THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND SELF-PROMOTION ON TRAVEL PHOTO SHARING

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Travel
Photo sharing
Social media
Self-promotion

Tourism is a social activity that enables people to communicate with each other. With the development of technology and communication tools, the way of communicating has also changed. Especially the emergence of smart technologies has allowed the development of social media platforms and people to share their touristic activities instantly. In this context, the aim of the study is to examine the effect of social media use and self-promotion on sharing travel photos. Within the scope of the study, data were obtained from 339 people by online survey technique. Confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis were used through the AMOS program in the analysis of the data. As a result of the analysis, self-promotion of social media usage and according to the research results it has been determined that social media usage has a positive effect on self-promotion and travel photo sharing and self-promotion has a positive effect on travel photography promotion. In line with the results obtained, various suggestions have been made to develop actionable strategies for the tourism industry.

SOSYAL MEDYA KULLANIMI VE KENDİNİ TANITMANIN SEYAHAT FOTOĞRAFI PAYLAŞMAYA ETKİSİ

ÖZ

Anahtar Kelimeler

Seyahat
Fotoğraf paylaşımı
Sosyal medya
Kendini tanıtma

Turizm, insanların birbirleriyle iletişim kurmalarını sağlayan sosyal bir faaliyettir. Teknolojinin ve iletişim araçlarının gelişmesiyle iletişim kurma şekli de değişmiştir. Özellikle akıllı teknolojilerin ortaya çıkması sosyal medya platformlarının gelişmesine ve insanların turistik faaliyetlerini anlık paylaşmalarına olanak sağlamıştır. Bu kapsamda çalışmanın amacı, sosyal medya kullanımı ve kendini tanıtmanın seyahat fotoğrafı paylaşmaya etkisini incelemektir. Çalışma kapsamında 339 kişiden çevrim içi anket tekniği ile veriler elde edilmiştir. Verilerin analizinde yapısal eşitlik modellemesi kapsamında doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve yol analizi yapılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde AMOS programı aracılığıyla doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve yol analizi kullanılmıştır. Analizler sonucunda sosyal medya kullanımının kendini tanıtma ve seyahat fotoğrafı paylaşma; kendini tanıtmanın da seyahat fotoğrafı tanıtma üzerinde pozitif bir etkisi olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar doğrultusunda turizm endüstrisi için eyleme geçirilebilir stratejiler geliştirmek için çeşitli önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today, tourists use the internet more effectively, they carry out many activities such as communication, information exchange, education, banking, tourism and travel through the network (Karaca, 2012). Accordingly, tourists' sharing their travel experiences as special photographs has increased with the internet and social media widespread (Jansson, 2018). Easy access to smart mobile devices has increased the use of social media contributing to the socialization of individuals (Mulvey et.al., 2020). The availability of social media due to the ease of internet access while traveling within for tourism has caused many tourists to share travel experiences during the travel (Lund et.al., 2020). Thanks to widespread use of smart devices with the development of technology, individuals can instantly share their travel experiences through their social networks, regardless of time and place limitations (Kim & Law, 2015). As a result, social media use can affect tourism experiences of by influencing their travel activities (Yu et.al., 2018).

According to the literature on the antecedents of the photo-sharing behavior of tourists; It has been revealed that the main purpose of taking photos among young consumers is not to preserve their travel memories, but to share the photos with a circle of friends (Chae et.al., 2017; Grewal et.al., 2019; Taylor, 2020). Therefore, as individuals' desire to socialize increases, the use of social media has also increased (Mulvey et.al., 2020). At the same time, people take photos to make their travel experiences memorable and share them selectively to express their personal identity (Barasch et.al., 2017).

