



Travel shaming? Re-thinking travel decision making amid a global pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed the notion of “travel shaming” under the spotlight—tourists are concerned about being criticized for traveling during the pandemic. Yet the broader idea of travel-induced shaming, conceptualized as ethics-based evaluations in this paper, has not drawn much attention as consequence-based assessments in travel-related risk research. This paper presents two studies revealing a) how ethics- and consequence-based risk evaluations influence individuals’ travel attitudes/intentions and b) how message framing about responsible travel affects travel shame and individuals’ intentions to travel responsibly. Using structural equation modeling, Study 1 suggests that consequence- and ethics-based evaluations play key roles in predicting travelers’ attitudes/intentions to travel. Moreover, social trust and self-efficacy significantly affect both types of risk evaluations. Study 2 adopts an experimental design and shows that, compared with loss-framed and controlled message conditions, gain-framed messaging can reduce travel shame and encourage tourists to travel responsibly. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed.

1. Introduction

Travel-induced shaming occurs when a person faces a moral backlash (e.g., criticism for being selfish and unethical) due to seemingly irresponsible travel behavior (Cohen et al., 2011; Doran et al., 2022). Irresponsible travel is usually thought to violate social norms and possibly threaten others; examples include excessive flying (Cohen et al., 2011), visiting boycotted tourism destinations (Lovelock, 2008; Yu et al., 2020), and participating in animal-based tourism (e.g., hunting, rodeos) (Shani & Pizam, 2008). In such cases, travelers’ decision making extends beyond calculating personal benefits and risks and also concerns about ethical judgments: people must also consider how others will perceive them and how their own actions might affect other people (Böhm, 2003). For instance, flight shaming is “characterized by feelings of shame or embarrassment about the environmental impacts from traveling by airplane” (Doran et al., 2022, p. 1), which can change one’s perspective on the desirability of holiday-related air travel. One may hence argue that travel decision making and tourist behavior studies cannot be cocooned in conventional calculations of practical utilities; this line of research need to take full consideration of ethics-related factors (Lovelock, 2008).

The global pandemic has ushered in a new ethical consideration called “travel shaming”. Consider the following anecdote as an example: Kaytlin, an American college graduate, recently posted on her social media that she was taking a long-awaited trip to South Korea. She soon received a spate of judgmental comments accusing her of being selfish for traveling during the pandemic (e.g., “So selfish of people to travel for leisure” and “Travel? Are you serious?”). These reactions upset her and left her wondering whether she had done something wrong (CNN, 2021). People facing travel shaming may endure backlash and/or be labeled irresponsible because traveling during the pandemic can put others at risk (CNN, 2021). Ketchum (2020) discovered through a study that two-thirds (67%) of people would judge others morally for traveling before the judges deemed it completely safe to do so; over half of individuals surveyed stated they would censor their social media to avoid travel shaming.

Put simply, travel shaming represents a new form of social ethical pressure amid the pandemic (Glazier, 2021) that can evoke negative emotions such as shame. This form of shaming may lessen people’s approach tendencies (i.e., by tempering their travel-related attitudes and intentions) (Babin & Babin, 2001). Although many countries have recently re-opened to tourists or loosened their testing requirements for

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fully vaccinated visitors, consumer confidence in traveling remains relatively low: a 2022 survey found that only 34% of American adults indicated that they felt comfortable traveling again (Ballard, 2022). In addition to health concerns, traveling during the pandemic can lead to ethical judgments given its potential adverse effects on other people and destination communities (Daly, 2022). Addressing these ethical concerns marks an important first step towards long-term tourism recovery (Collins-Kreiner & Ram, 2020). Yet even as tourism scholars are paying closer attention to ethical dimensions of travel (Doran et al., 2022; Lovelock, 2008), few have explored the impacts of ethics-based evaluations and emotions on travel decision making under a tourism risk analysis framework. Similarly, scarce literature has outlined intervention strategies to remedy the consequences of ethical concerns when making travel decisions in relation to sustainable tourism development.

In an effort to bridge these gaps, this paper includes two studies investigating the influences of ethics-based evaluations on travel intentions along with strategies to mitigate the negative effects of travel shaming. The study expands the conventional risk evaluation framework by integrating consequence-based and ethics-based evaluations in travel decision making. Following Böhm (2003), this research conceptualizes ethical judgment as a type of risk evaluation. The negative aspects of ethics-based evaluations and emotions are emphasized accordingly. Based on the proposed framework, Study 1 explores the general associations between risk evaluations (i.e., ethics- and consequence-based) and travel attitudes/intention via structural equation modeling. The framework also integrates two key antecedents of risk assessment dimensions—social trust and self-efficacy (Ter Huurne & Gutteling, 2009). Aligned with a mood-repair view (Loewenstein et al., 2001), Study 2 examines the roles of message framing in influencing ethics-based emotions (i.e., travel shame) and intentions to travel responsibly, which could facilitate sustainable travel recovery. Study 2, therefore, expands Study 1 by narrowing the focus to travel shame and revealing a causal relationship between message framing around responsible behavior and travel intention as well as one's intentions to travel responsibly.

2. Literature review and conceptual framework

2.1. Consequence-based vs. ethics-based risk evaluations

People often judge risky activities based on potential outcomes (i.e., possible benefits and risks). Studies have demonstrated that consequence-based evaluations cannot fully predict behavioral intention; especially in the situation where risks are caused by human activity and the causal agent can be easily identified and blamed, the influence of ethics-based evaluation would be stronger than consequence-based evaluation (Böhm, 2003; Böhm & Pfister, 2000). Ethical considerations may be especially vital in risk evaluations but are often excluded from risk analysis research because “previous work has been concerned mostly with outcomes and not with actions” (Sjöberg & Winroth, 1986, p. 192). Therefore, in our paper, risk evaluations are judged based on two aspects: consequence- and ethics-based considerations (Böhm, 2003).

Consequence-based considerations involve “evaluating potential consequences or consequences that have already taken place” (Böhm, 2003, p. 200). Evaluations based on possible negative outcomes are akin to risk perceptions (Cowan & Kinley, 2014); put simply, perceived risks characterize consequence-based evaluations of risky activities, which have been widely studied in tourism (Chien et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2020). Although some scholars have limited consequence-based evaluations to negative consequences (Chien et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2020), Böhm and Pfister (2000) used the term “consequence-based evaluations” more leniently to include both negative and positive consequences (e.g., benefits) in risk research. For example, the advantages of certain environmentally harmful behaviors (e.g., the convenience of taking a plane) shape people's judgments of environmental risks. The

present study follows Böhm and Pfister (2000) and includes perceived risks and benefits within consequence-based evaluations in the proposed framework.

By contrast, ethics-based evaluations are “[judgments of] whether the risky behavior violates any ethical principles. Ethical judgments are judgments about what one ought or ought not to do in a certain situation” (Böhm, 2003, p. 200). Therefore, ethics-based evaluations center on assessing actions per se (i.e., behavior that can give rise to ethical concerns) (Böhm & Pfister, 2000). In addition, evaluation, “in particular moral evaluation, is somehow grounded in human sentiment” (D'Arms & Jacobson, 2000, p. 722) and represents an affect-based judgment about a specific action (Solomon, 1988). Ethics-based evaluations thus involve how an action makes a person feels (e.g., embarrassed, ashamed). Sjöberg and Winroth (1986) suggested that exposure to immoral or unethical activities can affect perceived risk. Ethics-based evaluations tied to survival can inform people's decisions about whether to accept a risky behavior. For instance, environmental shame is frequently considered when evaluating environmental risks and usually serves as social pressure to compel environmentally friendly behavior (e.g., green purchases) (Cowan & Kinley, 2014).

