

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Seeking Validation in Digital Tourism: Social Desirability and Travel Sharing

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November 2025

Volume:22

Issue:6

DOI: 10.26466/opusjsr.1776957

Citation:
Bağcı, E. (2025). Seeking
validation in digital tourism:
Social desirability and travel
sharing. *OPUS- Journal of Society
Research*, 22(6), 1318-1332.

Abstract

Information and communication technology (ICT) developments have fundamentally transformed the tourism industry, significantly influencing travel planning and experience-sharing behaviors in particular. Social media platforms enable individuals to meet their needs for identity construction and self-expression through content sharing. These sharing motivations are largely shaped by drivers such as the pursuit of social approval and the desire to be liked. This study examines the effects of social approval and the desire to be liked on the online sharing of travel experiences. Data obtained from 408 participants reveal that both factors have a significant impact on experience-sharing behaviors (social approval: $R^2 = 0.926$; desire to be liked: $R^2 = 0.905$). In addition, sharing motivations were found to differ across gender, income level, educational attainment, and generations. In particular, women, younger generations, and individuals with higher income and education levels are more likely to share their travel experiences. The findings provide important insights for understanding the dynamics of online self-presentation and for developing digital tourism marketing strategies. The study underscores approval-seeking patterns that shape individuals' digital content-sharing behaviors.

Keywords: social approval, social desirability, social networking, travel information

Öz

Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerindeki gelişmeler, turizm endüstrisini köklü biçimde dönüştürmüştür; özellikle seyahat planlama ve deneyim paylaşımı davranışlarını önemli ölçüde etkilemiştir. Sosyal medya platformları, bireylerin kimlik inşası ve ifadesine yönelik ihtiyaçlarını içerik paylaşımı yoluyla karşılamalarına olanak tanımaktadır. Bu paylaşım motivasyonları ise çoğunlukla toplumsal onay ve sosyal beğenilme arzusu gibi güdülerle şekillenmektedir. Bu çalışma, sosyal onay ve sosyal beğenilme isteğinin seyahat deneyimlerinin çevrim içi paylaşımı üzerindeki etkilerini incelemektedir. 408 katılımcıdan elde edilen veriler, her iki faktörün de deneyim paylaşım davranışları üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur (sosyal onay: $R^2 = 0.926$; sosyal beğenilme: $R^2 = 0.905$). Ayrıca, paylaşım motivasyonlarının cinsiyet, gelir düzeyi, eğitim seviyesi ve kuşaklar arasında farklılık gösterdiği saptanmıştır. Özellikle kadınlar, genç kuşaklar ve daha yüksek gelir ile eğitim düzeyine sahip bireylerin seyahat deneyimlerini paylaşma olasılıkları daha yüksektir. Elde edilen bulgular, çevrim içi benlik sunumu dinamiklerini anlamada ve dijital turizm pazarlama stratejilerinin geliştirilmesinde önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır. Çalışma, bireylerin dijital içerik paylaşımında onay arayışına dayalı davranış biçimlerinin altını çizmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal Onay, Sosyal Beğenilme Eğilimi, Sosyal Ağ Kurma, Seyahat Bilgisi.

Introduction

Advancements in Internet technology have not only optimized information accessibility but also led to a significant increase in user engagement. In this context, social media platforms can be considered one of the most significant innovations that the Internet offers to users. Social media is defined as digital platforms that meet users' informational needs, facilitate interactive communication, and provide opportunities for socialization.

The integration of multimedia content constitutes one of the fundamental factors contributing to the increased utilization intensity of these platforms. The contemporary rise in internet penetration has established social media as a central element of daily life. This phenomenon transforms traditional communication paradigms and optimizes users' time allocation on digital platforms. Innovations in information and communication technologies maintain a symbiotic relationship with the tourism industry. The number of tourism stakeholders in the social media ecosystem exhibits exponential growth. Consumers establish virtual tourism communities to facilitate experience sharing. Tourism consumers disseminate their travel experiences through various social media platforms via audiovisual materials and evaluations. These contents play a crucial role in potential tourism consumers' decision-making processes and shape their travel preferences.

People, as social beings, have an inherent need for validation and recognition. Social media platforms play a significant role in fulfilling this need through shared content and received interactions. While stress and disappointment experienced due to insufficient engagement with one's posts are considered normal phenomena, systematic posting and pursuit of interaction aimed at preventing such situations are classified as obsessive behavior (Batu and Güler-İplikçi, 2018). There is a necessity for research examining the effects of social media usage on individual behaviors, interpersonal relationships, and personality structure. Social desirability and the need for social approval represent an individual's desire for acceptance from their environment.

Individuals who share content on social media platforms exhibit a fundamental need for approval and recognition from their social environment, independent of their personality traits. To better comprehend the motivations of individuals who share their travel experiences on social media, it is imperative to examine the multifaceted effects of this phenomenon. Given the limited research in the domain of social desirability and need for approval, this study aims to make significant contributions to the existing literature. Furthermore, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between various variables to evaluate social sharing motivations more comprehensively within the context of travel experiences. This research aims to examine the relationship between social desirability, need for approval, and the motivation to share travel experiences on social media. The study analyzes the differentiation of these variables according to demographic factors and their interrelationships.