Travel photo shared on social media are becoming more important for tourism industry and affect decision processes by increasing the awareness of individuals (Taylor, 2020). Some studies involving social media and travel photo tourists' travel photo sharing can positively affect tourism perceptions (Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017). In fact, it has been evaluated that travel photo sharing on social media has an impact on tourists' future holiday intentions (Wong et.al., 2020). In these circumstances, it is aimed to examine the effects of social media use and self-promotion on tourists' travel photo sharing. According to the literature on this issue, previous studies generally show that the effects of social media use on personality apprehensions and touristic travel intentions (Gong, 2016; Baniqued, 2019; O'Day, 2021; Kanwal & Isha, 2022; Eryılmaz & Zengin, 2014; Eryılmaz & Şengül, 2016; Aylan, 2020; Harman & Eyyüpoğlu, 2020, Tang et.al., 2022). It is thought

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that this study will contribute to the literature, since no study has been found on the effect of social media use and self-promotion on travel photo sharing directly.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Due to the development of technology, the widespread use of smart mobile devices and the increasing interest in digital spaces, the number of social media users causes it to become an inseparable whole of life, especially in the new generation (Baran, 2020). It is thought that such developments in the effective travel photo sharing by tourists and the use of social media have a great effect on people desire to self-promotion. The hypotheses developed in this context are explained under the following headings.

2. 1. Using social media and sharing travel photos

Taking photos from mobile devices (Oxford University Press, 2015) is considered a routine practice today (Lo & McKercher, 2015). Photography is defined as a logical evolution of the individual's desire to show himself in contemporary digital networks (Larsen, 2008). Travel photos are represented as a sincere and personal media in terms of tourism experiences (Wang et.al., 2012), so that individual can interact uninterruptedly even at a distance while performing tourism activities (Germann Molz & Paris, 2015). In this context, travel photos are considered as a symbol of the mobile society resulting from the constant interaction between travel and communication (German Molz & Paris, 2015). Many tourists take their travel photos and draw to create concrete proof of "I was there" that transforms abstract experience into concrete reality (Stylianou-Lambert, 2019). In this regard, social media channels are considered as an important element that allows tourists to instantly create, communicate and share their travel experiences through photographs (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was formed:

H_1: Social media use is positive affect on travel photo sharing.

2. 2. Use of social media and self-promotion

People tend to promote themselves in order to develop and maintain the self-esteem attributed to the positive reactions and compliments of others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). The majority of social media users manipulate and share their personal profiles to create desired impressions using various strategic self-promotion techniques (Rui & Stefanone, 2013). In a study by Tooke and Camire (1991), it was found that men tend to show more attractive financial possibilities, while women tend to show their physical

appearance more attractive. The expected positive reactions encourage social media users to deliberately share their own images. Specifically, many people have a belief that there is a possibility of achieving desired results, including the results of others. This situation causes an individual with the intention of promoting himself to increase the use of social media (Kim & Lee, 2011). On the subject, Rosenberg and Egbert (2011) emphasized that the need for positive self-development motivates self-promotional behaviors and this situation increases the use of social media. Accordingly, the following hypothesis was formed:

H2: Social media use is positive affect on self-promotion.

2. 3. Self promotion and share travel photos

Many tourists, when travel photo sharing via online social media channels, strategically select information about their photos and tend to deliberately manipulate images to show their friends (Kim & Tussyadiah, 2013). According to Goffman (1959), this strategic travel photo sharing situation is called "impression management". Presenting yourself diligently in order to create a positive impression on others is expressed as a purposeful promotion process (Lyu, 2016). The emergence of innovative mobile applications that allow tourists to improve the quality of their travel photos while presenting and changing their own image in travel photos significantly supports the phenomenon of strategic self-promotion (Hancock & Toma, 2009).

H3: Self-promotion is positive affect on travel photo sharing.

3. METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The population of the research consists of individuals aged 18 and over living in Turkey. The sample of the research consists of a total of 339 people selected by convenience sampling method, who use social media. The data used in the study were collected between February and March 2022. In the study, online survey method was preferred due to time, cost and pandemic conditions. The survey link was shared via social media and mobile communication applications and the participants were asked to fill in the surveys. Ethical permission was obtained from Sivas Cumhuriyet University Social Sciences Ethics Committee for this study.

In the study, a five-point Likert type (1-Strongly Disagree...3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree...5-Strongly Agree) measurement tool consisting of 13 statements was used. The

statements in the questionnaire were taken from the study by Taylor (2020). In addition, there are six more expressions (age, gender, education, marital status, occupation, profit) in the measurement tool that measure the demographic characteristics of the participants. In this study, the demographic characteristics of the participants were revealed by frequency analysis using the SPSS program and then, Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Path Analysis were used within the scope of structural equation modeling by using the AMOS program in analysis of the data.

