

# Flight-to-nowhere service: Investigating factors influencing the repurchase intention

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## Abstract

Revenge vacation, or an individual's strong desire to go on vacation to make up for missed opportunities to travel and escape the stresses of daily life, can take the form of purchasing a flight-to-nowhere service. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, travel restrictions are gradually being relaxed, emphasising the need to investigate the long-term viability of this unique service. This research aims to investigate factors influencing the repurchase intention of the flight-to-nowhere service. Four variables of interest have been identified in this research, namely escapism, aesthetics, temporal illusion and repurchase intention. Purposive sampling yields 126 passengers of flight-to-nowhere service. To analyse the data, this research employs Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using SPSS and AMOS software. The results suggest that escapism and aesthetics are positive predictors of repurchase intention. Meanwhile, temporal illusion moderates the relationship between aesthetics and repurchase intention, such that high temporal illusion (vs low) weakens the relationship between the two variables. Practical suggestions and future research opportunities are detailed at the end of the paper.

## Keywords

Escapism, aesthetics, temporal illusion, repurchase intention, flight-to-nowhere, COVID-19, revenge vacation

## Introduction

Aviation industry contributes to increased carbon emissions (Liu et al., 2020; Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2006). The industry is responsible for 12% of total transport sector carbon emissions and 2.8% of all human-caused carbon emissions (Kroyan et al., 2022). In the last decade, an increasing number of people and activists considered flying to be shameful, resulting in the

phenomenon of 'flygskam' (or flight shame) in Europe (Chiambaretto et al., 2021). Due to travel restrictions and the shutdown of

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international and national transportation networks during the COVID-19 pandemic, the world experienced lower carbon emissions (Musselwhite et al., 2021). The pandemic situation, combined with the gradual tightening of rules, has placed the tourism industry in an increasingly perilous position as of March 2020 (Ramelli and Wagner, 2020). One of its service sectors, aviation, was also affected by global level restrictions, so airports and terminals were empty of tourists in the spring instead of the crowds they had been used to (Zenker and Kock, 2020). However, there were reports of empty or nearly empty planes (ghost flights) filling the skies during this time period, as airlines were forced to fulfil their contractual obligations to fly or risk losing their licenses (Gallego and Font, 2021). Thus, despite the fact that some researchers have criticised the flight for its unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions (Pratt and Tolkach, 2022), there is some doubt about the sustainability of this service after the pandemic. The flight-to-nowhere service, on the other hand, can help to mitigate the cost burden that the coronavirus has imposed on the aviation industry by allowing flights that are forced to fly, rather than flying empty, to reduce the service provider's costs by involving passengers (Anwar et al., 2020). This research seeks to investigate travellers' motivations for repurchasing such a service during times of crisis.

In October 2020, during the period of restrictions, the flight-to-nowhere service was launched with the slogan 'Come with us, we are not going anywhere', which also referred to the event's sensation-based vacation illusion program (Kaszás, 2020). Smartwings, the airline responsible for the service, has been able to fly people without putting them in mandatory quarantine while complying with regulations (wearing masks, keeping their distance, hand sanitizer). All this was possible because the aircraft, which took off from Liszt Ferenc International Airport with the passengers, did not land in a foreign country nor even fly over other countries (Kaszás, 2020). Prior to the pandemic, the world had become acquainted with virtual tours or simulated mobility in a simulated environment with virtual reality assistance (see Itani and Hollebeek, 2021; Wei, 2019). Such a solution creates the illusion of travel or going on a vacation, with flights taking place in a simulated environment, eliminating consumers' high-risk perceptions during the pandemic (Su et al., 2022; Syahrivar et al., 2021). As a result, those

who would otherwise be denied the opportunity to go on vacation are given the opportunity (or the illusion) to do so. It is worth noting that flight-to-nowhere services have been accused of increasing carbon emissions at a time when the world can benefit from lower carbon emissions due to travel restrictions (Chiu et al., 2020; Pratt and Tolkach, 2022).

This research aims to investigate factors influencing the repurchase intention of flight-to-nowhere services. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, travel restrictions are gradually being relaxed, emphasising the need to investigate the long-term viability of this unique service. Several variables of interest are escapism, aesthetics, temporal illusion and repurchase intention. We also investigated the moderating effects of temporal illusion, which has received little attention in the tourism literature. Our research adds to the limited literature on flight-to-nowhere services, a recent innovation in the aviation industry amid the COVID-19 pandemic, by investigating the services in the context of Hungarian passengers, who are underrepresented in tourism literature. Furthermore, we frame our work in the context of 'revenge vacation', a phenomenon that has received special attention in both academic and professional literature.