While general studies on social approval and desirability exist, there is a lack of empirical research examining the impact of these motives specifically on travel experience sharing motivations among Turkish tourism consumers. This study aims to fill this gap.

Conceptual Framework

The Concept of Social Approval Need

Humans are characterized as beings inherently oriented towards social interaction and subject to societal approval mechanisms (Hofmann and Dibartolo, 2014). The phenomenon of social approval can be conceptualized within the framework of an individual's intrinsic need for social acceptance and validation, avoidance behaviors stemming from the anxiety of disapproval, and the significance attributed to collective evaluations (Leite and Beretvas, 2005). In the literature, the theoretical framework of the need for social approval is shaped around the concepts of desirability (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960) and appreciation (Fehr and Falk, 2002). Crowne and Marlowe (1960) approached the concept of social approval from the perspective of social desirability. While indi-

viduals experience positive affect as a result of appreciation obtained through social approval mechanisms, they experience shame in the absence of approval (Fehr and Falk, 2002). Hebert et al. (1997) conceptualized the need for social approval as the behavioral manifestation of the pursuit of appreciation. Various theoretical approaches exist regarding the need for social approval. Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016) posit that this need is a phenomenon shaped by cultural determinants and leaves significant imprints on our life experiences. Leite and Beretvas (2005) address the concept in the context of an individual's pursuit of social approval and tendency to avoid disapproval.

The need for social approval is a psychosocial phenomenon characterized by individuals exhibiting adaptive behavioral patterns in social interactions, attributing significance to others' expectations, desires, and evaluations, and subsequently modifying their behavioral repertoire accordingly. This psychological construct not only potentially triggers a tendency to conform to collective expectations and demands rather than maintaining autonomous self-perception but also serves a functional role in establishing interpersonal bonds and maintaining social interactions (Karaşar and Öğülmüş, 2016). Empirical findings indicate that the need for social approval manifests more prominently in collectivistic cultural structures compared to individualistic cultures (Twenge & Im, 2007; Middleton & Jones, 2000). This phenomenon is associated with elevated anxiety levels regarding others' evaluations among these individuals (Twenge and Im, 2007). The presence and significance of the need for social approval can be observed across various domains of life. While this psychological construct facilitates social cohesion and interpersonal proximity, it simultaneously leads individuals to live according to societal expectations rather than self-determination. However, systematic research findings regarding the prevalence and cultural determinants of the need for social approval specific to Turkey are not yet available (Karaşar, 2014).

The need for social approval functions as a fundamental psychological factor that shapes individuals' behavioral patterns, playing a determinant role in their processes of seeking social acceptance

and recognition. Individuals exhibit various behavioral tendencies motivated by the fulfillment of this psychological need and the desire to construct a positive social image. These tendencies include patterns such as: inability to provide negative responses, prosocial behavioral inclination, displaying behaviors that conform to social norms but conflict with authentic self for the purpose of gaining social popularity, social adaptation, and behavioral modification aimed at obtaining others' approval (Değirmenci and Demirli, 2019). There is a significant correlation between the need for social approval and perfectionism (Karaşar and Öğülmüş, 2016). Research in the literature demonstrates that individuals with perfectionist tendencies exhibit higher levels of anxiety regarding others' evaluations and greater needs for approval compared to their counterparts (Antony and Swinson, 2009). Another psychological construct associated with the need for social approval is social anxiety (Karaşar and Öğülmüş, 2016). Studies indicate that individuals with high levels of need for social approval display a marked tendency to optimize their image in others' perspectives and may experience social anxiety in response to the possibility of failing to create or maintain this image (Chiba et al., 2009). In this context, it can be concluded that individuals with high needs for social approval experience intense anxiety regarding creating and maintaining a positive impression in interpersonal relationships.

The Concept of Social Desirability

Based on a comprehensive literature review, it has been determined that the concepts of social desirability and social approval are used synonymously, particularly in international research, and encompass similar characteristic features. Within this context, these concepts have been treated as equivalent in the present study. Social desirability is defined as an individual's tendency to present themselves as more qualified and competent to society than they actually are, influenced by environmental factors. Similarly, social approval refers to an individual's effort to gain social acceptance. Humans, as social beings, are shaped within a specific

cultural and social environment from birth and develop according to the parameters of this cultural structure. As individuals, who are in continuous evolution and transformation, interact with different cultural and social environments, they experience processes of adaptation and social integration. One of the primary factors affecting social desirability is the social environment that the individual aspires to be part of. Individuals exert considerable effort to attract attention and gain acceptance in their targeted social environment, demonstrating a tendency to prove their personal characteristics. Social desirability, as Kozan (1983) indicates, reflects an individual's internal state. Individuals may endeavor to create a positive impression on others to adapt to their social environments, establish a favorable image, and maintain effective communication. According to Haran and Aydın (1995), social desirability can be conceptualized as individuals' efforts to demonstrate that their characteristics are socially desired and appreciated qualities.

