AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH TO REVEAL THE HABITS, MOTIVATIONS, AND TENDENCIES OF GENERATION Z TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AS A LEISURE ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Generation Z's (Gen-Z) technology-centered lifestyles have resulted in a departure from traditional behavior patterns, particularly in their use of social media platforms (SMPs) for leisure activities. In this regard, an exploratory, qualitative research approach was adopted in the present study, which deeply understands the perceptions and feelings of Gen-Z members' engagement with the SMPs for their leisure pursuits. Inductive content analysis was performed on the data collected from 107 Gen-Z member university students selected using convenience sampling. The perspectives and internal and external motivations of Gen-Z members towards producing content on SMPs are discussed within the scope of social comparison and social presence theories, while their views on whether to perform recreational activities are built on the theoretical foundations of leisure constraints (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural) and facilitators. Gen-Z behaviors regarding joining or not joining groups were framed based on social media engagement (behavioral, affective, and cognitive) and leisure constraints. The results obtained will lead to the opening of new discussion areas for the creation of modern marketing strategies for the recreation industry, marketing organizations, and public institutions and organizations.

INTRODUCTION

In the past 25 years, social media platforms (SMPs) have profoundly reshaped how we interact and form relationships, providing instant communication across the globe with friends, family, and professional

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contacts (McCarthy et al., 2023). These platforms offer immediate global communication among friends, family, business associates, and social groups, facilitating interactions beyond traditional networks and providing diverse information including leisure activities (Da Mota & Pickering, 2020). At the same time, platforms have become central to our lives as crucial channels through which people spend their leisure time intensively. SMPs can highlight the unique features of destinations and motivate visitors to share attractive travel experiences, which can lead to increased visitor density or overcrowding in regions. In addition, SMPs can highlight the unique features of destinations and motivate visitors to share attractive travel experiences, which can lead to increased visitor density or overcrowding in regions (Song & Abukhalifeh, 2022), while encouraging community members to develop content, create value, and interact effectively with other community members (Nusair et al., 2024). Da Mota and Pickering (2020) attributed the surge in popularity of recreational activities in protected areas to shared content, including visuals, narratives, and geolocation details.

Cao et al. (2024) emphasize that people mainly engage with SMPs such as TikTok for entertainment, social connection, and to capture and share special moments. As such, in the present research, we intended to scrutinize the perceptions, behaviors, and motivations of Gen-Z members towards recreational activities by focusing on members of Gen-Z who use SMPs intensively and actively. Gen-Z is a digital generation that leads the way by voluntarily participating in various online platforms, always online, and is connected by using social media applications. Gen-Z's exposure to technology pushes members of the generation to actively use SMPs to perform functions such as communicating with their families and friends, making travel decisions (Rahimi & Stylos, 2022), and obtaining information about various topics (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). In addition, Gen-Z trusts SMPs and can be influenced by intense exposure to attractive visuals on social media and advertisements (Rahimi & Stylos, 2022). Since Gen-Z is a hyper-connected generation with different travel arrangements and needs, investigating their usage habits, motivations, values, attitudes, and behavior patterns of SMPs towards recreational activities using SMPs are not only a significant contribution to the literature but also a vital necessity for the recreation industry as a rising consumer segment. The growth of this tourist/recreationist segment requires the development of new models based on the implementation of a visually appealing and integrated cross-device marketing strategy (Rahimi & Stylos, 2022) rather than traditional consumer marketing strategies (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). In this

respect, this study aims to shed light on the usage habits, behavioral tendencies, and motivations of Gen-Z based on their leisure time activities on SMPs and to pioneer the creation of modern marketing strategies by revealing their behavioral patterns on SMPs as an important consumer segment. Considering that Gen-Z will be the main consumer of tourism products in the future (Nowacki et al., 2023), it is crucial to reveal the habits, motivations, and tendencies of the generation members in using SMPs in a holistic manner to create new marketing strategies and make the necessary plans (Uysal, 2022; Tanase et al., 2023). As underlined by Robinson and Schanzel (2019), generation-based research that identifies different consumer groups and their specific needs and desires plays a key role in the development of marketing strategies for businesses and industries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SMPs

Social media, one of the most powerful online networking tools, has been integrated into real-world social and economic life (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Social media is an online setting (Zhao et al., 2018) or effective marketing channel (Ho et al., 2022) that provides users with an ultimate venue for engagement through features such as participation, open communication, dialogue, community building, and connection (Zhao et al., 2018). It is also acknowledged as an innovative Internet-based information-sharing platform that allows users to create and share content through social interactions (Ghaderi et al., 2023). The most important feature of social media is that it offers new technological frameworks (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, Facebook) that enable users to create and share their own media instead of being passive media consumers (Cox & Paoli, 2023). Additionally, Cohen (2011) compiled the characteristics and nature of the term from the definitions of social media as follows: a) it depends on information technology, as social media encompasses online tools, applications, and platforms; b) social media affects human behavior and real lives because it directs users to create a virtual community by using cross-platforms; and c) social media are important communication channels that enable the interaction and cooperation of participants (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

In today's digital age, social media is indispensable for information exchange, socialization in virtual spaces, and real-time life-sharing (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022; Zhao et al., 2018). These platforms include online forums, blogs, chat rooms, discussion boards, and social networking sites such as

Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube (Yağmur, 2020; Ghaderi et al., 2023). These online platforms allow people with similar interests to come together, discuss common problems and issues, obtain information, and offer support on a variety of topics, such as health, recreation, and vocational and technical issues (Bronstein et al., 2016). SMPs are frequently used to share geolocation data associated with images, text, and routes for recreational activities (Da Mota & Pickering, 2020). As social media is seen as a new way for people to connect socially, it has turned into fulfilling the mission of a completely online environment built on the contributions and interactions of participants rather than a new way of communicating (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). On the flipside, on social media, tourists/recreationists share not only information-related features (price, weather, tourist attractions) (Ho et al., 2022) but also experiences that refer to the subjective evaluations of individuals and the experience of activities. Information, emotions, dreams, and fantasies related to a trip or recreational activity are also included in this experience and are shared through photos, videos, emoticons, and other linguistic markers on network platforms (Zhao et al., 2018).

