

**DESTİNASYON İSTEKLERİNİN KODUNU ÇÖZMEK: SOSYAL MEDYANIN PARASOSYAL
ETKİLEŞİM YOLUYLA GENÇ GEZGİNLERİN TERCİHLERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ**
**DECODING DESTINATION DESIRES: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUNG
TRAVELERS' CHOICES THROUGH PARASOCIAL INTERACTION**

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Bu çalışma, kaynak güvenilirliğinin (çekicilik, uzmanlık, güvenilirlik ve benzerlik) ve adillik (dağıtım sal bilgi, prosedürel ve kişilerarası) özelliklerinin Sosyal medya fenomenleri ve takipçileri arasındaki parasosyal ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi üzerindeki etkisini ve bu ilişkilerin Y ve Z kuşakları arasındaki destinasyon ziyaret niyetlerinin pazarlama sonuçlarına nasıl yol açtığını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Kartopu örneklem metodu veri toplama metodu olarak kullanılmıştır. Toplam 204 katılımcıya ulaşarak 204 adet anket formu doldurtulmuştur. Toplanan veriler Smart PLS kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, çekiciliğin (kaynak güvenilirliğinin bir alt boyutu), dağıtım sal adaletin, prosedürel adaletin ve bilgisel adaletin, Sosyal medya fenomenleri ile Y ve Z kuşağı arasında parasosyal ilişkiler geliştirmede önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğunu ve bu parasosyal ilişkilerin, bu faktörler ile destinasyon ziyaret niyetleri arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini göstermektedir. Ayrıca, uzmanlık, güvenilirlik, benzerlik ve bilgilendirici adillik, önceki literatürle uyumlu olmayan bir şekilde, parasosyal ilişkileri ve niyetleri etkilememektedir. Bu araştırma, destinasyon pazarlaması bağlamında destinasyon ziyaret niyetlerinin anlaşılmasına ilişkin kanıtlar sunarak turizm pazarlaması literatürüne önemli teorik ve pratik katkılar sağlamaktadır.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the influence of source credibility (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity) and fairness (distributive information, procedural, and interpersonal) on developing parasocial relationships between SMIs and their followers, and how these relationships lead to the marketing outcome of destination visit intentions between generation Y and Z. This study utilized a quantitative research method, specifically the self-administered questionnaire technique. The collected data was analysed using Smart PLS. The findings indicate that attractiveness (a sub-dimension of source credibility), distributive fairness, procedural fairness, and informational fairness have a significant influence on developing parasocial relationships between SMIs and generation Y and Z. Additionally, these parasocial relationships mediate the relationship between these factors and destination visit intentions. Furthermore, expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, and informational fairness do not influence parasocial relationships and intentions, which is not in line with previous literature. This research makes significant theoretical and practical contributions to the tourism marketing literature by providing evidence in regard to understanding destination visit intentions in the context of destination marketing.

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Introduction

In recent years, social media (SM) has had a significant impact on how people obtain and use tourism information (Xiang et al., 2015). In line with this, social media is one of the most commonly used tools for marketing strategies, with managers paying significant attention and increasing their budget to create an effective social media presence on online platforms (Torres et al., 2019). According to Usui et al. (2018), the primary reason for the raise of SM is its significant power in shaping consumers' emotions, experiences, and perceptions, making it a crucial information source in the travel decision-making process. In the last decade, marketing has been evolved from social media marketing techniques to SMIs marketing strategies (Coco & Eckert, 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021). Social media influencers, also referred to as "micro-celebrities," are becoming increasingly popular among consumers (Delbaere et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2019). Research suggests that influencer marketing has a greater impact on consumer behaviour compared to other types of advertising, due to the perceived credibility and trustworthiness of the influencers (Gerrath & Usrey, 2021). A study by Swant (2016) showed that almost fifty percent of followers consider influencers' recommendations and forty percent of followers end up purchasing the promoted goods by the SMI. One of the key aspects is the issue of trust playing a crucial role in consumers' intentions to purchase tourism-related goods and services and accepting the information shared by SMIs. Thus, the credibility of SMIs is essential in influencing a travellers' decision on where to go (Pop et al., 2022).

SMIs who are able to create a parasocial relationship with their followers have a significant impact on their followers' intentions (Farivar et al., 2021; Leite & Baptista, 2022). The concept of parasocial relationships was first described by Horton and Richard Wohl (1956) as a relationship that occurs between media personalities and their audience (Dibble et al., 2016). This type of relationship is often perceived by the audience as a personal friendship with the media persona. Recently, studies have underscored the impact of SMIs on travel intentions (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020; Magno et al., 2017) to particular locations (Xu & Pratt, 2018) and sharing tourism experiences (Wong et al., 2020). However, it is necessary to acknowledge that SMIs relationships with their audience is not often linear, direct and instant (Lim et al., 2020). As such, more conceptual research stress the determining role of the personas of SMIs such as the communication styles, credibility and fairness of SMIs (Yuan & Lou, 2020). In this regard, this research problematizes the issue of credibility and fairness in creating parasocial relationships in the context of SMIs and tourism research. However, there is dearth of knowledge regarding the extent to which these factors promote a parasocial relationship between influencers and followers in the context of tourism research. Few studies focussing the credibility and fairness in shaping parasocial relationship between SMIs and audiences emphasise further research from different research contexts (Lim et al., 2017).

