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7 **Understanding the importance that consumers attach to social media sharing (ISMS):**  
8 **Scale development and validation**  
9

10 **Abstract**

11 In response to the increasing ubiquity of social media platforms, improved consumer choice,  
12 and technological progress, the importance of consumer-generated content (CGC) continues  
13 to grow for organizations marketing their destinations, products, and services to tourists. Yet,  
14 despite the importance tourists place on CGC and information shared via social media, there  
15 remains a lack of academic focus in this area. To address this gap, we use a rigorous multi-  
16 step scale development procedure to create a scale centered on understanding the importance  
17 consumers attach to social media sharing (ISMS) from a tourists' perspective. Studies  
18 conducted across different contexts (Turkey and Scotland), comprising 1183 participants,  
19 were used to validate the newly developed ISMS scale. The scale indicates internal  
20 consistency and reliability, alongside construct and predictive validity. Directions for future  
21 research and the practical implications of the newly developed ISMS scale are discussed by  
22 way of conclusion.  
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26 **Keywords**  
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28 Consumer-generated content (CGC); social media; tourism; CGC types; importance of CGC;  
29 participant sharing; non-participant sharing  
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## 48 1. Introduction

49 The benefits social media provides to consumers (e.g., easier access to information,  
50 more substantial product/service information from multiple perspectives, and access to end-  
51 user evaluations) serves to underpin the mediums' directing power (Kang, 2018). To this end,  
52 content shared via social media can influence tourists' decision-making in a number of ways,  
53 influencing their travel planning process by providing the reviews, virtual tours, and impartial  
54 information central to destination choice and itinerary development (Morosan & Bowen,  
55 2018). As such, travel websites and social media serve a dual purpose, underpinned by the  
56 symbiosis between providing a platform that allows potential and past consumers to  
57 respectively (i) gather and utilize information concerning tourism products and services, and  
58 (ii) share their own evaluations of destinations, tourism offerings, and services experienced  
59 prior (Perez-Vega, Taheri, Farrington, & O'Gorman, 2018). As a result, consumers can have  
60 either a positive and negative impact on tourism services depending on the sentiment of the  
61 content, reviews, and opinions they share; with this influence intensified when a consistent  
62 narrative is demonstrated collectively by the community at large (Perez-Vega et al., 2018).

63 To this end, consumers have taken to sharing their opinions of travel destinations and  
64 experiences with gusto, with the number of reviews generated on third party, tourism-centric  
65 social media sites increasing significantly in recent years. For example, TripAdvisor users  
66 generated 200 million reviews in 2014, with this number rising to over 600 million in 2017.  
67 Moreover, estimates suggest that one in ten internet users have visited TripAdvisor.com, with  
68 the website boasting an average of 490 million users per month in 2018 (TripAdvisor, 2019).  
69 However, tourists intending to share their opinions and evaluations of destinations, sites, and  
70 experiences are not constrained to doing so on websites solely focused on showcasing and  
71 aggregating travel and tourism reviews. Instead, similar consumer-generated content (CGC)  
72 regularly emerges on more universal social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook,  
73 and Twitter (Lo et al., 2011; Mariani, Ek Styven, & Ayeh, 2019). As a result, many marketers  
74 within the sector have shifted their attention from traditional media towards fostering engaged  
75 online communities underpinned by social media interactions (Liu, Li, North & Yang, 2017).  
76 In response, tourism firms have increased the resources and expenses allocated to social  
77 media marketing, as CGC across social media platforms continues to prove increasingly  
78 important in terms of attracting potential consumers (Su, Huang, & Hsu, 2018). As such,  
79 travel and tourism organizations require a greater understanding of CGC in order to stimulate  
80 more effective and efficient outcomes.

81 Social media differs from traditional media platforms as users generate the majority of  
82 the content. These users typically fall under two categories: firms and consumers (Xiang &  
83 Gretzel, 2010). Many consider CGC as more organic, up-to-date, enjoyable, impartial, and  
84 reliable than firm-generated content (FGC). As such, CGC can influence the attitudes of other  
85 potential consumers (Gensler et al., 2013). Nonetheless, consumers generate content for  
86 different purposes (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002; Shao, 2009; Chen et al., 2013). Some do so to  
87 feel socially accepted; to demonstrate their appreciation of a product, service, or experience;  
88 to engender respect or fame; or to exhibit their own knowledge and expertise (Chu & Kim,  
89 2011; Chen et al., 2013). Others create and share content to inform and help others (O'Hern &  
90 Kahle, 2013). While sometimes explicit, individuals may also be unaware that they have  
91 created content at the behest of these intrinsic motives. Further, it is important to consider  
92 *where* content is shared; CGC on platforms linked to specific organizations typically serves a  
93 functional purpose, whereas CGC shared via personal social media accounts is more likely to  
94 serve a hedonic purpose (Grace-Farfaglia et al., 2006). As such, *different* types of content  
95 (shared on *different* platforms) are likely to influence the perceptions of potential consumers  
96 in *different* ways. Thus, the following questions underpin this study: i) can the type of, and  
97 importance attached to, CGC shared on social media differ? Moreover, ii) if differences are

98 identified, can a suitable measurement instrument be developed to investigate the importance  
99 potential consumers attach to content shared on social media? As such, this study seeks to  
100 extend current discourse by providing a valid and reliable scale through which to measure the  
101 importance that potential consumers attach to social media sharing (ISMS) from a tourists'  
102 perspective. This scale encompasses the two core dimensions of social media sharing (IPS:  
103 Importance attached to participant sharing; INPS: Importance attached to non-participant  
104 sharing) as perceived by potential consumers.

105 In order to develop and validate the ISMS scale, it is first important to investigate and  
106 examine how CGC is manifest from a range of perspectives. CGC is an important antecedent  
107 in terms of directing the purchasing behaviors of potential consumers. The directing impact of  
108 CGC begins by raising consumer awareness of the products and experiences mentioned via  
109 shared content. In doing so, potential consumers may develop a degree of attachment to  
110 experiences vicariously through the content shared by others. This, in turn, may increase their  
111 level of interest towards those experiences. This process is reinforced by potential consumers'  
112 efforts to obtain further information on experiences of interest, and is finalized when they  
113 arrive at the 'purchasing' stage (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). As such, for CGC to direct  
114 purchasing behavior, it must first play a role in raising consumer awareness of products,  
115 services, experiences, and brands. However, while CGC is recognized as an important  
116 determinant of brand awareness (Bruhn et al., 2012), the effectiveness of different types of  
117 CGC remains underexplored.

118 As such, CGC requires further examination. Current literature suggests that it is  
119 typically conceptualized in general terms, with ambiguity driven by the concession that CGC  
120 is generated under different circumstances and in different ways; consumers share content on  
121 both personal social media accounts and platforms aligned to specific organizations or brands  
122 (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002). Further, consumers can generate content using third-party social  
123 media tools, further extending the complexity of the phenomenon. As CGC is generated  
124 across multiple platforms via different means, it is likely that the individuals who see, read, or  
125 hear this content, and who are influenced by it, may differ. However, CGC *can* be  
126 characterized by its emotional and functional appeal to other consumers (Chen et al., 2013).  
127 For example, tourists can typically only evaluate products and services during- or post-  
128 consumption; given the practical constraints of tourism (e.g. distance, cost, and risk), they  
129 rarely have the chance to 'try out' destinations and on-site experiences, products, and services  
130 therein prior to travel. Thus, tourism-related CGC provides potential consumers with the  
131 opportunity to access information otherwise inaccessible – shaping their opinions,  
132 perceptions, and expectations in the process (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Different social media  
133 content can therefore influence the travel decision-making process (Yoo & Gretzel, 2012),  
134 with the analysis of different types of CGC likely to catalyze more effective and efficient  
135 curation of CGC for firms across the sector.

136 Yet, despite the importance of CGC for the tourism industry, research examining the  
137 different types of shared content and the level of importance attached by tourists to CGC on  
138 social media platforms has yet to receive sufficient academic attention. To address this gap,  
139 this study develops and validates a scale examining the importance that potential consumers  
140 attach to content shared via social media. The literature review summarizes extant studies on  
141 social media sharing, CGC as participant and non-participant sharing, and CGC as a driver of  
142 brand awareness. Subsequently, following Churchill (1979), a rigorous scale development  
143 process is used to validate the newly developed ISMS (*Importance attached to Social Media  
144 Sharing*) scale. Implications and conclusions are then provided, followed by suggestions for  
145 future research.

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## 148 2. Literature Review

### 149 2.1. Social media and the importance of consumer-generated content

150 Social media encourages and facilitates interaction, cooperation, and content sharing (Palmer  
151 & Lewis, 2009). It takes various forms, including blogs, micro-blogs, social networks, online  
152 forums, media-sharing websites, and review websites (Malik, Dhir, & Nieminen, 2016). Both  
153 firms and consumers generate content on many of these platforms (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).  
154 However, as potential consumers perceive CGC as more candid, impartial, and reliable than  
155 FGC (Herrero, Martin & Hernández, 2015), it is pivotal for organizations to gain an  
156 understanding of how best to ensure that it emerges in a manner that does not damage their  
157 brand. Besides the significant role of CGC in encouraging potential consumers to engage with  
158 products, services, or experiences, the attractiveness and relevance of the content shared is  
159 also important (Chen et al., 2015).

160 CGC can direct purchasing behavior and influence potential consumers in various  
161 ways. This is consistent with social influence theories (e.g., social comparison and social  
162 contagion), which suggest that individuals adopt similar beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors to  
163 others through communication (i.e., contact with those they consider influential) (Bilgicer,  
164 Jedidi, Lehmann, & Neslin, 2015). Miniard and Cohen (1983, p.171) argue that “to the extent  
165 consumers’ behavior is influenced by concerns over what others might think of them or how  
166 others might act toward them as a function of their product choice and usage, the  
167 identification and separation of normative from personal reasons for preferring a product  
168 would appear to be quite useful”. To this end, social comparison can also take place when  
169 individuals “are sensitive to social cues concerning their purchase and consumption behavior”  
170 (Bearden & Rose, 1990, p.463); seeking the same products and experiences as those  
171 conspicuously consumed by influencers. Therefore, when shared by individuals with a degree  
172 of social influence, CGC can shape consumers' decision-making and purchasing processes  
173 (Mariani, Ek Styven, & Ayeh, 2019). Further, in line with the elaboration likelihood model  
174 (ELM), potential consumers consider content created and shared on social media as a core  
175 component of the information evaluation process. For example, an individual who considers  
176 CGC as qualified, useful, and reliable, or who trusts the person sharing the content, may  
177 follow a peripheral consumption route. As outlined in ELM, the peripheral route for  
178 processing information can shorten the evaluation and consumption process when potential  
179 consumers accept the legitimacy of shared information (i.e., quality of CGC) (Strack, 1999).  
180 As such, it is necessary to examine CGC in further detail, with specific emphasis placed on  
181 understanding how potential consumers process and evaluate the importance of different  
182 content.