The SMPs play a vital role in the decision-making of tourists/recreationists (Chu et al., 2020; Yağmur, 2020; Aktaş et al., 2024), word-of-mouth communication, and travel recommendations (Cheng & Edwards, 2015). Whereas SMPs enable travelers to discover new destinations/activities, it influences behavior in triggering or discouraging visits/activities to the destination. Furthermore, SMPs also affect collective responses to disasters, including coordination of activities in crisis situations, communication with society, and communication between citizens, while reducing the risks of participating in the activity/exploration of the destination (Aktaş et al., 2024). However, the use of SMPs can have a positive impact on users' sense of social connectedness by creating social capital, disseminating innovative ideas (Jabeen et al., 2023), and contributing to personal representation, while users making negative comparisons with themselves (McCarthy et al., 2023) cause many negative experiences such as social media addiction, fatigue, exhaustion, fear of missing opportunities, and fake news (Jabeen et al., 2023).

Gen-Z

Generation Z, commonly known as Gen-Z, represents a new sociological cohort that is deeply influenced by information technology, the Internet, and social networks (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Generation Z is designated by a plethora of monikers, including iGeneration, Online

Generation, Post-Millennials, Gen Tech, and others; each epithet, such as Generation C—derived from "constantly clicking" and "connectivity"— and Generation R—indicative of responsibility—captures a distinct facet of this cohort's identity (Uysal, 2022). In addition to these labels, the names "postmillennial", "centennials", "pivotals" or "digital natives" are also used for members of Gen-Z (Robinson and Schanzel, 2019). There is a debate in the body of knowledge on the beginning and ending year of Gen-Z (Viţelar, 2019; Goh & Okumus, 2020; Jeresano & Carretero, 2022; Giachino et al., 2023; Singh & Sibi, 2023), leading to a flexible birth year range for generation membership. Nonetheless, there is scholarly agreement that the birth years spanning 1995 to 2012 delineate the Generation Z demographics (Fisu et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Generation Z is distinguished by attributes, such as technological adeptness, flexibility, intelligence, and cultural tolerance, underpinning their robust global interconnectivity and significant virtual engagement (Fisu et al., 2024). In this regard, Gen-Z witnesses a series of facts in virtual areas, from political situations to natural disasters/environmental crises, social movements, war, and terrorism (Çalışkan, 2021). These global events affect the collective consciousness of Gen-Z and cause the development of human values, such as universality, helpfulness, self-direction, success, and security in generation members (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). Additionally, Generation Z is recognized for its open-mindedness and affinity for ad hoc culture, although there may be diminished sensitivity to privacy concerns. Nevertheless, they are broadly acclaimed for their compassion, community spirit, independence, self-affection, determination, ambition, preparedness, and prudence (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021).

Gen-Z has a life intertwined with the Internet, as it grew up with instant global connections provided by tools such as smartphones, tablets, wearable devices, and SMPs (Viţelar, 2019), and they see the Internet as an inseparable part of their lives (Monaco, 2018). Gen-Z is a generation that stays up to date or follows the current issues spread through mass media or the Internet and is competent in using the Internet for entertainment, learning, and business purposes (Fisu et al., 2024). Additionally, GenZ is conceptualized in connection with mobility, social networks, and digitalization (İlhan et al., 2022; Jeresano & Carretero, 2022) because they have grown up with access to digital technologies, and they skillfully use these tools (Jeresano & Carretero, 2022) to collect information from various sources, analyze it, and draw meaningful conclusions (Singh & Sibi, 2023).

Gen-Z is seen as a content creator because it uses social media and instant Internet connection to access resources (Vitelar, 2019), and they heavily prefer SMPs to better connect with their friends and family. This situation causes both Gen-Z members to spend more time on SMPs and Internet tools, and traditional forms of communication to change into online communication relationships, which have become a new norm (Uysal, 2022). Gen-Z not only uses social media for communication but also for creative purposes, work, learning (Fisu et al., 2024), and recreational activities. Uysal (2022) underlines that the members of Gen-Z are active social media users and have contact at many points, causing them to comment on reality and the environment in which they live or engage in recreational activities, and to share their opinions and attitudes via SMPs. In addition, while members of this generation tend to share photos and videos on SMPs, it is also emphasized that they not only use content on the Internet but also contribute to the content using their creativity. In this respect, Nalçacı İkiz and Öztürk (2022) characterized Gen-Z as a transforming society that uses information and communication technology, and the digital world also changes them. The resulting two-way interaction causes Gen-Z to develop different understandings of relationships, contacts, conversations, and learning, and to turn into individuals who evaluate their leisure time differently (Nalçacı İkiz & Öztürk, 2022). While Gen-Z prefers experiences rather than owning things, and the search for "unforgettable experiences" makes these group members stand out, their open-minded, to-do list-oriented lives and tendency to visit unusual places and do new things push them to intensely travel and carry out recreational activities (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019). Additionally, Generation Z's approach to activities such as opportunities for celebration, social engagement, meaning creation, and empowerment illustrates their inclination to transform such experiences into forms of hedonistic behavior (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study employed an exploratory, qualitative research methodology to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's perceptions and behaviors, specifically related to their use of SMPs for leisure activities (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research was designed based on the phenomenological pattern, which is the most frequently preferred qualitative research pattern. In phenomenology, light is shed on