2.2. Antecedents and consequences of risk evaluations

2.2.1. Consequence-based evaluations, attitudes, and behavioral intentions

Consequence-based evaluations, especially perceived risks, have been broadly studied in risk research (Liu et al., 2019). Perceived risks refer to anxiety and the likelihood of harmful consequences that consumers face, whereas perceived benefits represent consumers' beliefs about what they might gain from engaging in an activity (Choi et al., 2013).

Perceived benefits and risks are interrelated and often manifest simultaneously in the decision-making process (Finucane et al., 2000). Both are significant predictors of attitudes and behavioral intentions in risk analysis (Liu et al., 2019). Some individuals depend on perceived benefits and risks when making decisions, while others rely predominantly on one or the other (Kim et al., 2014). Perceived benefits positively influence people's attitudes and behavioral intentions; the opposite is true for perceived risks (Choi et al., 2013).

In the course of travel, tourists leave their typical environment and enter a (usually) unfamiliar one. Risk perceptions are inherent to travel decisions. Perceived risks are negatively associated with individuals' travel-related attitudes and behavioral intentions (Huang et al., 2020; Quintal et al., 2010). On the contrary, the perceived benefits of travel can generate greater perceived value and behavioral intentions (Choi et al., 2013). The pandemic has rendered benefit–risk assessment more salient during travel decision making, as tourists may perceive greater risks or benefits to a trip (Bae & Chang, 2021). We, therefore, hypothesize that, during the pandemic.

H1. The perceived benefits of travel are positively related to one's attitudes towards travel.

H2. The perceived benefits of travel are positively related to one's travel intentions.

H3. The perceived risks of travel are negatively related to one's attitudes towards travel.

H4. The perceived risks of travel are negatively related to one's travel intentions.

2.2.2. Ethics-based evaluations, attitudes, and behavioral intentions

Ethics-based evaluations are central to risk analysis, particularly when a person's decisions affect others. Studies of pro-environmental issues have demonstrated that actors who engage in behavior that causes environmental problems, such as carbon dioxide emissions, do not necessarily suffer from direct consequences (e.g., floods caused by climate change) of their behavior. However, they are morally

condemned by others (Pfister & Böhm, 2001). Böhm (2003) indicated that “evaluation of environmental risks entails not only individual cost–benefit considerations but also ethical judgments, such as the equitableness of outcomes” (p. 201). Shaming, as a typical moral phenomenon, can convey an assessment of an action’s moral impact as well as its desirability. This ethics-based evaluation has been shown to decrease individuals’ approach tendencies (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985); in other words, shaming can distract people from expressing their desire to execute a behavior. People therefore usually hold less favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions towards activities that can evoke shame or humiliation (Babin & Babin, 2001). In the tourism context, tourists’ ethics-based evaluations can heavily mold their decisions as a result (Lee et al., 2017). For instance, Doran et al. (2022) found that flight shaming can reduce consumers’ desirability for air travel significantly. During the pandemic, research suggests that travel shaming has an important negative influence on the attractiveness of travel (Zaman et al., 2022). We hypothesize that, during the pandemic.

H5. Ethics-based evaluations are negatively related to one’s attitudes towards travel.

H6. Ethics-based evaluations are negatively related to one’s travel intentions.

Attitudes have long been regarded as a predictor of behavioral intention. The literature indicates that positive attitudes lead to stronger behavioral intentions (McMillan & Conner, 2003). Many tourism studies have also unveiled positive and significant relationships between tourists’ attitudes and intentions to engage in tourism activities (Choi et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2020). Put formally,

H7. Attitudes towards travel are positively related to travel intentions.

2.2.3. Antecedents of risk evaluation

Research on risk communication has revealed that self-efficacy and social trust are the most impactful antecedents in risk evaluations (Ter Huurne & Gutteling, 2009). As such, it is crucial to examine how social trust and self-efficacy influence individuals’ risk evaluations (i.e., perceived benefits, perceived risks, and ethics-based evaluations) during the travel decision-making process amid the pandemic.

The notion of social trust asserts that public perceptions of risk depend heavily on the amount of trust invested in managing agencies (i.e., the government and industry) (Wachinger et al., 2013). Public trust in institutions is a core factor driving risk assessment (Ter Huurne & Gutteling, 2009). Low trust is typically associated with higher risk evaluations of an institution (Liu et al., 2019). For example, social trust negatively affects perceived risk but positively affects perceived benefits in terms of food consumption, which involves health-related risks and benefits (Legendre & Baker, 2020). According to Chen et al. (2018), social trust can also alleviate concerns about moral hazards and trusting relationships tend to be associated with fewer ethical concerns. For instance, when consumers trust regulators in financial services, they generally believe that these regulators fairly and honestly implement clients’ requests at low costs, and thus customers’ ethical risk evaluations about the financial service will reduce (Chami et al., 2002). Furthermore, Nihlén (2018) found that citizens’ trust in the government’s vaccination policy is negatively correlated with their ethical considerations in risk communication. We, therefore, contend that social trust can negatively influence ethics-based evaluations during the pandemic.

H8. Social trust is positively related to one’s perceived benefits of travel.

H9. Social trust is negatively related to one’s perceived risks of travel.

H10. Social trust is negatively related to one’s ethics-based evaluations of travel.

Self-efficacy is concerned with “people’s beliefs in their ability to influence events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 2010, p. 1). According

to Ter Huurne and Gutteling (2009), self-efficacy is positively related to the perceived sufficiency of risk-related information and one’s ability to manage risky behavior. That is, when people feel confident about controlling outcomes perceived risks will decline whereas the perceived benefits of the behavior (if any) will be amplified. In terms of self-efficacy and ethical considerations, Snipes et al. (1999) revealed that one’s self-efficacy affects how ethical risks are evaluated. For example, anti-smoking advertisements normally stress the risks of smoking, which can spark ethical concerns (i.e., stigmatizing smokers and those with smoking-related diseases). However, if consumers believe that they can quit smoking as long as they wish (i.e., high self-efficacy), they are more likely to have low levels of ethical concerns of the ads (Manyiwa & Brennan, 2012). In the tourism and hospitality context, efficacy was also found to affect consumer’s ethical judgment. For instance, using a restaurant context, Ding (2022) found that consumers with higher efficacy could show greater ethical tolerance and less negative ethical judgment. Hence, a negative relationship exists between self-efficacy and ethical risk evaluation. Self-efficacy is thus a significant predictor of how individuals evaluate risks, benefits, and ethical concerns when traveling during the pandemic.

H11. Self-efficacy is positively related to one’s perceived benefits of travel.

H12. Self-efficacy is negatively related to one’s perceived risks of travel.

H13. Self-efficacy is negatively related to one’s ethics-based evaluations of travel.

2.3. Mood repair and message framing

Böhm and Pfister (2000) described ethics-based emotions as feelings resulting from ethical violations, which naturally accompany ethical judgments. Böhm (2003) outlined two forms of ethics-based negative emotions: self- and other-related. The former type is directed at the self and implies self-blame, while the latter type is directed at others and ascribes responsibility outside oneself (Böhm, 2003). Different from other-related ethical emotions (e.g., anger) which pertain to others’ behavior, self-related emotions (e.g., shame) stem from how others see oneself, involving self-reflection and self-evaluation (Haidt, 2003). Specifically, shame has been deemed a predominantly negative moral emotion; “a shamed person who is focusing on negative self-evaluations would naturally be drawn to a concern over others’ evaluations” (Tangney et al., 2007, p. 4). Consumers are likely to feel shame upon engaging in acts that are unethical or harmful to others or society (Böhm, 2003), consistent with our theorization that traveling during the pandemic can lead to travel shame due to others’ negative judgment of self.