Consumers' experiences are critical factors in positive feedback, subsequent revisit, and service repurchase (Manthiou et al., 2014; Maunier and Camelis, 2013; Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Among the various factors influencing the decision to engage in vacation activities, escapism and aesthetic experiences have been reported in the previous studies (Ahmadpour et al., 2014; Faiyetole and Temitope, 2018; Ponsignon et al., 2020; Smith, 2003; Wang et al., 2021). Escapism experience allows consumers to escape from their daily routines and stresses of daily life; whereas, aesthetics experience evokes peace of mind during vacations. Both are essential concepts in successful vacation marketing campaigns (Lee et al., 2017; Manthiou et al., 2014). A less investigated concept in tourism literature is temporal illusion, where time is perceived to move slowly or stop (Chen et al., 2017; Conti, 2001; Wallisch, 2008), giving a person the impression that they are living without a clear aim or goal. Temporal illusion may affect consumer experiences during service delivery (Bielen and Demoulin, 2007; Law et al., 2004; Tom and Lucey, 1995; Zhang and Shao, 2019).

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: the first section is the literature review, in which the key concepts featured in this research,

as well as hypotheses developments, are explained and argued. The second section is the research methodology, which details the steps for gathering and analysing data. The third section is the findings, which present the most important statistical results. The fourth section is the discussion, which highlight key findings, theoretical contributions, and managerial implications. Finally, the conclusion section provides a summary of this research.

## Literature review

### *Revenge vacation*

People who are experiencing negative emotions are more likely to engage in experiential and hedonistic activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of the risks (Agyeiwaah et al., 2021; Wu and Lau, 2022). During the period of travel restrictions, upset and distressed individuals may seek vacation opportunities at any cost to escape the daily grind (Joshi and Sadhale, 2022; Torres et al., 2021a). They might also attempt to compensate for their missed trips by engaging in recreational activities that gave the appearance of a vacation (Kim et al., 2021a; Kökény and Kiss, 2021). This coping mechanism resembles compensatory consumption (see Syahrivar et al., 2022a). Vacation is defined as being away from home for leisure or recreational activities (Tan and Li, 2021). Revenge vacation, or an individual's strong desire to engage in recreational activities to compensate for missed vacation opportunities, is thus a relevant concept to discuss (Chiu et al., 2020; Joshi and Sadhale, 2022; Wang and Xia, 2021; Zaman et al., 2022). Revenge vacation might take the form of a real vacation or an activity that gives the impression of a vacation (Zaman et al., 2022). During revenge vacation, consumers spend more money than usual, engage in unusual activities, and have a strong desire to experience escapism (Joshi and Sadhale, 2022). Revenge vacation as a concept can be a good marketing strategy for tourist destinations under lockdown. Service providers can still provide their services to tourists via the internet and a simulated environment. It includes virtual reality attraction sites (Itani and Hollebeek, 2021), which could be used to evoke memories of prior journeys (Gammon and Ramshaw, 2021; Wang and Xia, 2021), and the sale of services that create the illusion of tourism (Gammon and Ramshaw, 2021), such as flight-to-nowhere services. It is important to note that flights to nowhere, the main topic of this research, is not a type of transportation or mobility service; passengers do not pay to travel from one

location to another because planes land at the same location from which they depart. Instead, passengers regard the service as a mini-vacation (Thomaselli, 2020).

### *Escapism*

External threats or stressors induce a fight-or-flight response (Cannon, 1932; Schmidt et al., 2008). When overcoming threats is perceived to be difficult or impossible, fleeing or escaping from the source of the threats may appear appropriate. Fleeing can be either physical or mental/emotional. In this sense, escapism can be viewed as a mental form of running away from unpleasant thoughts. Longeway (1990) identified several strategies used by a 'escapist' to avoid unwanted thoughts and stressors, including distracting oneself from the source of unwanted thoughts, denying evidence that leads to unwanted thoughts, avoiding the source of unwanted thoughts, and restricting access to the source of unwanted thoughts. According to Hastall (2017), escapism occurs as a way to cope with socio-psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Owing in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, escapism as a component of the experience economy has become an important and relevant concept in the tourism literature (Kaur and Kaur, 2020; Smith et al., 2022). In this research, escapism is defined as the ability of the flight-to-nowhere service to distract consumers from their unwanted thoughts and unpleasant reality.