The concept of social desirability refers to participants' tendency to provide responses that align with social expectations in scale applications. This phenomenon stems from individuals' inclination to demonstrate possession of desirable behaviors and characteristics in accordance with societal norms during self-evaluation processes (Akin, 2001). Research indicates that responses provided in self-report scales are influenced by variables external to the construct being measured. Among these variables, the most notable is individuals' tendency to demonstrate socially acceptable characteristics, which has been conceptualized in the literature as the social desirability effect. This situation is considered a potential threat to the validity of measurement instruments (Haran and Aydın, 1995). Within Randall and Fernandes's (1991) theoretical framework, social desirability is examined as a two-dimensional construct comprising personal characteristics and item-related properties. From the perspective of personal characteristics, it is observed that individuals with high social approval motivation tend to avoid responses that might damage their self-image or provide re-

sponses conforming to social norms rather than reflecting their actual circumstances (Dönmez and Akbulut, 2016).

Paulhus (1984) conceptualized social desirability as a reflection of personality and examined this construct along two fundamental dimensions: "self-deception" and "impression management." In the self-deception dimension, individuals sincerely believe in the existence of their positive attributes, whereas in the impression management dimension, individuals strategically present themselves in various ways. The theoretical framework developed by Philips and Clancy (1972) conceptualized the foundation of social desirability along two primary axes: social acceptance and attention-seeking. The social acceptance factor categorizes behavioral patterns that individuals exhibit to optimize their social integration. The attention-seeking dimension explicates the mechanism through which individuals satisfy their need for social desirability through feedback received after gaining visibility in social contexts (Erzen et al., 2021).

Motivational Factors in Travel Information Sharing Behavior

Contemporary tourists predominantly prefer digital platforms in their information-seeking processes during travel planning. During destination selection and holiday planning, tourists initiate their information search in digital channels and tend to interact with tourism enterprises that maintain a strong presence on online platforms (Machaz, 2010). Within the context of consumer-oriented development of information technologies, the emergence of social media platforms and consumers' rapid adaptation to these platforms presents itself as a noteworthy phenomenon (Çobanoğlu, 2010). The analysis of individuals' motivational factors in sharing travel experiences is critically important for comprehending travelers' socio-cultural and environmental characteristics in depth and providing strategic recommendations to marketing professionals (Oliveria et al., 2020). The concept of motivation represents an individual's impetus to act, which can be categorized within the framework of internal and external dynamics (Ghaisani, Handayani and Munajat, 2017). Internal

motivation suggests that behavior is executed through an individual's self-will, while external motivation posits that it is shaped by the drive to gain rewards or avoid sanctions (Vries et al., 2017).

Travelers' content sharing motivations are addressed through various theoretical frameworks in the literature. While some researchers examine these motivations through the internal-external dichotomy, others evaluate them from a multidimensional perspective, including recreational, identity construction, and reward-based aspects (Chavez, Ruiz, Curras and Hernandez, 2020; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). One of the common findings of empirical studies is the dominant role of recreational motivation in social media sharing. Additionally, the desire to contribute to other travelers through information sharing and the motivation to develop social networks are prominent. Socialization, identity construction, and sharing behavior as a status indicator also occupy a significant place in travelers' motivational repertoire (Arslan and Şimşek, 2022).

Social media platforms have precipitated a paradigm shift in the sharing of travel experiences by providing tourism consumers with interactive communication opportunities. The tourism industry has attained a more effective position in reaching target audiences by optimizing marketing strategies through digital platforms. This transformation has rendered social media integration a strategic imperative for businesses within the sector. Social media platforms utilized in tourism consumers' decision-making processes serve as catalysts in shaping accommodation preferences (Rathore, Joshi, and Ilavarasan, 2017). In the evolutionary process within the digital ecosystem, social networking sites have undergone a significant paradigm shift (Enders et al., 2008). These platforms are positioned among the dominant elements of the contemporary internet ecosystem (Kasavana et al., 2010). Social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Friendster, and Bebo have demonstrated exponential growth in terms of user adoption. Numerous social networking platforms provide services with technological infrastructures supporting multidisciplinary areas of interest (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). For users of these

platforms, digital interaction has become an integral part of daily life. Users fulfill their socialization needs in the virtual environment and experience an alternative social reality through these platforms (Ganley and Lampe, 2009, as cited in Grabner-Krauter, 2009).

Methodology

Research Significance and Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to examine the relationship between social desirability and need for approval among individuals who have undertaken tourist travel, and their motivation to share travel experiences on social media. The subsidiary objectives include analyzing the causality of these individuals' social desirability, need for approval, and their motivation to share travel experiences on social networking sites, as well as determining whether these variables differ according to participants' demographic characteristics (Generation, gender, education level, and income level). The research findings are anticipated to contribute to the relevant literature and provide recommendations for sector stakeholders to improve their existing processes. In this context, the findings are expected to play a significant role in both academic circles and practical applications.