Individuals who are in a poor mood generally use mood regulation strategies to reduce or alleviate negative emotions (Werner-Seidler & Moulds, 2012). The mood-repair view suggests that people in a negative affective state are less able to absorb additional negative information and prefer encouraging information to restore their state (Loewenstein et al., 2001). In other words, a negative mood decreases one’s confidence in dealing with negative information. People in such moods (e.g., after having been travel shamed) will be motivated to repair their mood and reduce negative affect by focusing on uplifting information.

Message framing can greatly influence negative emotions such as shame (Amatulli et al., 2019). Message framing describes how the same information can have differential persuasive effects when its presentation focuses on distinct goals, namely gains versus losses (Levin et al., 1998). Loss-framed messages highlight the adverse consequences (i.e., losses and costs) of not performing an action (i.e., “If you don’t do it, you will suffer a loss”), while gain-framed messages highlight positive consequences (i.e., gains and benefits) associated with an action (i.e., “If you do it, you will benefit”) (Levin et al., 1998). Essentially, gain-framed

messages emphasize the gains/benefits of conducting a behavior, whereas loss-framed messages stress the losses/costs of failing to do so (Levin et al., 1998).

According to the mood-repair theory, people in a positive or negative mood will respond differently to gain and loss-framed messages (Loewenstein et al., 2001). In most cases, individuals in a negative mood seek positive information to improve their affective state. Conversely, people in a negative mood usually try to avoid negative information; negatively framed messaging thus leads to lower desirability and greater rejection (Norris & Brookes, 2021). Similarly, Keller et al. (2003) demonstrated that people in a negative state would be more persuaded by a gain-framed message and take the promoted action based on expected positive outcomes. Yet, a loss-framed message could lead to further degradation of mood and leave people less able to cope with additional negative information (Keller et al., 2003).

Therefore, we propose that the framing of responsible travel messages can be a useful strategy to assuage negative ethical emotions and encourage responsible travel behavior. Responsible travel covers various actions aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of tourism while maximizing related benefits. When traveling responsibly, tourists thoughtfully plan their trips to ensure enjoyable experiences while positively influencing the destination and local people (CREST, 2022). Responsible travel behavior during the pandemic includes mask wearing, social distancing, and adhering to other health and safety guidelines. In the current context, a gain-framed message about responsible travel will underscore the benefits of taking responsible traveling behaviors such as wearing a mask, social distancing, and following destination guidelines during travel; a loss-framed message will focus on the detriments of not abiding by these recommendations. Travel shame is unpleasant, such that people may be motivated to avoid it and hence respond favorably to a positive message. Accordingly, we hypothesize that during the pandemic.

H14. a–b: Compared with loss-framed messages and a control group (i. e., no message), gain-framed messages will more positively influence one's intentions to (a) travel; and (b) travel responsibly. Furthermore, compared with a control group, loss-framed messages will result in even lower persuasion.

H15. a–b: Travel shame mediates the effects of message framing on one's intentions to: (a) travel; and (b) travel responsibly.

2.4. Overview of studies

With a focus on a comprehensive understanding of risk analysis, this research aims to reveal the significant role of risk evaluations in travel decision-making in a risky setting. The COVID-19 pandemic serves as the research context for our study. By conceptualizing consequence- and ethics-based evaluations as two forms of risk evaluation (Böhm, 2003; Böhm & Pfister, 2000), Study 1 aims to establish an integrated risk analysis framework to understand tourists' travel decision making during the pandemic. Specifically, it examines the negative effects of ethics-based evaluations on one's travel attitudes and intentions during the pandemic. Negative ethics-based evaluations are expected to inhibit people's travel intentions and well-being. Given the importance of tourism recovery for both destination development and individual benefits, it is critical to understand how to persuade tourists to travel responsibly in the face of negative feelings evoked by ethics-based evaluations (e.g., travel shame). Study 2 adopts the mood-repair view (Loewenstein et al., 2001) and translates the theoretical insight from Study 1 into actionable recommendations. In particular, Study 2 examines the effect of message framing on reducing travel shame and encouraging responsible travel during the pandemic.

3. Study 1

This study's primary objective was to examine how ethics-based risk

evaluations, in conjunction with consequence-based risk evaluations, influence people's travel attitudes/intentions. Considerable evidence exists regarding the impacts of consequence-based evaluations (e.g., perceived risks and benefits) on travel decisions (e.g., Chien et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2020). However, few studies have incorporated the ethical dimension into the risk analysis framework or validated its influence on travel decision making. Therefore, as pictured in Fig. 1, Study 1 included an initial test of the general effects of ethics- and consequence-based evaluations on travel decisions (Hypotheses 1–7) along with two key antecedents of risk evaluations: social trust and self-efficacy (Hypotheses 8–13).

3.1. Methodology

To achieve the study objectives, an online survey was performed that covered several core constructs: social trust, self-efficacy, perceived risks, perceived benefits, ethics-based evaluations, attitudes, and travel intentions (Table 2). Social trust indicates public trust in managing agencies (e.g., governments, regulators, industry) and was measured with three items (e.g., "I trust the government authorities that regulate and supervise the tourism industry to prevent COVID-19") (Legendre & Baker, 2020; Liu et al., 2019). Self-efficacy captures one's beliefs about their ability to perform recommended behaviors; this construct was evaluated with three items (e.g., "I would be able to do what is needed to prevent COVID-19 during travel") from the scale used by Demuth et al. (2016). Perceived benefits were assessed using six items (e.g., "Travel can take me out of a stressful situation") applicable to the tourism and hospitality context (Kim & Jang, 2017). COVID-19 is a public health crisis, and health risk measurement thus constituted a key focus of this study. Such assessment usually includes risk likelihood and risk-related anxiety (Ferrer & Klein, 2015). Therefore, perceived risks were measured with four items (e.g., "I'm worried about the potential threat of COVID-19 during travel"; "I'm likely to contract COVID-19 during travel") (Babcicky & Seebauer, 2017). Ethics-based evaluations are grounded in human sentiment, and dependent on one's internal sense or feeling (D'Arms & Jacobson, 2000). Ethics-based evaluations in this study were thus measured using three items. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate to what extent an action (e.g., taking a leisure vacation during COVID-19) would make them feel ashamed (Andrews et al., 2002; McKeogh et al., 2018). Finally, participants were asked to indicate their attitudes towards travel (e.g., "How positive or negative do you feel towards travel during the new normal of COVID-19?") (Huang et al., 2020) and their travel intentions (e.g., "I will consider taking a leisure vacation soon") (Quintal et al., 2010) with 3 items, respectively. All items were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale.

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board from the authors' institution to ensure compliance with ethical protocols. The board has reviewed objectives and contributions, and procedures that ensure anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and participant consent for this research. Data were collected in September 2020 via a consumer panel managed by Prodege, a leading professional marketing company based in California. As a GRIT top 50 full/field service provider, Prodege has a large and engaged audience, which allows us to target appropriate samples, ensure confidentiality by separating respondents from the research team and shorten the timeframe to get timely results (Prodege, 2021).