### *Repurchase intention*

The relationship between businesses and consumers has long shifted from market transaction to long-term customer relationships (Kotler and Levy, 1969). This is due to the fact that a company's long-term survival is dependent on returning customers and repeat purchases (Chang et al., 2019). Customers who are loyal will not only return and repurchase their favourite products and services, but will also recommend them to others (Koklic et al., 2017; Vlachos and Lin, 2014). During the COVID-19 pandemic, airline industries all over the world were hit hard by restricted air travel, reduced passenger capacity and declining airline stock prices (Kökény et al., 2022; Maneenop and Kotcharin, 2020). As a result, airline companies must devise novel marketing strategies to retain their loyal customers. During the pandemic, one of the notable offerings is flight-to-nowhere, in which customers can enjoy in-city air vacation as well as regular flight services, such as eating lunch on the

plane (Gopalakrishnan and Kovoov-Misra, 2021). Consumers' desire for sensational experiences increases their proclivity to purchase or repurchase tourism services during the pandemic (Torres et al., 2021b). From the consumer's perspective, the flight-to-nowhere service can be viewed as a form of revenge vacation (Chiu et al., 2020; Joshi and Sadhale, 2022; Wang and Xia, 2021; Zaman et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the flight-to-nowhere service has been chastised for increasing carbon emissions, especially during the pandemic (Chiu et al., 2020; Pratt and Tolkach, 2022). As a result, retaining regular passengers is difficult despite the service's attractiveness, thus the relevance of this research. As the travel restrictions are gradually being relaxed, we argue that repurchase intention is a relevant concept to investigate as it concerns with the long-term viability of this unique service. In this research, repurchase intention is the propensity to repeat purchase and recommend the flight-to-nowhere service.

Escapism necessitates a medium, typically involving indulgence goods and services, to divert one's attention away from unwanted thoughts and stressors. Previous research has found escapism in users of cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs (Jouhki and Oksanen, 2021; Sadava et al., 1978), digital and online games (Calleja, 2010; Kardefelt-Winther, 2014; Syahrivar et al., 2022b), films and TV-series (Addis and Holbrook, 2010; Jones et al., 2018) and touristic objects (Ponsignon et al., 2020; Smith, 2003). Travel and access to tourist attractions may be severely restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Irimiás and Mitev, 2020). A recent tourism innovation, such as flight-to-nowhere services (Gopalakrishnan and Kovoov-Misra, 2021), may serve as a way to escape unwanted thoughts during the pandemic while remaining within a safe boundary. We argue that the escapism element that the flight-to-where service can provide during the pandemic will encourage existing customers to repurchase the service. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**H1:** Escapism has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

### *Aesthetics*

Aesthetics is one of the concepts that has sparked numerous debates among scientists, philosophers, and artists. Aesthetics, in general, is concerned with the subjective beauty of a person, an object, an activity, or an idea. The concept of aesthetics was derived from the concept of taste

(Townsend, 2013). It is the notion that people do not always apply aesthetics criteria to someone or something, but rather „taste' (or sense) them in accordance with some purposes or mechanisms of their creation(s). Awe and pleasure can be elicited by visually appealing or aesthetics objects (Graziosi and Yaden, 2021). However, aesthetics is not limited to visual stimuli; the concept is also used in fields such or olfactory arts (Straughan, 2015) and musical arts (Juslin et al., 2021), where specific criteria may be used to determine the „degree' of aesthetics. Aesthetic desire is associated with pleasure-seeking behaviour and hedonism (Gorodeisky, 2021). In the context of air transport, an aircraft's interior aesthetics refer to the design and details of the seat, cabin, and compartment (Wang et al., 2021). Ahmadpour et al. (2014) classified aircraft interior aesthetics into two dimensions, namely (interior) neatness and style, which provided passengers with a shooting feeling. In this research, aesthetics is defined as the extent to which aircraft interior designs contribute to passengers' pleasant and harmonious experience during flight-to-nowhere service.

Tourists have a proclivity for seeking out beauty (Salim et al., 2021). The aesthetics of the modes of transportation used by tourists to reach their favourite destinations may also have an impact on their overall experiences. In the context of air transport, Faiyetole and Temitope (2018) found that the interior aesthetics of aircraft played a significant role in passengers' airline selection. Barry's work (2021) provided insights into the motivations of tourist photography among aircraft passengers, one of which was aesthetics. A previous study by Ahmadpour et al. (2014) suggests the aesthetic design of aircraft interiors may contribute to passengers' peace of mind during the flight. Moreover, Wang et al. (2021) argued that the aesthetics of the cabin influence the comfort and satisfaction of aircraft passengers. We contend that passengers on flight-to-nowhere are motivated to use the service because of the aesthetic value that the plane and air travel can provide. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

