

# TRAVELING IN THE DIGITAL WORLD: HOW DOES INSTAGRAM INFLUENCES YOUNG PEOPLE'S TOURISM ENGAGEMENT AND INTENTION IN TERMS OF SOCIAL COGNITIVE LEARNING THEORY?

Viajando no Mundo Digital: Como o Instagram Influencia o Engajamento no Turismo de Jovens em Termos da Teoria de Aprendizagem Social Cognitiva?

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of Instagram's e-servicescape on the behavior of young people using a model based on social cognitive learning theory. 408 young tourists participated in the quantitative research. The research model and hypotheses were examined using exploratory factor, correlation, and regression analyses. The results showed that layout & functionality had no impact, while tourists' positive emotions and online flow experiences were influenced by financial security and esthetic appeal. It was also noted that the components of Instagram's e-service experience play a crucial role in understanding the travel behavior of young people. Therefore, it is important for tourism businesses to continually improve content of their account, especially in terms of financial security and aesthetic appeal, as the experiences of young travelers on Instagram impact their purchase intentions. Incorporating online flow experience and positive affect into the social cognitive learning model helps better explain tourists' behavior on social media. The study offers a perspective to tourism researchers and professionals by providing information about the meaning of young tourists' social media use for the tourism industry.

## KEYWORDS

Tourist; Young; Instagram; Social Cognitive Learning Theory; Flow Experience.

## RESUMO

Este estudo examina o cenário do impacto dos serviços eletrônicos do Instagram no comportamento de jovens turistas, usando modelo baseado na Teoria da Aprendizagem Cognitiva Social. Participaram da pesquisa quantitativa 408 jovens turistas. O modelo e as hipóteses da pesquisa foram examinados por meio de análises de fator explicativo, correlação e regressão. Os resultados mostraram que o layout e a funcionalidade não tiveram qualquer impacto, enquanto as emoções positivas e as experiências de fluxo online dos turistas foram influenciadas pela segurança financeira e pelo apelo estético. Observou-se, também, que os componentes da experiência de serviço eletrônico do Instagram desempenham um papel crucial na compreensão do comportamento de viagem dos jovens. Portanto, é importante que as empresas de turismo melhorem continuamente o conteúdo das suas contas, especialmente em termos de segurança financeira e apelo estético, uma vez que as experiências dos jovens

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viajantes no Instagram têm impacto nas suas intenções de compra. Incorporar a experiência de flow online e o efeito positivo no modelo de aprendizagem social cognitiva ajuda a explicar melhor o comportamento dos turistas nas redes sociais. O estudo oferece uma perspectiva aos investigadores e profissionais do turismo, fornecendo informações sobre o significado do uso das redes sociais pelos jovens turistas para o setor turístico.

#### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Turista; Jovem; Instagram; Teoria da Aprendizagem Social Cognitiva; Experiência Flow.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Many people make their purchases for touristic travels such as hotels, restaurants, or plane tickets through e-commerce platforms. As tourism marketers can reach wider markets in a brief time with less cost through social media (Icoz et al., 2018), businesses are investing more in digital options (Paquette, 2013). One of the systems that businesses use intensively in e-commerce is Instagram.

Instagram is used effectively in advertising, promotion, and distribution (Smith, 2018), as it offers tourism regions and businesses the opportunity to create images with visual posts (Perinotto et al., 2020), and tourists to transform their holiday experiences into visual representations (Gretzel, 2017). Photos, videos, and comments on tourism products shared by users provide information that other tourists need (Smith, 2018). The content and the sharing atmosphere offered by Instagram affect followers' purchase intentions (Rizka & Hidayatullah, 2020).

This situation directs service providers who want to increase their competitiveness to Instagram (El Tayeb, 2021) and pushes them to improve the content and quality of their posts (Mendes-Filho, 2014). By developing Instagram content, businesses aim to manage customers' emotional and behavioral reactions to online interactions (Lee & Jeong, 2012). However, despite this general definition, the literature on the interactive processes and determining factors between the business-Instagram environment-potential tourists is still quite limited (Tobias-Mamina et al., 2020; Ismarizal & Kusumah, 2023).

The causes and origins of social media-influenced travel behavior remain insufficiently understood in scientific studies (Thomaz et al., 2017). This ambiguity can be attributed to variations in social media habits among users, the nature of the content, and the user-friendly

interface of platforms such as Instagram. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how Instagram users perceive and respond to the e-service environment. This understanding will shed light on which Instagram features encourage young tourists to visit specific destinations.