We targeted U.S. residents over the age of 18 who had traveled for leisure for at least one night (internationally or domestically; that is, those who had traveled out of the state where his/her primary residence was) in the past 12 months. Quota sampling was used in reference to the demographic profile of U.S. residents according to the latest U.S. Census (Table 1). To avoid bias, participants were excluded if they worked in tourism and hospitality themselves or who had household members employed in the industry. To ensure data validity, respondents were discarded from data analysis if they 1) submitted incomplete responses, or failed any screening criteria (i.e., age, nationality, whether taking

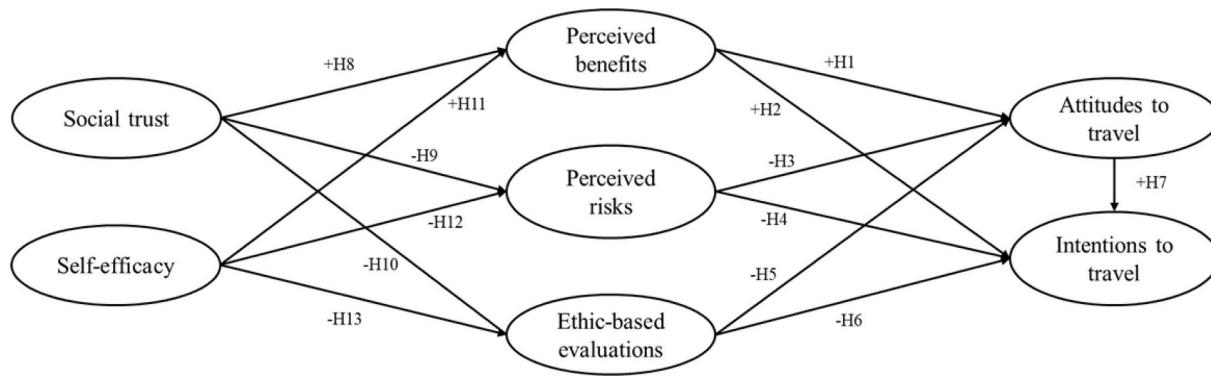


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of Study 1.

Table 1
Sample profile (Study 1: n = 1216; Study 2: n = 851).

Categories		US. Census 2019	Study 1	Study 2
Gender	Male	48%	46.63%	45.60%
	Female	52%	53.37%	54.40%
Age (years)	18–20	5%	1.40%	1.20%
	21–44	41%	43.75%	40.20%
	45–64	33%	36.18%	25.10%
	>65	21%	18.67%	23.50%
Region	Northeast	17%	17.02%	18.00%
	Midwest	21%	20.48%	20.6%
	South	38%	34.05%	37.70%
	West	24%	28.45%	23.70%
Ethnicity	American Indian, Alaska native or Aleutian	0.7%	0.41%	1.10%
	Asian	5.76%	5.43%	7.80%
	Black or African American	12.69%	13.98%	12.5%
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.18%	0.08%	0%
	Caucasian/White	61.51%	63.73%	64.4%
	Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	18.90%	15.54%	13.00%
	Other	0.26%	0.66%	1.10%
	Not to answer		0.16%	0.20%

leisure vacation in the past 12 months) or attention check questions (i.e., “For this query, please choose ‘2’”) (Abbey & Meloy, 2017). For these reasons, 304 responses were excluded; 2) were considered rush work with less than 31% of the average survey completion time (2395 s) (Li, 2012). A total of 133 responses were excluded; or 3) presented suspicious patterns that were either polarized to the higher end (≥ 6) or the lower end (≤ 2) of the 7-point scale (Li, 2012). For this reason, 30 responses were excluded. Ultimately, 1216 valid questionnaires were retained in the final data set. Most respondents (79.93%) were between the ages of 21 and 64, and 46.63% were men (Table 1). Nearly two-thirds (61.17%) earned an annual household income between US \$30,000 and US\$104,999, and 62.92% of respondents held a college degree or higher.

4. Results

4.1. Measurement model

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied for data analysis. First, a Shapiro–Wilk test was conducted in SPSS (Version 26). Significant p -values were observed for the variables ($p < 0.001$), suggesting a non-normal data distribution. Mplus was employed for analysis because the program allows users to choose various techniques for model estimation and can deal with non-normal data. Specifically, the weighted least squares mean- and variance-adjusted (WLSMV) estimator outperforms other estimations when processing non-normal data and when dealing with ordered categorical data from Likert-type scales, it was therefore deemed appropriate in the current paper (Finney & DiStefano, 2006). Common method bias was evaluated using Harman’s one-factor

test. The total variance extracted by one factor was below the recommended threshold of 50%, indicating the absence of common method bias in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Next, constructs’ reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were tested. Table 2 shows that Cronbach’s α coefficients ranged from 0.88 to 0.96 for all factors, indicating sufficient internal consistency. Composite reliabilities were 0.70 or above (ranging from 0.92 to 0.96), demonstrating adequate internal validity and consistency for each construct in the model.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to examine the measurement model. The comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were computed to assess goodness of fit. The results of CFA indicated that our measurement model fit the data well ($\chi^2_{(254)} = 2182.02, p < 0.001; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.03; RMSEA = 0.07$). Convergent validity was verified by computing the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) for each construct. All AVE values were greater than 0.50 and CR values surpassed 0.60 (See Table 2), suggesting that the model had good convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The discriminant validity of the model was tested by comparing the AVE values to the squared correlations between corresponding constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All AVE values were greater than the squared correlations of paired constructs, reflecting good discriminant validity.

4.1.1. Structural model and hypothesis testing

We tested Hypotheses 1–13 by estimating the structural model in Mplus VERSION 8.3. Results suggested a good model fit ($\chi^2_{(261)} = 3777.95, p < 0.001; CFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.06$).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and confirmatory factor analysis results.

Factors and items (Cronbach's α)	Mean	SD	Standardized factor loading	S.E.	p-Value	Composite reliabilities	AVE
Social trust (0.89)						0.92	0.79
I trust the government authorities that regulate and supervise the tourism industry to prevent COVID-19.	3.38	1.93	0.80	0.01	<0.001		
I trust tourism industry regulators in relation to the licensing of health and control of COVID -19.	3.65	1.76	0.93	0.01	<0.001		
I trust that travel service/product providers ensure every necessary step is taken to protect consumers' health.	3.96	1.77	0.93	0.01	<0.001		
Self-efficacy (0.93)						0.94	0.84
I would be able to do what is needed to prevent COVID-19 during travel	4.75	1.83	0.87	0.01	<0.001		
I would be capable of effectively preventing COVID-19 during travel	4.44	1.84	0.93	0.01	<0.001		
I feel confident about protecting myself from infecting COVID-19 during travel	4.41	1.898	0.96	0.01	<0.001		
Perceived risks (0.88)						0.92	0.75
I'm worried about the potential threat of COVID-19 during travel	5.03	1.88	0.94	0.01	<0.001		
I'm afraid of potentially contracting COVID-19 during travel	4.88	1.94	0.94	0.01	<0.001		
I'm likely to contract COVID-19 during travel	3.87	1.80	0.84	0.01	<0.001		
I'm more likely to contract COVID-19 during travel compared to other people	3.60	1.95	0.73	0.02	<0.001		
Perceived benefits (0.94) (The following statements are about travel for a leisure vacation during the new normal of COVID-19, please indicate how much you agree with them)						0.95	0.78
Travel can take me out of a stressful situation	5.32	1.75	0.89	0.01	<0.001		
Travel can give me a sense of achievement	4.86	1.81	0.86	0.01	<0.001		
Finding a great place to travel can reinforce positive feelings about myself	5.05	1.75	0.90	0.01	<0.001		
Travel is a way to take my mind off things that are bothering me	5.12	1.83	0.91	0.01	<0.001		
Travel can fill an empty heart	4.80	1.86	0.83	0.01	<0.001		
Travel is a positive distraction	5.09	1.80	0.91	0.01	<0.001		
Ethics-based evaluations (0.91)						0.94	0.84
Taking a leisure vacation during COVID-19 can make me feel ashamed	3.55	2.12	0.92	0.01	<0.001		
Taking a leisure vacation during COVID-19 can me feel embarrassed	4.04	2.21	0.96	0.01	<0.001		
Taking a leisure vacation during COVID-19 can me feel humiliated	3.24	2.09	0.88	0.01	<0.001		
Attitudes (0.96)						0.96	0.89
How positive or negative do you feel towards travel during the new normal of COVID-19?	3.61	1.78	0.91	0.01	<0.001		
How good or bad do you feel towards travel during the new normal of COVID-19?	3.64	1.70	0.97	0.00	<0.001		
How favorable or unfavorable do you feel towards travel during the new normal of COVID-19?	3.61	1.77	0.96	0.00	<0.001		
Intentions (0.89)						0.93	0.81
I will consider taking a leisure vacation soon.	4.09	2.10	0.98	0.00	<0.001		
I expect to take a leisure vacation soon	3.86	2.15	0.96	0.00	<0.001		
I want to take a leisure vacation soon.	5.10	1.95	0.76	0.02	<0.001		

Note: N = 1216.