183

### 184 2.2. Types of CGC

185 CGC is typically examined within the broader framework of user-generated content (UGC)  
186 (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). As such, extant classifications investigating the scope of UGC and  
187 electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWoM) (Table 1) do not take the *type* of CGC into sufficient  
188 consideration. Therefore, in order to develop and validate a scale centered on understanding  
189 the importance consumers place on social media sharing, it is first vital to examine CGC from  
190 different perspectives by acknowledging its various sub-dimensions.

191 Extant literature on UGC and CGC has established the importance of focusing on *why*  
192 consumers opt to share content online (Chung, Han & Koo, 2015). Besides the basic  
193 provision of product, service, or experience-related information, individuals also generate  
194 content in order to satisfy hedonic needs (e.g., self-realization or gaining social status) (Lee &  
195 Ma, 2012). As such, different personal motivations for sharing CGC often result in different  
196 types of content (Bulut & Doğan, 2017). Further, *potential* consumers encountering content  
197 generated by *existing* consumers across social media platforms may allow this CGC to

198 influence their own consumption behaviors (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). In other words,  
 199 potential consumers may alter their behavior by *attaching importance* to content generated by  
 200 others. This is typically manifest in two ways: through utilitarian and hedonic appeal (Kotler  
 201 & Keller, 2012), as CGC pertaining to products, services or experiences is often underpinned  
 202 by greater detail on functionality and effectiveness, with clear positive or negative  
 203 connotations attached. Given the scale of contemporary user-led information sharing, extant  
 204 research classifies CGC manifest online or via social media in multiple ways (**Table 1**).  
 205 However, while demonstrating the practical and academic importance of the phenomena, the  
 206 lack of consensus regarding the exact characteristics of CGC renders current classifications  
 207 insufficient.

208  
 209 **Table 1.** Types of consumer-generated content (CGC)

Author/s	Types	Definitions
Kiecker and Cowles (2002, p.79)	Spontaneous	“Initiated and/or carried out by individual consumers using their own means and know-how (e.g., via a personal email account or homepage).”
	Quasi-spontaneous	“Initiated and/or carried out by individual consumers in web environments created by marketers (e.g., corporate websites).”
	Independent or third party-sponsored	“Initiated and/or carried out by individual consumers in web environments created by special interest groups, Professional associations, and/or organizations for purposes other than selling products.”
	Corporate-sponsored	“Initiated by marketers, but carried out by individual consumers who are paid and/or otherwise motivated to “spread the word” about a product or company for the purposes of selling its products or promoting the company.”
Park and Lee (2008, p.388)	Attribute-value	“Attribute-value reviews are rational, objective and concrete based on the specific facts about a product.”
	Simple-recommendation	“Simple-recommendation reviews are emotional, subjective, and abstract based on consumer feelings about a product.”
Shao (2009, p.9)	Consuming	“Consuming refers to the individuals who only watch, read, or view but never participate.”
	Participating	“Participating includes both user-to-user interaction and user-to-content interaction (such as ranking the content, adding to playlists, sharing with others, posting comments, etc.). It does not include one’s actual production.”
	Producing	“Producing encompasses creation and publication of one’s personal content, such as text, images, audio, and video.”
Chu and Kim (2011)	Opinion seeking	Where an individual pursues information and recommendations from others.
	Opinion giving	Where an individual provides information to others and influences them through this information.
	Opinion passing	Where an individual conveys opinions to others through multi-directional communication.
Ebermann et al. (2011, p.5)	Explicit	“Explicit recommendations are intentionally provided from one SNS user to another SNS user. Such recommendations may in particular be given through direct communication channels such as Webmail-like messaging within SNSs or as direct response to recommendation requests in status messages.” (i.e., explicit behavior refers to deliberate recommendations).
	Implicit	“Even though the major goal of the information in users’ profiles is not to recommend something, it might have a recommendation effect on users reading it because it refers to the products and services users like.” “Profile information that is not directed at specific other users in form of direct user-to-user communication and might have a potential, unintended recommendation effect is considered as implicit

		recommendation.” (i.e., implicit behavior refers to unintended recommendations).
Yan et al. (2011, p.2)	Score rating review	“Score rating reviews give general comments about several aspects of the purchasing process such as product quality, service logistics, and service quality.”
	Text-based online review	“Text-based online reviews usually give several comments about the products or the buying experience.”
Zhang and Lee (2012, p.118)	Positive eWoM:	“refers to consumers’ description of pleasant experiences with a product or their endorsement for a new product”
	Negative eWoM	“propagates rumors and scandals about a company or product, and consumers’ unpleasant experience with a product or company”
Abrantes et al. (2013, p.1068)	In-group	“eWoM with close friends or family”
	Out-of-group	“eWoM with individuals beyond a person’s social, familial and collegial circles”
Kulmala et al. (2013, p.21)	Organic	“Organic eWoM occurs naturally when a person wants to tell others about a positive or negative experience with a product or a company”
	Amplified	“Amplified eWoM occurs when a marketer launches a campaign or in some other way encourages others to speak about a product or a company”
Chen et al. (2013, p.2080)	Evaluative	“The evaluation from the consumers after the use of Products”
	Informative	“Information that is stated clearly and logically, which allows users to be attracted after receiving the message”
	Benefit	“A message that will cause direct or indirect conflict to consumer’s benefit”
O’Hern and Kahle (2013, p.23-26)	Informing	“A process that engages users in the creation of content that either praises or criticizes a particular product or brand (promotion-focused user activity) and directs these user-generated reactions primarily at the users’ fellow customers (C2C knowledge flows).”
	Pioneering	“A process in which customers create their own new product improvements (innovation-focused activity) and share these inventions directly with their fellow users (C2C knowledge flow).”
	Co-communicating	“A process that occurs when users create their own novel marketing materials (promotion-focused user activity) and share them directly with a firm (C2B knowledge flow) to enhance the firm’s marketing communications.”
	Co-creating	“A process that occurs when users create their own novel product designs (innovation-focused user activity) and share these designs directly with a firm (C2B knowledge flow) for the purpose of enhancing the firm’s new product offerings.”
Sparks et al. (2013)	Specific content	Reviews about products are described clearly.
	Vague content	Details contained in product reviews are much less specific.
Weisfeld-Spolter et al. (2014, p.262)	Many-to-one	“Many-to-one eWoM (e.g. the number of votes) represents the trend or explicit preference of a crowd”
	One-to-many	“One-to-many text-based eWoM (e.g. product reviews) is descriptive and requires the audience to use more cognitive effort to read the reviews.”
	Many-to-many	“Many-to-many eWoM (e.g. online discussion groups) is a high involvement activity in which consumers continuously participate in the communication process.”
Oh et al. (2015, p.138)	Internal eWOM	“internal eWoM provided by retailers”
	External eWOM	“external eWoM provided by third-party <i>informediaries</i> or customers”
Kim and Johnson (2016)	Informational eWoM	Includes descriptions about functions, values, and benefits of brands and products.
	Emotional eWoM	Refers to the atmosphere, emotions and feelings associated with brands and products.
Fu et al. (2017,	Commercial message	“Promotion news, new products information, corporate social responsibilities, fashion news related to brand”

p.27)	Lifestyle affairs	“Practical wisdom, meaningful articles, interesting videos or photos, popular music or movies”
	Personal opinions	“Low service quality store, pleasant shopping experience, experience of buying low quality product, news or articles with critical opinions”

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211 Various gaps exist in prior studies examining the type and nature of CGC. Extant  
 212 classifications (**Table 1**) demonstrate the lack of focus on the interaction between “where”  
 213 and “with what motive” CGC is generated. For instance, Kiecker and Cowles (2002)  
 214 emphasize that consumers can generate shared content on both their personal social media  
 215 accounts and on those controlled by organizations, with their classification therefore focusing  
 216 on “where” content is shared, not *why*. Nonetheless, Kiecker and Cowles (2002) do contend  
 217 that consumers generate content in four ways (spontaneously, quasi-spontaneously,  
 218 independently, or corporate-sponsored). The conceit of this classification is that the platforms  
 219 where each type of content is generated are different. Spontaneous content, focused on  
 220 individuals expressing their opinions through personal platforms (e.g., via email) ranks first in  
 221 the authors’ classification. Quasi-spontaneous content represents content generated by  
 222 consumers on organizations’ platforms. Third party-sponsored (independent) content focuses  
 223 on mediator platforms that enable the flow of information between consumers, with no  
 224 explicit objective of selling a product. Their fourth category, corporate-sponsored, covers  
 225 content generated by organizations but spread by consumers, with either implicit or explicit  
 226 recognition of the sponsored nature of this content.

227 However, this classification underplays the emotional motives that can underpin CGC.  
 228 More specifically, consumers may not share opinions on products, services, or experiences  
 229 with the sole purpose of *informing* others. As emphasized in social influence theories, a desire  
 230 to ‘be liked’ or to receive social recognition could instead stimulate CGC. Accordingly,  
 231 similar actions are likely to emerge from those who see, read, or hear CGC. Nonetheless, the  
 232 possibility of fake content generated by fake consumers cannot be ignored (Burgess et al.,  
 233 2011). In essence, this represents content shared by what appears to be consumers, but with  
 234 hidden firm involvement or curation. Therefore, when classifying CGC, one should take into  
 235 consideration platform differences *and* possible motive differences.

236 To this end, Shao (2009) contends that consumers demonstrate behavior in three ways.  
 237 However, they play a key role in generating and developing content in only two of these three  
 238 behaviors. Shao (2009) further states that individuals who exhibit ‘participating behavior’  
 239 share, rank, or comment on existing content only, whereas those demonstrating ‘producing  
 240 behavior’ generate new content. However, this classification again provides scant detail  
 241 regarding the information itself, the emotional appeal of the content, or the platforms where  
 242 content is generated. Park and Lee (2008) focused directly on consumer product reviews.  
 243 However, as mentioned prior, reviewing products is not the sole goal of social media sharing.  
 244 CGC also encapsulates consumers’ desire to demonstrate participation in experiences in more  
 245 general terms. In such instances, while consumers are not reviewing products, services, or  
 246 experiences, the content that they share could still encourage other potential consumers to  
 247 engage with associated organisations and brands. Further, Chu and Kim (2011) examined  
 248 eWoM on social networks, classifying it as: opinion seeking, opinion giving, and opinion  
 249 passing. However, they did not suggest which type of content is more likely to be generated  
 250 via individuals’ own social media accounts compared to those aligned with organizations,  
 251 despite the assertion that potential consumers perceive CGC with no organizational influence  
 252 or involvement as more accurate and impartial (Bore et al., 2017).