While studies have examined users' perceptions of the online shopping environment (Hakim & Deswindi, 2015; Sreejesh & Abhilash, 2017; Tankovic & Benazic, 2018), there is a noticeable deficiency in scholarly research regarding Instagram's e-servicescape. Koay, Teoh, and Soh's (2021) indicates that Instagram influencer marketing activities significantly appeal to users. Additionally, Hannifah (2019) found that visual contents have an influence on Generation Y's travel decisions. Tesin et al. (2022) established Instagram as an important source for travel information.

But the specific features of Instagram that enhance user interaction and experience remain unclear. This underscores the necessity to explore how Instagram transforms users into tourists and the platform's role in stimulating touristic behavior. Similarly, Ismarizal and Kusumah (2023) emphasize the requirement for scholars in the field of tourism to broaden their examination of consumer behavior and delve into the psychological facets of Instagram photo and video content, as well as Instagram usage. Furthermore, Gumpo et al. (2020) advocate for the identification of trustworthy information sources for Instagram users and the assessment of how these factors influence travelers' confidence in the platform. Given these scholars' concerns, there is a clear need to address these gaps and contribute to the existing body of literature through further exploration in this area.

The social cognitive learning theory [SCLT] is a comprehensive framework that integrates cognitive behavior and social learning theories. It posits that human behavior is the result of learning, which occurs through the interplay of personal, behavioral, and environmental factors (Wood & Bandura, 1989). According to Bandura's theory, people learn behaviors by observing others and their interactions within the social environment. However, behavior is not merely a product of imitation; it also involves cognitive processing of environmental stimuli. Individuals develop their social and psychomotor skills by actively exploring their surroundings, which in turn influences their behavior. This process occurs through sensory, motor, and cognitive systems, shaping individuals' lives and actions. Therefore, the theory acknowledges the role of the external environment in shaping human behavior and how individual characteristics can also impact the environment (Bandura, 1986; 2001).

Bandura's SCLT provides a framework to understand tourist behavior considering Instagram's interaction with the e-servicescape. It can be argued that Instagram is a suitable case for understanding the basic principles of social cognitive theory, including reciprocal determination, symbolic consumption, self-efficacy, and vicarious learning, which are instrumental in explaining human behavior. For example, Instagram allows users to gain insights into the lives and activities of others, influencing their decision-making processes. Consequently, users on social media platforms both influence and are influenced by interactions, illustrating the concept of reciprocal determination.

Influencers can serve as sources of inspiration, using travel-related content to inform users' decisions. Subsequently, these symbolic visual contents undergo a meaning-making process in the users' minds, impacting their behavior, thus demonstrating symbolization capacity. Moreover, user interaction on this platform, such as likes and comments, can reinforce or challenge specific travel habits. Individuals assess their self-efficacy by comparing their experiences to those portrayed on Instagram.

Furthermore, by promoting interaction among users, sharing travel experiences on social media facilitates social learning. This content encourages users to form a positive perception of destinations, demonstrating vicarious learning. Tourist behavior can also be accelerated by users' positive effects on social media and their flow experiences, even though Instagram's e-servicescape promotes both direct and indirect learning. In the light of all information, the study examines the relationship between Instagram's e-servicescape, flow experience, positive affect, and users' behavioral intention from an SCLT standpoint. A research model was developed [Figure 1], and hypotheses were subsequently tested to explore these connections.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Social Cognitive Learning Theory** - According to behaviorist psychological theories, learning is a link between stimulus and behavior. This approach contends that the individual interacts with the surroundings, and learning occurs in response to external stimuli. In other words, learning accepts the change in behavior that results from reinforcement and repetition. Cognitive approaches, on the other hand, believe that learning occurs by analyzing various mental processes (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). Bandura (2001) defines people as active participants in the daily flow of life, and with this view, he expands the framework of learning approaches and

connects behavioral and cognitive psychology. People are beings who are affected by and participate in environmental events. As a result, the human mind is structured to produce and react rather than work reactively. This clearly demonstrates that the mind shapes human behavior. Bandura's SCLT theory was developed with this perspective in mind. The theory is widely accepted in the fields of education and psychology, with distinct characteristics (Bahar, 2019).

SCLT posits that people's learning is the result of the interaction of personal, environmental, and behavioral factors. In other words, people's internal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental events improve learning by influencing each other in a bidirectional manner (Bandura 1999). According to SCLT, learning occurs when individuals imitate the behavior of others while watching and observing them in social situations (Slavin, 2018). If the observation experience is positive and related to the observed behavior, people will imitate it (Ilmiani et al., 2021).