Table 3
Summary of structural model results in Study 1 (H1-H13) and results in Study 2 (H14-H15).

Study	Hypothesis	Paths	β	S.E.	p-Value	Results
Study 1	H1	Benefits → Attitudes	0.40	0.02	<0.001	Supported
	H2	Benefits → Intentions	0.34	0.02	<0.001	Supported
	H3	Risks → Attitudes	-0.45	0.02	<0.001	Supported
	H4	Risks → Intentions	-0.04	0.03	0.15	Unsupported
	H5	Ethics → Attitudes	-0.30	0.02	<0.001	Supported
	H6	Ethics → Intentions	-0.19	0.02	<0.001	Supported
	H7	Attitudes → Intentions	0.48	0.03	<0.001	Supported
	H8	Trust → Benefits	0.47	0.06	<0.001	Supported
	H9	Trust → Risks	0.79	0.07	<0.001	Unsupported
	H10	Trust → Ethics	0.68	0.07	<0.001	Unsupported
	H11	Efficacy → Benefits	0.01	0.06	0.87	Unsupported
	H12	Efficacy → Risks	-1.26	0.06	<0.001	Supported
	H13	Efficacy → Ethics	-1.15	0.06	<0.001	Supported
Study 2	H14a	Message framing (gain vs. loss vs. control) → Intentions to travel			<0.001	Supported
	H14b	Message framing (gain vs. loss vs. control) → Intentions to travel responsibly			<0.001	Supported
	H15a	Message framing → Travel shame → Intentions to travel				Partially supported
	H15b	Message framing → Travel shame → Intentions to travel responsibly				Partially supported

Note: Benefits: perceived benefits of travel; Risks: perceived risks of travel; Ethic: ethics-based evaluations of travel; Trust: social trust; Efficacy: self-efficacy; Attitudes: attitudes towards travel; Intentions: intentions to travel.

Table 3 provides a summary of the SEM and hypothesis testing results. All hypotheses were supported except for H4, H9, H10, and H11. Perceived benefits positively affected attitudes towards travel as well as intentions to travel during the pandemic, whereas perceived risks negatively influenced attitudes towards travel; H1–H3 were thus supported. Yet, no statistically significant relationship emerged between perceived risks and travel intentions, failing to support H4. The effects of ethics-based evaluations on attitudes and intentions were each negative and significant, lending support to H5 and H6. Attitudes towards travel during the pandemic positively influenced travel intentions, supporting H7. Consistent with H8, social trust had a significant positive effect on perceived benefits; however, social trust also had a positive influence on perceived risks and ethics-based evaluations, which contradicted our hypotheses. H8 was therefore supported while H9 and H10 were not. Self-efficacy negatively influenced perceived risks and ethics-based evaluations but failed to influence perceived travel benefits. As such, H12 and H13 were supported and H11 was not.

The R² values indicated the explanatory power of the variable(s) leading to each construct. Social trust and self-efficacy explained 22.6% of the variance in perceived benefits, 56.9% of the variance in perceived risks, and 49.4% of the variance in ethics-based evaluations. Furthermore, perceived benefits, perceived risks, and ethics-based evaluations collectively explained 67.5% of the variance in attitudes towards travel during the pandemic and explained 69.9% of the variance in intentions to travel during the pandemic along with attitudes. The explanatory power of consequence- and ethics-based risk evaluations on attitudes/intentions towards travel was substantial according to the classification of R² values (weak: R² = 0.19; moderate: R² = 0.33; substantial: R² = 0.67) (Kim, 2018). Corresponding results are displayed in Table 3.

5. Study 2

Study 1 identified the negative roles of ethics-based risk evaluations (i.e., travel shaming) on individuals' intentions to travel during the pandemic. Given the pronounced contributions of tourism—especially international tourism—to destinations and locals' livelihoods, it is imperative to restore travelers' confidence and promote sustainable tourism development. This thus begs the question: what can the industry do about travel shaming? Scholars have recommended that people consider ways to avoid "moral injury" during tourism recovery, such as by being fully vaccinated; visiting places with a low overall incidence of COVID-19; and adhering to guidelines around masking, screening, and testing (Korducki, 2021). Although these measures are considered responsible travel behaviors and can reduce the risk of virus transmission, exactly how this information should be delivered to tourists remains unclear: some pro-environmental studies have highlighted gain-framed messages as more persuasive while others have argued that loss-framed messages are the most effective (Grazzini et al., 2018; White et al., 2011).

To address this question in the current context, Study 2 further explored the impacts of message framing about responsible travel on

tourists' travel shame and responsible travel intentions (see Fig. 2). An experimental design was adopted to focus on feelings of travel shame and to consider whether message framing, as an intervention strategy, can effectively reduce travel shame while influencing travel intentions and intentions to travel responsibly during the pandemic.

5.1. Methodology

Following the same procedure as in Study 1, we collected data via Prodege in April 2021. Among them, 194 responses were excluded because they did not meet the screening criteria, failed to answer attention check questions, or were considered incomplete; 48 responses were deleted for a completion time less than 31% of the average length (2068 s) (Li, 2012); and 6 responses presented suspicious a pattern. Therefore, the final sample size was 851. Slightly less than half (45.60%) were men. Many were either 21–44 (40.20%) or 45–64 (25.10%) years old (Table 1). Most participants' annual household income ranged between US\$30,000 and US\$104,999 (65.90%); 56.60% held a bachelor's degree or above.

First, to make the travel-shaming context more specific and realistic, the study scenario included real-life examples (e.g., comments and posts) collected from social media to characterize travel shaming. Participants were asked to imagine that they were going to take a leisure trip and had posted their travel plans on social media (e.g., Instagram, Twitter). Soon after, they received some negative comments (e.g., "You may endanger other people around you. It's selfish. I think you'd better stay in your house").

The main goal of Study 2 was to empirically test how gain-framed messaging (vs. loss-framed messaging vs. a control group) about responsible travel could affect travel intentions and intentions to travel responsibly. Following Grazzini et al. (2018) and White et al. (2011), a 3-cell (gain-framed message vs. loss-framed message vs. control) design was used to test whether respondents' intentions to travel (as well as to travel responsibly) varied among the gain-framed, loss-framed, and control conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to each condition. In the gain-framed message condition, participants were told "If you travel responsibly during the pandemic, which includes following guidelines at the destinations, wearing masks and maintaining social distance, you may protect others (such as family, friends, and strangers) as well as yourself, and enjoy your trip." The gain-framed message about responsible travel highlighted the benefits of traveling responsibly during the pandemic. However, in the loss-framed message condition, the message emphasized the costs of not traveling responsibly: "If you travel irresponsibly during the pandemic, which includes not following guidelines at the destinations, not social distancing and traveling without masks, you may pose risks to others (such as family, friends and strangers) as well as yourself, and mess up your trip." In the control condition, participants received neither of the above messages regarding responsible travel, representing the no-message condition.