**H2:** Aesthetics has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

### *Temporal illusion*

Different people have different perceptions of time. Time may appear to some people to be moving faster or slower than it actually is. In contrast to objective time, subjective time reflects individual's perception or experience on the

passage of time (Li and Tian, 2020). According to Wallisch (2008: 38), „*the brain contains a variety of internal clocks and rhythm detectors that might influence the experience of time.*” In other words, one’s perception of time may be distorted and inaccurate, resulting in the so-called temporal illusion. According to Chen et al. (2017), the discrepancy between the real physical timeline and the (network of) neurons produced timeline composed inside a person’s brain causes temporal illusion. A form of temporal illusion is a flow state that occurs when a person is so engrossed in their activity that they believe time is flying by (Karasakal and Albayrak, 2022; Zaman et al., 2022). Meanwhile, time checking or time awareness is associated with the perception that time moves slowly (Conti, 2001). The crux of temporal illusion is a discrepancy between the actual and perceived occurrence of an event, creating the illusion that time moves slower or faster than expected. According to Power (2011), one of the components of temporal illusion is an experience (conscious episodes) of the present or what appears to be the present rooted in one’s memory. As a consequence, the temporal illusion can be a long-lasting experience. Edwards and McCormick (2017) argued that temporal illusions could be triggered by greater sensory awareness of physical discomfort. In this regard, examples of temporal illusions can be found in situations where customers are queuing or waiting in line for a service and may overestimate their waiting time (Bielen and Demoulin, 2007; Law et al., 2004; Tom and Lucey, 1995; Zhang and Shao, 2019). In this research, temporal illusion is defined as the degree to which time is perceived to move slowly or stop, giving a person the impression that they are living without a clear aim or goal.

### *The moderating effects of temporal illusion*

According to Klinecicz (2014), time perception is essentially an awareness of change. In other words, the perception of time is influenced by perceived changes in one’s environment. Previous research on flight experiences has documented instances in which passengers experienced altered perceptions of time (e.g., time moves slowly, feeling stuck) as a result of various flight-related factors such as waiting time before take-off, flight monotony, long-haul flights, less comfortable cabin and seat designs, and emergency situations (Poria and Beal, 2017; Xu and Witlox, 2022; Yusupova et al.,

2022). Passengers are also expected to remain seated throughout the flight, which may cause mental and physical discomfort (Kim and Lee, 2018). Moreover, some flights, particularly short-haul flights, lack amenities (e.g., video screen and music) to keep passengers entertained. As a result, perceived changes in passengers’ immediate surroundings are low. When perceived changes or environmental dynamics are small or insignificant (e.g., monotonous cabin design, lack of movements), this can result in temporal illusion (Power, 2011), in which time appears to move slowly. Previous research has shown that perceived time (e.g., waiting time) during the service process influences consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction. Consumers under negative disconfirmation conditions (e.g., waiting time is perceived to be longer than expected) are generally dissatisfied (Bielen and Demoulin, 2007; Law et al., 2004; Tom and Lucey, 1995; Zhang and Shao, 2019). Dissatisfaction due to the negative perception of (service) time should, in turn, result in lower loyalty and repurchase intention (Li et al., 2021; Mainardes et al., 2021). Meanwhile, previous research on leisure activities found inconclusive results for escapism and behavioural intention, as well as aesthetics and behavioural intention (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Jiang and Balaji, 2021; Norris et al., 2022; Tan, 2017). In this research, we argue that temporal illusion may significantly impair consumer experience during the service process, weakening the association between escapism and repurchase intention as well as the association between aesthetics and repurchase intention. As previously stated, escapism necessitates the use of a medium, typically of indulgence or hedonic nature, through which a person can mentally avoid unpleasant thoughts and stressors; however, the presence of temporal illusions during flight-to-nowhere service caused by, among other things, monotonous in-flight elements may undermine this goal. Furthermore, temporal illusions due to sensory awareness of physical discomfort (Edwards and McCormick, 2017) during the flight may divert passengers’ attention away from the aesthetics of the plane cabin. Thus, the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H3:** Temporal illusion moderates the relationship between escapism and repurchase intention, such that high temporal illusion (vs low) weakens the relationship between the two variables.

**H4:** Temporal illusion moderates the relationship between aesthetics and repurchase intention, such that high temporal illusion (vs low) weakens the relationship between the two variables.

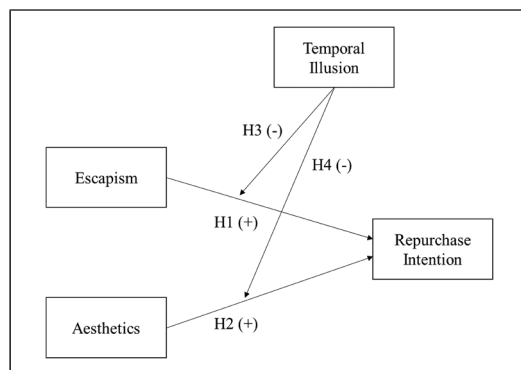
Based on the aforementioned hypotheses, we present our theoretical framework in Figure 1.