253 Interestingly, Ebermann et al. (2011) suggest that individuals make recommendations  
 254 either intentionally or without knowing that they are doing so, but do not differentiate the  
 255 platforms where this distinction is manifest. Kulmala et al. (2013) consider eWoM either

256 *organic* or *amplified*. The former resembles explicit personal recommendations (Ebermann et  
257 al., 2011), whereas the latter echoes corporate-sponsored content (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002).  
258 Chen et al. (2013) examined types of eWoM (evaluative, informative, and benefit)  
259 underpinned by clear organizational involvement on social networks, with content generated  
260 by consumers on their own social media profiles ignored. Finally, Wu and Wang (2011), Kim  
261 and Johnson (2016), and Liu et al. (2017) examined eWoM in the rational and emotional  
262 context. However, they again did not discuss the platforms upon which this occurred or how  
263 eWoM surfaces.

264 As such, shortcomings remain across extant research necessitating a more robust  
265 classification of CGC. This principally emerges from the lack of insight into the interaction  
266 between the platform used for sharing and the potential motive behind CGC. Research can  
267 assess these two elements *separately*. However, developing a classification based on the  
268 interaction between *both* is likely to yield results that are more valuable. Specifically, it may  
269 be beneficial to classify CGC based on *where* the sharing takes place and *what* the motive  
270 behind shared CGC is, allowing scholars and practitioners to examine CGC from a different  
271 perspective.

272 This study recognizes that consumers can generate content in their own social media  
273 accounts or on profiles, accounts, and pages that relevant organizations administer. This may  
274 lead potential consumers to attach different levels of importance to such content. Potential  
275 consumers might therefore pursue reliable information and social value through the content  
276 shared by others. Information seeking is generally carried out with utilitarian purposes,  
277 especially in the tourism industry where consumers use CGC to gain detailed user reviews of  
278 destinations, travel agencies, hotels, experiences, or excursions (Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013).  
279 However, as individuals often derive pleasure from content they encounter, the relevance of  
280 the information shared should also be examined in terms of hedonic impact (Chen et al.,  
281 2015). For example, tourism scholars often attach emotional value to the process of  
282 information searching and travel planning (Sigala, 2018). Interesting CGC can prompt  
283 potential consumers to pursue the same experience as others (Chen et al., 2015); if CGC  
284 demonstrates experiences that potential consumers consider particularly enjoyable or  
285 aspirational, this may trigger their desire to experience the same thing. To this end, Sedera et  
286 al. (2017) suggest that individuals attribute different levels of importance to different types of  
287 content, and that CGC with a high level of social influence is particularly powerful in  
288 encouraging potential consumers to follow suit.

289 This supports the central tenets of social learning (SLT) and social identity theories  
290 (SIT). According to SLT, behavior is learned from the environment through observation.  
291 Individuals often demonstrate the same behaviors as others in order to obtain desirable  
292 outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Considering SLT from the perspective of consumer behavior, one  
293 can expect that the attitudes and behaviors of consumers are formed and enhanced by their  
294 friends. More clearly, when individuals observe desirable consequences stemming from the  
295 actions taken by friends and family, they are likely to adopt similar behaviors (Webb &  
296 Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014). Similarly, self-esteem underpins SIT. Individuals' self-esteem may  
297 develop due to exhibiting behaviors accepted by society. If individuals feel accepted by those  
298 that they respect, their self-esteem may increase (Stets & Burke, 2000). Here, CGC can  
299 enhance an individuals' self-esteem if they attach importance to the information shared  
300 (Valkenburg et al., 2006).

301 Further, social comparison and social contagion theories can explain potential  
302 consumers' desire to undertake similar experiences demonstrated via CGC (Ozimek, Bierhoff,  
303 & Hanke, 2018). According to social comparison theory, individuals compare themselves  
304 with other individuals or groups. When considered aspirational, such individuals can have  
305 similar ideas and stimulate similar attitudes and behaviors via upward social comparison (Lee



306 & Watkins, 2016). Some individuals exhibit similar attitudes and behaviors (and pursue  
307 similar experiences) to others in order to avoid social disapproval (Cox & Bauer, 1964) or to  
308 achieve social approval (Jellison & Gentry, 1978). Further, according to social contagion  
309 theory, individuals mirror the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of others who they care about  
310 in their social environment (Bilgicer et al., 2015). Behavioral change (e.g., social adaptation)  
311 occurs when an individual adapts the behaviors and opinions of others (Zheng et al., 2010).  
312 This change is mediated by communication between actors (Scherer & Cho, 2003), with CGC  
313 serving as an increasingly prevalent example of this. Here, tourists encountering CGC  
314 pertaining to destinations, experiences, or activities that they deem aspirational, exciting, and  
315 impartial may place greater importance upon it, and subsequently exhibit similar behaviors.  
316 Finally, there may be a desire for recognition from others who have liked the shared content,  
317 or from those who hope to experience the same activity under the influence of uniformity  
318 behaviors that emerge due to group pressure (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

319 In brief, potential consumers attribute importance to social media sharing in two key  
320 ways, contingent on whether it offers the opportunity to: (1) obtain reliable information and  
321 (2) gain prestige, social status, and/or recognition. Therefore, the *importance* individuals  
322 attach to shared content differs in line with *type* of content shared.  
323

### 324 **2.3. CGC as participant and non-participant sharing**

325 While CGC can focus on presenting oneself to others, finding out about or planning events,  
326 browsing or posting media, and generally seeking or sharing information (Malik, Dhir, &  
327 Nieminen, 2016), it can be categorized based on its emotional, hedonic, and functional appeal  
328 (**Table 1**). However, beyond this reductive differentiation it is also important to consider *how*  
329 individuals generate content across platforms. Therefore, it is necessary to generate a  
330 classification that takes into account CGC on consumers' own social media accounts/profiles  
331 and on platforms with direct or indirect organizational involvement.  
332

333 To this end, consumers typically generate social media content in either a (i)  
334 *participatory* or (ii) *non-participatory* manner. Participant content sharing refers to when  
335 individuals post on social media accounts associated with organizations or brands, or when  
336 they share content with a specific purpose directly related to an organization (e.g., providing  
337 product information and evaluation) (Dedeoğlu, 2016). Under such circumstances, the  
338 functional information that consumers share may benefit organizations by providing direct or  
339 indirect feedback, which can subsequently be used to improve products and services (Eley &  
340 Tilley, 2009). Stemming from notions of participant behavior established in consumer  
341 behavior literature, consumers might share positive information regarding high quality  
342 products and services that meet their expectations, whereas they may also contribute to  
343 product and service improvement by sharing negative information, constructive feedback, or  
344 critical reviews of products and services that did not meet their expectations (Eley & Tilley,  
345 2009). As such, participative CGC can hold a positive or negative sentiment, and can include  
346 co-creation, co-destruction, and brand agitation behaviors (Dolan et al., 2016; Hower, Gannon  
347 & Cordina, 2017). Crucially, as this content is shared on social media accounts with direct or  
348 indirect organizational involvement, CGC represents a participative interaction between  
349 consumer and firm. Thus, while consumers may hold different motives for generating  
350 participative content, it mainly plays a utilitarian role (Kamboj & Sarmah, 2018);  
351 characterized by information sharing, experience transfer, and information seeking (Chae &  
352 Ko, 2016).  
353

354 However, not all CGC emerges on platforms with organizational involvement and/or  
355 control (Tajvidi et al., 2017). Consumers can generate and share content on their own or their

356 friends' social media channels (e.g., blogs and social network profiles) without participating  
357 in any activity directly related to a brand or seeking any recognition from an organization  
358 (Dedeoğlu, 2016). This non-participant sharing therefore typically refers to shared content  
359 posted by an individual driven by social or hedonic motives (e.g., a desire to be liked,  
360 socialization, or self-expression). Under such circumstances, consumers do not prioritize  
361 product and/or service improvement, and this CGC does not typically serve a functional  
362 purpose (Alsufyan & Aloud, 2017). As such, individuals posting content in their own or their  
363 friends' social media profiles, or generating content on private blogs, are primarily regarded  
364 as engaging in non-participant sharing behavior. This CGC is therefore generated with the  
365 motive of sharing experiences and opinions with friends and family, rather than simply  
366 sharing information for the benefit of others or directly interacting with organisations and  
367 brands. By generating content spontaneously in their own and their friends' social media  
368 accounts, consumers can provide them with information relating to goods and services  
369 without participating in the product or service development process (Kamboj & Sarmah,  
370 2018).

371  
372 As such, CGC classified as non-participant sharing is typically born from different  
373 motives, including: making new friends, staying in touch with friends, relaxation, passing  
374 time, a desire to be liked, enjoyment, improving self-image, and prestige-seeking - satisfying  
375 consumers' social and hedonic desires in the process (Shao & Kwon, 2019). To this end,  
376 within the context of non-participant sharing and hedonic motivations, Heinonen (2011)  
377 identified two core categories: 'social connection' and 'entertainment'. Regarding social  
378 connection, consumers generate and share content in order to show new things to their social  
379 circle, to feel a sense of belonging to their social circle, to follow up on events and friends'  
380 activities, to stay connected with their social circle, and to expand upon existing relationships.  
381 In doing so, CGC may serve as a form of self-expression, helping consumers to manage and  
382 curate their self-image – emphasizing the hedonic motives of non-participant sharing. As  
383 such, non-participant sharing typically holds greater emotional value than the more functional  
384 participant sharing behaviors (Krishnamurthy & Dou, 2008).

#### 385 386 **2.4. CGC as a driver of brand awareness**

387 Extensive and well-positioned CGC can significantly increase consumers' awareness of  
388 organizations and brands (Sigala, 2018). Brand awareness represents the "strength of the  
389 brand node or trace in memory, as reflected by consumers' ability to identify the brand under  
390 different conditions" (Keller, 1993, p. 3). Foroudi (2019) suggests that brand awareness is  
391 comprised of two core elements: brand recall and brand recognition. Brand recall refers to the  
392 "consumer's ability to recall a brand when given the product category", whereas brand  
393 recognition represents "consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given  
394 the brand as a cue" (Keller, 1993, p.3). As such, the ability of CGC to attract widespread  
395 attention while also providing brand-related information can serve to increase potential  
396 consumers' knowledge and awareness of brands and organizations. In other words,  
397 organizations can become more familiar with *potential* consumers by understanding,  
398 analysing, and encouraging shared content created by *existing* consumers. According to the  
399 associative network model, memory consists of nodes, defined as stored information  
400 connected by links that vary in strength (Keller, 2013). Within the context of tourism, a  
401 destination brand serves as a possible node (Pike et al., 2010). Brand awareness reflects the  
402 strength of the brand node in the consumer mind (Kladou & Kehagias, 2014), with destination  
403 brand awareness defined as the tourist's ability to recall and recognize a destination (Gómez,  
404 Lopez, & Molina, 2015). Thus, destination brand awareness can play a vital role in the

405 decision-making process, as it encapsulates the presence and strength of the destination image  
406 in the minds of potential tourists (Gannon et al., 2017).