Research Methodology

In this study, a quantitative research methodology was employed, and the study was designed using a causal research model. A literature review was conducted to identify appropriate scales for the research. The decision was made to utilize pre-designed and validated scales. Three distinct scales were employed to test the desired variables: a 15-item scale developed by Evren et al. (2021) to measure social desirability, a 25-item scale developed by Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016) to measure social approval, and a 25-item scale developed by Huang, Basu, and Hsu (2010) to measure motivation for sharing travel experiences on social media. The final version of the scale was refined considering factors such as cultural differences, under the guidance of expert tourism academics.

The survey instrument consists of four sections. The first section contains statements measuring social desirability levels. The second section includes statements designed to measure social approval needs. The third section comprises statements measuring motivation for sharing on social platforms. The fourth section consists of questions aimed at determining participants' demographic characteristics. The scale items employed in the study were designed in a 5-point Likert-type format. This scale was graduated as follows: 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly agree).

Due to temporal and financial constraints, it was deemed appropriate to conduct the research on a specific sample. Non-probability convenience sampling method was employed for research implementation and sample determination. The scales were administered online to voluntary participants at five-star establishments in Kuşadası between 2024-2025. The scale was administered on a voluntary basis to guests aged 18 and above staying at five-star accommodation establishments in Kuşadası. Analyses were conducted with data obtained from 408 participants. The required ethical committee approval for data collection was obtained from Doğuş University with protocol number 2022/87

Data Analysis

The analysis of data obtained from the study commenced with normality testing, followed by validity and reliability assessments. Upon confirming the dataset's suitability, regression analysis, T-test, ANOVA, and frequency analyses were conducted. All aforementioned statistical analyses were performed utilizing the IBM SPSS statistical software package.

Analyses of Normal Distribution, Reliability, and Validity

Based on the descriptive statistics conducted for normal distribution analysis of the scale evaluating social media sharing motivations of guests staying in five-star accommodation facilities, the arithmetic mean (2.7891) and median (2.2800) values were

found to be convergent. The skewness coefficient was calculated as -.577 and the kurtosis coefficient as -1.278, with these values being observed within the acceptable range (+1.5 / -1.5). In the findings obtained from the social approval needs scale, the arithmetic mean (2.7882) and median (2.2880) values were convergent; the skewness (.605) and kurtosis (-1.192) coefficients were determined to be within the acceptable range (+1.5 / -1.5). Similarly, in the social desirability scale, the arithmetic mean (2.7982) and median (2.3333) values were found to be convergent; the skewness (.624) and kurtosis (-1.094) coefficients were positioned within the acceptable range (+1.5 / -1.5).

Considering the criterion that skewness and kurtosis coefficients, which are the most prominent indicators of normal distribution, should be within the range of +1.50 to -1.50 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), the obtained values falling within this range support the applicability of parametric tests in relational analyses.

In the reliability analysis of the scales, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were examined. The obtained Cronbach's Alpha values exceeded the threshold value of 0.70, which is considered sufficient for scale reliability in the relevant literature (Büyüköztürk, 2013; Nunnally, 1978), confirming that all scales possess internal consistency. The analysis results are presented in detail in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Social Media Sharing Motivation	0.99	25
Social Approval Need	0.991	25
Social Desirability	0.983	15

Factor analysis and Varimax rotation method were employed to transform the data into a more explanatory and meaningful form. Subsequently, the item distribution in the dimensions of motivation for sharing on social networking sites, need for social approval, and social desirability scales has differentiated from their original forms. Upon examination of the variance and eigenvalue coefficients of the scales, their factorial explanatory power was found to be at a very high level. The results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Factor Analysis (KMO & Variance Explained)

Scale	KMO Sample Adequacy	Explained Variance (%)
Social Media Sharing Motivation	0.991	81.36
Social Approval Need	0.94	82.97
Social Desirability	0.983	80.97

Based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity analyses, the motivation coefficient for sharing on social media platforms was determined to be 0.991, the need for social approval coefficient was 0.940, and the social desirability coefficient was 0.983. The statistical significance of the scales ($p < 0.001$) statistically validates the usability of the dataset within the scope of the research.

Analysis of Research Data and Findings

This section presents the correlational and descriptive analysis findings. The primary objective of the research is to examine the effects and relationships between social desirability and need for approval variables on the motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms. These variables will also be analyzed within the context of demographic parameters. The research model developed and hypotheses to be tested are presented below.

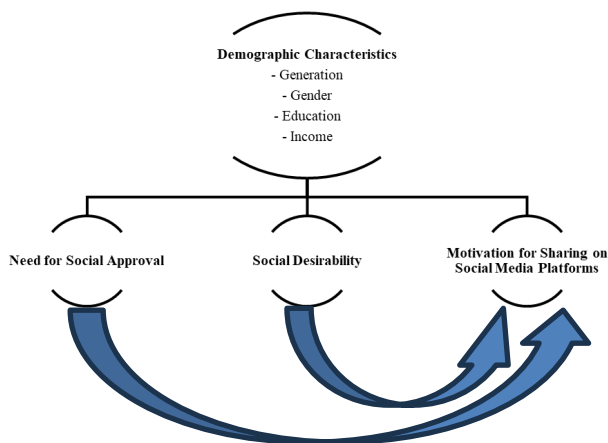


Figure 1: Research Model

Primary Hypothesis H1a: Participants' social desirability levels positively influence their motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms.