individuals' subjective experiences regarding the facts or situations they experience (Lester, 1999). In this way, in-depth data are provided to help researchers understand the experiences of the participants in detail. In addition, in this study, transcendental phenomenology was chosen because its focus is on revealing and understanding lived experiences (Yalçın, 2022). An interview form with eight questions was created by examining relevant literature in detail. The prepared questions were sent to two academicians with expertise in qualitative research methods in the fields of tourism and recreation science, and their opinions were asked. Their feedback prompted modifications to the wording to augment clarity, culminating in the formulation of eight open-ended questions that were suitable for a pilot test. The pilot test was administered to five university students representative of Generation Z. Following the affirmation that the questions were well received and clear, the main field study commenced. The research questions were structured to elicit detailed responses as follows:

• *Please specify your three most preferred SMPs when sharing content/posts (pictures, photos, videos, information, etc.) related to your leisure activities.*

• *On average, how much time do you spend per day on SMPs (X platform (Twitter), Facebook, WhatsApp, Threads, Instagram, etc.)?*

• *Which content (images, photographs, videos, information, etc.) do you share most among the content related to your leisure activities?*

• *What do you think about sharing content/posts on the SMPs about any leisure activity?*

• *What factors push or direct you to share content/posts about your leisure activities via social media tools?*

• *How do the contents/posts you encounter on social media tools affect your ability to engage in leisure activities?*

• *What effect does a content or post you encounter on any social media tool about leisure time have on you regarding participating in or not participating in this activity?*

• *Why do you think people participate or do not participate in groups created on social media tools related to leisure activities?*

Sampling and Data Collection

The study was conducted among students at Siirt University, members of Generation Z, using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is frequently used in exploratory research (Cochran, 1997). Convenience sampling has advantages such as time, cost, and speed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013), providing appropriate conditions and studying

volunteers who want to participate in the research (Christensen et al., 2015), and allowing the study of situations that are thought to contain rich information (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The reasons why Gen-Z was included in the research focus are that they have a lifestyle intertwined with technology, they prefer digital communication (Ali et al., 2023) and social platforms instead of face-to-face interaction (Ali et al., 2023) and they are technologically competent (Tang, 2019). Also, the reason why Siirt University was chosen as the study area was that the recreational opportunities around the campus and city center were limited. For a person to be a member of Generation Z, it is necessary to be born between 1995 and 2012 (Fisu et al., 2024), and since all participants are in this age range, they are considered members of Generation Z (Please see Table 1). Research data were collected between October 15 and November 30, 2023, from 11 departments (Table 1) by academics (3) and students (3) who were informed/trained (Informational meeting on points to consider before data collection) in the qualitative method. The data collection process was carried out on a voluntary basis in the classroom environment, before the beginning of the course or during breaks, to ensure that the participants felt comfortable and provided sincere answers. After analyzing the responses of 107 participants, it became evident that data saturation had been achieved, as no new information was forthcoming, thereby signaling the completion of the data collection phase. The duration for completing the interview forms ranged from 10 to 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was carried out on the data collected from the participants, in line with the stages specified by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) and Altunışık et al. (2022). In this regard, inductive precoding was performed on the data obtained, and the categorized codes and initial codes were discussed and transformed into final codes. Themes were created based on the codes, and then the suggested codes and themes were agreed upon and transformed into findings.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure construct validity, participants were provided with information about the purpose and subject of the research, and any explanations that would direct them were avoided. In line with the internal and external reliability of the research, all processes of the qualitative research method were specified in detail, and the results obtained were interpreted through analytical generalization, away from the influence of the researcher. In this

study, two academicians were asked to code the data for reliability and to ensure consistency between coders, as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994). All kappa values indicate high agreement between the coders (Karagöz, 2017) and are presented in the relevant tables. Also, support was received from two academics working at a university that provides English education in the field of tourism science regarding the suitability of the Turkish-English translations of the participant opinions in the interview forms.

RESULTS

This research focuses on the tendencies, values, attitudes, and motivations of Generation Z university students regarding their utilization of SMPs for leisure purposes. The objective is to elucidate the behavioral patterns of this emergent demographic on SMPs, thereby informing the formulation of contemporary marketing strategies. Initially, the research presented data on the characteristics of the participants and their SMPs usage patterns. Subsequently, participants' responses were analyzed and organized into various codes and themes via content analysis, aligned with the sequence of questions posed in the interview protocol.

Considering the demographic profile of the participants, more than half of the participants are women (58.9%). The participants mainly consist of 1st and 2nd year students (69.1%) and the age range of 18-23 (86.9%), while approximately half of the participants (53.3%) were students at the School of Tourism and Hotel Management. While roughly 60% of Gen-Z members spend 0-4 hours of their lives on SMPs, nearly 1 in 10 tend to spend time on social media whenever they have free time, and half of the participants (56.0%) tend to prefer sharing photos/pictures on these platforms.