When explaining human behavior, the theory emphasizes the interaction between the external environment and the individual's inner world. It is assumed that knowledge is obtained through various forms of interaction and cognitive evaluation (Fiske & Taylor, 2020; Chowdhury & Majumdar, 2021). This information obtained is the human response to external environmental stimuli, which is frequently influenced by behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). In this regard, theory is commonly used to explain human behavior (Tang, 2014). Because the theory contends that social interaction shapes the actions people take to improve their quality of life, meet their needs, and achieve their goals, it emphasizes the importance of cognition in this context (Harinie et al., 2017).

**e-Servicescape** - Different researchers explain that the servicescape affects the customer in various ways. Lin and Mattila (2010) argue that customers consider both the service environment and their interaction with employees and evaluate their service consumption experiences holistically. Because the service environment does not only consist of the relationship between customers and employees. It is a holistic servicescape that expresses all the elements perceived by the customer (Bitner, 1992). For example, factors such as the physical elements of restaurants (music, smell, temperature) affect customers' perceptions of the physical environment (Ryu & Jang, 2007). Similarly, Apaolaza et al. (2020) mention that environmental aesthetics significantly affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, it is

stated that service delivery increases quality judgment and perceived value. All elements such as physical service, employee service and customer service environment shape customer satisfaction and behavior (Line & Hanks, 2020).

Previously, scientific studies focused on the physical environmental conditions of the service environment. However, the fact that technology has become a prominent part of human life has changed this attitude and brought the concept of e-servicescape to the fore (Huang et al., 2017). The factors that affect the physical service experience of the consumers and the factors that play a role in the e-service experience are different.

Many studies have focused on this issue and mentioned the unique aspects of the e-servicescape (Tran & Strutton, 2020; Yadav & Mahara, 2020). Harris and Goode (2010) refer to the virtual atmosphere that emerges when a customer visits a company's website as an e-servicescape. The authors define the dimensions of e-servicescape in their research as 'aesthetic appeal, layout and functionality, financial security'. According to Lai et al. (2014) consider elements such as "ambient, design, signs, symbols and artifacts, interaction" as the basic components of the e-servicescape in their research.

An e-servicescape can stimulate customer emotions and perceptions towards a website, thereby influencing purchase intention. In this context, it is important for companies to create an online atmosphere that increases their willingness to buy and produces certain emotional effects (Wu et al., 2017). Similarly, the use of e-servicescape has a significant role in service organizations. Because customers visit websites before purchasing services, and the prevailing atmosphere here affects people's purchasing behavior (Hakim & Deswindi, 2015). Therefore, the continuous improvement and development of the e-service experience offered to people on a website or social media network can be a strategy that increases competitiveness beyond ordinary action.

**Social Media as an e-Servicescape** - Electronic service experience now has a dominant role in shaping consumer behavior (Raji et al., 2024). As an area where e-service experience is offered, social media provides access to huge masses in a brief time (Kind & Evans, 2015). This has caused marketing managers to pay more attention to social media platforms when examining their purchasing processes (Aji et al., 2020). Because, thanks to their features and designs, social media applications intensify the interaction between commercial companies and their customers. However, as a result of the e-service experience it offers, social media both determines the choices of consumers and accelerates the communication process between the

service provider and the buyer (Hopkins et al., 2009; Jeon & Jeong, 2009). Social media networks reveal people's visual and auditory experiences of products or services. The colors, music, themes, backgrounds, fonts and layouts used, as well as the content, affect the expectations and perceptions of consumers towards products or services. Moreover, considering that people take into account the recommendations of others, the visual and audio e-servicescape of social networks is important. Especially service industries such as tourism cannot remain indifferent to the advantages of social media-based marketing.

**Hypothesis Development** - Improving the e-service environment offered by a service provider increases the perceived value by the user (Yeo et al., 2021). E-servicescape components that determine consumer experience are aesthetic appeal, ambient conditions layout and functionality for fashion consumers (Lee & Park, 2013), and ambient conditions, design, search aids and slogans, and functional aspects for the hospitality industry (Jeon & Jeong, 2009). These features affect tourists' online experience. Providing a low-quality e-servicescape may cause people to turn to competitors (Huang et al., 2017). The hardware and visual compatibility of social media networks reinforces the flow experience as an important determinant of online shopping (Boukabiya & Outtaj, 2021). The hypothesis developed in this context is as follows:

- H1: The e-servicescape has significant influence on the flow experience of young tourists.
- H1a: Financial security has significant influence on the flow experience of young tourists.
- H1b: Layout & Functionality has significant influence on the flow experience of young tourists.
- H1c: Aesthetic appeal has significant influence on flow experience of young tourists.