With this aim in mind, this research examines the communication process between SMIs and followers through the lenses of source credibility and fairness in the context of destination visit intentions. Specifically, the study examines the influence of source credibility and fairness on developing a parasocial relationship between SMIs and their followers, and how this relationship influences destination visit intentions. The study also explores the mediating role of the parasocial relationship between source credibility, fairness, and destination visit intentions, based on the source effect theory. This research uniquely contributes to the literature by incorporating the concept of fairness in the tourism destination literature. As such, the concept has been readily used for the general product categories or fashion and beauty research (Yuan & Lou, 2020). However, as detailed above, a parasocial relationship between SMIs and their audiences is so nuanced that one cannot take it for granted. Thus, using the lenses of credibility and fairness of SMIs in the context of tourism destination literature, this research enriches the knowledge on understanding the linkage between social media users and SMIs. As highlighted by Dedeoglu (2019) the perceived trustworthiness of social media influencers (SMIs), who are considered as providers of information, is of utmost significance in relation to the impact of the message conveyed to consumers. There is a correlation between the perceived credibility of a source on social media and the intention of users to visit to the destinations recommended by the source (Cheng et al., 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Social Media Influencers in Travellers' Decision-Making

With the rise of social media, consumers have drastically changed the way they make travel decisions. They often turn to social media as the first platform for researching their future travels (Dabija et al., 2018). Social media is seen as a powerful platform that enables people to share their experiences online anytime and anywhere. SMIs have emerged as a result of the exponential expansion of social networking sites (Cox et al., 2009). Jalilvand (2017) stated that SMIs are acknowledged as opinion leaders with the power to increase the impact of shared information. Often seen as micro-celebrities (Gaenssle & Budzinski, 2021) digital influencers are often seen as more relatable than traditional celebrities as they engage directly with their fans and share details of their personal lives (Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003). The practice of influencer marketing is rapidly growing worldwide as more and more people seek out brand endorsements (Childers et al., 2019; Tafesse & Wood, 2021). Through influencer marketing, organizations aim to create interactive relationships with their clients in a more credible and direct way (Backaler & Backaler, 2018). Additionally, there is a strategy to utilise celebrities to promote tourist destinations (Xu & Pratt, 2018). The study by Femenia-Serra and Gretzel (2020) demonstrated the power of social media in opening new doors for destination marketing organizations to boost a destination's popularity and attractiveness, particularly among Millennials and Gen Zs who are presumably more influenced by social media (Dabija et al., 2018).

Influencer marketing is a strategy commonly used to target generally younger population. The age and presence of followers on social media platforms show notable differences, with users in their 40s using Facebook and Twitter, those in their 30s preferring Instagram, and those in their teens and early twenties favouring TikTok (Haenlein et al., 2020). The experiences of social media influencers significantly influence potential customers when choosing which tourism products to purchase (Litvin et al., 2008). According to a survey conducted by Rakuten Marketing (2019) involving 3,600 consumers from five countries, 88% of respondents reported that they were motivated to visit the favourite destination of SMIs (Rakuten, 2019). Therefore, social media platforms are strong and effective tools for influencers to share their opinions about their travel experiences, which can have a significant influence on potential travellers' decision-making (Pop et al., 2022).

Source Effect Theory

Social media influencers (SMIs) strive to effectively convince their followers to change their attitudes and behaviours in a way that aligns with the preferences and interests of various brands (Breves et al., 2019). Credibility is often defined as the positive traits possessed by a communicator that can influence the recipient's willingness to accept the associated message. In the context of marketing, the concept describes the extent to which the source of information is recognized as an expert on the topics being considered, and is capable of providing impartial viewpoints on the matter (Ohanian, 1990). Hovland and Weiss (1951) proposed the notion of source credibility as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of communication. According to the researchers, when a source is considered credible, the persuasiveness and effectiveness of the message increase (Farivar et al., 2021; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). The existing body of literature shows a connection between persuasion and two key factors: the attributes of the source and the perceived usefulness of the message. The source effect theory assumes that several criteria pertaining to the source, such as similarity, attractiveness, expertise, visibility, fairness, and reliability, substantially influence the effectiveness of communication (Farivar et al., 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2020). These components of source credibility are especially important in the context of social media (Dou et al., 2012). Consumers usually consider celebrities as experts in their fields and attractive when they are perceived as reliable. This plays a significant role in the assessment of brands and advertisements (Goldsmith et al., 2000). In essence, it can be said that a well-known media figure is expected to have a higher level of credibility in influencing consumers compared to an ordinary commercial (Roy et al., 2021).

Scholars have studied these factors in various fields related to persuasion, including psychology, marketing, sales, advertising, interpersonal interactions, and organizational communication (Ashraf et al., 2023; Breves et al., 2019). Several scholarly investigations have been conducted to explore the role of credibility in destination marketing within the tourism context (Van der Veen & Song, 2014; Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2022).. Van der Veen and Song (2014) found a positive relationship between the attractiveness of an endorser and consumers' attitudes towards both the advertisement and the location, suggesting that the endorser's

attractiveness indirectly influences tourists' intention to visit the destination. It has also been proposed that the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of a celebrity endorser can positively influence tourists' brand affinity for a place through the mechanism of parasocial interaction (Zhang et al., 2020). Similarly, Zheng et al. (2022) highlighted that the credibility of the endorser had a favourable impact on the parasocial relationship with followers. This relationship, in turn, had a beneficial effect on both attitudes towards the destination and the intention to visit.

Parasocial Relationships

The concept of parasocial relationships (PSR) can be described as a socio-emotional connection formed between a media figure and their audience. Social media platforms, unlike traditional media, provide a unique environment for interactive engagement between media personalities and their audience. This allows social media influencers to build parasocial relationships with their followers (Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2020). Parasocial relationships are a notable example of the potential connections that can exist between individuals and media figures (Oliver et al., 2019). The uncertainty reduction theory (URT) and gratification theory are commonly used in the field of human communication to explain the communication process between influencers and followers. The practice of influencer marketing benefits both the influencer and the company by effectively influencing the attitudes and behaviours of their respective followers (Aw & Chuah, 2021). Recent research has shown that PSR between social media influencers (SMIs) and followers plays a substantial role in followers' buying intentions (Masuda et al., 2022). Leite and Baptista (2022) studied 433 female individuals living in the United States who actively followed at least twenty fashion and beauty-oriented social media influencers. The findings of their research proved a well-established relationship between social media influencers and their audience significantly impacting purchasing intentions.