In terms of leisure activities, Instagram and WhatsApp have emerged as the platforms of choice for communication among Gen-Z members. A marginal portion of respondents (1.1%) disclosed not utilizing the SMPs. The primary reasons cited by this minority for eschewing SMPs include perceived time wastage and opposition to systemic impositions. The sentiments of the participants disinclined towards SMPs usage were encapsulated as follows:

"…wasting time on these platforms is nonsense! It feels like it's stealing most of our precious time…(P20), …it eliminates the confidentiality of private life by revealing our private lives and beautiful moments… (P84), …I do not prefer it because I see it as an

imposition or extension of capitalism, which causes people to consume more and want more of everything… (P36)"

Table 1. *Demographic profile*

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	63	58.9
	Male	44	41.1
Year of being a student	1st	23	21.5
	2nd	51	47.6
	3rd	11	10.3
	4th	22	20.6
Age	18-20	39	36.4
	21-23	54	50.5
	24 -26	14	13.1
Departments	Tourism and Hotel Management	57	53.3
	Education	12	11.2
	Physical Education and Sports	8	7.5
	Economic and Administrative Sciences	7	6.5
	Arts and Science	6	5.6
	Health	6	5.6
	Social-Technical Services	3	2.8
	Veterinary	3	2.8
	Foreign Languages	2	1.8
	Design	2	1.8
	Theology	1	0.9
Spend leisure time on social media (X platform, Facebook, WhatsApp, Threads, Instagram, etc.)	0 < leisure time ≤ 2 hours	30	28.0
	2 < leisure time ≤ 4 hours	34	31.8
	4 < leisure time ≤ 6 hours	22	20.6
	6 < leisure time ≤ 8 hours	10	9.3
	Every moment I find free	11	10.3
Total		**107**	**100.0**
Shared Content	Photograph/picture	84	56.0
	Video	45	30.0
	Info	21	14.0
Total		**150**	**100.0**

The analysis of participants' perspectives on sharing leisure activity-related content on SMPs yielded two distinct thematic categories: positive and negative. Members of Gen-Z have a predominantly positive view of content sharing. A positive perspective is presented through three themes: personal, social, and third parties (businesses, marketing organizations, etc.). Among these themes, members of Gen-Z highlighted elements related to the personal contribution of sharing content for recreational activities on the SMPs. While Gen-Z expresses fewer comprehensive opinions on its social contribution, they emphasize that these shares are prominent for the recreation industry, marketing companies, and other third organizations that collect data on the Internet and that they make significant contributions

to the recognition and advertising activities of businesses, especially with the shared content.

Table 2. *Preferred platforms for sharing content/posts at leisure activities*

SMPs	Frequency	Percent
Instagram	91	34.0
WhatsApp	76	28.4
X Platform (Twitter)	30	11.2
TikTok	18	6.7
Facebook	15	5.6
Snapchat	14	5.2
YouTube	6	2.2
Telegram	5	1.9
Threads	5	1.9
I do not use/prefer	3	1.1
VSCO	3	1.1
SUGO	2	0.7
Total	**268**	**100.0**

The category of negative features of shared content for recreational activities was divided into personal and societal themes. Gen-Z sees the personal effects of negativity as gaining unnecessary information, causing a waste of time, eliminating freedom and creativity, and exposing private life in an unlimited way for an infinite period. Regarding societal aspects, despite the presence of content related to leisure activities on social media platforms, the absence of regulatory mechanisms for the content shared, coupled with Generation Z's concerns about social deterioration, the erosion of cultural values, the transformation of traditional communication channels and forms, and normalization of potentially negative exemplars, fosters a sense of unease within this demographic cohort.

Table 3. *Participant opinions regarding content production on the SMPs*

Positive		Negative	
Theme	**Code**	**Theme**	**Code**
Personal	Making learning easier	Personal	Unnecessary information
	Self-improvement		
	Talent discovery		
	Useful information provider		
	Delivering experience		Waste of time
	Socialization		
	Easy access to information		
	Arousing desire		
	Creativity		Violation of privacy
	Increasing self-confidence		
	Immortalize memories		
	Effective and efficient use of time		Restricting freedom/creativity
	Reflecting thoughts and perspectives		
	Awareness (activities done and to be done)		
	Economy		

Societal	Social development	Societal	Reduced respect for moral values
	Tolerance		
	Making others happy		Disruption of communication (such as with family, friends, and others)
	Stress reduction		
	Integration		
Third parties	Recognition/Advertising		Bad example - taking it for granted
	Gaining knowledge		

Kappa value: 0.95

The motivations of Generation Z members for engaging with SMPs for leisure pursuits are analyzed through the lens of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, as delineated by Ryan and Deci (2000). While intrinsic or self-determined motivations describe the realization of an action in individuals through an innate desire, belief, or attitude to perform an action (Dodds et al., 2022), extrinsic or controlled motivations describe people's aspirations, life goals (Correia & Kozak, 2017) which refers to motivation arising from influences outside the individual (Mehmetoğlu, 2012). The bulk of Gen-Z members' motivation to share recreational activities on SMPs stems from internal desires, rather than external influences. Participants' opinions on intrinsic motivations:

"…the content I share is liked by others…(P4), …showing others the moments when I am happy…(P6), …to be able to assist people in any matter while performing recreational activities… (21), …to inspire people by touching them…(P38), …to feel better and be happier by breaking the daily routine by staying in touch with a wide audience… (P42), … ...discovering new activities and especially doing the activities of people I follow closely on social media… (P69)".

Participant expressions for extrinsic motivations:

"…for popularity by showing my expertise while performing the activities I enjoy…(P45), …due to the need to show those around me and other people how active a person I am…(P56)".