One of the main factors affecting the online e-service experience of consumers is the positive effect it produces on emotions. The factors that reveal this effect are the characteristics of the service environment offered. For example, the beautiful and usable design of websites develops positive emotions on consumers (Mano & Oliver, 1993). In addition, Lee and Park (2013) states that consumers' evaluations of online platforms also cause positive emotions on other users. The hypothesis developed in the light of this information is as follows:

- H2: The e-servicescape has significant influence on positive affect for young tourists.
- H2a: Financial security has significant influence on positive affect for young tourists.
- H2b: Layout & Functionality has significant influence on positive affect for young tourists.
- H2c: Aesthetic appeal has significant influence on positive affect for young tourists.

Individuals who are satisfied with the e-servicescape of social media, continue their online purchasing behavior (Rahman & Listyorini, 2022). A comparable situation exists for the web contents and social media applications of the tourism industry. Although there are studies examining this relationship between the e-service experience and the behavioral intention of users (Sousa & Voss, 2012; Fakhoury & Aubert, 2015), it is seen that studies that deal with the subject in terms of tourism behavior are limited (Sreejesh & Abhilash, 2017). However, considering that the worldwide online travel market has reached 475 billion dollars in 2022 (Statista), it is a meaningful effort to examine the perception of e-service and tourism behavior, especially through social media. The hypothesis developed in the light of this information is as follows:

H3: The e-servicescape has significant influence on the intention to travel of young tourists.

H3a: Financial security has significant influence on the intention to travel of young tourists.

H3b: Layout & Functionality has significant influence on the intention to travel of young tourists.

H3c: Aesthetic appeal has significant influence on the intention to travel of young tourists.

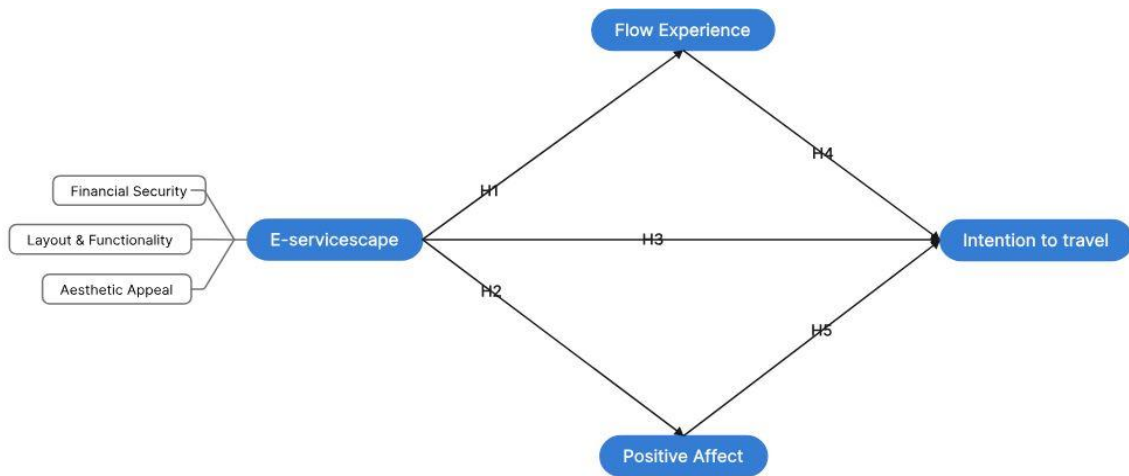
Elements such as visual appeal, aesthetics and design exhibited by websites or social media not only affect the emotions and thoughts of consumers, but also trigger their behavior (Teng et al., 2018). Because the appearance of websites improves the cognitive and emotional positive reactions of consumers. While design and functionality support the cognitive processes of the person, the environment's color, photograph, etc. attractiveness-producing ingredients contribute to the development of positive physiological responses. However, the service provider's slogan improves the emotional response of users. Color, font, font size, music, animation, background colors and other visual images enrich the experiential flow of users, causing the consumer a sense of pleasure and arousal (Carlson & O'Cass 2011; Sreejesh & Abhilash 2017). The e-service experience offered determines the positive or negative thoughts of users (Jeon & Jeong, 2009). It is inevitable that these thoughts will guide the travel intention. The hypothesis developed in the light of this information is as follows:

H4: The flow experience has significant influence on intention to travel.

H5: The positive affect has significant influence on intention to travel.



Figure 1 - Conceptual model.