Primary Hypothesis H1b: Participants' need for social approval positively influences their motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms.

Primary Hypothesis H2: Participants' motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms varies according to their demographic characteristics.

Sub-hypotheses:

H2a: Participants' motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms differs across generational cohorts.

H2b: Participants' motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms varies based on gender.

H2c: Participants' motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms differs according to educational attainment.

H2d: Participants' motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms varies based on income levels.

Primary Hypothesis H3: Participants' social desirability levels vary according to their demographic characteristics.

Sub-hypotheses:

H3a: Participants' social desirability levels differ across generational cohorts.

H3b: Participants' social desirability levels vary based on gender.

H3c: Participants' social desirability levels differ according to educational attainment.

H3d: Participants' social desirability levels vary based on income levels.

Primary Hypothesis H4: Participants' need for social approval varies according to their demographic characteristics.

Sub-hypotheses:

H4a: Participants' need for social approval differs across generational cohorts.

H4b: Participants' need for social approval varies based on gender.

H4c: Participants' need for social approval differs according to educational attainment.

H4d: Participants' need for social approval varies based on income levels.

The testing of hypotheses and interpretation of analyses are presented below.

Table 3. Regression Model (Key Results)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R-Square	Beta Coefficient	P-Value
Social Desirability	Travel Sharing Motivation	0.905	0.96	0.0
Social Approval Need	Travel Sharing Motivation	0.926	0.958	0.0

In the regression analysis, the correlation between social desirability conditions and motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms was found to be 0.951 (95%). The impact of social desirability conditions on the motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms was determined to be 0.905 (90%). Consequently, hypothesis H1a was accepted.

The regression analysis revealed that the correlation between the need for social approval and motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms was 0.962 (96%). The impact of social approval needs on the motivation to share travel experiences on social media platforms was determined to be 0.925 (92%). Therefore, hypothesis H1b was accepted. When examining correlation values, 0 indicates no relationship, while +1 indicates a complete relationship (Karakus et al., 2016). The results of 90% and 92% in the analysis demonstrate the existence of a significant and strong relationship between the variables.

For the sake of clarity and brevity, detailed outputs of all statistical tests conducted in this study have not been included in the main body of the text. However, these results are securely archived and can be made available upon request. The table presented below offers a concise summary of the ANOVA analyses performed, highlighting the key patterns and statistically significant differences observed across demographic groups.

The ANOVA homogeneity analysis was conducted based on the generational variable of participants, and it was determined that the data did not exhibit a homogeneous distribution ($P = 0.001$). The significance value obtained from the analysis ($P = 0.000$) was found to be consistent with the generally accepted significance threshold of $P < 0.05$ in social sciences. In light of these findings, hypothesis H2a was statistically supported. According to the Dunnett C - Post Hoc test, which is utilized in

non-homogeneous difference analyses, it was determined that Generation Y demonstrated significantly lower rates of sharing memories on social media platforms compared to Generations X and Z.

Table 4. ANOVA and t-Test Results: Effects of Demographic Variables on Travel Sharing Motivation, Social Approval, and Social Desirability

Variable	Statistic	p-Value	Interpretation
Generations - Sharing Motivation	F(2, 405) = 37.02	< .001	Significant difference observed
Gender - Sharing Motivation	t(406) = 5.28	< .001	Females exhibit higher motivation
Education - Sharing Motivation	F(3, 404) = 38.79	< .001	Postgraduates show higher motivation
Income - Sharing Motivation	F(4, 403) = 18.94	< .001	Higher income group shows stronger motivation
Generations - Need for Social Approval	F(2, 405) = 39.68	< .001	Generation Y exhibits lower need
Gender - Need for Social Approval	t(406) = 5.70	< .001	Females show significantly lower need
Education - Need for Social Approval	F(3, 404) = 36.58	< .001	Higher education level corresponds to higher need
Income - Need for Social Approval	F(4, 403) = 19.37	< .001	Higher income associated with greater need
Generations - Social Desirability	F(2, 405) = 37.43	< .001	Generation Y shows lower desirability
Gender - Social Desirability	t(406) = 5.53	< .001	Females exhibit lower desirability
Education - Social Desirability	F(3, 404) = 36.58	< .001	Bachelor's and above demonstrate higher desirability
Income - Social Desirability	F(4, 403) = 19.96	< .001	Higher income group shows greater desirability

Upon examination of the T-test analysis, it was observed that the Levene value (0.034) did not meet the expected threshold for homogeneity ($P > 0.05$). In the significance analysis, the Sig value ($P = 0.000$) met the required coefficient ($P < 0.05$). Consequently, hypothesis H2b was accepted. The analysis revealed that females demonstrated significantly higher motivation to share on social media platforms compared to males

In the analyses conducted within the scope of the research, the homogeneity coefficient (0.000) obtained according to participants' educational status did not meet the statistically significant homogeneity threshold ($p > 0.05$). In the analysis performed for significance difference detection, the significance value ($p = 0.000$) was found to be below the critical threshold ($p < 0.05$). In light of these findings, hypothesis H2c was accepted. For detailed examination of inter-group differences, Dunnett's C - Post Hoc analysis, which is preferred in heterogeneous variance conditions, was applied. Analysis results revealed a statistically significant and distinct difference between participants with Master's degree and above and participants at other educational levels. These individuals demonstrated higher sharing motivation compared to others.

