessor of economic benefit perceptions of the e-commerce platforms. Consumers may pay more for branded (trusted) products if they face various risks in the...
market. This can be accepted in the context of interpersonal relationships based on trust among people (Rotter, 1971).

Accordingly, the first hypothesis of the study is below:

**H1. Economic benefit of e-commerce platforms mediates the effect of effectiveness of e-commerce platforms on online purchase intentions.**

The range of offerings of e-commerce platforms also extended during the pandemic to prevent the infection of the virus. During the pandemic era, the extent of online commerce activities expanded all over the world. On the other hand, drivers of consumer behaviors in the context of pandemic anxiety are diverging from the previous era and require more explanation than conventional and e-commerce behaviors. Since the determinative core theme of the Covid-19 era is fear and anxiety, we need to better understand behaviors under such anxiety conditions. Lazarus (1991) asserts that fear and anxiety emotions tend individuals to avoid or escape behaviors. And also when the external threat is obvious, anxiety plays an adaptive role and leads to taking appropriate coping reactions to overcome the source of the threat. But in the relationship between pandemic anxiety and conventional commerce, the fear is not related to the commerce itself, it is related to the exchange context which can convey infection virus among people. So the pandemic anxiety caused people to avoid or escape from conventional social markets but in the end, people are stuck at home with their unmet needs. UGT suggests that people select the medium which meets their needs and satisfies them. People selected e-commerce platforms that are congruent with the avoidance need from the external Covid-19 threat and also capable to meet the need for supplying daily life in a secure context. Accordingly, we propose that:

**H2. Pandemic anxiety positively effects online purchase intentions.**

As a contemporary stress theory, the conservation of resources (COR) theory suggests that individuals strive to obtain, protect, and build resources and actual loss or threats to loss of valued resources drive people to experience stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Health or self-preservation is one of those valued things (Hobfoll, 2011). Individuals, in order to cope with the stress, invest their other resources to offset the current challenges of threats (Hobfoll et al. 2003). We propose that pandemic anxiety which is a form of long-term stress leads people to try to protect their health, which is a rare valued resource, in a tradeoff with other ample resources like property. When pandemic anxiety, which shows the perception of a threat to life, arises then people easily invest other resources (money or other objective owned things) to overcome the threat and save health. So during the pandemic, people should have changed their primary focus in commerce activities from seeking cost-savings to conserving health.

The third hypothesis of the study and the research model (Figure 1) is below.

**H3. Pandemic anxiety moderates the relationship between perceived effectiveness and economic benefit of e-commerce platforms and online purchase intentions.**
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**Figure 1. Research Model**

![Research Model Diagram]

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants of the study are 513 individuals from Turkey who are mostly (91.7%) between 20 and 60 years of age (med= 30-40), 214 (41.7%) of them were female, and 299 (58.3%) of them were male. The detailed demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participant Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Categories</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or below</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly income (TL)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;3000</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3001-5000</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5001-7500</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7501-10000</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10000+</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product and service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic devices</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing&amp;Fashion</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, beauty, sport, and travel</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure

The research data was gathered through an online questionary form by using a cross-sectional survey design. The link to the online questionary form was sent by email to convenient people whom the authors contacted through their social networks. Participation in the survey was voluntary. 517 individuals who use e-commerce platforms in their daily life participated in the online survey. Four of the survey forms were not filled properly and so these were extracted from the data. Totally 513 questionary data were used in the subsequent analyses. The confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis for testing the research hypotheses were conducted using IBM AMOS 23.

Measures

The measures and the construct of the survey form were adapted from Tran (2021) and translated into Turkish. In the translation process, the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970) was applied. The participants’ perceived effectiveness of e-commerce platforms (PEEP) was measured using the 4-item Likert type, PEEP scale (Fang et al, 2014). Pandemic anxiety was measured with the 3-item Likert type, Pandemic Fear Scale which was developed by Tran (2021). The participants’ perceived economic benefit and their online purchase intentions were measured by the scales which were developed by Dabbous and Tarhini (2019) and adopted by Tran (2021). Besides main research variables, as control variables, demographic characteristics including gender, age, education, and monthly income information of the participants were collected in the survey.