Table 4. *Motivations that lead to sharing content on SMPs*

Theme	Code
Intrinsic	Feeling better
	Being happy
	Be satisfied
	Increase self-confidence
	Touching people
	Get rid of boredom
	Snobbism
	Desire to share experiences
	Posts/content being liked by others
	Arouse curiosity/jealousy
	Socializing/interacting
	Flaunting
	Remaining as a memory

	Helpful to others
	To be an example/inspire someone
	Reaching a wide audience
	Make good use of your leisure time
	Distracting people from daily routine
Extrinsic	Ability to mobilize others
	Awareness
	Helping people gain experience/expand their horizons
	Social perception (appearing active, being accepted, introducing yourself to others, being famous/popular)

Kappa value: 1.00

Perspectives of Gen-Z members on the values and attitudes created by the content they encounter on SMPs related to recreational activities, Based on Hadinejad et al.'s (2019) attitude classification, a thematic classification was made as favorable and unfavorable. Attitude is a psychological concept that expresses a person's positive and negative evaluations of objects, places, and topics, and can shape an individual's future behavior (Hadinejad et al., 2019). In other words, attitude has a leading function in shaping a person's behavior, that is, in forming behavioral intentions (Kim & Kwon, 2018). The favorable opinions of Gen-Z regarding the contents encountered were reflected in the participants' opinions more broadly than the unfavorable ones. While favorable attributes emphasize broadening one's interests, enriching one's knowledge of an activity or subject, and discovering new talents, emphasizing one's self-knowledge and development, they also refer to time management and activity expertise in terms of making good use of time, increasing activity expertise, and preventing routines. Unfavorable attitudes and values reflect views related to laziness and addiction caused by the following factors.

Table 5. *Participant values and attitudes towards content encountered on SMPs*

Theme	Code	Theme	Code
Favorable	Increasing or triggering the urge/curiosity to participate in the activity	**Unfavorable**	Addiction
	Realizing the need		
	Inspire the desire to share similar content on the platform		
	Expand your interests		
	Enriching information		
	Discovering new talents		
	Transforming leisure activities into productive ones (specialization)		Becoming passive - becoming lazy instead of turning to activity
	Using time efficiently and effectively		
	Preventing routine		

Kappa value: 0.90

Gen-Z's views on the transformation of the contents they encounter in SMPs for recreational activities into behavior are divided into three upper dimensions: personal, interpersonal, and structural facilitators. Raymore (2002) based on the facilitator factors that determine which factors enable or encourage participation in an activity. The views of Gen-Z members mainly include opinions associated with intrapersonal facilitators' aggregate dimension, which compromises personal characteristics, emotions and feelings, and personal development themes. While the interpersonal facilitators aggregate dimension consists of the theme of socialization and social acceptance, which includes interaction, group membership, and the ability to perform the activity with other people, structural facilitators cover the global system that emerges when a fact or situation turns into a trend. In contrast, the perspectives that the content they encounter on SMPs for recreational activities pushes people not to participate in the activity are divided into aggregate dimensions based on intrapersonal and structural leisure constraints developed by Crawford and Godbey (1987). Leisure constraints urge factors that hinder participation in any activity, preference, and leisure experience (Son et al., 2024). The aggregate dimension of intrapersonal constraints is represented by the theme of individual characteristics, and while the theme is associated with shared content having negative characteristics, not containing information, and being outside the scope of interest, it also symbolizes the absence of mood and antisocial characteristics. The aggregate dimension of structural constraints includes the themes of material insufficiency and the global system, which point to the capitalist system's control of constant purchasing or consumption.

Table 6. *Participants' opinions on participating or not participating in activities in relation to the content they encounter on the SMPs*

Participate (why)			Not participate (why)		
Aggregate Dimension	Theme	Code	Code	Theme	Aggregate Dimension
Intrapersonal Facilitators	Individual characteristics	Offering difference-diversity	Having negative attributes	Individual characteristics	Intrapersonal Constraints
		Being in the field of interest	Inability to obtain information - it is useless		
		Personal satisfaction			

	Affections-feelings	Entertaining, delighting, exciting, giving pleasure, well-being.	Being out of interest		
	Self-enhancement	Containing information - being useful	Anti-sociality		
			Mood		
		Querying perspective	Financial impossibility	Money	Structural Constraints
		Providing development			
Interpersonal Facilitator	Socialization and social acceptance	Socialization	Constant push to buy and participate (capitalist system)	Global system	
		Joining groups			
		Allowing others to do the activity			
Structural Facilitators	Global system	Becoming a trend			

Kappa value: 0.80

The opinions of Gen-Z members about groups created for recreational activities on the SMPs are presented under the headings of joining and not joining. Gen-Z members' opinions about joining groups are classified as aggregate dimensions within the framework of social media engagement, which is widely accepted in the literature and underlined by Dessart (2017). It consists of three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The behavioral aspect of engagement comprises manifestations of participation, including sharing, learning, and validation, associated with the level of energy, effort, and time spent on behavioral engagement (Dessart et al., 2016). Affective engagement refers to enthusiasm and pleasure towards an attachment object. Cognitive engagement represents a general mental activity that focuses on something, including attention and focus (Dessart, 2017). The aggregate dimension of behavioral engagement is broadly reflected in the views of Gen-Z and is presented with the themes of sharing on SMPs, being approved by group members or others, and learning-based extroversion-social group membership and self-enhancement. The aggregate dimension of affective engagement is given on a smaller scale and with a narrower scope under the theme of personal characteristics. Similarly, the aggregate dimension of cognitive engagement is grouped under the theme of addiction, which has become a trend among Gen-Z, and is presented on platforms as a new form of communication and interaction. Conversely, opinions about not joining groups related to recreational activities on SMPs emerged on a smaller scale and narrower scope than joining. The non-joining category is based on the theoretical framework of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural leisure