In the tourism context, drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Zheng et al. (2022) conducted research on tourist destination marketing to investigate the impact of PSR on followers' behavioural attitudes and intentions to visit. Findings show that the credibility of the endorser has a significant positive effect on the parasocial relationship of followers. This, in turn, has a beneficial effect on their attitude towards the location and their intention to visit. Choi et al. (2019) studied tourists' parasocial interactions in online communities and concluded that trust plays a significant role in establishing PSR forecasting travel satisfaction.

Also, the study by Yuan and Lou (2020) investigated functions of source credibility and fairness parasocial connections and product interest. The researchers found that the strength of followers' parasocial relationship with influencers is positively correlated with their perceived attractiveness of influencers, similarity to influencers, procedural fairness, and interpersonal fairness of their interactions with influencers. Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) examined the influence of source credibility and the mediating role of PSR on traveller intention with a sample of 379 individuals. The results stress a significant effect of the sub-dimensions of source credibility (trustworthiness and expertise) and confirmed the mediating role of PSR on intention. The establishment of PSR requires three crucial elements, as outlined in existing literature: the attributes of the source, the attributes of the audience, and the interaction between them (Ashraf et al., 2023). Given the higher level of interactivity in the communication between social media influencers and their audience compared to celebrities, it becomes essential to examine the characteristics of the message's source and the communication process, particularly fairness, in enhancing the parasocial relationship between SMIs and their followers. The table below shows the summary of the studies which is related to research subject.

Table 1. Recent Studies Regarding Parasocial Relationship

Author	Title	Key findings
Zheng et al. (2022)	Effect of parasocial relationship on tourist's destination attitude and visit intention	Empirical findings indicated that the credibility of the endorser had a beneficial impact on the parasocial relationship of the followers, which subsequently had a positive impact on their attitude towards the location and their intention to visit. Furthermore, the parasocial relationship had a crucial role in mediating the connection between credibility and both destination attitude and visit intention.
Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021)	The impact of the source credibility of Instagram influencers on travel intention: The mediating role of parasocial interaction	The sub-dimensions of source credibility, namely trustworthiness and expertise, had a substantial influence on travel intention. Additionally, they strongly mediated the relationship between the trustworthiness and expertise sub-dimensions of parasocial interaction and travel intention.
Choi et al. (2019)	Travelers' parasocial interactions in online travel communities	Each trust dimension (competence, kindness, and honesty) has a significant role in creating PSI, predicting community satisfaction, and travel satisfaction. However, the amount of contact only positively moderates the association between PSI and trip satisfaction.
Ashraf et al. (2023)	How do social media influencers inspire consumers' purchase decisions? The mediating role of parasocial relationships	The study's findings revealed a favorable association between developing a parasocial relationship with followers and factors such as information fairness, expertise, trustworthiness, resemblance, and interpersonal and procedural skills. On the contrary, the study findings indicated that distributive fairness does not enhance the Parasocial relationship with followers. Additionally, the study revealed that attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, interpersonal, procedural, and information fairness indirectly have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions through the Parasocial relationship.
Haobin Ye et al. (2021)	Parasocial interaction on tourism companies' social media sites: antecedents and consequences	The perception of closeness and alignment of values between consumers and the social media spokesperson led to a higher level of parasocial contact. This, in turn, resulted in a rise in brand identification and customer citizenship behavior. Furthermore, the impact of parasocial interaction on brand identification was more pronounced when there was a high level of alignment between the spokesperson and the brand.
Yuan and Lou (2020)	How social media influencers foster relationships with followers: The roles of source credibility and fairness in parasocial relationship and product interest	The strength of followers' parasocial relationship with influencers is positively correlated with their perceived attractiveness of influencers, similarity to influencers, procedural fairness, and interpersonal fairness of their interactions with influencers.

Hypothesis Development

Research has revealed that there are two fundamental antecedents for strengthening the parasocial relationship (PSR). These are the attributes of media personalities and the amount of time dedicated to interacting with them. According to the research, the credibility of the media personalities plays a significant role in influencing the persuasiveness of their message (Ecker & Antonio, 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2020). Further, source credibility comprises four key elements: attractiveness, expertise, similarity, and trustworthiness. These elements have been studied by researchers to determine their impact on communication effectiveness. They are also closely linked to the personal attributes of the endorsers and can significantly influence the persuasiveness of messages by strengthening the parasocial relationship between social media influencers (SMIs) and their audience (Lou & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Research on social media influencers has shown that their credibility greatly impacts the attitudes and purchase intentions of individuals who actively follow or are familiar with them (Ashraf et al., 2023; Schouten et al., 2020). This phenomenon emphasizes the importance of source credibility as a key factor in travel intentions. Based on the findings of a study by Cheng et al. (2020), it can be argued that social media users are influenced by high levels of source credibility when making travel-related decisions and use valuable travel-related content to express their travel aspirations. Additionally, Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021) concluded that there is a significant correlation between the travel intentions of travellers and the sub-dimensions of source credibility, trustworthiness and expertise.