Based on the analyses conducted within the research framework, it was determined that the homogeneity assumption was not met in the assessment according to participants' income status ($p = 0.000 > 0.05$). Moreover, when examining the significance level, the obtained value ($p = 0.000$) was observed to be below the generally accepted threshold in social sciences ($p < 0.05$). In light of these findings, hypothesis H2d was supported. For detailed examination of inter-group differences, Dunnett's C - Post Hoc analysis, which is preferred in heterogeneous variance conditions, was applied. Analysis results revealed statistically significant and distinct differences between participants who perceived their income levels as very good, good, and moderate compared to those who perceived them as poor, and also between those who perceived their income as very good and those who perceived it as very poor. Individuals with very high income levels demonstrated this attitude at a higher rate than those with very poor income levels.

The ANOVA homogeneity analysis was conducted based on the generational variable of participants, and it was determined that the data did not exhibit a homogeneous distribution ($P = 0.000$). The significance value obtained from the analysis ($P = 0.000$) was found to be consistent with the generally accepted significance threshold in social sci-

ences of $P < 0.05$. In light of these findings, hypothesis H3a was statistically supported. According to the Dunnett C - Post Hoc test, which is used in non-homogeneous difference analyses, Generation Y was found to have significantly lower social approval need attitudes compared to Generations X and Z.

Upon examination of the T-test analysis, the Levene value (0.007) was found to not meet the expected value for homogeneity ($P > 0.05$). In the significance analysis, the Sig value ($P = 0.000$) met the required coefficient ($P < 0.05$). Accordingly, hypothesis H3b was accepted. The analysis revealed that females demonstrated significantly lower levels of social approval needs compared to males.

In the analyses conducted within the scope of the research, the homogeneity coefficient (0.000) obtained according to the participants' educational status did not meet the statistically significant homogeneity threshold ($p > 0.05$). The significance value ($p = 0.000$) obtained from the analysis performed for detecting significance differences was found to be below the critical threshold ($p < 0.05$). In light of these findings, hypothesis H3c was accepted. To examine intergroup differences in detail, Dunnett's C - Post Hoc analysis, which is preferred in cases of heterogeneous variance, was applied. The analysis results revealed a statistically significant and distinct difference between participants with Master's degree and higher education levels and those with high school education or less, compared to participants at other educational levels. These individuals demonstrated a higher level of need for social approval than others.

According to the analyses conducted within the research framework, it was determined that the homogeneity assumption was not met in the evaluation based on participants' income status ($p = 0.000 > 0.05$). Furthermore, when examining the significance level, the obtained value ($p = 0.000$) was observed to be below the generally accepted threshold in social sciences ($p < 0.05$). In light of these findings, hypothesis H3d was supported. To examine intergroup differences in detail, Dunnett's C - Post Hoc analysis, which is preferred in cases of heterogeneous variance, was applied. The analysis results indicate that individuals with very

high income levels demonstrate a higher need for social approval compared to others.

The ANOVA homogeneity analysis was conducted based on the generational variable of participants, and it was determined that the data did not exhibit a homogeneous distribution ($P = 0.000$). The significance value obtained from the analysis ($P = 0.000$) was found to be consistent with the generally accepted significance threshold in social sciences of $P < 0.05$. In light of these findings, hypothesis H4a was statistically supported. According to the Dunnett C - Post Hoc test, which is employed in non-homogeneous difference analyses, Generation Y exhibited significantly lower social desirability levels compared to Generations X and Z.

The T-test analysis revealed that the Levene value (0.012) did not meet the expected threshold for homogeneity ($P > 0.05$). In the significance analysis, the Sig value ($P = 0.000$) met the required coefficient ($P < 0.05$). Consequently, hypothesis H4b was accepted. The analysis demonstrated that females exhibited significantly lower social desirability levels compared to males.

In the analyses conducted within the scope of the research, the homogeneity coefficient (0.000) obtained according to participants' educational status did not meet the statistically significant homogeneity threshold ($p > 0.05$). In the analysis conducted for significance difference detection, the significance value ($p = 0.000$) was found to be below the critical threshold ($p < 0.05$). Based on these findings, hypothesis H4c was accepted. To examine intergroup differences in detail, Dunnett's C - Post Hoc analysis, which is preferred in heterogeneous variance conditions, was applied. The analysis results revealed a statistically significant and distinct difference between participants with a Bachelor's degree and those with high school education or less compared to participants with other educational levels. These individuals demonstrated higher social desirability levels than those with associate degrees but lower levels than other educational groups.