407 The content created by others is often considered more influential than FGC because it  
408 is considered more genuine and reliable (Herrero et al., 2015). The fact that potential  
409 consumers consider the content created by existing consumers as important may increase their  
410 level of involvement and likelihood of sharing in future (Arndt, 1967). This increased  
411 involvement echoes SLT, which examines how human behaviors can be explained in terms of  
412 continuous reciprocal interaction among cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors.  
413 These behaviors are learned through observation, where individuals mimic the behavior of  
414 others to obtain desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977). From a consumer behavior perspective,  
415 SLT suggests that the activities carried out by close friends form and strengthen consumers'  
416 behaviors (Webb & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2014). Thus, potential consumers may increase their  
417 level of involvement with the subject of the shared content, with involvement defined as a  
418 motivational situation that generally affects consumer decision-making (Cohen, 1983). This  
419 increase in the level of involvement can lead potential consumers to search for more  
420 information (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). In this context, CGC (both participant sharing and  
421 non-participant sharing) act as stimuli and increase involvement with content. This allows  
422 individuals to search for information relating to the phenomenon being shared. To this end,  
423 potential customers' level of awareness of products, services, experiences, and destinations  
424 are likely to be positively influenced. Therefore:

425

426 *H<sub>1</sub>*: The importance attached to participant sharing in social media (IPS) influences  
427 destination brand awareness in a positive and significant way.

428

429 *H<sub>2</sub>*: The importance attached to non-participant sharing in social media (INPS)  
430 influences destination brand awareness in a positive and significant way.

431

432 Testing these hypotheses is crucial to approving the application of the proposed ISMS  
433 scale, as it is vital to recognize whether it has predictive validity. In order to do so, the  
434 relationship between the newly developed scale and brand awareness was tested (DeVellis,  
435 2003).

436

### 437 **3. Methods and Scale Development**

438 In order to conduct extensive and robust scale development, the stages recommended by  
439 Churchill (1979) were followed. Given the context of this study, attention was paid to the  
440 processes used in various scale development projects undertaken across extant hospitality and  
441 tourism research (e.g., Kim et al., 2015; Pan et al., 2017; Taheri, Gannon, Cordina & Lochrie,  
442 2018). As such, the scale development process consists of four distinct phases (**Figure 1**):  
443 Phase 1 deals with item generation and the formation of constructs. In Phase 2, item  
444 "purification" was conducted. In Phase 3, the initial validation and application of the ISMS  
445 scale was performed. In Phase 4, the ISMS scale was replicated in a different context.

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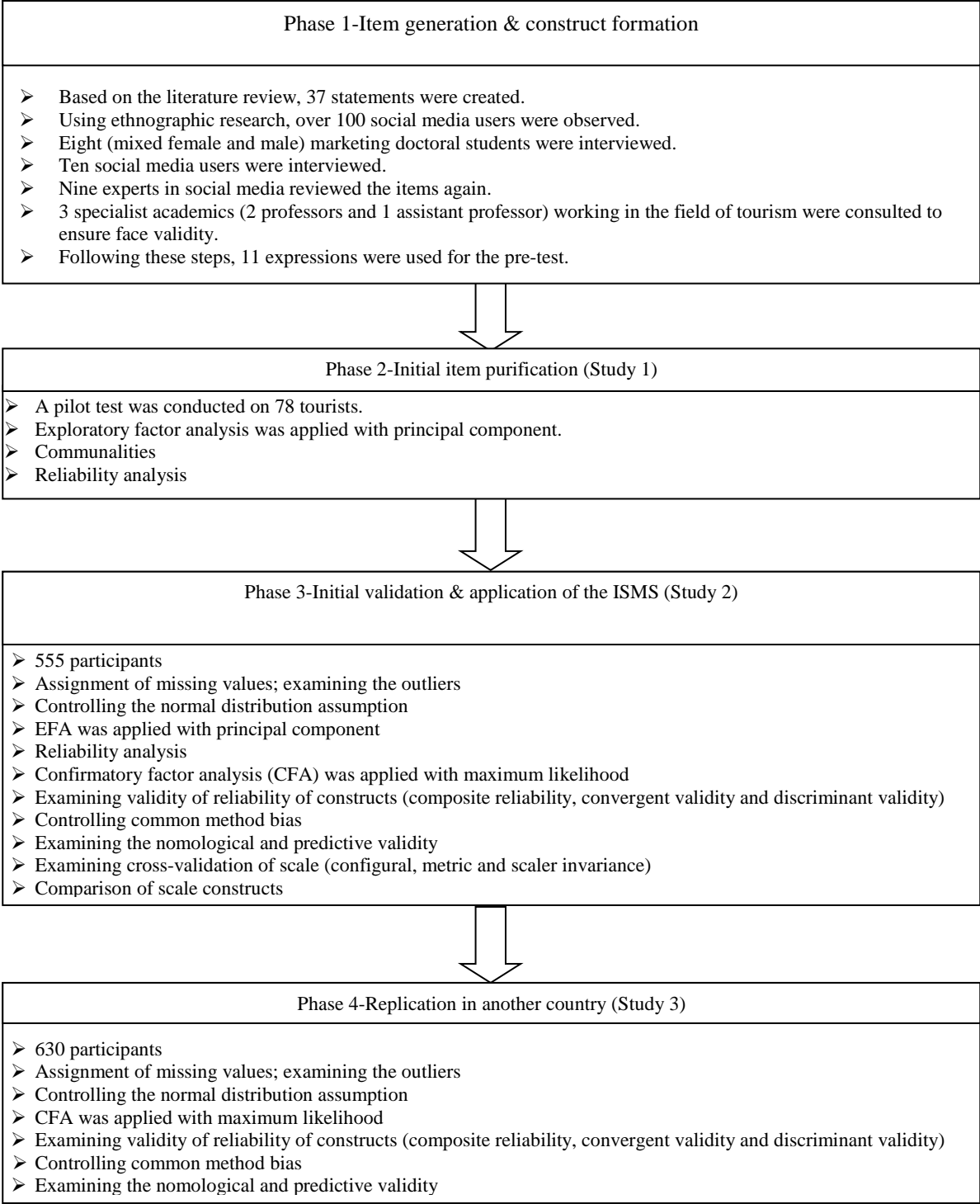
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**Figure 1. Scale development process**

481 **3.1. Item generation and construct formation (Phase 1)**

482 This study generated an initial item pool in two stages: First, an extensive literature review  
483 was conducted in order to identify relevant ISMS items and sub-dimensions within the  
484 context of tourism. As no similar scales exist across extant discourse, items could not be taken  
485 wholesale from established sources. Therefore, the second stage of the initial item pool  
486 development involved undertaking ethnographic research. By conducting participant  
487 observation, this information was classified as either “non-participation” or “passive  
488 participation” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Wen et al. (2018) support the use of ethnographic  
489 research methods in both social and consumption-centric situations. For this study, the first  
490 author observed the conduct of over 100 social media users across popular platforms (e.g.,  
491 Instagram and Facebook). More specifically, (1) content created by consumers on the social  
492 media profiles of various tourism organizations, and (2) content created by consumers in their  
493 own and their friends’ social media profiles were examined. In order to explore whether the  
494 statements generated accurately captured the ISMS construct, a mixed cohort of marketing  
495 doctoral students were interviewed. These semi-structured interviews started with broad  
496 questions, such as ‘Why did this social media user generate this content?’ or ‘What is your  
497 opinion on why this social media user generated this content?’ These questions led to in-depth  
498 conversations about the social media interaction and purpose of the content (Taheri et al.,  
499 2018). The first author then consulted and shared their notes and findings with the other  
500 members of the research team. Subsequently, an initial pool of 37 items was generated.

501 Next, the research team sought the judgment of individuals with expertise in both  
502 tourism and social media marketing, alongside a number of individuals who, while not  
503 considered experts in the field, used social media extensively. These views were collected in  
504 order to assess the “readability” of the 37 items generated via short conversation-style  
505 interviews were conducted. While selecting the non-expert participants, we endeavored to  
506 select those who used social media for general purposes (n=5) and those who engaged with  
507 tourism-related content (n=5). Half of these participants were female, with ages ranging from  
508 22-53. These ten individuals were asked to review the 37 items concerning clarity, necessity,  
509 and similarity. Three participants from the group using social media for general purposes  
510 identified five ‘unclear and complicated’ expressions. Four people from the group focused on  
511 tourism-related sharing defined eight statements as unnecessary and overly similar. Therefore,  
512 13 items were excluded at this stage because they were unclear, unnecessary, or held  
513 deficiencies. Next, nine scholars recognized as experts in the field reviewed the remaining 24  
514 items. These experts were asked to read the definition of each dimension and place each item  
515 under a corresponding dimension. Items they considered meaningless were to be marked as  
516 “not applicable” and items the experts could not agree upon were subsequently eliminated. As  
517 a result, the panel of experts marked 11 items as non-relevant and the authors therefore  
518 excluded them from the study.

519 Finally, the authors consulted a further panel of experts to ensure face validity. At this  
520 stage, three scholars (two professors and one assistant professor, all within business faculties)  
521 with expertise in the tourism field were consulted on whether the statements were applicable  
522 and represented the associated dimensions. As two of the experts indicated that two items  
523 were “not applicable” in measuring their associated dimension, those items were removed  
524 from the scale. The scale therefore was finalized before the pre/pilot test (**Table 2**), and face  
525 validity was supported.

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531 **Table 2.** Measurement Items

Dimensions	Measurement Items
IPS	IPS1* When choosing a destination, <b>recommendations</b> of others on a destination website and/or on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) about the destination are important to me.
	IPS2* When choosing a destination, <b>sharing</b> of others on a destination website and/or on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) about the destination are important to me.
	IPS3 When choosing a destination, <b>comments</b> of others on a destination website and/or on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) about the destination are important to me.
	IPS4 When choosing the destination, <b>ratings</b> of others on a destination website and/or on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) about the destination are significant to me.
	IPS5 When choosing a destination, <b>ratings</b> of other users on websites (e.g., TripAdvisor, booking.com) where travel evaluations are included and holiday packages are sold are important to me.
	IPS6 When choosing a destination, <b>comments</b> of other users on websites (e.g., TripAdvisor, booking.com) where travel evaluations are included and holiday packages are sold are important to me.
	IPS7* When choosing a destination, <b>recommendations</b> of other users on websites (e.g., Trip advisor, booking.com) where travel evaluations are included and holiday packages are sold are important to me.
INPS	INPS1 Holiday related <b>comments</b> of other users on their own social media accounts (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.
	INPS2 Holiday related <b>sharing</b> of other users on their own social media accounts (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.
	INPS3 Holiday <b>recommendations</b> of other users on their own social media accounts (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.
	INPS4 Holiday related <b>sharing</b> (photo, video) of other users on social media accounts of others (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.