## METHODOLOGY

**Scope** - Today's buying behavior is online shopping, which has evolved with modern technology (Soares et al., 2022). The number of virtual consumers is increasing globally, depending on the online shopping channels that develop over the internet and social media (Le & Ngoc, 2024). The majority of the groups that prefer online shopping because of its speed and accessibility are young people (Choudhury & Dey, 2014). Young individuals, contrary to traditional behavioral patterns, adapt to technological and other advancements more quickly. They create their own social behavior patterns rather than adopting societal conventions. Online buying is a frequent practice for young people in this behavioral plane (Handa & Gupta, 2014). Young people are shopping online via social media like the internet. They prefer social media channels because they are less inclined to face-to-face shopping (Godlring & Azab, 2021). On the other hand, factors such as getting more discounts and providing cheap products or services lead young people to social media (Ayoobkhan, 2016).

Consumption of tourism products is becoming increasingly popular, especially among young people aged 15-29, as seen on social media platforms.. For these young tourists, travel serves to expand their perspectives, engage in local activities, and immerse themselves in diverse cultures. The young tourist segment represents the fastest growing group in the global tourism market, accounting for approximately 23% of total international tourists.. In this regard, this market plays a significant role in the sustainable development of tourist regions and enterprises (UNWTO, 2016). Moreover, young tourists are known for their extensive use of social media

platforms to conduct comprehensive research on potential travel destinations, compare distinct options, and explore the experiences shared by fellow travelers before finalizing their travel plans (Atasoy & Türkay, 2024). Considering these information, this study aims to delve into the correlation between Instagram's e-servicescape and the travel intentions of tourists, with a specific focus on the perspectives of young tourists.

**Data Collecting** - The research data were obtained from young tourists who had previously examined the pages of the hotels on Instagram and benefited from this resource while planning their vacations. The questionnaire was created through Google Forms and delivered to the participants. Data were collected in April-June 2020. As the relevant dates coincide with the peak periods of the COVID-19 pandemic, online collection of research data was deemed appropriate. In the specified period, the pandemic affected the entire world, face-to-face contact with people was avoided and curfews were imposed in many countries.

Therefore, the questionnaire designed via Google Form was delivered to the participants online. The survey link was first posted on Instagram. It is expected that Instagram users will support the research by stipulating that the information of the potential participants will be kept confidential and will only be used in academic studies. As of the end of June, responses were received from 408 participants. A question was asked to decide whether the participants of the study were suitable or not. According to this, "Did you use Instagram on your last touristic trip?" Those who answered yes to the question were able to answer the research questions. All the questionnaires obtained were deemed appropriate for the analysis processes.

**Scale Design** - The questionnaire used in this study consists of five parts [demographic information, e-servicescape, flow experience, positive affect, travel intention]. The authors developed the questionnaire using two different scientific studies. In the research, 17 statements about e-servicescape, positive affect and online flow experience were obtained from Huang et al. (2017). 4 statements regarding behavioral intention were revised from Mason and Paggiaro's (2012) research and included in the scale. The questionnaire form was developed based on a 7-point Likert type scale. Accordingly, all expressions; ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7). The questionnaire, which was originally in English, was translated into Turkish by the researchers.

## **FINDINGS**

**Characteristics of the Sample** - Individuals from 30 different cities of Turkey contributed to the research. Participants mostly consist of young tourists between the ages of 19-22 (45.1%) and female participants are in the majority (52.3%) in terms of gender. The last vacation of 31.6% of the sample is 1-3 days. In this study, it was determined that half of the participants used Instagram while planning their vacation [to a certain extent (29.4%), significantly (22.3%)]. 36.5% of the sample spend 1-3 hours a day on Instagram.

**Exploratory Factor Analysis** - The reliability of the measurement was examined with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The 95.2% value obtained was considered to indicate high reliability (Ekelu & Quainoo, 2019). Again, to understand the structural features of the scale and to evaluate its validity, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed, and the dimensions of the scale were examined (Table 1). The KMO value (0.93) and the significance of Bartlett's test (0.000,  $p < 0.05$ ) showed that the data were suitable for the construct to be measured. Equamax technique was preferred in the study and expressions below 0.40 were excluded from the evaluation.

**Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Items	Factor Loads	Eigenvalue	Explained Variance %	CA	Average	Standard deviation
<b>Layout and functionality (LF)</b>						
Instagram is easily navigated.	,860	3,16	15,04	,930	4,98	1,59
There are convenient ways to between similar pages on Instagram is easy.	,851					
Information about hotels is easily accessed on Instagram.	,785					
Information about holiday plans is easily accessed on Instagram.	,569					
<b>Travel intention (TI)</b>						
Instagram will be my first choice for my travel plan in the future.	,761	2,85	13,61	,941	4,33	1,83
I'll recommend Instagram to my friends.	,731					
I'll spread a positive word of mouth about Instagram.	,657					
I'll continue to use Instagram in my holiday plans.	,497					
<b>Aesthetic appeal (AE)</b>						
I like tourism posts on Instagram.	,685	2,52	12,02	,914	4,62	1,57
I think that tourism posts on Instagram are entertaining.	,628					
The design of Instagram's tourism pages is adventurous.	,612					
<b>Positive affect (PA)</b>						
When using Instagram, I felt friendly.	,643	2,44	11,63	,847	4,33	1,61
When using Instagram, I felt relaxed.	,589					
When using Instagram, I felt cheerful.	,581					

When using Instagram, I felt happy.	,569					
<b>Financial security (FS)</b>						
When paying for tourism firms, Instagram does not require a lot of details.	,869	2,43	11,59	,855	5,32	1,38
I am confident in the security procedures on Instagram.	,816					
Instagram is sensitive about security.	,576					
<b>Flow experience (FE)</b>						
When using Instagram, I didn't think about anything else.	,772	1,97	9,37	,704	5,92	1,06
When using Instagram, I focused entirely on what I was doing.	,768					
When using Instagram, I lost the concept of time.	,419					

A six-dimensional structure was obtained from 21 items. These dimensions are listed as follows from largest to smallest according to the proportion of variance explained: Four-item Layout and functionality (AVE= 15,048%; eigenvalue= 3,160), four-item Travel intention AVE= 13,614%; eigenvalue= 2,859), three-item Aesthetic appeal (AVE= 12,026%; eigenvalue= 2,525), four-item Positive affect (AVE= 11,631%; eigenvalue= 2,525); eigenvalue=2,525), four-item Positive affect (AVE=11,631%; eigenvalue=2,44), three-item Financial security (AVE=11,596%; eigenvalue=2,43) and three-item Online flow experience (AVE=9,379%; eigenvalue=1,97) dimensions. The mean and standard deviation values for each dimension are also shown in Table 1. In this context, the factor with the highest agreement was online flow experience ( $\bar{x}$ = 5.92), followed by financial security ( $\bar{x}$ = 5.32), organization and functionality ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.98), aesthetic appeal ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.62), positive impact ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.33) and intention to travel ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.33).

**Hypothesis Tests** - A series of scientific analyzes were conducted in order to test the hypotheses. Firstly, the model created to determine the effect of users' e-servicescape perception on online flow experience was tested with hierarchical regression [Table 2]. The model was significant (F=56,320; p<0.01). E-serviscape explained 29.0% of the online flow experience. The e-servicescape factors that contribute significantly to the model are aesthetic appeal ( $\beta$ =.186; p<0.01) and financial security ( $\beta$ =.204; p<0.01). The dimension of Layout and functionality did not contribute significantly ( $\beta$ =.065; p<0.01).

**Table 2. The relationship between e-servicescape and flow experience**

Independent variable	Beta	Std. Error	t	Significance	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance (Model)	Hypothesis
FS	,204	,038	5,382	,000	58,320	,290	,000	H <sup>1a</sup> supported
LF	,065	,038	1,721	,086				H <sup>1b</sup> unsupported
AE	,186	,039	4,779	,000				H <sup>1c</sup> supported

\*Dependent variable=FE

The model tested the interaction between e-servicescape and positive affect was significant ( $F=231.314$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). Accordingly, the rate of explaining the positive affect of the e-servicescape is 62% (Table 3). The significant contribution was produced by aesthetic appeal ( $\beta=.636$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and financial security ( $\beta=.143$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). It is seen that the layout & functionality did not produce a significant contribution ( $\beta=.096$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 3. The relationship between e-servicescape and positive affect**

Independent variable	Beta	Std. Error	t	Significance	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance (Model)	Hypothesis
FS	,143	,040	3,551	,000	231,314	,629	,000	H <sup>2a</sup> supported
LF	,096	,040	2,374	,018				H <sup>2b</sup> unsupported
AE	,636	,041	15,379	,000				H <sup>2c</sup> supported

\*Dependent variable=PA

The model that tests the effects of Instagram users' perceptions of e-servicescape on their intention to travel is also found to be significant ( $F=289.829$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). 68% of participants' travel intentions are explained by their perception of the e-service environment (Table 4). Dimensions producing significant contribution on travel intention to financial security ( $\beta=.130$ ;  $p<0.01$ ); aesthetic appeal ( $\beta=.710$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and layout & functionality ( $\beta=.230$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 4. The relationship between e-servicescape and travel intention**