## Methodology

This quantitative research employed an online questionnaire. To be eligible, respondents must affirm that they participated in the flight-to-nowhere service in Hungary, particularly on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 when the service was first launched. Purposive sampling yielded 126 passengers of flight-to-nowhere service. The respondent profile is provided in Table 1. The majority of respondents were males under the age of 40, with university degrees, and living outside of the capital city (Budapest).

This research employed four measurement scales. The 3-item escapism scale was adapted from Hosany and Witham (2010) and Manthiou et al. (2014); the 3-item aesthetics scale was also adapted from Hosany and Witham (2010) and Manthiou et al. (2014); the 6-item temporal illusion scale was adapted from Kim and Geistfeld (2007); lastly, the 5-item repurchase intention scale was adapted from Chang et al. (2019) and Prayag et al. (2017). The reliability of each measurement scale is presented in Table 2.

The primary method of this research is Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The data analysis followed a 2-step process: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). To guide the process, we used



**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework (notes: (+) = positive effect, (-) = negative effect).

several methodological works from Hair et al. (2014), Kaiser (1974), Schreiber et al. (2006) and Shook et al. (2004). To examine the construct validity, we observed the values of Cronbach's Alpha, factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Composite Reliability (C.R.). To determine the sampling adequacy, we observed the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). Lastly, to determine the fitness of the proposed model, we observed several indicators such as Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR), Goodness of Fit (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI).

## Findings

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) measures sampling adequacy. A KMO value of .50 or more is considered suitable for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). Based on Table 4, the KMO is .776 (Sig. < .05), suggesting that the samples are adequate for factor analysis (EFA).

To measure the adequacy of the four factors produced from EFA processing, the cumulative variance explained should exceed 60% and the Eigenvalues should be greater than 1 (Hair et al., 2014). Based on Table 5, the four factors have a cumulative variance of 82.9% and a total Eigenvalue of 1.567.

Table 6 shows the construct validity of the four factors. According to Shook et al. (2004), the loading factor should be greater than .70,

**Table 1.** Respondent profile.

		N	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	86	68.3
	Female	40	31.7
Age	≤ 40 (Younger Adults)	66	52.4
	> 40 (Older Adults)	50	47.6
Education background	With University/ College degree	66	52.3
	Without University/ College degree	60	47.7
Residence	Inside the Capital City	58	46.0
	Outside the Capital City	68	54.0

Note: N = Number of respondents.

**Table 2.** Measurements.

Variables	Items	Measures	Cronbach's Alpha
Escapism (ESC)	1. I completely left reality out of my participation in the event. 2. I felt I played a different character here 3. The experience let me imagine being someone else	Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	.860
Aesthetics (AES)	1. The setting of the service (aircraft interior) pays close attention to design details. <sup>a</sup> 2. It was pleasant just being here. 3. I felt a real sense of harmony.	Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	.827
Temporal Illusion (TLN)	1. I go into the future like a cork on the sea, not from choice but because I can't stop it. 2. I feel my life is a series of starts and stops—stuck, moving, then stuck again. 3. I keep my future open and uncommitted. 4. I shy away from long-term responsibilities. 5. I disregard the future and take things as they came. 6. I feel that time is broken, chopped up, and without direction.	Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	.941
Repurchase Intention (RPI)	1. I will say positive things about the flight-to-nowhere service to other people. 2. I will frequently visit the flight-to-nowhere service again in the future. <sup>a</sup> 3. If I could, I would like to repurchase the flight-to-nowhere service as much as possible. <sup>a</sup> 4. My intentions are to repurchase the flight-to-nowhere service. 5. I intend to repurchase the flight-to-nowhere service.	Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)	.926

Note: <sup>a</sup> Items were removed during the EFA and CFA processes.

the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than .50, and the Composite Reliability (C.R.) should be greater than .70. Due to low factor loadings (< .50), items AES1, RPI2, and RPI3 were removed from their respective constructs. Following the removal of the items, all construct validity indicators meet the aforementioned thresholds.

Following EFA, CFA was performed using SPSS and AMOS software. Based on Figure 2, the two exogenous variables are escapism (ESC) and aesthetics (AES); the endogenous variable is Repurchase Intention (RPI); lastly, the moderator is Temporal Illusion (TLN). The Squared Multiple Correlations ( $R^2$ ) value of the model suggests that 42.6% of the variance of RPI can be explained by ESC and AES.