Notes: \*Item deleted following exploratory factor analysis; **IPS**: Importance attached to participant sharing; **INPS**: Importance attached to non-participant sharing.

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## 2. Initial item purification (Phase 2)

537 The initial item reduction was conducted using data collected from tourists in one of Turkey’s  
538 most popular travel destinations - Alanya. The questionnaire was prepared in Turkish and  
539 translated into different languages (English, German, and Russian) in order to allow the  
540 research team to collect data from a wide spread of tourists. The back-translation method  
541 ensured this translation was conducted robustly (Gannon et al., 2017). In practice, this meant  
542 that the questionnaire was prepared in Turkish and translated into English. It was then edited  
543 by native English-speaking academics. This copy was sent to translators with knowledge of  
544 both the source (English) and target (German, Russian and Turkish) languages. After this  
545 stage, the language in each questionnaire (English, German, Russian and Turkish) was  
546 compared for inconsistencies. This comparative stage was crucial in ensuring consistency of  
547 meaning across languages.

548 As there were no differences in the translated scales, it was decided to use the scale  
549 edited after proofreading for the English questionnaires, and to use the translated scales, re-  
550 translated after the first translation phase, for the German, Russian, and Turkish ones. In order  
551 to eliminate possible mistakes, a pre-test was conducted on 10 individuals selected for each  
552 scale prepared in each of the four languages. Following this pre-test, it was clear that there  
553 were no communication, language, or understanding problems with the scale items, allowing  
554 the research team to proceed to the scale refinement and validity stages.

555 In order to verify the psychometric features of the new measurement scale, an initial  
556 reduction stage test was conducted (Hinkin et al., 1997) with 78 tourists in Alanya. This is  
557 satisfactory according to Johnson and Brooks (2010). These tourists were selected on a  
558 voluntary basis via convenience sampling. A seven-point scale ranging from “strongly  
559 disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7), with no distinct labels for scale points 2–6, accompanied  
560 each item. To identify the underlying structure of the importance attached to social media  
561 sharing (ISMS), exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to analyze this data.

562 Around 55% (43) of the pilot study participants were male, while 45% (35) were  
563 female. Among the participants, 24.3% (19) were aged 50 or over, and each of the following:

564 18-25 (13), 26-33 (13), 34-41 (13) and 42-49 (13) age groups had a rate of 16.7%. Only seven  
565 participants (8.97%) were 17 or younger. Regarding marital status, 23 participants were  
566 married (29.5%) while 55 were single (70.5%). Concerning education, 12.8% of the  
567 participants (10) had completed post-graduate education, while 44.9% (35) held a bachelor's  
568 degree. 80.8% (63) of participants were traveling with an agency and 24.4% stated that they  
569 were visiting Alanya for the first time. 30.8% (24) of the participants did not have any  
570 children and 33.3% (26) had one child. Finally, 30.8% (24) of the participants stayed in four-  
571 star hotel accommodation and 28.2% (22) stayed in five-star hotel accommodation.  
572

### 573 **3.3. Initial validation and application of the ISMS Scale (Phase 3)**

574 To further verify the constructs identified in Phase 2, reliability and construct validation  
575 techniques were used to assess the scale items measuring the newly developed ISMS  
576 construct (Hair et al., 2014; Taheri, Jafari & Okumus, 2017). A professional research  
577 company assisted the authors when administering the questionnaires. During the data  
578 collection process, four professional interviewers, trained on the nature of the study, were  
579 assigned by the research company. Questionnaires were administered in areas of relevance to  
580 tourists, such as beaches, souvenir shops, restaurants, and hotel lobbies in Alanya, Turkey.  
581 The authors conducted and distributed the questionnaires at various locations, collecting  
582 responses over 14 days. Respondents were again selected using convenience sampling.

583 This stage reached 800 participants. Hair et al.'s (2014) suggestion was taken into  
584 consideration in this screening process. Accordingly, questionnaires that were not filled in  
585 more than 15% and answered as "straight lining" were discounted from the analysis process.  
586 Overall, 245 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis as they contained missing values  
587 or were not adequately completed. In total, data obtained from 555 respondents was used. The  
588 methods and algorithms proposed by Westland (2012) were employed to determine whether  
589 the number of samples obtained in the current study could test the proposed model. Therefore,  
590 this study uses the a-priori sample size calculator for SEM (Soper, 2017). This requires input  
591 data such as the anticipated effect size, statistical power levels, and the number of observed  
592 variables and latent variables in the model, alongside the desired probability, to detect the  
593 minimum sample size for conducting SEM. The results indicate that the minimum sample size  
594 should be 545 for a model with three latent variables; 16 observed variables; .15 low  
595 anticipated effect size; .80 desired statistic power level; and .05 probability level. Therefore,  
596 our sample (n=555) surpassed the recommended minimum.

597 Further, missing value and outlier assignments were used (Hair et al., 2014). The  
598 assumption of normal distribution was also checked. Missing values were specified with the  
599 mean substitution method, and Mahalanobis distance was examined to determine outliers.  
600 One outlier was determined and removed (Mahalanobis D (16)>57.794,  $p<.001$ ) (Hair et al.,  
601 2013), leaving 554 cases for data analysis. Finally, a normal distribution assumption was  
602 checked, as the maximum likelihood method was used in estimating the measurement model.  
603 Skewness values were between -.580/.073 and kurtosis values were between -1.103/.062;  
604 thus, the data had normal distribution (Kline, 2011) (**Table 3**).  
605

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics (Phase 3 & Phase 4)

Items	Phase 3 (n=554)				Phase 4 (n=629)			
	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
When choosing a destination, comments of others on a destination website and/or on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) about the destination are important to me.(IPS3)	4.33	1.26	-.18	-.52	4.31	1.27	-.16	-.61
When choosing a destination, ratings of others on a destination website and/or on social media websites (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) about the destination are significant to me.(IPS4)	4.26	1.45	-.34	-.70	4.25	1.45	-.31	-.76
When choosing a destination, ratings of other users on websites (e.g., TripAdvisor, booking.com) where travel evaluations are included and holiday packages are sold are important to me.(IPS5)	4.36	1.19	-.13	-.54	4.37	1.17	-.15	-.51
When choosing a destination, comments of other users on websites (e.g., TripAdvisor, booking.com) where travel evaluations are included and holiday packages are sold are important to me.(IPS6)	4.41	1.34	-.58	-.12	4.40	1.33	-.57	-.15
Holiday related comments of other users on their own social media accounts (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.(IPNS1)	4.33	1.20	-.43	-.01	4.37	1.18	-.43	-.07
Holiday related sharing of other users on their own social media accounts (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.(IPNS2)	4.22	1.31	-.51	.06	4.21	1.31	-.49	.00
Holiday recommendations of other users on their own social media accounts (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.(IPNS3)	4.38	1.20	-.40	-.18	4.40	1.20	-.40	-.28
Holiday related sharing (photo, video) of other users on social media accounts of others (profiles) (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) are important to me.(IPNS4)	4.39	1.22	-.40	.02	4.43	1.18	-.37	-.06
I can imagine what...looks like.(Awareness)	3.87	1.47	-.05	-1.10	3.85	1.44	-.04	-1.06
I am aware of...as a travel destination.(Awareness)	3.89	1.60	-.08	-.84	3.87	1.51	.00	-.75
I can recognize...among other similar destinations.(Awareness)	3.96	1.47	.07	-.95	3.92	1.45	.11	-.94
Some characteristics of...come to my mind quickly.(Awareness)	4.00	1.43	-.15	-1.04	3.96	1.41	-.12	-1.06
I can quickly recall the marketing activities about...(Awareness)	3.99	1.38	-.03	-.77	3.97	1.35	.00	-.77



491 Of the 554 participants, 44.2% (245) were male, while 55.8% were female (309);  
492 66.8% (370) were aged 49 and below, 33.2% (184) were 50 and above; 273 were married  
493 (49.3%) and 281 were single (50.7%). In terms of education, 7.4% (41) were post-graduate  
494 educated; 23.3% (129) held bachelor's degrees; 28% (155) had high school degrees; and  
495 24.4% (135) had an associate's degree. Overall, 78.7% (436) traveled with an agency, and  
496 35% (194) stated that they were visiting Alanya for the first time. Further, 18.8% (104) had  
497 no children, 31.8% (176) had one child, and 34.1% (189) had two children; 34.7% (192) were  
498 staying in four-star hotels and 23.8% (132) were staying in five-star hotels.

499 Composite reliability was examined alongside convergent and discriminant validity.  
500 Then, common method bias (CMB), nomological validity and predictive validity were  
501 checked. CMB was controlled through Harman's Single-Factor Approach using confirmatory  
502 factor analysis (CFA) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). In order to obtain  
503 information concerning the structure and validity of the scale, EFA was applied. Reliability  
504 levels of the structures obtained after construction were examined. CFA was subsequently  
505 applied to confirm the obtained structure, with construct validity examined. In order to  
506 investigate nomological and predictive validity, the structural equation modeling approach  
507 was used. Destination awareness was selected, as it was an expected antecedent of ISMS. In  
508 doing so, destination awareness was adopted from Ferns and Walls (2012) and measured via  
509 five items. Then, the cross-validation of the ISMS scale construct was checked through  
510 measurement invariance tests. Finally, in order to determine the correct construct for the  
511 ISMS scale, the one-factor model was compared under two groups: a two-factor first-order  
512 model and a two-factor second-order model (**Appendix 1**).