constraints, as presented by Crawford and Godbey (1987). Intrapersonal constraints were presented under the theme of personal characteristics, revealing that a person's wide social circle, active personality traits, and social anxiety are the key features that prevent group participation. In groups formed for recreational activities, the absence of accompanying people from the immediate circle on those platforms is presented as the aggregate interpersonal dimension under the theme of a lack of companions. The structural aggregate dimension consists of the security theme, which reflects the concerns that the groups created will turn to unintended activities and the personal information given in the groups will spread, and the addiction theme, which indicates the concern that the groups will become addicted to the groups they are members of or that the groups will create addiction due to the groups gaining popularity on a global scale.

Table 7. *Participant opinions about joining and not joining in groups on SMPs*

Joining			Not joining		
Aggregate Dimension	Theme	Code	Code	Theme	Aggregate Dimension
Behavioral engagement	Extroversion - social group membership	Performing activities with others	Sociability	Personal traits	Intrapersonal constraints
		Being involved in different environments	Social anxiety		
		Being with people with similar characteristics /traits			
		Meeting people- socializing	Doing activities with people who are not from your family and friends circle	Lack of companions	Interpersonal constraints
		Act as a group			
		Sharing information			
		Acceptance			
		Snobbism	Groups orienting towards different goals	Security	
	Self enhancement	Learning new things – self - enhancement			
Affective engagement	Personal traits	Having a productive and fun time	Dissemination of private information-cyber security		
Cognitive engagement	Addiction	Change in the way of interaction and communication	Anxiety about addiction	Addiction	Structural constraints
		Becoming a trend			

Kappa value: 0.85

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

SMPs enable people to communicate and interact with each other more than ever before (Irfany et al., 2024). These platforms are the lifeline of Gen-Z (Singla & Agrawal, 2024). The fact that Gen-Z was born into technology causes them to be labeled as an iGeneration or Generation C and constitutes the source of change in behavioral tendencies (Irfany et al., 2024). Unlike other generations, Gen-Z frequently interacts with other people through SMPs and spends a significant part of their daily time on these platforms. The vital needs and other responsibilities of participating Gen-Z members constitute approximately eight hours of sleep, eating, and drinking, and two hours of personal care, needs, and responsibilities in an average human life. In terms of time, when eight hours are allocated to business life/six hours to education, they do not want to be exposed to stereotyped and inflexible working conditions (Kavak & Şener, 2021), it is revealed in Table 1 that generation members spend a significant part of their remaining 6-8 hours on SMPs. In this respect, it can be inferred that leisure time for members of this generation is centered on social media. However, owing to the intense impact of technological developments on human life, it should be taken into consideration that in this classification of time, the clear distinction between traditional leisure and work time has become blurred. In this context, people tend to spend much more time on SMPs than on the period specified above. In addition, although SMPs itself stand out as a recreational activity, the groups created for recreational activities and shared content also have a vital and irreplaceable function in terms of obtaining information, learning, sharing, and then turning into behavior. This indicates that recreation has now become digital and will become more digital each passing day.

Gen-Z members mainly shared photos and videos on platforms (86%). This shows that members of Gen-Z are active and intense users of social media (Hernandez-de-Menendez et al., 2020), and that they are important guides in obtaining information about something and achieving something. Woodside et al. (2024) highlight that social media and specialized opinion platforms are now common sources of information for consumers, tourists, or recreators who seek to validate their choices and inform other users to make wise purchasing decisions.

Gen-Z was born into technology, causing them to use internet technologies actively and effectively. These features coincide with the research findings, as many of the participants actively used the platforms, and the minority group had the ability to use them despite having a reaction

and choosing not to use them. While Instagram is at the forefront of the platforms preferred by Gen-Z to share content related to recreational activities, WhatsApp is relatively less preferred by Gen-Z. Approximately half of the participants used both platforms to share recreational activities. Instagram allows users to share photos and videos, add captions to photos, categorize photos with hashtags and tag users, and apply various filters to provide images with a variety of looks, while shared content is distributed to the news feeds of friends or followers and becomes an archive of life experiences (Shannon, 2022). These features can be used extensively for transforming the recreational activities experience carried out by Gen-Z members into permanent ones, viewing the shared content by their followers, self-actualization, follower-environment approval, or recognition. WhatsApp, one of the most popular social media tools among all age groups, allows users to transmit a range of content, such as images, audio, video, text, documents, and location sharing in real time over the Internet (Agrawal & Mittal, 2024). All of these reasons lead to the active and intensive use of Gen-Z in recreational activities. Among Gen-Z university students, Instagram is preferred over WhatsApp because it is a platform based on photo and video sharing, the ability to prepare reel videos, and the opportunity to easily communicate and interact with different people and groups. However, Facebook, which was very popular in the past, was not preferred by members of Gen-Z. Kaplan (2020) underlines that Gen-Z is moving away from using Facebook and instead turning to other applications where their content disappears and their posts do not come to mind again in the future.