Furthermore, recent research confirmed the significant influence of sub-dimensions of source credibility (knowledge, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) on enhancing the parasocial relationship with followers (Aw & Chuah, 2021; Zheng et al., 2022). Additionally, Yuan and Lou (2020) identified a positive and significant effect of the attractiveness and similarity of social media influencers on enhancing the parasocial relationship between influencers and their followers. Furthermore, research has determined that the sub-dimensions of source credibility play a crucial role in strengthening the parasocial relationship between SMI and followers (Lou & Kim, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis has been developed:

Hypothesis 1: The perception of (a) attractiveness, (b) expertise, (c) trustworthiness, and (d) similarity has a favourable impact on the development of the parasocial relationship between travel-based SMIs and their followers.

In the context of organizational behaviour, fairness is defined as the behaviour that occurs in interactions between an organization and the public, or between decision-makers and their followers. The concept of fairness is closely connected to individuals' perceptions and interpretations of what is considered fair. This perception has the potential to influence attitudes and behaviours (Dahanayake et al., 2018). Fortin et al. (2020) describe four distinct dimensions of fairness: distributive fairness, procedural fairness, interpersonal fairness, and information fairness. Uwa (2022) defines distributive fairness as the fair distribution of rewards and resources. Procedural fairness refers to the fairness of the decision-making process as a whole (Choi et al., 2022). Interpersonal fairness is described as the treatment of others with respect and decency. The concept of information fairness relates to the effectiveness of communication of information (Brockner et al., 2021).

The study by Fang and Chiu (2010) emphasizes the significant influence of fairness on promoting trust and communication between members of an organization. Additionally, the research showed that interpersonal and procedural fairness were crucial factors in the parasocial relationship (PSR) between social media influencers (SMIs) and their followers (Yuan and Lou, 2020). The research investigated the impact of SMIs on consumer purchase decisions and identified interpersonal, procedural, and information fairness as significant factors in enhancing the PSR with followers (Ashraf et al., 2023). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formed:

Hypothesis 2: The perception of (a) distributive, (b) interpersonal, (c) procedural, and (d) informational fairness has a favourable impact on the development of the parasocial relationship between travel-based SMIs and their followers.

Moreover, Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021) examined the mediating role of the PSR on travel intention and found that the relationship between trustworthiness and expertise and travel intention is mediated by the PSR. Similarly, the mediation effect of the PSR was confirmed between sub-dimensions of source credibility and fairness and consumers' purchase intention (Ashraf et al., 2023). Much research has been conducted to explore the various elements that influence destination visit intention. However, the investigation of the impact of source credibility and fairness on destination visit intention remains relatively limited in the existing literature. As a result, the following hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis 3: PSR positively affects travellers' destination visit intentions.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between source credibility's (a) attractiveness, (b) expertise (c) trustworthiness and (d) similarity and travellers' destination visit intentions is mediated by parasocial relationship.

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between (a) distributive, (b) interpersonal, (c) procedural, and (d) informational fairness and travellers' destination visit intentions is mediated by parasocial relationship.

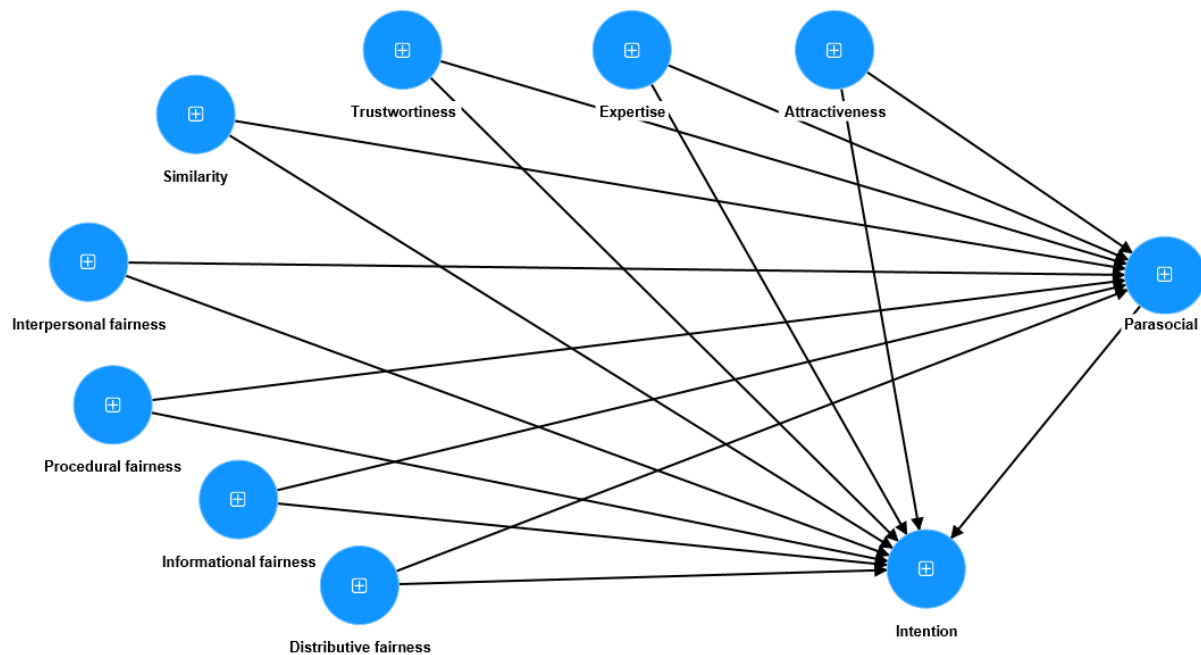


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research method, specifically the self-administered questionnaire technique. Primary data was collected in November 2023 using a snowball sampling technique in Turkey. According to data published by Statista (2022), Turkey's internet user population has substantially increased, with an estimated 70 million individuals. As a result, Turkey now ranks 15th globally in terms of its digital population and has a relatively young population. Therefore, this study proposes a model based on the source effect theory to analyse the direct effects of source credibility and fairness on parasocial relationships and destination visit intentions.