Based on the analyses conducted within the scope of the research, it was determined that the homogeneity assumption was not met in the assessment according to participants' income status ($p = 0.000 > 0.05$). Furthermore, when examining

the significance level, it was observed that the obtained value ($p = 0.000$) was below the generally accepted threshold value in social sciences ($p < 0.05$). In light of these findings, it was concluded that hypothesis H4b was supported. To examine intergroup differences in detail, Dunnett's C - Post Hoc analysis, which is preferred in cases of heterogeneous variance, was applied. The analysis results indicate that individuals with very high income levels demonstrate higher levels of social desirability compared to others.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the influence of individuals' "need for social approval" and "social desirability levels" on their motivations to share travel experiences on social media. The findings demonstrate that both variables have a significant impact on travel experience sharing motivation.

The unusually high R^2 values observed in the study (above 0.90) may be attributed to the strong alignment between the measurement scales and the behavioral tendencies of participants. In the context of social media behavior research, particularly when examining internal psychological drivers like social approval and desirability, such high explanatory power is not uncommon. These constructs have been shown to deeply influence online self-presentation and content sharing behaviors, especially in digitally active populations. This supports previous findings that models involving identity expression and social interaction motives tend to produce high predictive validity (Tegar et al., 2025).

One of the most notable findings of the study is the strong correlation between "social desirability" and "travel experience sharing motivation." Specifically, individuals with high social desirability levels tend to share their travel experiences more frequently on social media. This finding aligns with previous studies demonstrating that individuals utilize social media platforms for "self-presentation" and "ideal self-image construction" (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Individ-

uals with high social desirability levels may be inclined to share content to enhance their positive perception within society (Chou & Edge, 2012).

Furthermore, a significant and strong relationship was identified between "need for social approval" and travel experience sharing motivation. The primary reason for individuals with high need for social approval being more willing to share travel experiences may be their desire for "recognition and appreciation through likes, comments, and interactions" from their social network. This finding corresponds with previous research establishing a direct relationship between social media usage and "need for social validation and acceptance" (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Utz et al., 2012).

Another significant aspect of the findings pertains to the role of "demographic variables" in social media sharing motivation. "Generational differences" emerge as a particularly prominent factor in this context. The study revealed that "Generation Y and Z" demonstrate a higher propensity for sharing travel experiences compared to Generation X. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that younger generations are more integrated with digital platforms and utilize social media more extensively as a "means of self-expression and socialization" (De Vries, et al., 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

Regarding gender variables, females were found to be more predisposed to sharing experiences compared to males. Literature has demonstrated that females engage more frequently in social media interactions and utilize these platforms more regularly (Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012). Female social media usage is generally considered to be oriented toward "relationship building, strengthening connections, and identity construction."

Educational attainment and income levels were also found to influence social media sharing motivation. Individuals with higher educational levels demonstrated greater willingness to share travel experiences. This may be attributed to higher-educated individuals' more conscious utilization of digital platforms for "knowledge sharing and experience transfer." Additionally, individuals with higher income levels were observed to share travel

experiences more frequently. This may be due to their ability to travel more frequently to diverse destinations, thus possessing more content to share.

These findings present significant strategic implications for the tourism sector. Particularly for tourism enterprises developing social media-focused marketing strategies, "understanding how consumers utilize social validation mechanisms will provide a substantial advantage." Travel brands can encourage users to share more content through "interactive and rewarding campaigns" that appeal to the need for social approval and social desirability tendencies.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into how social approval motives influence individuals' travel sharing behaviors in digital platforms. The results highlight that social validation remains a powerful driver of online self-presentation during travel, shaping not only what travelers share but also how they construct their digital identities. However, this study is not without limitations. First, as the research sample included only individuals who travel and actively share their experiences on social media, the motivations of those who travel but refrain from sharing remain unexplored. Future studies should therefore focus on understanding the underlying reasons why certain travelers prefer delayed or no sharing of their travel experiences, in order to provide a more holistic view of digital travel behavior. Second, the data were collected exclusively from the Kuşadası destination, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other destinations with different cultural, demographic, or digital engagement dynamics. Finally, the use of a convenience sampling method restricts the representativeness of the sample and may introduce potential bias. This limitation should be taken into account when interpreting and applying the results. Despite these constraints, the study contributes meaningfully to the growing literature on tourism marketing and digital consumer behavior by emphasizing the social-psychological dimensions of online sharing. Addressing these limitations in future research could further strengthen theoretical understanding and enhance managerial insights

for destination marketers and social media strategists.

Critical Discussion of High Statistical Values

The uncharacteristically high R^2 values (above 0.90) and high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients observed in this study warrant a more detailed discussion, as requested by the reviewer. In the social sciences literature, high R^2 values should be treated with caution, especially in models examining behavioral and psychological motivations. However, research by Ozili (2023:p.12) indicates that an R^2 value between 0.50 and 0.99 is acceptable in social science research, particularly when the explanatory variables are statistically significant. In the present study, the high explanatory power of strong internal psychological drivers, such as social approval and social desirability, on direct behavioral outcomes like online self-presentation and content sharing, theoretically supports these high R^2 values. This suggests that the constructs under investigation profoundly influence digital behavior, and the model possesses high predictive validity.