After reading the presented message, participants were asked to rate the levels of their ethics-based emotions about taking a leisure trip during the pandemic on a 3-item 7-point Likert scale (i.e., "embarrassed/ashamed/humiliated"). The average score for travel shame was retained for data analysis (Cronbach's α = 0.97). After rating travel shame, participants were asked to indicate their travel intentions based on three items (e.g., "I would still consider taking the leisure trip"; "I'm still looking forward to my leisure trip"; "I would still go on with my travel plan"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The average score for travel intentions was calculated for data analysis (Cronbach's α = 0.97). Finally, a single item was used to test participants' general intentions to travel responsibly (i.e., "I would travel responsibly if I take the leisure trip"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A single item was chosen over multi-item scales because the latter may produce an incomplete evaluation and neglect some aspects of responsible travel that are important to travelers during the pandemic (e.g., choosing a suitable destination; considering pandemic-related restrictions in one's

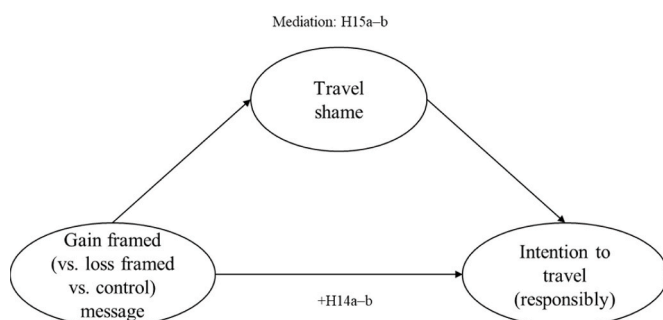


Fig. 2. Conceptual model of Study 2.

home country and destination; following instructions, wearing a mask, and social distancing). A “global” single-item measure instead allows respondents to “consider all aspects and individual preferences of the certain aspects of the construct being measured” (Nagy, 2002, p. 79).

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Manipulation check

For the manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate their extent of agreement that the message emphasized costs/losses and benefits/gains. Following the study design of Grazzini et al. (2018) and White et al. (2011), the control group received no message manipulation. A manipulation check was thus only conducted in the gain-framed and loss-framed conditions. An independent sample *t*-test suggested that participants in the gain-framed message treatment perceived more gains/benefits from the message focus versus those assigned to the loss-framed message condition ($M_{\text{gain}} = 5.56$, $M_{\text{loss}} = 3.52$; $t = 12.29$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, participants assigned to the loss-framed message condition reported higher levels of perceived losses/costs based on the message focus than those assigned to the gain-framed message condition ($M_{\text{gain}} = 3.61$, $M_{\text{loss}} = 5.40$; $t = 11.18$, $p < 0.001$).

5.2.2. Effects of message framing on travel intentions and intentions to travel responsibly

Travel intentions. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant effect of message framing on travel intentions [$F(2,848) = 17.43$, $p < 0.001$]. Planned contrasts showed that participants exposed to the gain-framed message ($M_{\text{gain}} = 5.09$, $SD = 1.85$) were more likely to take a trip than those exposed to the loss-framed message [$M_{\text{loss}} = 4.15$, $SD = 2.13$; $t(564.96) = -5.65$, $p < 0.001$] and those in the control condition [$M_{\text{control}} = 4.77$, $SD = 1.82$; $t(559.03) = -2.03$, $p = 0.043$]. Furthermore, a significant difference was observed between the loss-framed message condition and the control condition in terms of travel intentions [$t(554.63) = -3.73$, $p < 0.001$] (see Fig. 3); Hypothesis 14a was thus supported.

Intentions to travel responsibly. Study 2 further indicated whether a message-framing effect (gain-framed vs. loss-framed vs. control) influenced participants’ intentions to travel responsibly. A one-way ANOVA suggested a significant effect of message framing [$F(2,848) = 12.18$, $p < 0.001$]. Planned contrasts showed that for the gain-framed message, participants’ intentions to travel responsibly ($M_{\text{gain}} = 3.40$, $SD = 2.17$) were significantly higher than for participants exposed to the loss-framed message [$M_{\text{loss}} = 2.59$, $SD = 1.91$; $t(567.12) = -4.74$, $p < 0.001$] and those in the control condition [$M_{\text{control}} = 2.82$, $SD = 1.98$; $t(559.32) = -3.32$, $p < 0.001$]. However, participants in the loss-framed message condition and in the control condition did not exhibit significantly different intentions to travel responsibly [$t(555.42) = -1.38$, $p = 0.171$] (see Fig. 3); as such, Hypothesis 14b was partially supported.

5.2.3. Mediating effect of travel shame

Model 4 in the PROCESS macro extension (Version 4) for SPSS (Hayes, 2017), a commonly used path analysis modeling tool for estimating direct and indirect effects, was used to test the mediating effect of travel shame. A mediation analysis was carried out via bootstrapping with 5000 replications and a 95% confidence interval (CI) (Hayes, 2017).

Travel intentions. Results indicated that a gain-framed message (vs. loss-framed message) significantly reduced travel shame ($\beta = -0.69$, $p < 0.001$) and increased travel intentions ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$). Travel shame negatively affected travel intentions ($\beta = -0.60$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the bootstrap results suggested a significant indirect effect of the gain-framed message (vs. loss-framed message) on travel intentions through travel shame ($\beta = 0.41$, 95%CI: [0.2123,0.6123]). Travel shame partially mediated the relationship between message framing (gain vs. loss) and travel intentions, lending partial support to H15a.

Intentions to travel responsibly. A gain-framed message (vs. loss-framed message) negatively affected travel shame ($\beta = -0.69$, $p < 0.001$) and positively predicted travel intentions ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$). Travel shame also negatively affected intentions to travel responsibly ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$). Bootstrap results revealed a significant indirect effect of a gain-framed message (vs. a loss-framed message) on responsible travel intentions through travel shame ($\beta = 0.27$, 95% CI: [0.0652,0.1980]). Thus, travel shame partially mediated the relationship between message framing (gain vs. loss) and intentions to travel responsibly, partially supporting H15b.

6. General discussion

Risk evaluation is an important aspect of tourism research given its role in travel decisions. However, studies have primarily focused on consequence-based risk evaluations (i.e., perceived risks); while perceived benefits as well as ethics-based evaluations, have frequently been overlooked in a risk analysis context (Bae & Chang, 2021; Huang et al., 2020). Travel not only affects individuals’ well-being and health but also involves interactions with other people and with local communities. During the pandemic, travel shaming is tied to the perceived selfishness of individuals who choose to vacation, making travelers more sensitive to ethics-based evaluations (Glazier, 2021).