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of social media use and self-promotion on sharing travel photos. For this purpose, the model of the research is shown in Figure 1 below.
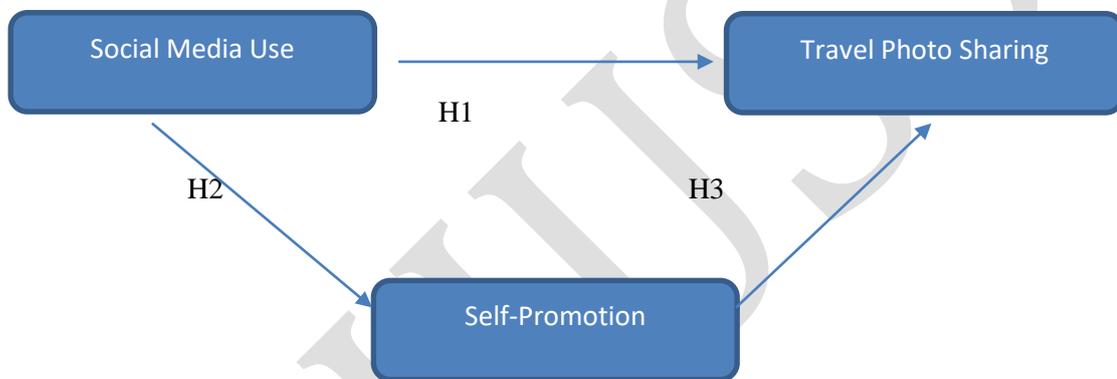

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Research

The hypotheses created in line with the research model are as follows:

H$_1$: Social media use is positive affect on travel photo sharing.

H$_2$: Social media use is positive affect on self-promotion.

H$_3$: Self-promotion is positive affect on travel photo sharing.

4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

According to Table 1, 64.9% of the participants were female, 35.1% were male; 20.1% are married and 79.9% are single. 66.4% of the participants are between the ages of 18-25, 71.7% have an income of 4250 TL or less. 55.5% are postgraduate graduates and 66.7% are students. Statistical data on the demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information About Participants

Gender	f	%	Marital status	f	%
Woman	220	64.9	Married	68	20.1
Male	119	35.1	Single	271	79.9
Age	**f**	**%**	**Cover. Family Profit**	**f**	**%**
18-25	225	66.4	4250 TL and below	243	71.7
26-33	46	13.6	4251-6000 TL	41	12.1
34-41	31	9.1	6001-7750 TL	33	9.7
42-49	24	7.1	7751- 10000 TL	10	2.7
50 years and older	13	3.8	10001 TL and above	12	3,5
Education	**f**	**%**	**Job**	86	17.5
High school and below	20	5.9	Public sector	52	15.3
Associate Degree	34	10	Private sector	44	13
Licence	97	28.6	Student	226	66.7
Graduate	188	55.5	Other	17	4.1
Total	**339**	**100**	**Total**	**339**	**100**

4. 1. Scale Validity and Reliability Analysis

The research model was first subjected to factor analysis, and the validity and reliability of the scale were checked. The results of the scale used in the study are shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Analyze of the Scales

Factors	Expressions	Factor Loads	Cronbach Alpha	AVE	CR
Social Media Usage	**SMU7**	,574	,890	,808	,916
	SMU6	,771			
	SMU5	,818			
	SMU4	,680			
	SMU3	,792			
	SMU2	,717			
	SMU1	,788			
Self-Promotion	**SP3**	,751	,809	,743	,896
	SP2	,935			
	SP1	,890			
Travel Photo Sharing	**TPS3**	,931	,940	,843	,941
	TPS2	,921			
	TPS1	,902			

In order to test the reliability and validity of all factors in the table, internal consistency reliability and convergent validity analysis were performed. Cronbach's

Alpha coefficient is generally preferred to be 0.70 and above (Hair et al., 2010). In the study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of all factors was above 0.70. Convergent validity method was used to test the construct validity in the study. For validity, AVE values should be greater than 0.5, CR values should be higher than 0.7 and CR values should be higher than AVE values (Hair et al., 2010). According to Table 3; AVE values of all factors are above 0.5, CR values are above 0.7 and CR values are higher than AVE values. In this case, all factors have construct validity.