Independent variable	Beta	Std. Error	t	Significance	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance (Model)	Hypothesis
FS	,130	,044	2,971	,003	289,829	,680	,000	H <sup>3a</sup> supported
LF	,230	,044	5,255	,000				H <sup>3b</sup> supported
AE	,710	,045	15,788	,000				H <sup>3c</sup> supported

\*Dependent variable=TI

The model testing the effects of participants' positive affect and online flow experience levels on their intention to travel was also found to produce significant results ( $F=384,937$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The findings show that the online flow experience and positive affect that Instagram offers explains 65% of young users' intention to travel (Table 5). While the positive affect felt by the

participants made a significant contribution to the model ( $\beta=.948$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), it was determined that the online flow experience did not produce a significant contribution ( $\beta=-.005$ ;  $p<0.01$ ).

**Table 5. The relationship between e-servicescape, positive affect and travel intention**

Independent variable	Beta	Std. Error	t	Significance	F	R <sup>2</sup>	Significance (Model)	Hypothesis
PA	,948	,038	25,017	,000	384,937	,654	,000	H <sup>4</sup> supported
FE	-,005	,056	-,088	,930				H <sup>5</sup> unsupported

\*Dependent variable=TI

## CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The current research presents a novel framework for tourism studies by examining the relationship between Instagram's e-servicescape and tourist behavior through the lens of Bandura's SCLT. The findings illustrate a positive influence of Instagram's e-servicescape on the travel intentions of young users, signaling the platform's potential impact on travel-related behaviors. Additionally, it is proposed that expanding the social cognitive learning model, which encompasses both cognitive and behavioral aspects, to include supplementary variables such as online flow experience and positive affect would be beneficial. This expanded approach facilitates the identification of e-servicescape elements that influence the online flow experiences and positive affect of young Instagram users, as well as the distinct examination of variables influencing travel intentions. The study concludes with theoretical and practical recommendations based on the research findings.

**Theoretical Implications** - Instagram functions as the designedly or unintentionally learning/imitation environment mentioned by Bandura (1986; 2001), and the expectation that it will produce behavioral results (O'Rourke, 2006) is realized. The behavioral consequences of the symbolic interaction offered by Instagram make it logical to consider social media as a learning-action environment based on SCLT. As a social subsystem, Instagram produces cognitive and social effects and can determine human behavior (Kilipiri, Papaioannou & Kotzaivazoglou, 2023).

Visual and audio content shared on Instagram allows users to follow and imitate other visitors. This observation motivates users and may result in touristic travel. In fact, this empathy that develops through social media also refers to young tourists' self-efficacy belief that their actions

will not result as they expect (Bandura, 1997). At the same time, content producers' posts encourage young tourists and increase the dominance of Instagram in tourist behavior. The results reveal that behaviors such as commenting and liking content improve interaction among young users, and therefore the reciprocal determinism aspect of Bandura's theory. Therefore, the actions of young tourists on Instagram, such as observation, imitation and interaction, provide a representation of social cognitive learning.

Instagram posts of tourism regions and businesses need to be evaluated and developed based on the critical issues of SCLT. Young tourists seem to consider symbolic learning materials such as photos, videos, etc. and the comments of others. Instagram also offers direct communication opportunities. This transforms Instagram into a collection of multiple learning conditions. In this context, it offers a learning experience that produces both direct and indirect effects. This experience can turn Instagram into an electronic word-of-mouth marketing channel and drive tourist behavior (Silaban et al., 2023). In this case, the study of Instagram will make important contributions to the scope of SCLT.

The fact that the Layout and functionality variable did not produce the expected effects may be related to the fact that there is a uniform situation for Instagram in this regard. However, the contribution of the flow experience to the models needs to be explained. While some studies state that online flow experience cannot explain behavioral intention (Pu et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2017), others argue that more flow experiences will increase purchase (Van Noort et al., 2012; Ozkara et al., 2017; Ameen et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). In this study, it was found that flow experience did not play a role in participants' travel intention.

The literature shows that studies that consider the flow experience with different dimensions have obtained different results on online purchase intention (Ozkara et al., 2017). For example, Liu et al. (2022) confirmed that trust and flow as mediating variables support each other and affect consumers' purchase intention. Ali (2016) mentions that perceived flow experience mediates website quality, customer satisfaction and purchase intention. As a result, based on the possibility that the combined effect of flow experience is significant, it should be recommended to be tested with different variables other than positive affect. In addition, positive affect were found to increase purchase intention. This is supported by the existing literature (LeDoux, 1989; Baumeister et al., 2007).