The questionnaire items were operationalized according to existing literature, using multiple scales. Respondents indicated their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from total agreement to disagreement). The scales were adopted from previous research, including attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise scales from Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021); the similarity scale from Ashraf et al. (2023); and distributive, interpersonal, and informational fairness scales from Ashraf et al. (2023). The scales for parasocial relationships and destination visit intentions were taken from Ashraf et al. (2023) and Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021), respectively.

This study used snowball sampling to collect the data which is a suggested method when precisely defining the target population is difficult (Saunders et al., 2019). Snowball sampling is a cost-effective and practically useful alternative compare to probability sampling methods. Snowball sampling carries a heightened risk of sample bias and expanded margin of error. This approach does not employ random selection, rendering the participants more inclined to recommend individuals who share comparable characteristics. Hence, the findings may not completely reflect the entire population. It also enables researchers to reach the potential participants in a short period of time especially when there is no personal access to target population (Bryman, 2016). As a result, due to the time and funding constrains this research used snowball sampling method to collect the data.

The study sample targeted members from two different generations of tourists: Generation Y (also known as Millennials), which includes those born between 1980 and 1994, and Generation Z (often referred to as digital natives), which consists of individuals born between 1995 and 2010. The reason for choosing participants from these two generations in this study is based on the assumption that they use technology more frequently and

spend more time on social media (Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021). To ensure that only Millennials and Generation Z individuals were included, respondents were asked to state their year of birth at the beginning of the questionnaire. Participants born before 1980 were manually excluded from the data.

A pilot study was conducted with 23 participants before the main study, and minor changes were made afterwards, such as rewording some questions. Data collection was completed through an online questionnaire that was shared on various social networking platforms, with a specific focus on groups dedicated to travel enthusiasts who discuss their travel experiences in designated Facebook groups and Instagram pages. Out of the 228 questionnaires that were administered, 24 were excluded from the analysis due to being incomplete. This left a final sample size of 204 questionnaires for further analysis. Table 1 includes details of the participants' socio-demographic profiles.

Table 2. Demographic Profiles of Respondents (n=204)

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	101	49.5
	Male	103	50.5
Age	18-22	52	25.5
	23-27	39	19.1
	28-32	54	26.5
	33-38	40	19.6
	39- 42	19	9.3
Income in TL	25.000 TL and under	116	56.9
	25.0001-50.000 TL	71	34.8
	50.0001-75.000 TL	10	4.9
	75.0001 TL and above	7	3.4
How much time do you spend on social media	Up to an hour	20	9.8
	1-2 hours	78	38.2
	3-5 hours	80	39.2
	More than 5 hours	26	12.7
How many SMIs you follow in relation travelling	1-3	128	62.7
	4-6	43	21.1
	7-9	11	5.4
	More than 9	22	10.8

Data Analysis

This research adopted several measurement scales. The source credibility scale from Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021), fairness from Ashraf et al. (2023), and PSR and destination visit intention from Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) were used. This research tested the conceptual model of the study through Smart PLS 4 software. The following information is indicated in Table 2 below: the items of each construct, the items' loading, assessment of internal consistency, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity for the reflective measurement model assessment. All measured items provided a sufficient score to meet the convergent validity criteria, which needs to be above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). The results of the Cronbach's α and composite reliability test confirmed that construct reliability is provided. For exploratory purposes, it is anticipated that the values will exceed 0.6, while a value above 0.7 is considered sufficient for confirmatory purposes (Henseler et al., 2012). The square root of each AVE value is above 0.5, confirming enough score is provided for convergent validity. The correlations between constructs are found to be lower than the square root of each Average Variance Extracted (AVE), indicating satisfactory discriminant validity for all constructs.

Table 3. Assessment of Reflective Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Measure	Loading (>0.7)	Cronbach's Alpha (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)	CR (>0.7)	Adapted from
Attractiveness	Q1	I think the travel influencer that I most admire and follow on social media is very attractive.	0.852	0.878	0.732	0.891	Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021)
	Q2	I think traveling oriented SMI I follow on social media is very stylish.	0.899				
	Q3	I think traveling oriented SMI I follow on social media is elegant.	0.864				
	Q4	I think traveling oriented SMIs I follow on social media is handsome/ sexy.	0.805				
Expertise	Q1	I think traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media is sufficiently experienced	0.909	0.909	0.846	0.913	
	Q2	I think traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media is an expert on his/her area.	0.934				
	Q3	I feel traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media have so much knowledge about their areas	0.917				
Trustworthiness	Q1	I think traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media is reliable.	0.918	0.95	0.869	0.953	
	Q2	I think traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media is honest.	0.947				
	Q3	I think traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media is credible.	0.943				
	Q4	I think traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media is one who keeps promises.	0.921				
Similarity	Q1	I can easily identify with my chosen social media influencers	0.888	0.886	0.814	0.886	
	Q2	Traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media and I am lot alike.	0.909				
	Q3	Traveling oriented SMIs that I most admire and follow on social media and I have a lot in common.	0.911				
Distributive fairness	Q1	The information shared by SMI that I most admire and follow on social media, benefits fans like me.	0.92	0.886	0.814	0.888	Ashraf et al. (2023)
	Q2	I believe the time I spent on watching posts of SMI that I most admire and follow, is worth it.	0.882				