513

### 514 **3.4. Replication in another country (Phase 4)**

515 Hinkin et al. (1997, p.15) contend that it is "*necessary to collect another set of data from an*  
516 *appropriate sample and repeat the scale-testing process with the new scales*", and this  
517 "*replication should include confirmatory factor analysis, assessment of internal consistency*  
518 *reliability and construct validation*". Accordingly, the ISMS scale was replicated using data  
519 obtained from tourists in Glasgow, Scotland. Over 14 million tourists arrived in Scotland in  
520 2015, with Glasgow welcoming 15% of them. Further, domestic tourists spent a total of  
521 £4.97billion, of which 12% was spent in Glasgow (VisitScotland, 2016). As such, Glasgow is  
522 at the heart of Scotland's tourism sector, making it a suitable candidate for this replication  
523 phase. Indeed, while the Turkish tourism industry typically relies on those seeking the 3Ss  
524 (i.e., sun-sea-sand) (Alvarez, 2010), the Scottish tourism industry is underpinned by those  
525 seeking culture and heritage (VisitScotland, 2017). As a result, each context is sufficiently  
526 diverse and likely to host different types of tourists. The sample collected from Scotland for  
527 the purpose of replication is therefore crucial in checking whether the items in the newly  
528 developed ISMS scale were appropriate for different types of tourists in markedly different  
529 contexts.

530 The a-priori sample size calculator was again used to determine sample size. As per  
531 Phase 3, this indicated that the minimum sample size should be 545. Overall, data was  
532 collected from 630 participants at this stage, indicating that the sample used for replication is  
533 sufficient. The data screening process was employed in line with the previous stage. The  
534 mean substitution method was first used to identify missing values. Second, Mahalanobis  
535 distance was examined to determine outliers in the study. Because one outlier was detected,  
536 this subject was excluded from the data (Mahalanobis'  $D(13) > 49.285$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, the  
537 assumption of normal distribution was checked as the maximum likelihood method was used  
538 in estimating the measurement model. As skewness values were between  $-.579/.110$  and  
539 kurtosis values were between  $-1.063/.001$ , the distribution of the data was considered

540 'normal' (Kline, 2011) (**Table 3**). Overall, data from 629 participants was used at the  
 541 replication stage of the analysis.

542 The demographic results indicate the following participant age distribution: 17 and  
 543 below (54; 8.6%); 18-25 (81; 12.9%); 26-33 (88; 14%); 34-41 (129; 20.5%); 42-49 (87;  
 544 13.8%); 50-57 (84; 13.4%) and 58 and over (106; 16.9%). Regarding the respondents, 52.1%  
 545 were female, and 49.4% were single. Respondents with Associate's degrees accounted for  
 546 21.1% of the sample, and respondents with a bachelor's degree represented 22.7%.  
 547 Respondents with High School degrees accounted for 29.3% of the sample. The majority of  
 548 respondents visited the destination with a package tour (78.5%). 33.4% of the sample had a  
 549 child, while 33.4% had two children. As with Phase 3, the existence of CMB was examined.  
 550 Harman's Single-Factor Approach was again applied alongside CFA for the control of CMB  
 551 through chi-square tests (Podsakoff et al., 2003).  
 552

## 553 4. Results

### 554 4.1. Initial Items' purification (Phase 2)

555 Before discussing the EFA results, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO), the measure of sample  
 556 adequacy, and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were examined. The KMO value is very close to  
 557 the limit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012), while the correlations among the measurement items  
 558 are sufficient according to the result of Bartlett's test of Sphericity (Hair et al., 2013). After  
 559 examining the appropriateness of the data, EFA was performed using a principle component  
 560 analysis and the varimax rotation method. **Appendix 2** presents the correlation matrix for the  
 561 initial item purification stage.

562 Communalities were examined. Only one item was found to be below the  
 563 recommended value of .50 (Hair et al., 2013). However, this was disregarded because the  
 564 value was very close to .50 and the scale in question was examined with an exploratory  
 565 purpose. As a third step, factor loadings were examined. In light of the Eigenvalue, the factor  
 566 construct gives clues about a four-dimensional construct; however, the factor loadings were  
 567 not excluded from the scale since the minimum recommended value exceeded .50 (Hair et al.,  
 568 2013) (**Table 4**). Therefore, the ISMS scale composed of 11 items was used for analyses to be  
 569 carried out for validation and application.  
 570

571 **Table 4.** Results of the factor analysis and reliability test (Phase 2)

Dimension	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalue	% of Variance*	Cronbach's $\alpha$	KMO	Bartlett's test of sphericity
First	.943	3.27	26.58	.936	.62	<i>p</i> <.001 Approx. Chi- square= 464,273 df=55
	.934					
	.918					
Second	.802	2.45	23.70	.820		
	.834					
	.788					
Third	.794	1.60	15.50	.751		
	.761					
	.941					
Fourth	-.490	1.01	10.12	-.094		
	.854					

572 **Notes:** \*Total variance explained is 75.90%.  
 573  
 574

575 **4.2. Initial validation and application of the ISMS (Phase 3)**

576 **4.2.1. Exploratory research - Phase 3**

577 In this phase, EFA was again applied. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett’s test of  
 578 Sphericity were also examined in order to check the applicability of EFA. The KMO value  
 579 (.82) and a significant chi-square value for the Bartlett's test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2=2704.09$ ,  $df=55$ ,  
 580  $p<.001$ ) indicated that factor analysis was appropriate for the data collected. The EFA shows  
 581 three factors with Eigenvalues  $\geq 1$  and explains 66.56% of the variance in the data. It explains  
 582 28.5% of the first factor variance, 28.2% of the second factor variance, and 9.7% of the third  
 583 factor variance. However, some items had low commonalities ( $<.50$ ). Therefore, an iterative  
 584 process eliminated items that had commonalities below .50 (Hair et al., 2013). According to  
 585 the results of repeated factor analysis, the KMO value of .83 and a significant chi-square  
 586 value for the Bartlett's test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2=2536.22$ ,  $df=28$ ,  $p<.001$ ) indicated that factor  
 587 analysis was appropriate for the data. The final factor analysis also resulted in two factors  
 588 with Eigenvalues  $\geq 1$  and explained 75.23% of the total variance. The first factor, INPS,  
 589 included four items and explained  $<37.97\%$  of the variance. The second factor, IPS, contained  
 590 four items and captured nearly 37.26% of the variance. Cronbach’s alpha values were checked  
 591 for internal consistency, with all dimensions  $>.70$  ( $\alpha=.88$  for IPS;  $\alpha=.89$  for INPS) -  
 592 establishing the internal consistency of the items loaded to each dimension (Nunnally &  
 593 Bernstein, 1994) (**Table 5**).

594 **Table 5:** Exploratory factor analysis results

Dimension	Factor Loadings	Eigenvalue	% of Variance*	Cronbach’s $\alpha$	KMO	Bartlett’s test of Sphericity
First (INPS)	.864	3.466	37.97	.891	.831	p< .001 Approx. Chi-square= 2536,216 df=28
	.830					
	.884					
	.888					
Second (IPS)	.855	2.553	37.26	.881		
	.867					
	.874					
	.837					

596 **Notes:** IPS: Importance attached to participant sharing; INPS: Importance attached to non-participant sharing.  
 597 \*Total variance explained is 75.23%.

598  
 599 **4.2.2. Confirmatory research - Phase 3**

600 At this stage, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in order to validate the  
 601 nature of the ISMS construct and its dimensionality based on the EFA results. The aim here is  
 602 to corroborate the two-dimensional structure of the ISMS scale and to establish convergent  
 603 and discriminant validity. Therefore, the ISMS scale was first examined through CFA by  
 604 using the maximum likelihood method in IBM AMOS 23.0. Here, the findings provided  
 605 evidence of unidimensionality. The chi-square of this model was significant ( $\chi^2= 79.566$ ;  $df=$   
 606  $19$ ;  $\chi^2/df= 4.188$ ), and the values of additional fit indices were acceptable (root mean square  
 607 error of approximation [RMSEA] = .076; comparative fit index [CFI] = .98; normed fit index  
 608 [NFI] = .97; goodness of fit index [GFI] = .97) (Anderson, Gerbing & Hunter, 1987).

609 The standardized loadings of each item on their intended constructs were significant  
 610 and exceeded the minimum criterion (.50) (Hair et al., 2009). Convergent validity was  
 611 established because all factor loadings were highly significant and the average variance  
 612 extracted (AVE) values were  $>.50$  within each dimension (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). After  
 613 confirming the measurement model, the ISMS scale was examined for convergent and  
 614 discriminant validity. Discriminant validity represents “the extent to which a construct is truly

615 distinct from other constructs by empirical standards. Thus, establishing discriminant validity  
 616 implies that a construct is unique and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs  
 617 in the model” (Hair et al., 2014, p.104). We assessed discriminant and convergent validity in  
 618 four ways. *First*, we confirmed that the square roots of the AVE of all constructs were larger  
 619 than all other cross-correlations. *Second*, we confirmed that all AVEs were  $>.50$ . *Third*, the  
 620 correlations among all constructs were identified as being distinct from each other. *Fourth*, all  
 621 underlying items showed the highest loadings on their intended constructs, with all factor  
 622 loadings  $>.60$  (with significant *t*-values). Thus, all constructs hold adequate convergent and  
 623 discriminant validity (**Table 6** and **Appendix 3**).

624  
625

**Table 6.** CFA Results

Dimension	Items	Std. Factor Loadings	t	AVE	CR	Correlation
INPS	INPS1	.82	*Fixed	.67	.89	.18 (.03)**
	INPS2	.74	18.781			
	INPS3	.87	22.784			
	INPS4	.86	22.697			
IPS	IPS3	.82	*Fixed	.66	.88	
	IPS4	.81	20.625			
	IPS5	.84	21.733			
	IPS6	.77	19.593			

626 **Notes:** \*Parameter fixed at 1.0 during ML estimation \*\*Squared correlations between constructs are in  
 627 parentheses. **IPS:** Importance attached to participant sharing; **INPS:** Importance attached to non-participant  
 628 sharing.  
629

#### 630 4.2.3. Common method bias

631 In controlling for CMB, the two-factor and single-factor models were compared via chi-  
 632 square tests, which demonstrated that the former was superior to the latter ( $\Delta\chi^2= 1130.2$ ;  $\Delta df=$   
 633  $1$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Therefore, common method bias was not a concern for this study, further  
 634 supporting the two-dimensional structure.  
635

#### 636 4.2.4. Nomological and predictive validity

637 Nomological validity is the degree to which a construct acts as expected in theory (Bagozzi,  
 638 1980). To establish nomological validity, the relationship between the dimensions of ISMS  
 639 and destination awareness were assessed using SEM. The results indicate that the ‘goodness-  
 640 of-fit’ indices were acceptable ( $\chi^2= 219.594$ ;  $df= 62$ ;  $\chi^2/df= 3.542$ ; CFI= .96; TLI= .95;  
 641 NFI=.95; GFI=.94; RMSEA= .068) (Hair et al., 2003). Further, the findings also demonstrate  
 642 that both IPS ( $\beta= .49$ ,  $t= 10.153$ ) and INPS ( $\beta= .17$ ,  $t=3.971$ ) significantly impacted upon  
 643 destination awareness, explaining around 30% of the variance. Therefore, both  $H_1$  and  $H_2$   
 644 were supported. The model also held satisfactory explanatory power, further reinforcing  
 645 nomological validity. The SRMR value was also taken into account when controlling for  
 646 predictive validity (Taheri et al., 2017). As the SRMR value (.0440) was  $<.05$ , predictive  
 647 validity was met (Hair et al., 2013).  
648

#### 649 4.2.5. Cross-validation of scale

650 We first examined whether gender (a demographical feature likely to stimulate significant  
 651 differences) resulted in differentiation in the measurement scale. Second, as the measurement  
 652 scale was applied to tourists from different cultures, invariance tests were conducted in order  
 653 to investigate whether all respondents understood the items appropriately. For the comparison  
 654 of the ‘gender sub-sample’, a configural invariance model was developed ( $\chi^2=117.6$ ;  $df=38$ ;  
 655  $\chi^2/df=3.096$ ; CFI=.97; TLI=.96; NFI=.96; GFI=.95; RMSEA=.062) (Hair et al., 2003). This

656 model was compared with the metric invariance model via chi-square difference test. The chi-  
 657 square difference between the configural and metric invariance model was found to be non-  
 658 significant for gender ( $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 11.5, p > .01$ ). Later, to establish whether scalar invariance  
 659 was supported, the metric invariance model was compared to the scalar invariance model. The  
 660 result of the chi-square difference test demonstrated no significant difference between the two  
 661 models ( $\Delta\chi^2(8) = 17.9, p > .01$ ).