The research findings suggest that the e-servicescape of Instagram has a positive affect on young tourists. This offers a valuable framework for understanding how e-servicescape influence the travel behavior of young people. However, it is important to consider the positive affect in the context of positive psychology. Emotions are complex and challenging to comprehend and control (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). The classical view in positive psychology suggests that positive emotions shape future behavior and play a role in socialization.

Positively valence emotions like joy, interest, and happiness can reinforce each other and guide individuals (Fredrickson, 2001). Mejer and Schafer (2018) discuss the emotional outcomes of using Instagram, which lead to various behaviors such as travel, sports, and cooking. Consequently, this study not only supports the principles of social cognitive learning associated with Instagram but also aligns with the tenets of positive psychology. Overall, this research provides a nuanced perspective on how the comprehensive features of Instagram impact young tourists and holds implications for both academics and practitioners within the field of tourism.

**Managerial Implications** - The research provides a guide on how Turkish young tourists plan their vacation and travel behaviors through Instagram pages, as well as how these tourism pages should be designed. The research confirms three dimensions of the e-servicescape (aesthetic appeal, design & functionality, financial security). Instagram's e-service atmosphere is an important predictor of tourists' positive emotions, flow experiences, and travel intentions. In this context, it is a meaningful effort to realize the role of Instagram pages of tourism businesses or regions in constructing the expectations and experiences of tourists and to make continuous improvements. Lee and Jeong's (2012) view that a good understanding of the social factors of tourism websites seems to be justified as it affects customer perceptions.

For this reason, all tourism stakeholders who trade or promote on Instagram should maintain their web pages with an approach that is easy to use, attractive and offers security protocols. Additionally, destination managers and tourism organizations can use photos, videos, comments, hashtags, geotags and other content to attract the attention of target tourist markets (Siyamiyan Gorji., Almeida-Garcia & Mercade Mele, 2023). Because Chen et al. (2017) thinks that a functionally well-designed website triggers the impulse to buy because it saves time and effort for users. Managers should review the strategies for security, privacy, and payment conditions in order to overcome the financial security concerns of tourism websites and social



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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18226/>

media pages. This recommendation is in line with previous research (See also Kim et al., 2006; Tankovic & Benazic, 2018).

The positive emotions that tourists feel about the content while browsing Instagram pages support their orientation to touristic products. In conditions where the e-servicescape alone is not enough, the positive emotions offered can convince the tourists. Hopkins et al. (2009) states that the content of the website leads to positive purchasing behavior. Additionally, Ibrahim and Aljarah (2023) mention that Instagram stories and content support people's positive emotions and satisfaction.

While designing social media or websites, the aesthetic aspect of the content will improve the positive mood of the tourists. For example, tourism businesses can attract tourists with professional content (photos, videos, reels, stories, etc.) they share on their Instagram pages. Although it does not produce a direct effect, the indirect relationship between Instagram's flow experience and tourists' travel intention is also an issue that tourism professionals should consider. Instagram pages can provide people with a fun, pleasant flow experience for their content, but this may not result in behavior. Therefore, it is recommended to consider the e-servicescape, positive affect and flow as a whole and to develop the processes of the managers accordingly.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Further research need to confirm the findings from different perspectives and disciplines. This research focuses only on one social media application. To generalize the research results, it would be beneficial to examine different social media applications (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc.) and tour organizers' marketing platforms (Expedia, Booking, etc.) by gathering data from larger audiences and focusing on various aspects of online experience perception. The research has focused on how tourists adopt social media when planning their vacations, but it has not considered the motivations of the people who use these networks.

Therefore, future research could be conducted using mixed approaches to gain comprehensive information about tourists' pre- and post-travel experiences and satisfaction. Additionally, there is a clear need for tourism and travel research in terms of social cognitive learning and positive psychology. Studies in which the basic assumptions of social cognitive theory are tested on different tourist groups will be valuable. On the other hand, a comparative study should be

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adopted to clearly determine the factors of social media that improve the emotional state of users. Moreover, it would be beneficial to determine the differences in social media tools such as Instagram and Facebook and to determine why some applications lead to more touristic behavior. This will also provide a basic guide to predicting tourist behavior, allowing for a clearer identification of marketing strategies within tourism practitioners.

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#### **PROCESSO EDITORIAL**

Recebido: 14 MAI 24    Aceito: 17 NOV 24