The fitness of the above SEM model is assessed through several indicators (fit indices) proposed by Schreiber et al. (2006). The results are presented in Table 7. In general, our model fitness is considered good and acceptable.

Table 8 presents the regressions analysis. The results support H1, H2 and H4.

Figure 3 illustrates the moderating effect of temporal illusion on the relationship between aesthetics and repurchase intention.

## Discussion

This research supports the positive effect of escapism on repurchase intention (H1). In other words, customers who have used a flight-to-nowhere service may reconsider repurchasing it in the future because it has the potential to distract them from their daily problems. The findings add weight to previous research and broaden the scope of the relationship between the two variables as demonstrated in different contexts such as hotels, Chang et al. (2019), restaurants (Chua et al., 2014), retail stores (Yoon and Oh, 2016), and mobile applications (Huang et al., 2019).

This research supports the positive effect of aesthetics on repurchase intention (H2). Customers

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics.

	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.D.
ESC1	126	1	5	4.65	.762
ESC2	126	1	5	4.03	1.073
ESC3	126	3	5	4.70	.494
AES1	126	1	5	4.30	.870
AES2	126	1	5	4.65	.861
AES3	126	1	5	4.22	1.019
TLN1	126	1	5	1.67	1.088
TLN2	126	1	5	1.43	.871
TLN3	126	1	5	1.54	.960
TLN4	126	1	5	1.73	1.091
TLN5	126	1	5	1.49	.927
TLN6	126	1	5	1.30	.751
RPI1	126	1	5	4.40	.989
RPI2	126	1	5	4.68	.734
RPI3	126	2	5	4.86	.532
RPI4	126	1	5	4.44	.908
RPI5	126	1	5	4.22	1.003

Notes: N = Number of respondents, Min = Minimum, Max = Maximum, S.D. = Standard Deviation

who have used a flight-to-nowhere service may reconsider repurchasing it in the future due to the aesthetics value that air travel can provide. The findings add weight to previous research and broaden the scope of the relationship between the two variables as demonstrated in different contexts such as technological products (Park et al., 2013), restaurants (Chua et al., 2014), apparels (Overmars and Poels, 2015), cruise travels (Calza et al., 2020; Jászberényi and Miskolczi, 2020), lodgings (Fu and Wang, 2020).

This research cannot support the moderating effect of temporal illusion on the relationship between escapism and repurchase intention (H3). The nature of escapism is to divert one's attention away from reality by immersing oneself in enjoyable and entertaining activities (indulgence). We argue that being fully immersed in travelling (mobility) activities negates the effect of temporal illusion, which is the perception of time as being still (frozen), broken, chopped up, and without direction.

This research supports the moderating effect of temporal illusion on the relationship between aesthetics and repurchase intention (H4). The results suggest that temporal illusion weakens the positive association between aesthetics and repurchase intention. Customers who experienced time distortions were generally dissatisfied with the service processes (Bielen and Demoulin, 2007; Law et al., 2004; Tom and Lucey, 1995; Zhang and Shao, 2019), resulting in lower behavioural intentions (Li et al., 2021; Mainardes et al., 2021).

**Table 4.** KMO and Bartlett's test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.776
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1601.296
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Notes: Approx. = Approximately, df = Degree of freedom, Sig. = Significance.

Some theoretical contributions of this research are as follows: first, previous studies in hospitality and tourism did not examine the direct effects of escapism and aesthetics on behavioural intention (e.g., repurchase/re-patronage/revisit and recommend intentions); rather, the relationships were usually mediated by satisfaction (e.g., Jin et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2021b; Lee et al., 2017; Taylor Jr et al., 2018). Our research closes the empirical gaps by providing evidence on the relationships among the aforementioned variables. Second, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first research to investigate the moderating effects of temporal illusion, a less explored concept in tourism literature. Previous research on leisure activities found inconclusive results for escapism and behavioural intention, as well as aesthetics and behavioural intention (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Jiang and Balaji, 2021; Norris et al., 2022; Tan, 2017). In this regard, we contend that the degree to which time is perceived to pass slowly or halt, giving travellers the impression that their lives are meaningless, can be used to explain the strength of the association between the two aforementioned predictors and their behavioural intention. Third, while temporal illusion has been discussed in non-aviation industries (e.g., Bielen and Demoulin, 2007; Law et al., 2004; Tom and Lucey, 1995; Zhang and Shao, 2019), our research fills a knowledge gap by investigating temporal illusion's role in flight-to-nowhere services, a new business model in the airline industry as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, previous research focus on how time perception during waiting time affect passengers' satisfaction. Finally, we bridge the population gap by examining Hungarian passengers, who have received less attention in studies on flight-to-nowhere service.