662 The authors paid specific attention to whether respondents from different language  
 663 groups (Turkish, German, Russian, and English) understood the questionnaire in the same  
 664 way. In doing so, the configural invariance model was examined. Having confirmed that the  
 665 configural invariance model was supported ( $\chi^2 = 197.5; df = 76; \chi^2/df = 2.598; CFI = .95; TLI =$   
 666  $.93; NFI = .93; GFI = .92; RMSEA = .054$ ), the metric invariance model was again investigated.  
 667 The results indicate that the metric invariance model was fully supported ( $\Delta\chi^2(18) = 27.3,$   
 668  $p > .01$ ). Moreover, the scalar invariance model was examined. The chi-square difference  
 669 between the metric and scalar invariance models was found to be non-significant ( $\Delta\chi^2(24) =$   
 670  $41.3, p > .01$ ). Additionally, in order to guarantee no differences between language groups  
 671 (Turkish, German, Russian and English) subjected to the measurement invariance tests,  $\chi^2$   
 672 tests were assessed between these groups and the respondents' demographical variables  
 673 (gender, age, marital status, education and income levels).

674 As per the  $\chi^2$  results, no significant differences between language groups and gender  
 675 were found ( $\chi^2 = 1.920; df = 3; p = .589$ ); nor for age ( $\chi^2 = 38.460; df = 18; p = .003$ ), marital status  
 676 ( $\chi^2 = 6.107; df = 3; p = .107$ ), education ( $\chi^2 = 21.530; df = 15; p = .121$ ) or income level ( $\chi^2 = 13.608;$   
 677  $df = 12; p = .326$ ). Accordingly, the distribution between the mentioned demographical  
 678 characteristics and language groups is not disproportionate (), and did not skew the results  
 679 (Oh & Hsu, 2014). In short, the two-dimensional ISMS scale is consistent as its metric and  
 680 scalar variance models are supported across both gender and language groups.  
 681

#### 682 **4.2.6. Comparison of scale constructs**

683 The ISMS scale's one-factor model, the two-dimensional first-order model, and the two-  
 684 dimensional second-order model were compared. In doing so, RMSEA (Hair et al., 2013),  
 685 Akaike information criterion (AIC) and consistent AIC (CAIC) (Hair et al., 2013) were taken  
 686 into consideration. As per **Table 7**, the one-factor model's goodness-of-fit indices were not  
 687 acceptable, whereas those of the two-dimensional first-order and two-dimensional second-  
 688 order models were acceptable. The standard factor loading of the INPS dimension of the two-  
 689 dimensional second-order construct was  $< .50$ . Therefore, this may prohibit convergent  
 690 validity. More specifically, when ISMS is considered as a second-order structure, the results  
 691 indicate that the correlation between IPS and INPS dimensions is insufficient. Conversely, if  
 692 all statements are made under a single dimension, the model fit indices are not appropriate.  
 693 Therefore, it is likely that an incorrect or misleading measurement will be made. As such, the  
 694 use of a structure in which these two dimensions are evaluated separately but in the same  
 695 measurement model (i.e., two-dimensional first-order) is preferable, as it provides results that  
 696 are more accurate. Thus, the two-dimensional first-order model is stronger.  
 697

698 **Table 7.** Summary of model comparisons

Model	$\chi^2$	df	RMSEA	CFI	AIC	CAIC
One-factor	1315.7	20	.342	.49	1347.7	1432.7
Two-dimensional first-order	79.5	19	.076	.98	113.5	203.9
Two-dimensional second-order	79.5	19	.076	.98	113.5	203.9

699

### 700 **4.3. Replication in another country (Phase 4)**

701 Following Hinkin et al. (1997), the generalizability of the model was tested with tourists who  
702 visited Glasgow, with confirmatory factor analysis first conducted. Next, internal consistency  
703 reliability and construct validity were examined. According to the CFA results, the overall fit  
704 of the measurement model was satisfactory:  $\chi^2=80.001$  ( $df=19$ ,  $p<.001$ ),  $RMSEA=.072$ ,  
705  $CFI=.98$ ,  $NFI=.97$ ). Composite reliability values surpassed .87, exceeding the recommended  
706 threshold (.60) (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Therefore, the items used to assess each construct were  
707 reliable and internally consistent. Further, convergent validity was assessed with the factor  
708 loadings in the measurement model. All confirmatory factor loadings exceeded .70, and all  
709 were significant ( $p<.05$ ). Likewise, the average variance extracted (AVE) from all constructs  
710 exceeded the recommended (.5) threshold ( $IPS=.64$ ;  $INPS=.64$ ) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).  
711 Therefore, convergent validity was met. Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the  
712 AVE values with the squared correlation between the two constructs. These AVE values were  
713 greater than the squared correlations between both constructs, supporting discriminant  
714 validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Chi-square difference test was used to test for CMB;  
715 the two-factor model was compared with the single-factor model. The chi-square tests also  
716 demonstrated that the two-factor model was superior to the single-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2=$   
717  $1192.72$ ;  $\Delta df= 1$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Therefore, common method bias was not a concern for this study  
718 and the two-dimensional structure was further supported. Correlation matrix results are  
719 presented in **Appendix 4**.

720 Finally, in order to evaluate nomological and predictive validity, SEM was  
721 implemented. The standardized path coefficient of the relationship between IPS and  
722 destination awareness was .46 ( $t=9.820$ ;  $p<.01$ ), suggesting that IPS is a significant predictor  
723 of destination awareness. Further, INPS has a significant positive effect on destination  
724 awareness ( $\beta=.17$ ;  $t=4.110$ ;  $p<.01$ ), and both IPS and INPS held satisfactory explanatory  
725 power for destination awareness ( $R^2=.27$ ), supporting nomological validity. The SRMR value  
726 was examined in controlling for predicate validity. The recommended value for SRMR is  
727  $<.05$ , demonstrating the predictive validity of the newly developed ISMS scale (.0439).

### 729 **5. Discussion and conclusions**

730 CGC across social media platforms is critically important for tourism businesses. However, it  
731 is likely that potential consumers prescribe different levels of importance to content generated  
732 by others depending on where, how, and why it is shared. Therefore, it is necessary to  
733 investigate and assess different types of consumer-generated content in order to better  
734 understand and manage the influence CGC can have on organizations. Prior studies highlight  
735 the shortcomings of existing CGC classifications generally (O'Hern & Kahle, 2013; Shao,  
736 2009), with this study responding to the need for a new measurement scale to assess the ISMS  
737 classification in the domain of tourism marketing. In doing so, this study followed a rigid  
738 multi-step, mixed-method scale development procedure (Churchill, 1979; Taheri et al., 2018).  
739 As no prior research has focused on the development of an ISMS scale, this study serves as a  
740 nascent assessment of this concept, contributing significantly to both theory and practice.

741 Concerning social media, extant literature typically attempts to measure consumers'  
742 engagement behaviors and involvement levels. For instance, Mirbagheri and Najmi (2019)  
743 emphasize that consumers are considered active on social media based on their attention  
744 (cognitive engagement), interest and enjoyment (affective engagement), and participation  
745 (behavioral engagement). Similarly, Hollebeek et al. (2014) investigated the measurement of  
746 consumers' brand engagement behaviors in social media and emphasized that engagement can  
747 be examined and measured within the framework of cognitive processing, affection, and  
748 activation. A 'brand' (or indeed the social media activities of a brand) typically serves as the

749 focal point of these studies. Yet, this study contends that the presence of a specific stimulant  
750 is not essential. Consumers can generate content with their own motives. As such, it differs  
751 from extant research in that it measures the importance attached to content, rather than the  
752 content-generation process itself. Further, research contends that social media involvement  
753 measures the extent to which individuals attach importance to social media more generally  
754 (Amaro, Duarte & Henriques, 2016). However, in this study, the importance attached to CGC  
755 on social media was measured, as opposed to the overall importance consumers attach to  
756 social media platforms.

757           Nonetheless, the newly developed ISMS scale is similar to Bearden, Netemeyer, and  
758 Teel's (1989) 'susceptibility to interpersonal influence' scale in some ways, namely as both  
759 recognize how the behavior and actions of one party can shape those of others. Further, IPS is  
760 similar to what Bearden et al. (1989) classes as an informational dimension, whereas INPS  
761 echoes the normative dimensions of the 'susceptibility to interpersonal influence' scale.  
762 However, it is crucial to note that Bearden et al.'s (1989) work measures phenomena *beyond*  
763 that of our newly developed ISMS scale. More precisely, it considers individuals' preference  
764 and purchase intentions via the aforementioned normative and informational dimensions.  
765 However, the newly developed ISMS scale only measures the level of importance that  
766 potential consumers attached to CGC. In other words, the possible elements that might shape  
767 purchasing intention are emphasized rather than focusing on direct purchasing trends.  
768 Moreover, the importance of CGC was classified in this study, alongside whether different  
769 levels of importance could result in different impacts.