	Q3	The information share by SMI that I most admire and follow, is beneficial for me in choosing among alternative destinations.	0.905				
Interpersonal fairness	Q1	I believe that the social media influencers I most like and follow on social media treat me with dignity.	0.917	0.927	0.873	0.927	
	Q2	I believe that the social media influencers I most like and follow on social media polity treat me.	0.946				
	Q3	I believe that the social media influencers I most like and follow on social media respectfully treat me.	0.94				
Procedural fairness	Q1	I can express my thoughts and ideas about travel with SMI that I most like and follow on social media.	0.881	0.866	0.789	0.868	
	Q2	If I don't agree with some messages or anything regarding destination shared by influencers then there is a way for me to inform him/or her.	0.9				
	Q3	I have the ability to affect the discussion or engagement with influencer if I so want.	0.883				
Informational fairness	Q1	I believe social media influencers that I most like and follow on social media provides recommendations based on reliable information.	0.911	0.887	0.816	0.888	
	Q2	I believe social media influencers that I most like and follow on social media is generally sincere in his post regarding place.	0.913				
	Q3	I believe social media influencers that I most like and follow on social media make recommendations by upholding ethical and moral standards.	0.886				
Parasocial relationship	Q1	The social media influencers I most like and follow on social media makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend.	0.789	0.858	0.639	0.859	Ashraf et al. (2023); Yilmazdoğan et al. (2021)
	Q2	If social media influencers I most like and follow on social media create new page I will also follow	0.837				
	Q3	I want to meet the social media influencers I most like and follow on social media in person.	0.793				
	Q4	I will be upset if something happened to the social media influencers I most like and follow on social media.	0.794				
	Q5	When Instagram influencer shares how it feels about the place she/he is visiting, this sharing helps me create my own opinion about that place.	0.782				
Destination visit intention	Q1	I will intend to visit the places shared by the influencer I follow on social media in the future.	0.883	0.871	0.795	0.877	(Yilmazdoğan et al., 2021)
	Q2	I prefer to visit the destination shared by the influencer I follow rather than other tourist destinations.	0.869				
	Q3	I would like to visit places that shared by influencers on social media, in the future	0.922				

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Constructs	(A)	(DF)	(E)	(INFF)	(I)	(INTF)	(PR)	(PF)	(S)	(T)
Attractiveness (A)	0.856									
Distributive fairness (DF)	0.562	0.902								
Expertise (E)	0.503	0.682	0.92							
Informational fairness (INFF)	0.482	0.702	0.634	0.903						
Intention (I)	0.559	0.66	0.584	0.685	0.892					
Interpersonal fairness (INTF)	0.477	0.614	0.584	0.737	0.597	0.934				
Parasocial relationship (PR)	0.6	0.72	0.609	0.779	0.736	0.703	0.799			
Procedural fairness (PF)	0.351	0.552	0.401	0.631	0.568	0.616	0.624	0.888		
Similarity (S)	0.537	0.643	0.527	0.683	0.591	0.743	0.695	0.619	0.902	
Trustworthiness (T)	0.6	0.727	0.738	0.77	0.621	0.707	0.687	0.575	0.668	0.932