Study 1 showed that consequence- and ethics-based risk evaluations both influenced travel decision making. Specifically, a positive relationship manifested between perceived benefits and travel attitudes/intentions; this pattern has been documented previously (Choi et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2014), albeit rarely in the risk context (e.g., a global pandemic). As anticipated, ethics-based evaluations (i.e., travel shaming) negatively affected respondents’ travel attitudes/intentions because travel amid the pandemic was viewed as undesirable. Traveling during a pandemic is not easy and can even lead to stress, because “those who travel are fiercely stigmatized for being negligent, ignorant, and

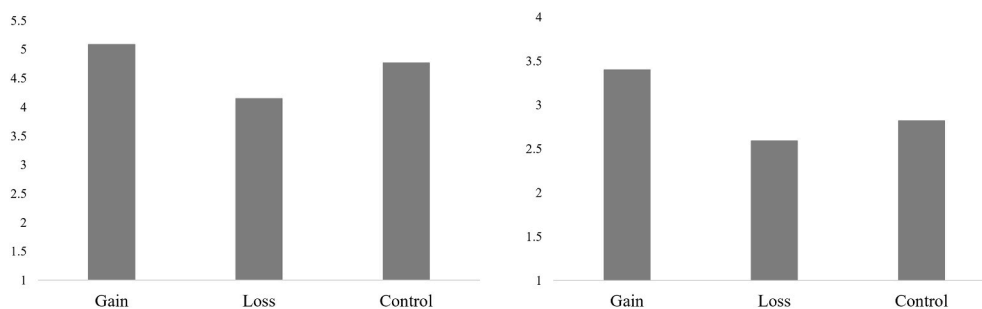


Fig. 3. Intentions to travel (left) and to travel responsibly (right) among participants in different conditions.

selfish, which spurs a broad spectrum of moral and emotional conflict for travelers" (Zaman et al., 2022, p. 4). Moreover, travel shaming is not unique to a pandemic context, and it has been specified as a major component of consumers' negative ethical considerations in various consumption contexts (e.g., hedonic consumption, flight shaming) (Zaman et al., 2022). Thus, our findings are consistent with ethical decision-making studies showing that people's ethics-based evaluations influence their perceptions and subsequent behavior in relation to certain activities (Sweeney et al., 2010). For instance, in an environmental protection context, ethics-based evaluations can promote pro-environmental behavior and discourage poor behavior (Doran et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Doran et al. (2019) found that ethics-based evaluations have stronger impacts than consequence-based evaluations on risk-related behavior, because man-made risks are associated with greater perceived moral blameworthiness, and the causal agent is more likely to be held accountable and punished. People who consider a societal risk (e.g., climate change) as morally reprehensible will judge it as significant and severe (Bassarak et al., 2017). The results of the present study were similar to prior ethical decision-making research (Bassarak et al., 2017; Doran et al., 2019): although both perceived risks and ethics-based evaluations appeared to inspire negative attitudes towards travel, only ethics-based evaluations significantly diminished travel intentions during the pandemic; perceived risks did not affect travel intentions directly. These patterns may be attributable to individuals' increased self-efficacy and coping strategies during the pandemic: consumers might feel confident protecting themselves from contracting COVID-19, but they usually have little control over how the pandemic affects others' behavior or evaluations (Zheng et al., 2021). Another possible reason involves asymmetries in consumers' evaluations between perceived risks and benefits under these circumstances. Because benefits are higher-level goals that motivate individuals' choices, perceived risks may not directly influence behavior in the presence of benefits (Chiu et al., 2014).

In terms of the antecedents of risk evaluation, social trust exerted a significant positive impact on perceived benefits. Contrary to expectations, people who trusted governments, industry regulators, and service providers appeared more concerned about the risks of contracting COVID-19 during travel and were more likely to experience travel shame. A possible reason could be when individuals depend on official sources, which often caution consumers about the severity of COVID-19 and claim that travel is among the main culprits of viral transmission, people perceive greater risks related to traveling during the pandemic. Thus, a high level of social trust might lead tourists to perceive greater threats from the pandemic and to be more likely to experience shame if they travel. Consistent with earlier studies, self-efficacy is pivotal in forecasting perceived risks and ethics-based evaluations (Fong et al., 2020). Identifying ways to provide consumers with simple but effective risk prevention measures is therefore critical during the pandemic.

In addition, Study 2 proposed an important marketing strategy—message framing—that can influence tourists' travel intentions and responsible travel intentions in general. Consistent with the mood-repair view (Keller et al., 2003; Norris & Brookes, 2021): gain-framed messages about responsible travel were found to boost travel intentions during the pandemic and encourage tourists to travel responsibly—both directly and indirectly—by reducing travel shame. Relatedly, van't Riet et al. (2010) found that compared with gain-framed messages, loss-framed messages were perceived as more threatening. This reaction produced stronger negative affect and lower levels of information acceptance. However, different from studies showing that loss-framed messages containing pro-environmental information could induce more positive recycling behavior than a no-message condition (Grazzini et al., 2018; White et al., 2011), our no-message condition generated more positive travel intention than the loss-framed message condition. This discrepancy may have arisen because a negative mood and a loss-framed message can result in higher levels of perceived risk

for unfavorable consequences (Keller et al., 2003). Therefore, loss-framed messages failed to mitigate travel shame and could even be counterproductive, hence decreasing general travel intentions as well as intentions to travel responsibly during the pandemic.

6.1. Theoretical contributions

This paper contributes to the literature in several ways. First, the risk evaluation framework has been expanded by adding an ethical dimension to clarify travel decisions when travel can elicit moral backlash from others. Macbeth (2005) pointed out that ethical considerations influence all human decisions. However, existing tourism risk analysis has been dominated by consequence-based dimensions (e.g., perceived benefits and risks) (Chien et al., 2017; Choi et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2020), whereas the ethical dimension (e.g., travel shaming) is often ignored because of the outcome-focused orientation that occurs in previous studies (Sjöberg & Winroth, 1986). As indicated by Zaman et al. (2022), travel shaming can diminish the positive impact of regenerative travel, which significantly undermines tourist attractiveness. In addition to COVID-19, scientists postulate that similar outbreaks could become more frequent in the future, considering factors such as population growth, environmental degradation, involvement in the food system, and increasing contact between humans and disease-harboring animals (Penn, 2021), therefore, our findings on travel shaming can apply in a long-term perspective leading to the future of human lives. Furthermore, by highlighting the role of travel shaming, our work expands the scholarship on travel decision making when tourism carries ethical implications for people and society, advocating a more thoughtful approach (Macbeth, 2005), and providing theoretical implications for travelers' decision making and behavioral research in various contexts from flight shaming, over-tourism, and animal-related tourism, to tourism boycotts (Doran et al., 2022; Lovelock, 2008; Macbeth, 2005; Shani & Pizam, 2008). Moreover, our results demonstrate the prominence of the ethical dimension as an inhibiting factor that surpasses perceived risks in influencing travel intentions, enriching the understanding of tourists' ethical decision making.

Second, our findings stress the significance of perceived benefits in the consequence-based risk evaluation framework. Perceived risks and perceived benefits were combined to further show that both are inseparable in risk analysis. Finucane et al. (2000) indicated that high benefits often accompany high risks. Travel decisions are based on the trade-offs between risks and benefits, which is particularly relevant during the pandemic. Results indicate that even in a high-risk travel setting (e.g., the pandemic), the benefits of travel are still important to tourists' attitudes/intentions towards travel. Hence, travel decisions are not solely determined by perceived risks but also promoted by perceived benefits. As such, destination managers and tourism service providers should emphasize the physical and psychological benefits of travel and provide supporting services and goods to satisfy tourists' needs.

Third, this research unveiled notable impacts of social trust and self-efficacy on consequence- and ethics-based evaluations. Contrary to expectations, findings conveyed a positive relationship between social trust and perceived risks as well as ethics-based evaluations, thereby presenting a trust paradox: trust may not always be positive for reducing risk perceptions. This outcome aligns with a prior risk analysis of COVID-19 in that "participants with high levels of social trust indicate more health and economic fears" (Siegrist et al., 2021, p. 797).