This research has several managerial implications: first, our research proves that escapism is a positive predictor of repurchase intention.



**Table 5.** Total variance explained.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum %	Total	% of Var	Cum %
1	4.939	35.277	35.277	4.939	35.277	35.277	4.762	34.015	34.015
2	4.528	32.343	67.620	4.528	32.343	67.620	2.795	19.961	53.977
3	1.258	8.983	76.603	1.258	8.983	76.603	2.480	17.718	71.695
4	.882	6.298	82.900	.882	6.298	82.900	1.569	11.206	82.900

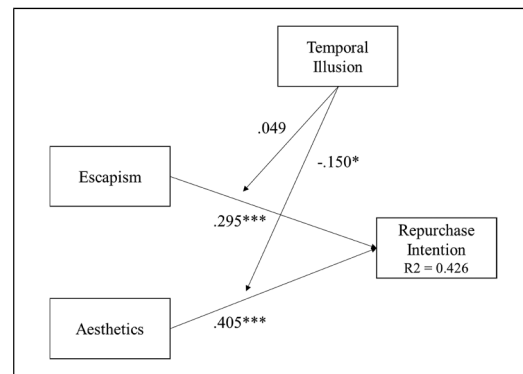
Notes: Var = Variance, Cum = Cumulative.

**Table 6.** Rotated component matrix.

	Component				AVE	C.R.
	1	2	3	4		
ESC1			.806		.678	.863
ESC2			.854			
ESC3			.810			
AES2				.784	.654	.791
AES3				.833		
TLN1	.872				.788	.957
TLN2	.944					
TLN3	.895					
TLN4	.859					
TLN5	.824					
TLN6	.927					
RPI1		.857			.780	.914
RPI4		.903				
RPI5		.889				

Notes: ESC = Escapism; AES = Aesthetics; RPI = Repurchase Intention; TLN = Temporal Illusion.

Flight-to-nowhere service providers may improve the on-board elements that help passengers distract their minds from their daily routines or problems, especially those that occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, our research proves that aesthetics positively predicts repurchase intention. Flight-to-nowhere service providers may improve the interior design of the cabins and their elements, making them more aesthetically pleasing and comfortable. Third, to reduce the effect of temporal illusion, passengers should be involved in fun activities or provided with amenities (e.g., games, puzzles) that keep them engaged throughout the flight. Fourth, when designing the consumer experience, a service provider planning to launch a similar service should consider how hungry consumers are for vacation. Simulated travel, such as flight-to-nowhere services, can be an option for consumers who have not taken a vacation in a long time. Fifth, flight-to-nowhere service could



**Figure 2.** Final SEM model (notes: \*\*\* =  $P \leq .001$ ; \* =  $P \leq .05$ ).

be an ideal solution when airlines are struggling to perform due to travel restrictions and have already incurred significant losses during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kökény et al., 2022; Miskolczi et al., 2021). There were also reports of empty or nearly empty planes littering the skyline as airlines met their contractual obligations to fly or risk losing their slots, a phenomenon known as 'ghost flights' (Gallego and Font, 2021). This research is expected to broaden policymakers' perspectives on alternative solutions to aggressive acquisitions and business restructuring (Suk and Kim, 2021). From a marketing standpoint, the main advantage is that airlines can keep in touch with consumers even when they are unable to provide full services. Thus, the unmet need for recreational activities during the travel restriction is partially met. Sixth, we see an opportunity to offer the flight-to-nowhere service to a different market during times of crisis; the service can be slightly modified and offered as a training program for steward and stewardess trainees. In countries where English is still a barrier, such as Hungary, the fact that the plane did not leave the country or cater to foreign tourists means that

service providers and passengers can communicate freely throughout the duration of the service. Passengers can experience airline service at a lower cost without the hassle of luggage check-in, lengthy security checks, or the fear of a language barrier. Furthermore, flight-to-nowhere may help to reduce partial plane maintenance costs incurred during the off-season. Finally, in light of the criticisms levelled at this type of service, we would like to emphasise the importance for the airline industry of striking a balance between business and environmental goals. We believe that flight-to-nowhere service can be a viable strategy for reducing flight costs and avoiding loss of flight permits during times of crisis. Nevertheless, it is not advisable to take advantage of this service in the wake of the pandemic in order to boost earnings at the cost of increased carbon emissions.