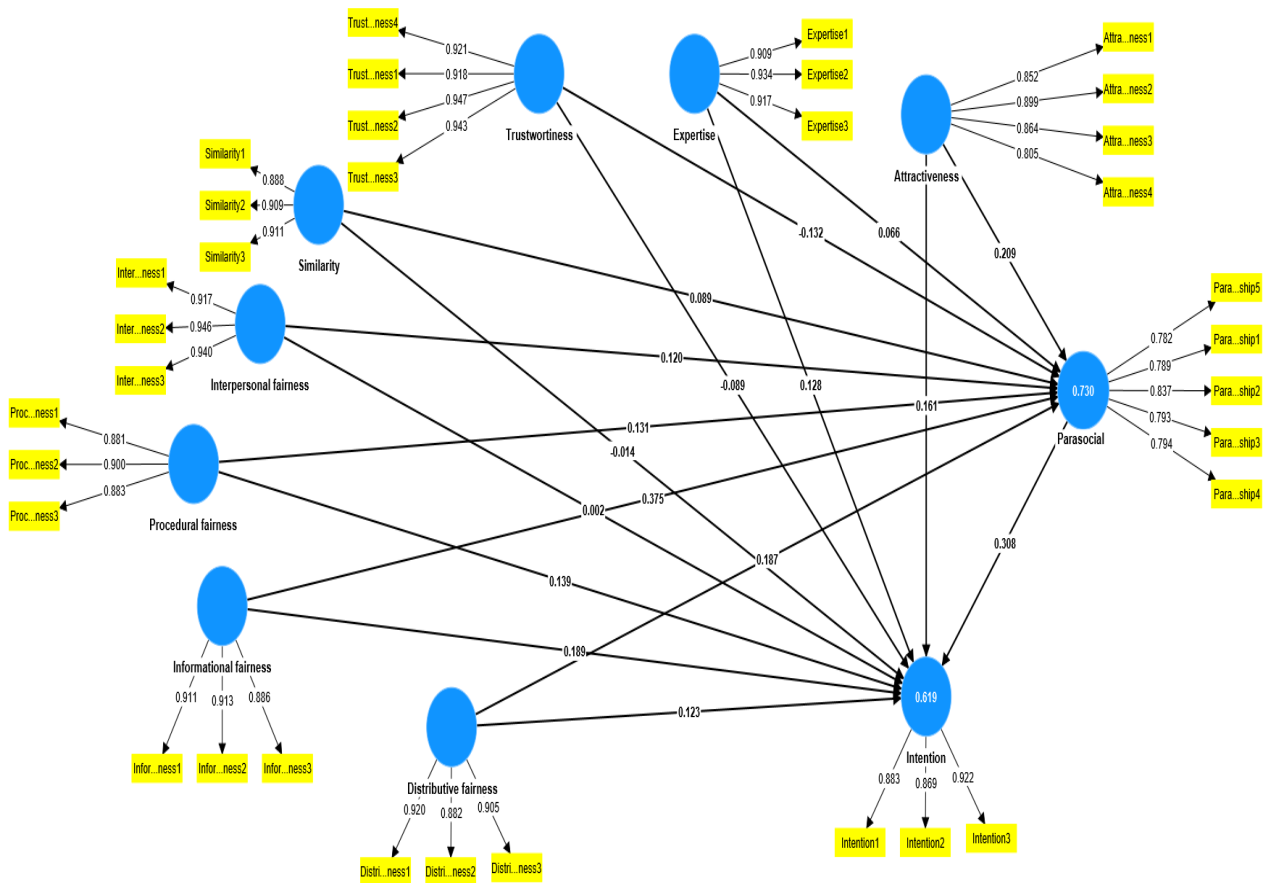


Figure 2. Structural Model of Study

As indicated from the structural model above, association between source credibility (attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity) and fairness (disruptive information, procedural, interpersonal) and PSR and destination visit intention is assessed to achieve research aim. Established associations between the constructs and the results of the SEM-PLS path algorithm are depicted in figure 2 above.

Results And Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of various sub-dimensions of source credibility, namely attractiveness, expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity, on the development of parasocial relationships between SMIs and their followers. The research found a positive and meaningful connection between attractiveness and the development of parasocial relationships ($\beta=0.212$, $T=3.771$, $p<0.05$), aligning with previous research that has identified attractiveness as an influential factor in fostering parasocial relationships between influencers and their followers (Yuan and Lou, 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). However, the linkage of expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity with parasocial relationships contradict with the findings of previous research (Zheng et al., 2022; Aw and Chuah, 2021). Also, it was found that the influence of interpersonal fairness on parasocial relationships (Hypothesis 2) was not statistically significant, contradicting previous research that has established interpersonal fairness as a significant factor in fostering parasocial relationships (Yuan and Lou, 2020; Ashraf et al., 2023).

In contrast, the path coefficients and T-statistics indicated statistically significant values between distributive ($\beta=0.194$; $T\text{-value}=2.607$; $p<0.05$), procedural ($\beta=0.129$; $T\text{-value}=2.531$; $p<0.05$), and informational fairness ($\beta=0.378$; $T\text{-value}=4.284$; $p<0.05$), and parasocial relationships, suggesting that these dimensions of fairness have a significant impact on the development of parasocial relationships. These findings are consistent with previous studies that have also identified procedural and informational fairness as significant factors in enhancing parasocial relationships with followers (Ashraf et al., 2023; Waribo et al., 2020). The table below provides further details on the hypotheses testing.

Table 5. Hypotheses Testing

Path	Path Coefficients	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Hypotheses
Attractiveness -> Parasocial relationship	0.212	0.056	3.771	0	H1a-Supported
Expertise -> Parasocial relationship	0.068	0.066	1.031	0.303	H1b-Rejected
Trustworthiness -> Parasocial relationship	-0.137	0.081	1.699	0.089	H1c-Rejected
Similarity -> Parasocial relationship	0.086	0.059	1.461	0.144	H1d-Rejected
Distributive fairness -> Parasocial relationship	0.191	0.073	2.607	0.009	H2a-Supported
Interpersonal fairness -> Parasocial relationship	0.117	0.061	1.925	0.054	H2b-Rejected
Procedural fairness -> Parasocial relationship	0.128	0.051	2.531	0.011	H2c-Supported
Informational fairness -> Parasocial relationship	0.381	0.089	4.284	0	H2d-Supported
Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.322	0.094	3.41	0.001	H3a-Supported

Mediation Analysis

Table 4 provides evidence that hypothesis H3 is accepted (H3: $\beta=0.322$; T-value=3.410; $p<0.05$). This suggests that the parasocial relationship with followers has a favourable impact on destination visit intentions of followers. The results of mediation test indicated that 4 out of the 8 mediated paths are confirmed. H4 assumed that PSR mediates the relationship between sub-dimensions of source credibility's (a) attractiveness, (b) expertise (c) trustworthiness and (d) similarity and travellers' destination visit intentions. There is enough evidence to confirm the assumption based on H4a that the relationship between attractiveness and destination visit intention is mediated by parasocial relationships. In other words, recent findings indicate that when social media influencer is considered attractive, the parasocial connection formed with the influencer, plays a significant impact in the fostering followers' destination visit intention.

On the other hand, the results showed there is no indirect positive effect of social media influencers expertise, trustworthiness and similarity on travellers' destination visit intentions through parasocial relationship. The previous studies found a contradictory result. For example, the results of the research by Yuan and Lou (2020) found that the relationship between consumers perception of attractiveness and similarity of social media influencers and marketing outcome of product interest are mediated through parasocial relationship. However, the study did not find any indirect influence of expertise construct. On the other hand, Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) conducted a study on the mediating influence of the parasocial relationship on travel intention. The study revealed that the association between trustworthiness, expertise, and travel intention is mediated by the parasocial relationship.