When the positive opinions of Gen-Z about producing content on social media are considered within the scope of social comparison and social presence theories, an important perspective is presented as to why participants produce content on social media and the conditions that push them to share can be better illuminated. According to Suls and Wheeler (2012), social comparison theory refers to the search for and use of information about other people's situations and opinions for the purpose of self-evaluation and is based on judging the accuracy of a person's views, beliefs, and abilities. Individual vanity-status and social-network effects push people to make intense comparisons, and this comparison increases people's potential for prejudice, affects the maintenance of self-esteem, and can lead to the desire to look more attractive (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022). In this respect, many codes mentioned under the personal theme of Gen-Z members (awareness, immortalization of memories, talent discovery, etc.) can be associated with this theory. Gen-Z tends to share content for

recreational activities on social media because they show off, prove themselves to others, and create a social impact on networks. Social presence theory reflects the ability to interact with others to exchange information on social media platforms (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022). In the context of social presence, Gen-Z's reasons for producing content for recreational activities arose from factors such as personal development, information acquisition, and interaction, as shown in Table 3. One of the important attributes of Gen-Z is that it is sensitive and active in social development (Fisu et al., 2024). Gen-Z also believes that sharing content for recreational activities is related to social contact, and these characteristics of Gen-Z have the purpose of serving social wellbeing, such as integration, tolerance, and social development. Further, Z's are aware that shared content creates brand awareness for third organizations, and that content shared on platforms can be used as an important source of information for other organizations. On the other hand, members of Gen-Z reflected the negative characteristics of producing content for recreational activities on an SMPs on a personal and social basis. Although these platforms have begun to play a key role, almost as much as the education system, in terms of the development of individuals and societies, they can lead to personal negativities, such as preventing the individual's creativity/freedom due to passivity, providing ready-made information, and being exposed to excessive unnecessary and irrelevant information. In addition, SMPs are seen as important triggers of striking negativities, such as causing the deterioration of social culture and values, especially taking the wrong people as idols.

The main components that push Gen-Z to share content for recreational activities are intrinsic motivation. This situation can be associated with the characteristics of narcissism, being self-centered (Kavak & Şener, 2021), and preference for individuality (Nalçacı İkiz & Öztürk, 2022). Since Gen-Z spends a lot of time on technology, their attention span is short, they need to receive frequent feedback, and since they lack independence and grow up in the digital world, they tend to spend less time directly communicating with their friends and loved ones (Gould et al., 2020). In this regard, the fact that Z's lives are in the orbit of technology and social media may cause them to turn to self-induced rather than external factors. The elements revealed within the scope of this research can also be discussed within the scope of social existence and comparison theories. Individuals' behavior towards sharing on platforms by making comparisons may be due to factors such as status indicators, ostentation, creating an impact on social networks, personal development, and

interacting with other people. In terms of extrinsic motivations, their characteristics of changing or touching society lead them to share, albeit relatively narrowly, elements such as raising awareness, informing, mobilizing people, and social perception.

The attitudes and behaviors of Gen-Z towards the content they encounter on social media fall into two categories; favorable and unfavorable. While Gen-Z university students see the contents of recreational activities as mostly useful, they may evaluate them negatively, especially in terms of their potential to create addiction and turn an active life into passive. As a reflection of the characteristic feature of Gen-Z, they are open-minded towards the content they encounter; that is, they do not have any prejudices. The fact that Z's have positive values and attitudes in their minds towards the content feeds their urge to perform recreational activities and share similar content. This is because individuals' value judgments and attitudes are important in shaping their future behavior (Dolnicar & Demeter, 2024). Arousing curiosity about positive attitudes and values, awareness of the need, and desire to share similar content reflect the components that trigger the individual's urge to turn into behavior in the future, arising from internal characteristics. Instead, Gen-Z, who grew up in technology and developed a strong digital bond towards the Internet (Jabar et al., 2024), is sensitive to issues such as creating addiction to content, pacifying human life, and restricting active life, which are important negative effects of technology. This may be due to Gen-Z members' lives becoming lazy or indolent because they can quickly access the things they want because of technology (Tapscott, 2009), and they constantly spend time on social media.

Gen-Z considers participating in recreational activities if the content they encounter supports their personal development in participating in an activity, is compatible with their personal characteristics, and more importantly, contains emotions that make them feel good. As positive emotions are strong triggers for individuals to perform a behavior, negative emotions push individuals to avoid or move away. Gen-Z tends to engage in activities focused on emotions and feelings that cause them to feel well-being, and in this regard, encountering content that makes them feel good is a vital element in turning into behavior. In the content encountered, elements such as making friends, being part of a group, and socializing were reflected in the views as noticeable interpersonal facilitators. Growing up with Internet technologies and communicating through SMPs cause them to create a life based on interactions with other people and social groups (Uysal, 2022), and this coincides with the views of the participants

and the obtained themes. Structural facilitators refer to social and physical institutions and organizations operating outside individuals (Son et al., 2024), and the contents encountered have emerged as significant facilitators for many people to engage in these recreational activities or for this situation to turn into a trend. This situation is evaluated by the characteristics of Gen-Z; they do not lag in the face of global developments, do not have prejudices against any issue, and are open to innovation. All of these facilitators point out that Gen-Z is constantly adaptable (Madden, 2017) and has a highly marketable/influenceable digital mindset (Viţelar, 2019). In contrast, regarding the personality, behavior, and belief characteristics of Gen-Z, components such as people's mood, anti-social personality, and obtaining information constitute intrapersonal constraints on recreational activities. This has emerged as the most important reason for non-participation, as it is associated with the characteristic feature that members of Gen-Z are more narcissistic/self-centered than other generations (Nalçacı İkiz & Öztürk, 2022). The fact that they see the content for recreational activities on the SMPs as an imposition of the system on themselves and the costs incurred by actively carrying out recreational activities have been identified as important structural constraints.