To examine the construct validity of the research measures, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed for the reflective measurement model. The obtained fit indexes values of the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 141.05$, $\chi^2$/sd $= 2.39$, CFI $= .98$, SRMR $= .03$, RMSEA $= .05$, PCLOSE $= .36$) showed that the model fits to the research data well (Hu & Bentler, 1999). To ensure the convergent validity of each measure, average variance extracted (AVE) values, and also to examine the reliability of measures, composite reliability (CR) values were calculated. Also as shown in Table 2 in diagonal, square roots of AVE values were used to ensure discriminant validity of the measures according to Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion. The AVE values of all of the measures are over .50, CR values are over .70, and all the square roots of AVE values are higher than the correlations of each construct as seen in Table 2. According to these results, the measurement model and all the scales are evaluated as reliable and valid.

Results

The descriptive statistics and bivariate correlation coefficients of the research variables are presented in Table 2. The correlation between effectiveness and economic benefits of e-commerce platforms are positive and significant ($r = .41$, $p < .01$). Pandemic anxiety is not significantly related to the perceived effectiveness and economic benefits of e-commerce platforms. Online purchase intentions is significantly and positively related to effectiveness ($r = .24$, $p<.01$) and economic benefits ($r = .44$, $p < .01$) of e-commerce platforms and pandemic anxiety ($r = .28$, $p < .01$).
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Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of e-commerce platforms</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>(.77)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic benefits of e-commerce platforms</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic anxiety</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online purchase intention</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05, **p < .01, n=513, SD: Standard deviation CR: Composite reliability, AVE: Average variance extracted, the bold values in pharanthesis on diagonal are the square root of AVE.

To test the research hypotheses, relying on the research model a path analysis was conducted in IBM AMOS. In this analysis, we examined the direct and indirect effects of the effectiveness and economic benefit of e-commerce platforms on online purchase intention and also the moderating role of pandemic anxiety on these effects. The summary of the analysis results is presented in Table 3. The findings revealed that the perception of the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms significantly and positively effect (b=.42, p < .01) the perceived economic benefits of e-commerce platforms. Pandemic anxiety has not a significant effect on the economic benefit perception of e-commerce platforms. Also, the interaction term of Effectiveness of e-commerce X Pandemic anxiety is insignificant which means pandemic anxiety does not moderate the relationship between perception of effectiveness and economic benefit of e-commerce platforms. On the other hand, economic benefit perception of e-commerce platforms (b=.80, p < .01) and pandemic anxiety (b=.43, p < .01) significantly positively effect online purchase intentions. The interaction term of economic benefits X pandemic anxiety was found significantly negatively related to online purchase intentions (b=-.07, p < .05), which shows a significant moderation role of pandemic anxiety on the relationship between perceived economic benefits of e-commerce platforms and online purchase intentions. The perceived effectiveness of e-commerce platforms does not have a significant direct effect on online purchase intentions but through perceived economic benefits effectiveness of e-commerce platforms has a significant indirect effect on online purchase intentions (b = .34, .18< BC %90 CI) < .52). This finding supports Hypothesis 1. Among the control variables, income is significantly positively (b=.09, p < .01), age (b=-.09, p < .05) and gender (b=-.21, p < .01) is significantly negatively related to online purchase intentions. Education is not related to online purchase intentions significantly.

Table 3. Summary of Path Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness of e-commerce → Economic benefits of e-commerce (R² = .23)</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of e-commerce</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandemic anxiety</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int. Effectiveness of e-commerce X Pandemic anxiety</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness &amp; Economic benefits of e-commerce → Online purchase intention (R² = .60)</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>LLCI</th>
<th>ULCI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of e-commerce</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to see how pandemic anxiety moderates the relationship between perceived economic benefits of e-commerce platforms and online purchase intentions, two-way interaction slopes were drawn. As depicted in Figure 2, from low perceived economic benefit to high perceived economic benefit, the slopes differ depending on the low and high levels of pandemic anxiety. The way the slopes change shows that pandemic anxiety dampens the positive effect of perceived economic benefits of e-commerce platforms on online purchase intentions. This finding supports Hypothesis 3.