770

### 771 **5.1. Theoretical implications**

772 The results indicate that CGC can be categorized in two ways and that CGC is composed of  
773 two dimensions: (1) participant sharing and (2) non-participant sharing. More specifically,  
774 with the aid of the newly developed ISMS scale, it is possible to examine the level of  
775 importance that existing and potential consumers attach to content generated by other  
776 consumers through the two approaches to CGC presented in this study. Further, the results  
777 suggest that the INPS dimension proposed in this study exhibits partial similarity with those  
778 emerging from prior research. For example, elements of INPS echo 'spontaneous' CGC  
779 (Kiecker & Cowles, 2002), 'organic eWoM' (Kulmala et al., 2013), 'simple-  
780 recommendations' (Park and Lee, 2008), and the 'implicit' dimension discussed by Ebermenn  
781 et al. (2011). Nevertheless, the main function of the dimensions mentioned in these studies  
782 focuses on information giving and the way this information is emotion-centered, with  
783 emphasis on the fact that it is manifest in a spontaneous way. Therefore, while non-participant  
784 sharing exhibits some similar characteristics with these extant dimensions in terms of emotion  
785 and spontaneity, it is assumed that the principal underlying goal of those engaged in non-  
786 participant sharing is not solely the sharing of the information itself.

787           As the IPS dimension presented in this study also includes content created with direct  
788 or indirect organizational involvement, it exhibits a degree of similarity to the 'attribute value  
789 dimension' highlighted by Park and Lee (2008). Further, the characteristics of the  
790 aforementioned IPS dimension are somewhat similar to the 'quasi-spontaneous', 'third party-  
791 sponsored', and 'corporate-sponsored' dimensions discussed by Kicker and Cowles (2002);  
792 the 'explicit' dimension studied by Ebermenn et al. (2011); and 'amplified eWoM' (Bore et  
793 al., 2017). Thus, while IPS and INPS cover and combine a range of dimensions discussed  
794 throughout extant literature, theoretical value also stems from the clarity that this study brings  
795 to contemporary CGC classification.

796           To this end, the importance attached to participant and non-participant sharing may  
797 differ based on the motives of those engaging with this content. In particular, content-

798 followers may perceive that content shared without commercial purpose is more interesting  
799 and attractive (Chen et al., 2014). Organizations can offer different types of discounts to  
800 consumers who have experienced their offerings. Thus, consumers may be more inclined to  
801 generate positive content pertaining to their experiences on social media. In such instances,  
802 content followers do not know whether consumers create content with promotional purposes.  
803 In other words, non-participant sharing, compared to participant sharing, is more likely to  
804 affect potential tourists' behavior because it surfaces without the motive to provide any  
805 information to the organization. As in social identity and social learning theories, individuals  
806 typically pursue experiences that others have undergone, particularly if they perceive these  
807 experiences as being positive, enjoyable, aspirational and/or worthy of appreciation. For this  
808 reason, INPS can encourage potential consumers to pursue the same experiences as those they  
809 have seen shared online. Supporting this, Sedera et al. (2017) emphasized that potential  
810 tourists could opt to undertake similar experiences because of CGC's social influence.  
811 Similarly, Narangajavana et al. (2017) suggested that exposure to social media content  
812 considerably affects tourists' destination expectations.

813 Finally, participant sharing, unlike non-participant sharing, emerges on platforms  
814 where the organization is involved (either directly or indirectly). Consumers who attach  
815 importance to participant-shared content typically do so due to the information it provides  
816 them, particularly when they have explicitly searched for this information. Nonetheless,  
817 platforms such as official websites, fan websites relating to organizations and brands, and  
818 third-party aggregators (e.g., TripAdvisor), which enable people to review organizations and  
819 to gather information via CGC present this information in different ways. In this sense,  
820 Gretzel and Yoo (2008) revealed that tourists best benefit from other consumers' reviews on  
821 third party platforms, satisfying their desire to engage in information seeking and information  
822 gaining. As a result, one would anticipate that further importance should be attached to  
823 participant sharing as opposed to non-participant sharing.  
824

## 825 ***5.2. Practical implications***

826 The results indicate that managers and social media marketers should pay attention to both  
827 participant sharing and non-participant sharing in order to develop a robust and nuanced  
828 understanding of the role of CGC. The proposed participant sharing and non-participant  
829 sharing scales provide a valuable instrument to help managers and social media marketers  
830 evaluate CGC more analytically. In other words, the newly developed scale provides  
831 instructions to managers and social media marketers (alongside website designers) to interpret  
832 the differences between participant sharing and non-participant sharing in different contexts.  
833 This study therefore provides an actionable tool that can be used to gauge their customers'  
834 experiences when interacting with CGC, and can consequently help in designing effective  
835 communication strategies.

836 To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of participant sharing, and to become  
837 more adept at influencing potential consumers seeking information from social media  
838 platforms, practitioners should first encourage past consumers to generate content through  
839 their own official social media platforms. A clear, hierarchical system (e.g., attributing titles  
840 to experienced consumers) should be employed in order to prevent this CGC from being  
841 perceived as insincere, unsubstantiated, or fake. Practitioners should encourage consumers to  
842 generate complementary content in conjunction with the experiences that they have  
843 undertaken. Further, consumers who share photographs and videos should be rewarded in  
844 different ways (e.g., granting a discount for their next holiday) in order to encourage the  
845 widespread sharing of more visual forms of CGC. In line with this, Yoo and Gretzel (2012)  
846 found that, in 2008, consumers showed interest in photograph and video content at the level  
847 of 50.6% and 14.2%, respectively. However, these rates increased to 54.9% and 23.9%



848 respectively in 2010. As such, CGC containing photographs and videos not only helps to  
849 portray the functional and emotional elements of tourism destinations and experiences to  
850 other (potential) consumers, but also acts as an important supplementary information source.  
851 By encouraging existing consumers to share such visual content (Lo et al., 2011), tourism  
852 organizations can lessen the impact of language fluency on the effectiveness of CGC. As  
853 tourism is a global industry, unconstrained by nationality or language, such CGC is better  
854 placed to serve as universally understandable sources of information for prospective  
855 international consumers.

856 As non-participant sharing (unlike participant sharing) is not a controllable form of  
857 CGC, it is not easy for practitioners to direct or curate it. This content emerges on an  
858 individual's personal social media profiles, or in those controlled by their friends.  
859 Nonetheless, organizations should encourage individuals to generate this type of content.  
860 Here, it is important for tourism organizations to curate their offering in a way that is suitably  
861 distinct, enjoyable, and gratifying in order to satisfy consumer expectations and encourage  
862 them to share CGC. Tourism organizations should recognize that individuals often aim to gain  
863 social status by participating in unique experiences and many aim to achieve this via the  
864 content that they share across their preferred social media platforms (Lee & Ma, 2012).  
865 Therefore, organizations must recognize the expectations of their customers. Accordingly,  
866 they must provide positive experiences and enable consumers to obtain positive feelings. By  
867 doing so, consumers may be more likely to share their positive tourism experiences in line  
868 with their own hedonic motives (e.g. prestige seeking, enhancing social networks, etc.).  
869 Nonetheless, while it is difficult to control non-participant sharing, as individuals are more  
870 likely to be motivated by hedonic motivation, tourism organizations can still cater to their  
871 desires by providing a suitably interesting, unusual, and rewarding consumption forum  
872 through which to stimulate positive CGC. More explicitly, if a tourist gains hedonic benefit  
873 from the destinations, events, sites (and experiences undertaken therein) that they visit, they  
874 may be more inclined to share such experiences across their own, and their friends', social  
875 media accounts – allowing tourism organizations to take advantage of non-participant sharing  
876 in a more nuanced manner.

877 Finally, it may be beneficial to focus more closely on social network platforms. Here,  
878 the hedonic benefits of sharing content (e.g., obtaining social status, prestige) may be more  
879 likely to emerge from 'likes' within an individuals' immediate/close environment. This is  
880 more likely on personal social media platforms than on CGC shared on other, third-party  
881 websites. Accordingly, organizations should encourage tourists to generate and share content  
882 about their experience of the organization's products or services. However, organizations  
883 must not interfere in the design of the content being shared; merely encourage consumers to  
884 do so. For instance, consumers should be encouraged to generate and share content on their  
885 own or friends' social media accounts with organization-specific hashtags. Since this sharing  
886 type is non-participant, it may be perceived by other potential consumers as more sincere,  
887 reliable, and credible. By following up on their own hashtags, organizations may be able to  
888 offer promotions to previous customers. In doing so, the volume of content shared, and the  
889 associated benefits of brand awareness, may increase.

890

## 891 **6. Limitations and future research**

892 As with all scholarship, this study is not bereft of limitations. First, the scale developed in the  
893 study was examined solely within the context of tourism. Testing the scale in different sectors  
894 could allow for further generalization of the findings. Second, the respondents were not asked  
895 to identify which social media platforms they used. Instead, they were asked to consider all  
896 social media platforms more generally. However, each platform may have unique  
897 characteristics, and this may subsequently differentiate the level of importance placed by

898 consumers on IPS and INPS. Future studies should therefore compare CGC shared on social  
899 networks underpinned by friendship and personal connections (e.g., Facebook and Instagram)  
900 with CGC shared on third-party websites typically lacking this core interpersonal component  
901 (e.g., TripAdvisor), as important supplementary findings may emerge. Third, the research  
902 sample was inherently non-generalizable. Only tourists fluent in German, Russian, Turkish, or  
903 English were included in this study. However, many of those using social media are from  
904 China or are fluent in French (GWI, 2014). Therefore, we encourage colleagues to develop  
905 future studies in which respondents from alternate countries serve as the sample in order to  
906 dilute the geographic specificity of this study. Further, the participants were approached based  
907 on their availability and through convenience sampling; future studies should be designed  
908 with a more purposeful sampling strategy in mind.

909 This study focuses on the motives underpinning CGC, alongside the importance of  
910 *where* shared content is manifest. As such, CGC was classified as *participant* and *non-*  
911 *participant* sharing throughout, with attention paid to its utilitarian or hedonic antecedents,  
912 and whether it emerges on individuals' or organizations' social media accounts. However, the  
913 decision to characterize CGC as *participant* and *non-participant* sharing remains an  
914 assumption, with the possibility that CGC could be classified differently when individuals: (1)  
915 hold greater hedonic motives while generating content (directly or indirectly) on  
916 organizations' social media accounts, or (2) have a more utilitarian motive, yet generate  
917 content on their own social media accounts. As such, the stimulus behind, and importance  
918 attached to, content shared by consumers under these conditions may remain ambiguous, with  
919 these sharing behaviors somewhat overlooked by the newly developed ISMS scale. Thus,  
920 depending on their focus, future studies may wish to first explore different classifications of  
921 CGC cognizant of these issues. Finally, contextual variables could moderate and/or mediate  
922 the effects of IPS and INPS on destination awareness. Future studies may also wish to  
923 investigate this. Despite the acknowledged shortcomings, the current study represents a  
924 necessary step forward in CGC research that benefits organizations as well as potential  
925 tourists.

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