Gen-Z has a weak bond with management and authority (Tapscott, 2009), which fuels their tendency to exhibit negative behavior when something is imposed or dictated to them. Gen-Z is a generation with high economic concerns (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019). Although the cost of carrying out an activity digitally is almost zero, actively carrying out the activity requires covering expenses such as transportation, participation fee, food and beverage, equipment, and guidance services. Considering the fact that the participants are students, the cost/money element has become evident as a limiting factor in performing an active activity. Additionally, one of the striking findings is that the interpersonal constraints mentioned by Crawford and Godbey (1987) are not reflected in opinions. The fact that family ties are weak (Nalçacı İkiz & Öztürk, 2022) and Z's development of personality traits and life skills in a socioeconomic period driven by chaos, uncertainty, variability, and complexity (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019) may cause Gen-Z to not participate in recreational activities and to develop behavior that does not require the presence of an accompanying person.

As revealing the tendencies of Gen-Z towards groups created for recreational activities on SMPs contributes to social media engagement and the creation, maintenance, and vitality of communities (Dessart, 2017), it is crucial for a business to make a valuable contribution to its brand value and e-WOM (Hollebeek & Chen, 2014), as well as to create management and

marketing strategies. Gen-Z's views on behavioral engagement were revealed in the broadest sense, based on the elements of sharing, learning, and validation, in the form of self-enhancement and extroversion-social group themes. The affective engagement dimension includes personal characteristics, based on pleasure and enthusiasm. Gen-Z members focus on joining groups to ensure their well-being and to enjoy an enjoyable time. Global situations that express chaos, such as political events in the world, natural disasters/environmental crises, social movements, war, and terrorism, can also lead people to escape from current realities (Çalışkan, 2021); that is, joining groups where they will feel good and have a pleasant time.

The cognitive engagement dimension covered the themes of attention and focus-based addiction. Joining groups has become a trend, or their traditional lives are now realized through social media, leading Gen-Z members to groups. In addition, it can be concluded that the theme of addiction has come to light because of Gen-Z's preference for communication via social media instead of traditional face-to-face communication, and their openness to innovations and global developments. On the other hand, Gen-Z's views on not joining groups reflect intrapersonal constraints such as being sociable and having social anxiety characteristics, while the absence of familiar people in the groups or the absence of a companion were revealed as interpersonal constraints. Gen-Z sees being sociable in an individual's environment or having extroverted personality traits as key elements that constrain participation in groups. It can be inferred that not participating in groups is because of the concern that the absence of an accompanying person may cause a lack of approval/motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) in individuals. The security risk and addiction concerns of Gen-Z members that may arise from joining groups are external constraints for not joining groups. Although Gen-Z faces many limiting elements, it has developed coping mechanisms due to growing up in a period of chaos (Robinson & Schanzel, 2019). In this respect, it can be said that Gen-Z is extremely talented in terms of developing strategies (negotiation) to overcome all the constraints they encounter.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

This study has theoretical and practical implications. A holistic and comprehensive investigation of the habits, values, attitudes, motivations, and behavioral patterns of Gen-Z members, who are university students, towards recreational activities on SMPs will make significant contributions to the body of knowledge of recreation, tourism, and consumer behavior.

Evaluations of Gen-Z regarding content production on SMPs and their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000) have been scrutinized in depth in the context of social comparison and social presence theories. The values and attitudes of Gen-Z members towards the content they encounter on the platforms are presented as favorable and unfavorable characteristics (Hadinejad et al., 2019) because they are the antecedent of their behavior, that is, they shape their behavior. The views of Gen-Z members that the contents they encounter on the platform lead them to engage in behavior or avoid behavior are built on the theoretical foundations of Crowford and Godbey's (1987) leisure constraints and Raymore's (2002) leisure facilitators. Finally, their behaviors regarding joining or not joining groups are framed as social media engagement (Dessart, 2017) and leisure constraints (Crowford & Godbey, 1987).

As for practical implications, Gen-Z is a generation that is very aware of their personal needs because they know themselves well (Kavak & Şener, 2021), and their technology-oriented lifestyle has led them to have an adaptable (Madden, 2017) and highly marketable/influenceable digital mindset (Vițelar, 2019). In this regard, Gen-Z behaves differently than other generations and people. Thus, the recreational industry, marketing organizations, public institutions, and organizations need to develop new strategies based on this difference in recreational activities and consumer behavior. It is believed that addressing social media behavior patterns and representations in a holistic and comprehensive manner in the present research will lead to the opening of new discussion areas for the creation of modern marketing strategies.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study had some limitations that will be overcome in the future. The fact that qualitative research focuses on revealing individuals' experiences of a phenomenon in depth rather than generalizing it means that analytical generalizations can be made based on rich internal predictions of the results. The research was conducted within the orbit of Gen-Z members, who are students of Siirt University, located in the Southeastern Anatolia region of Türkiye. This study aims to shed light on the experiences of Gen-Z, which has a technology-oriented lifestyle and a high rate of technology adoption, regarding the recreational activities they perform on SMPs, which are a vital part of digital recreation. Considering that people's lifestyles are becoming technology-centered on a daily basis, qualitative research can be conducted on the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of Gen-Z or members of different generations towards important tools of digital

recreation such as meta-leisure, virtual-augmented and mixed reality, and digital games. The research can be expanded on a quantitative and mixed-method basis in the context of different geographies, cultures, and Gen-Z individuals. Additionally, research can be enriched based on social comparison and availability theories, leisure constraints and facilitation, and social media engagement with a focus on digital recreation.

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