**Figure 2.** Moderating effect of pandemic anxiety on the relationship between perceived economic benefits of e-commerce platforms and online purchase intention
Conclusion

In this study, the relationships between effectiveness and economic benefits of e-commerce platforms and customers’ online purchase intentions are examined according to the condition of pandemic anxiety. Primary results indicate that the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms affect customers’ online purchase intentions through perceived economic benefits and pandemic anxiety moderates the effect of economic benefits on online purchase intentions.

According to the first finding of the study, the perception of e-commerce platforms as economically beneficial is significantly effected by the perception of the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms. The effectiveness concept highly depends on the notion of trust on e-commerce platforms. Customers, first of all, evaluate whether they face a trustworthy dealer at the beginning of a purchase transaction. It is understood that a reliable and effective shopping environment is the basis for an economical purchasing transaction. This finding is consistent with the research revealing that trust has an important role in consumers influencing their online purchase intention (Everard and Galletta, 2005; Gefen, 2000; Doney and Cannon, 1997; Ku et al., 2002).

The next finding of the research showed that the economic perception of e-commerce platforms has a significant effect on online purchase intentions. The economic benefit is one of the fundamental benefit types that can influence customer choice (Liu et al., 2019) and provides a competitive advantage to the dealer. The results also revealed that the economic benefit side of e-commerce platforms also mediates the effect of effectiveness of e-commerce platforms. This can be interpreted as effectiveness perception contributes to forming of beneficial perceptions and their variance explained on purchase intension overlaps to some extent. Thus the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms indirectly effects online purchase intention (Ray et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2019). From the rational individual point of view, low-cost purchase opportunities and economic benefits are expected to positively effect purchase intention in that medium. According to the uses and gratifications theory, people purposely select a specific medium that satisfies their needs and expectations (Katz et al., 1973). Furthermore, in the e-commerce context, empirical studies confirm this thinking (Tran, 2021) and support that economic benefits positively effect purchase behaviors and intentions (Maia et al., 2019; Sullivan & Kim, 2018).

Also, we have found that pandemic anxiety significantly effects online purchase intention. Under the pandemic conditions, customers seem to select appropriate mediums to satisfy their needs. On the other hand, pandemic anxiety seems to alter the economically oriented customer choices and intentions. Our last and spectacular finding reveals that pandemic anxiety negatively moderates the economic benefits and purchase intentions relationship in e-commerce. In other words, pandemic anxiety dampens the positive effect of economic benefits on purchase intention. When the pandemic anxiety gets high the search for cost reduction in purchase transactions decreases dramatically. We consider this situation as a rational and adaptive tendency in a pandemic context. In real life, rational choices should not be always economic. Conservation of resources theory (Hobbsoll, 1989) suggests that in order to cope with the stress, people invest their other resources to offset the current challenges of stressful threats (Hobbsoll et al. 2003). Individuals in the face of the pandemic threat, seem to choose to invest their material resources to save biological entities and withdrawal from seeking cost reduction in e-commerce activities. We think that the priority of economic
benefit in e-commerce changed to saving health due to the pandemic context. In contrast to this finding, Tran (2021) suggests that pandemic fear positively moderates the economic benefit and purchase intention relationship. That discrepancy between the two findings may derive from the different features of separate cultural samples, differentiated shopping orientations on products and services, or the different data collection periods in the pandemic. More research is needed to understand why the same emotional states as fear or anxiety distinctly effect purchase behaviors. We hope that our findings will contribute to this discussion in the marketing literature and practice.

This study has some limitations. The cross-sectional design limits our causal inferences to a great extent and limits our understanding of e-commerce purchase behaviors as a process rather than an instant activity. Future studies can be designed longitudinally, and also the level of preference between different commerce platforms can be included in the research model. Also, we think that the existing understanding regarding the role of emotions in the relationship between purchase behaviors and their predictors deserves more theoretical and practical attention.

Disclosure statement

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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