Conversely, high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, particularly those exceeding 0.95, which indicate the internal consistency of the scales, may suggest a risk of redundancy in the scale items, meaning they measure the same concept in very similar ways (UVA,2015). While this finding confirms that the scales used are highly consistent in measuring the intended construct, it is suggested that future studies consider making the scale items more economical or revising them to more clearly differentiate between dimensions.

Comparative and Critical Findings

One of the most noteworthy findings of the study is the strong correlation between "social desirability" and "travel experience sharing motivation." The finding that individuals with high social desirability levels share their travel experiences more frequently on social media aligns with previous studies showing that individuals use social media platforms for "self-presentation" and "ideal self-image construction" (Gonzales and Hancock, 2011;

Rui and Stefanone, 2013) . These individuals are motivated to share content to reinforce their positive social perception (Chou and Edge, 2012).

Furthermore, a strong and significant relationship was identified between the "need for social approval" and the motivation to share travel experiences. This suggests that individuals with a high need for social approval are driven by a desire for "recognition and appreciation through likes, comments, and interactions" from their social network (Nadkarni and Hofmann, 2012; Utz et al., 2015).

These findings take on a more critical dimension when discussed within the context of Turkey's collectivist cultural structure. As noted by Karaşar and Öğülmüş (2016:p.86), the need for social approval emerges as a more pronounced behavioral driver in collectivist cultures compared to individualistic ones. In this context, the fact that the search for social desirability and approval among the Turkish tourism consumer sample examined has a higher explanatory power compared to similar studies in Western literature underscores the influence of cultural determinants on online behavior.

The role of demographic variables in sharing motivation is also significant. Generations Y and Z, females, and individuals with higher education and income levels were found to have a higher propensity for sharing. This finding is consistent with the literature indicating that younger generations are more integrated with digital platforms and use social media more intensively as a "means of self-expression and socialization" (De Vries, et al., 2017; Sheldon and Bryant, 2016). The tendency of women to use social media for relationship building and strengthening connections (Muscanell and Guadagno, 2012) also supports this finding.

These findings offer concrete and strategic managerial implications for the tourism sector. Tourism businesses and destination marketers can optimize their marketing strategies by understanding how consumers utilize social validation mechanisms:

- Targeted Content Strategy: For the audience with high sharing motivation (Gen Y/Z, females, high-income group), content that appeals to the social desirability motive

(aesthetically striking, "Insta-worthy" experiences, luxury, or exclusive moments) should be produced.

- **Active Management of User-Generated Content (UGC):** Brands should rapidly and regularly repost/regram content (photos, videos, stories) shared by users on their own accounts, thereby directly satisfying the users' need for social approval. This serves as the most tangible reward mechanism for users.
- **Engagement-Focused Campaigns:** Reward-based competitions that encourage social desirability and the search for approval, such as "most-liked photo" or "most creative comment," should be organized. Rewards can be tangible, such as a discount on the next trip or a special experience (e.g., a free room upgrade)
- **Reputation Management and Advocacy:** Although individuals with a high need for social approval tend to avoid sharing negative experiences, businesses should encourage the sharing of positive experiences and respond quickly and empathetically to potential negative feedback. This will strengthen the destination's digital reputation and is a critical reputation management strategy for tourist destinations like Kuşadası.

Conclusion

This study has elucidated the effects of "need for social approval and social desirability levels" on individuals' motivations to share travel experiences on social media platforms. The results indicate that "individuals with high need for social approval and social desirability levels share more frequently" and primarily do so "to receive social recognition, approval, and establish connections with their network."

Moreover, demographic variables were found to influence this motivation. Specifically, "younger generations (Generation Y and Z), females, and individuals with higher education and income levels" were identified as being more inclined to share travel experiences. These data provide "significant

strategic insights for the tourism and digital marketing sectors."

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to research on digital consumer behavior and online identity construction. In particular, it supports existing theories regarding how social media serves as a "tool for self-presentation and social validation."

From a practical standpoint, it offers valuable insights for "tourism enterprises and social media marketers." Understanding how consumers utilize social approval mechanisms can assist brands in "developing more effective campaigns, better reaching their target audiences, and increasing user engagement." For instance, implementing "reward systems that encourage social media sharing" or organizing "competitions that enhance social desirability needs" could be effective strategies for tourism brands.

In conclusion, this study presents significant findings regarding the psychological and social dimensions of social media usage motivations. It has demonstrated how factors such as need for social approval and social desirability shape individuals' digital content sharing tendencies and provides a theoretical framework for future studies in this field.

Declarations

Funding: No funding was received for conducting this study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: Ethical approval for data collection was obtained from the Doğuş University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee with protocol number 2022/87. The study was carried out in accordance with institutional and national research ethics standards.

Informed Consent: Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all individuals involved in the survey.

Data Availability: The data supporting the findings of this study, based on responses from 408 participants staying at five-star accommodation establishments in Kuşadası, are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Disclosure: No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the conception, analysis, writing, or preparation of figures for this study. All content was generated by the author in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical standards.

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