4.2. Normality Test Results

To test whether the scales used in the research were normally distributed, a normality test was performed and Skewness (skewness) and Kurtosis (kurtosis) values were examined to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The skewness and kurtosis results of the scale used in the study are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Skewness and Kurtosis Values

Factors	Skewness	Kurtosis	min	Max
Social Media Use	-1,073	,334	1.43	5.00
Self-Promotion	-,671	-.625	1.00	5.00
Travel Photo Sharing	-,973	-.235	1.00	5.00

4.3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Before testing the research model with path analysis, all factor structures in the model should be verified with Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The goodness-of-fit values obtained as a result of CFA for social media use, self-promotion and travel photo sharing are shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Goodness of Fit Values	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	scales		
			Social Media Usage	Self-Promotion	Travel Photo Sharing
X2 /sd	χ2/ sd ≤ 3	χ2/ sd≤ 5	2,339	-	-
GFI	0.90 ≤ GFI	0.85 ≤ GFI	,978	1,000	1,000
CFI	0.97 ≤ CFI	0.95≤ CFI	,987	1,000	1,000
TLI (NNFI)	0.95 ≤ TLI	0.90 ≤ TLI	,976	-	-
RMSEA	RMSEA ≤ 0.05	RMSEA ≤ 0.08	,063	-	-

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According to Table 4, it is seen that all of the goodness-of-fit values of the scales included in the study show a good fit. After this stage, path analysis was used to test the strength and significance of the relationships (paths) between the variables in the research model.

4.4. Path Analysis Results

Path analysis was used to test the strength and significance of the relationships (paths) between the variables in the research model. Path analysis of the research model is as shown in figure 1 below:
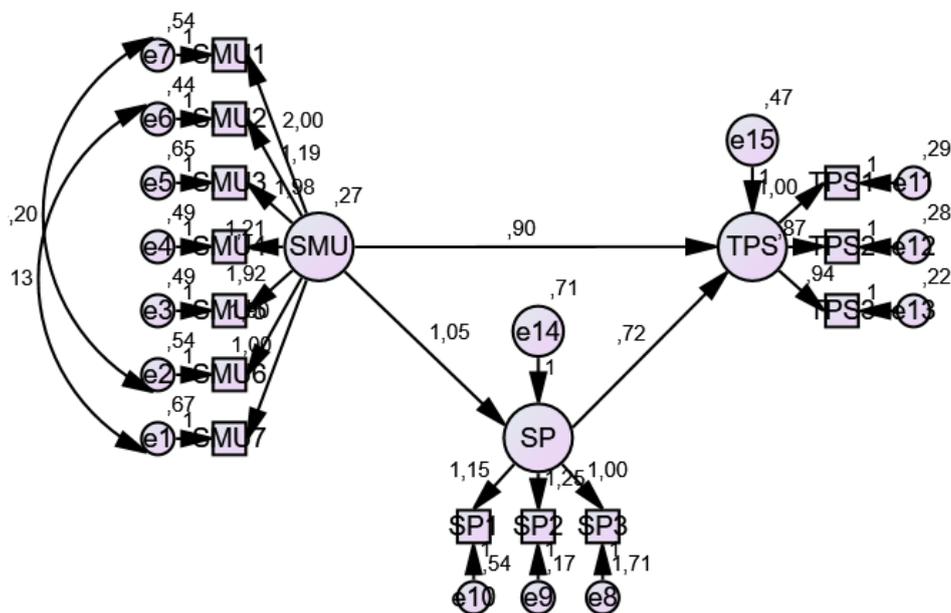

Figure 1: Path Analysis Model of the Research

As a result of the path analysis, the goodness of fit values of the research model are as in Table 5:

Table 5. Goodness-of-Fit Values of the Research Model

Compliance Measures	Good Fit	Acceptable Fit	Research Model
x2/sd	≤3	≤5	3,625
GFI	≥0.90	≥0.85	,915
CFI	≥0.97	≥0.95	,950
TLI (NNFI)	≥0.95	≥0.90	,935
RMSEA	≤0.05	≤0.08	,088