**Conclusion**

The temporary halt in human mobility caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the tourism and travel industries worldwide. Airlines must find new ways to stay afloat, such as offering flight services that land at the

exact location the planes depart, also known as the flight-to-nowhere. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is not over, travel restrictions are gradually being relaxed, emphasising the need to investigate the long-term viability of this unique service. Four variables of interest have been identified in this research, namely escapism, aesthetics, temporal illusion and repurchase intention. The results suggest that escapism and aesthetics are positive predictors of repurchase intention. Meanwhile, temporal illusion weakens the association between aesthetics and repurchase intention.

We want to point out a few limitations of this research: First, due to technical difficulties in reaching out to the appropriate people during the pandemic, the number of respondents for this study is relatively small. As a result, a few model fitness indicators sensitive to the number of cases (respondents) cannot be displayed. When the situation is more favourable, and a similar service is organised again, future research may retest our model by incorporating more respondents. Second, to generate a better model fit during the CFA processes, some items from the repurchase intention and aesthetics variables must be removed. Future research may retest our measurements and theoretical framework. Third, there was a time lag between service exposure and the investigation of their experiences with the flight-to-nowhere service. We acknowledge the possibility of recall bias due to temporary illusion caused not only by in-flight elements but also by things they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as social isolation. Future research may employ a different method, such as experimental design, to better understand the effect of temporal illusion. Lastly, we were aware of the debate around the flight-to-nowhere service in light of unnecessary carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; however, we did not assess consumers' perceptions of the service's environmental impact. Future research may incorporate environmental or green attitudes to provide a

**Table 7.** Model fitness.

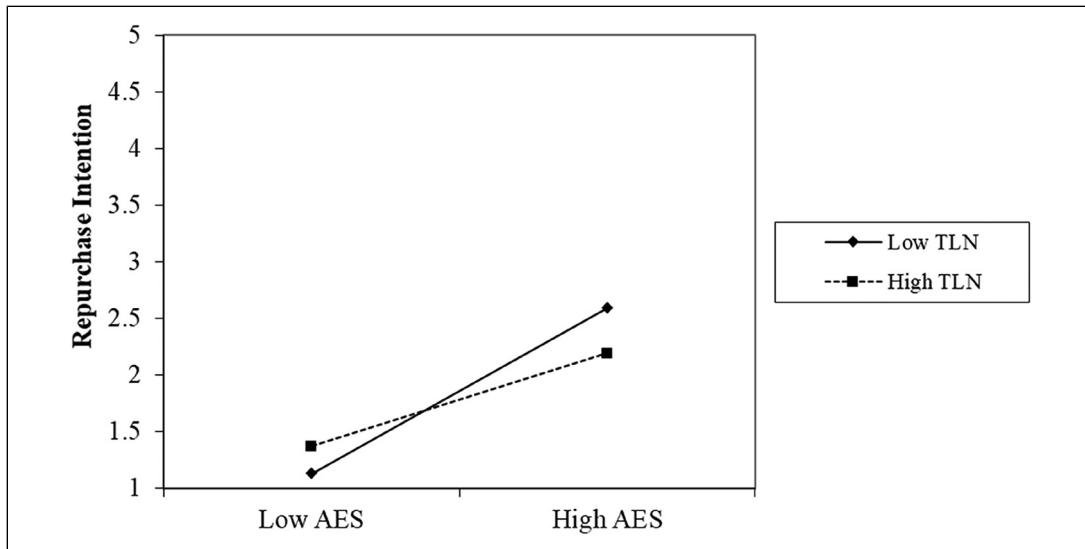
Fit Index	Recommended Thresholds	Results	Notes
SRMR	< .07	.057	Good Fit
GFI	>.95	.923	Acceptable Fit
NFI	> .95	.938	Acceptable Fit
IFI	> .95	.959	Good Fit
TLI	> .95	.932	Acceptable Fit
CFI	> .95	.959	Good Fit

Notes: SRMR = Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual; GFI = Goodness of Fit; NFI = Normed Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index.

**Table 8.** Regression weights.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
RPI	<---	ESC	.281	.075	3.747	***
RPI	<---	AES	.427	.084	5.057	***
RPI	<---	TLN	-.059	.075	-.790	.790
RPI	<---	IntESCxTLN	.051	.076	.667	.504
RPI	<---	IntAESxTLN	-.154	.076	-2.023	.043

Notes: ESC = Escapism; AES = Aesthetics; TLN = Temporal Illusion; RPI = Repurchase Intention; IntESCxTLN / IntAESxTLN = Moderating Effects of TLN; S.E. = Standard Error; C.R. = Critical Ratio; P = Significance Level; \*\*\* = P ≤ .001



**Figure 3.** The moderating effect of temporal illusion (notes: TLN = temporal illusion; AES = aesthetics).

more comprehensive picture of the flight-to-nowhere service.

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