Finally, this work enriches the literature on message framing and responsible travel marketing by showcasing how gain- and loss-framed messages influence consumers' travel decisions. Tourism scholars have demonstrated how ethical emotions influence tourists' decision making (Lee et al., 2017); nevertheless, few have discussed which marketing strategies can alleviate negative ethics-based emotions (e.g., shame) and encourage travelers to travel responsibly. As an important constituent of negative affect, shame plays a significant role in influencing consumer behaviors. Especially in the pandemic context, travel shame has become

a potential challenge for the recovery of destinations and even the whole travel industry. Therefore, it is paramount for tourism destinations and marketers to unveil the patterns of consumer behaviors by understanding the role of travel shame as well as its influencing factors (Zaman et al., 2022). By showing how message framing can foster responsible travel based on the mood-repair view (Keller et al., 2003; Norris & Brookes, 2021), the current findings emphasize the significant effects of gain-framed messages about responsible travel on travel shame. These results reinforce the need to continue advancing message-framing strategies in the tourism literature.

6.2. Practical implications

First, this study provides useful guidance by underlining the effects of ethics-based evaluations and gain-framed messages in encouraging responsible travel during and after the pandemic. COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on tourism development. As optimistic news about vaccines has boosted hope for recovery, industries and governments are taking action to reignite tourism—restoring traveler confidence, providing clear information to travelers and businesses, and updating response measures to maintain capacity (OECD, 2020). However, people still have lingering concerns about travel safety and are still susceptible to ethical backlash due to the pandemic (Ballard, 2022; Daly, 2022). Furthermore, although health and safety measures (e.g., mask wearing and social distancing) can reduce risk and promote responsible travel, how to effectively communicate such information to potential markets remains a challenge. Based on this reality, our study can provide meaningful insights for policymakers and industry practitioners to rebuild travel confidence and foster sustainable tourism recovery. For instance, when tourism service providers advertise products or share information with consumers (e.g., on social media), it would be wise to simultaneously cite the benefits of responsible travel by using a gained-framed message (e.g., “To protect yourself/others and enjoy your trip, please wear a mask and maintain social distance in public spaces”). In addition, carefully managing the valence of marketing messages can also help the travel and tourism industry achieve sustainable development in other contexts (e.g., ecotourism, rural tourism) and avoid protecting public benefits (e.g., health issues and environmental issues) at the expense of the industry’s livelihood. Especially nowadays, social media have transformed the way tourists make decisions before going on a trip. According to this study, a gain-framed marketing message of responsible tourism can reduce ethical concerns and encourage tourists to travel responsibly. This research implication also aligns with the suggestion of Font et al. (2021) that travel agents and marketers should communicate sustainability to customers as a people-centered value proposition that drives responsible decision-making.

Second, enhancing customers’ self-efficacy can reduce their risk evaluations and perceived stress. Newswire, a newswire service for journalists seeking health and science news, provides guidelines on how to bolster self-efficacy and cope with the pandemic. Tips include seeking out and learning from others who have dealt with the situation successfully; obtaining persuasive information, preventative knowledge, and reassurance from personal (e.g., family members and friends), professional (e.g., employers), and public sources (e.g., governments and health officials); and releasing physical stress and negative emotions (e.g., having a good cry, getting quality sleep, meditating, journaling, sharing, and exercising) (Hladek, 2020). Destination managers are advised to adopt these simple but effective guidelines to promote travelers’ self-efficacy. Furthermore, self-efficacy has also been shown to play an important role in other tourism settings that are considered risky (e.g., Huang et al., 2020). Our findings further support the significant effect of self-efficacy in ethics-related tourism contexts that involve risk taking behavior, such as air travel and post-pandemic travel recovery. Thus, if marketers or policy makers try to promote any responsible travel behaviors, they need to increase consumers’ self-efficacy beliefs by improving confidence and positive feelings about taking responsible

behaviors in communication messages.

Finally, the findings of this paper highlight the role of the ethical dimension in travel decision making. Destination marketing organizations should not only understand consumers’ risk–benefit evaluations in travel decisions but also attend to travel and tourism related controversies and consumer responses with a vigilant eye. For example, today’s value-conscious tourists are increasingly cognizant of the potential negative effects of their travel activities (e.g., travel-related carbon emissions, over-tourism, environmental consequences). It is crucial for destinations and tourism agencies to promote ethical actions that will help to protect the environment and other groups during travel, such as being kind to the environment, respecting other tourists, and appreciating the local community (Stainton, 2020). In addition to environmental issues, the links between tourism and politics can also lead to ethical dilemmas. A leisure travel decision may face ethical judgments when deciding where to visit (e.g., traveling to a country ruled by a despot or military junta) (Cuba, 2019) or what service providers to use. Under these circumstances, travel decisions cannot be understood completely until ethics are considered. Tourism stakeholders thus need to ponder consumers’ ethics-based evaluations and emotions so as not to alienate consumers, and tourism service providers need to be mindful of the growing consumer activism and develop moral intelligence in marketing practices.

6.3. Limitations and future directions

This research has some limitations. First, we mainly focused on self-blame (i.e., travel shame), which arises when people attribute travel-related criticism to themselves. Disapproval from others on social media threatens travelers’ own social identity and can motivate them to change their behavior. However, people’s travel actions can also be influenced by other-related ethical emotions (e.g., anger, outrage): individuals react negatively to others’ irresponsible behavior. For instance, tourists may feel angry about the unethical actions of industry operators, guides, or other tourists. This sense can in turn affect tourists’ travel decisions, word of mouth, and travel experiences. Our paper did not address how other-related emotions (e.g., anger caused by others) can influence travel behavior. Subsequent work can distinguish the effects of self- and other-related ethics-based evaluations.

Second, the research sample was limited to U.S. respondents and did not consider whether cultural differences influence perceived travel shame or the impact of message framing. Travelers from a collectivist culture might perceive stronger travel shame than those from an individualist culture. Moreover, the effect of message framing could be more salient in collectivist cultures (e.g., Asian countries). Future research may test how the roles of travel shame and its intervention strategies vary across cultural backgrounds.

Third, these studies tested the influence of risk evaluation and the impact of message framing on travel intentions amid the pandemic, especially at the peak of the pandemic and at the start of the vaccine rollout. How such effects function in other ethics-embedded contexts (e.g., environmental issues in tourism, over-tourism, and animal tourism) warrants further discussion. Subsequent research can analyze associated contexts to paint a richer picture of how ethics-based evaluations inform travelers’ decision making. Furthermore, we did not analyze the effect of information sources on message framing. Future studies could further examine whether gained-/loss-framed messages from different sources (e.g., governments vs. marketers vs. users; credible vs. incredible; expert vs. non-expert) affects ethical emotions and travel intentions differently.

Credit author statement

Xingyu Huang: Conceptualization, Data Collection and Formal Analysis, Writing. **Xiang (Robert) Li:** Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Supervision, Review and Editing. **Lu Lu:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Review and Editing.

Impact statement

Travel shaming, as a type of ethical consideration, goes far beyond the pandemic context, but could exist in any travel behavior that has the potential to make negative impacts (e.g., over-tourism). Our findings demonstrate that ethical considerations play a crucial part in consumers' decision-making. Especially given the challenges of population growth, environmental degradation, and frequent outbreaks, value-conscious tourists are increasingly cognizant of the potential negative effects of travel activities on the environment, other tourists, and local communities. Therefore, tourism scholars, policymakers, and practitioners should not only consider risk–benefit evaluations when analyzing travel decision-making but also attend to tourism related controversies and the growing ethical activism with a vigilant eye. Our work expands the scholarship on travel decision-making when tourism carries ethical implications for people and society, providing useful insights into ethics-based travel decision-making analysis and appropriate communication strategies for responsible travel to promote long-term and sustainable tourism development.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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