When the research model is examined, the goodness of fit values of the other values, except for the RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) value, show a good fit. RMSEA tends to increase as the number of variables and expressions in the model increase, so it can be said that it is a statistic that supports a small number of expressions. Thresholds of RMSEA have been interpreted a lot over time; in the early 90s, values between 0.05 and 0.10 indicated an average fit, while values above 0.10 were interpreted as poor fit of the model (MacCallum et al., 1996). Later on, values between 0.08 and 0.10 were called moderate and values below 0.08 were called good. However, more recent approaches have lowered the acceptable limit for this value. While values below 0.06 in the early 2000s were considered good, they were accepted as a threshold value of 0.07 (McQuitty, 2004). Therefore, when the research model that emerged in this study is examined, it is possible to say that all goodness-of-fit values show good fit.

The parameter estimates of the structural model providing goodness-of-fit values are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Research Model Results

Extrinsic Variable	Internal Variable	Standardized Regression Coefficient	Standard error	p Value	Situation
Social Media Usage →	Self-Promotion	,545	,154	,000	Accept
Social Media Usage →	Travel Photo Sharing	,374	,077	,000	Accept
Self-Promotion →	Travel Photo Sharing	,575	,134	,000	Accept

According to the results of the path analysis; the use of social media on self-promotion and travel photo sharing; also, self-promotion on travel photo sharing has been found to have a positive effect.

5.CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of social media use and self-promotion on sharing travel photos. In the study, before, performing the structural equation modeling, it was examined whether the data showed normal distribution and it was determined that the data showed normal distribution. Then, the internal consistency reliability and convergent validity of the scales used in the study were examined. Internal consistency was achieved because the Cronbach Alpha values of the scales used in the study were above 0.70. Convergent validity method was used to test the construct validity in the study. Social media use, self-promotion and travel photo sharing factors were found

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to provide convergent validity since all CR values were greater than 0.7, AVE values greater than 0.5, and all CR values greater than AVE values.

In the second stage of this research, the model was tested with path analysis and the hypotheses were tested by revealing the relationships. As a result of the path analysis, social media use for self-promotion and travel photo sharing; self-promotion was also found to have a positive effect on travel photo sharing, so all hypotheses were accepted.

Research findings add new information to the travel literature on the impact of social media use and self-promotion on tourists' travel photo sharing. Travel photo sharing behavior seems to be capable of creating a behavior that increase tourist experiences and travel memories. Thus, it will contribute to the motivation of the tourists who are likely to share their travel photos. Travel agencies and destination marketing businesses can contribute to the development of tourism by supporting tourists' travel photo sharing with alternative plans. It is considered as an important development that destinations desiring to increase their tourism attraction should organize award-winning photography contests related to the features they want to emphasize and and these contests should be presented together with social media channels open to everyone. Such efforts will make significant contributions to the revival of tourism. Tourists through travel photo sharing will be able to increase their sense of self and improve experience perceptions with the use of social media

Theoretically, this study sheds light on the social interaction processes that contribute to tourists' sense of self and evaluation of experience within their own reference. It also reveals that while the travel photo sharing positively affects the post-travel evaluations of the tourists, this effect will be limited to the tendency of self-promotion. Taken together, this research is a study that will expand the debate on how social media use and self-promotion shape travel photo sharing and how travel reviews are affected.

This study was carried out in a short time frame because of time, cost and pandemic constraints. Due to a small sample and online data collection, the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. In future research, it is important to examine the relationships between different types of personality traits and social media motivations, travel photo sharing and the concepts of self-promotion. In addition, the development of new generation reality technologies that can be used in the tourism industry, the

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widespread use of the Metaverse field, which is a different dimension within the scope of tourism activities (Baran and Baran 2021) and will increase the travel photo sharing on social media for virtual space travels and will have different effects on self-promotion. In this context, future research can be built on examining how the use of social media is affected by virtual space travels. It is thought that the findings to be obtained will contribute to the literature on tourism preferences.

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