Table 6. The Results of The Mediation Analysis

Path	Path Coefficients	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Hypothesis
Attractiveness -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.068	0.03	2.254	0.024	Accepted- Partial mediation
Expertise -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.022	0.023	0.941	0.347	Rejected
Trustworthiness -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	-0.044	0.029	1.533	0.125	Rejected
Similarity -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.028	0.022	1.287	0.198	Rejected
Distributive fairness -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.061	0.03	2.054	0.04	Accepted -full-mediation
Interpersonal fairness -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.038	0.025	1.528	0.127	Rejected
Procedural fairness -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.041	0.02	2.093	0.036	Accepted- Partial mediation
Informational fairness -> Parasocial relationship -> Intention	0.122	0.042	2.887	0.004	Accepted-Full mediation

H5 is related to PSR mediates the relationship between (a) distributive, (b) interpersonal, (c) procedural, and (d) informational fairness and travellers' destination visit intentions. The results of the test confirmed the mediation effect for the H5a (H5a: $\beta=0.061$; T-value=2.054; $p<0.05$), H5c (H5c: $\beta=0.041$; T-value=2.094; $p<0.05$), H5d (H5d: $\beta=0.122$; T-value=2.887; $p<0.05$) showing that there is an indirect effect of distributive, procedural, and informational fairness on destination visit intentions through parasocial relationship however, positive significant effect cannot be traced for the H5b ($\beta=0.322$; T-value=3.410; $p>0.05$) indicating that there is no mediation effect of parasocial relationship on interpersonal fairness and destination visit intention. The findings of the study are in line with previous studies highlighted that interpersonal, procedural, and informational fairness have a favourable indirect effect on consumers' purchase intentions through parasocial relationship (Ashraf et al., 2023; Yuan & Lou, 2020). It suggests that followers tend to develop a strong parasocial relationship with influencers considered to possess attributes of interpersonal, procedural, and informational fairness. This Parasocial relationship, in turn, correlates with the followers' intention. (Ashraf et al., 2023). Therefore, it can be said that findings of this study confirmed that the source credibility and fairness are crucial factors that influence the development of parasocial relationships between social media influencers and their followers. These relationships, in turn, have indirect impact on the followers' destination visit intention.

Conclusion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of source credibility and fairness on developing parasocial relationships between SMIs and their followers, and how these relationships lead to the marketing outcome of visit intentions for a destination. The findings of the study showed that attractiveness, along with distributive, procedural, and informational fairness, significantly affect the development of parasocial relationships among SMIs and young generations Y and Z. In addition, this study confirmed that the relationship between attractiveness and destination visit intention is mediated by parasocial relationships showing that considering the attractiveness of a social media influencer, the parasocial bond established with the influencer greatly influences the intention of followers to visit a certain destination. The empirical evidence from this study indicates that the concepts credibility and fairness involve essential sub-dimensions impacting on the levels of parasocial relationship to be built between SMIs and their followers. This research contributes to the existing literature by dissecting the source credibility and fairness concepts and evaluating the effect of each on

developing parasocial relationship. One of the most striking conclusions the analyses arrived is the significance of fairness in shaping followers' intentions. In particular, as the confirmed hypothesis on distributive fairness shows, when individuals come to the idea that SMIs they follow evenly distribute the information, time and resources among their follower, they are more liable to develop parasocial behaviour, which then, increase the likelihood of their positive decision making. Also, the analysis concluded that when SMIs are more open to communication and conversation with their followers, their procedural fairness levels go up and positively impact the development of parasocial behaviour. One key practical implication to note here is that SMIs effectiveness on shaping the decision making of their followers regarding tourism destination lies in their communication and conversation levels with their followers. Also, the research found that the level of fairness of the information shared by SMIs plays a vital role in impacting on followers' parasocial behaviours, and by extension, their visit intentions. Last but not least, it is reported that the travel intentions of followers can hinge upon the perceived attractiveness of SMIs. Thus, as stated at the outset, this research shows that SMIs effects' followers' destination choices is not taken for granted; instead, subjected to a variety of key factors. By delving into the components of source credibility and fairness, this research yielded significant empirical evidence to show the process of building parasocial relationships between SMIs and their followers.

Based on the finding, following recommendations can be drawn;

- A key strategy that SMIs can adopt can be to ensure providing fair information to benefit their followers (distributive fairness), considering their followers' views and feelings, and facilitating communication between both parties (procedural fairness). Additionally, prioritising the provision of accurate and honest information (informational fairness) can play a determining role in creating parasocial relationship. Considering that information about travel from SMIs is perceived as more reliable than that from official tourism websites, travel agencies, or the media, industry practitioners and destination marketing planners should pay attention to the perceived informational fairness, which can foster parasocial relationships and increase followers' desire to visit a destination.
- Following SMIs that are not just attractive but also trustworthy, knowledgeable about their industry, and able to engage in parasocial interactions with their followers, increases the likelihood that their followers will favor the brands and places that SMIs share. To achieve this, social media influencers (SMIs) should focus on their areas of expertise and give priority to credibility and imparting trustworthy information. This will allow them to engage with their followers in a parasocial manner, therefore facilitating the development of travel intentions among their followers. Ajzen (1991) highlighted intention as a significant antecedent driving behaviour. Hence, Social media influencers, who possess expertise in their respective domains, exhibit honesty, and skillfully engage in parasocial interactions with their followers, have the potential to impact the travel preferences of their followers, particularly the Y and Z generations who are very engaged on Instagram and highly active. Hence, it is crucial for companies and strategists aiming to attract the Y and Z generations to collaborate with Social Media Influencers (SMIs) that consistently engage in trustworthy and transparent sharing, in order to get a competitive edge.
- In order to enhance the impact of information generated by social media influencers (SMIs) on the decision-making process of their followers who engage in high levels of Parasocial interaction, it is imperative for brands and planners to strive for a deeper understanding of the content produced by SMIs that is highly valued by potential tourists.
- Social media influencers (SMIs) should prioritize not only growing their follower base, but also ensuring they provide genuine and trustworthy content to their existing followers. This will enable them to engage with their followers in a parasocial manner and positively influence their followers' intention to travel.
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This study has some limitations. The data is collected on all social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube. Due to the differences in communication features between each platform, it is suggested that researchers use a single platform for interaction between social media influencers (SMIs) and their followers. This will allow for a more focused analysis of the specific features and dynamics of that particular platform. In the current research, destination visit intention was used as an outcome measure. Further research should

instead focus on alternative outcome factors such as visit behaviour. Additionally, this research only focused on the Y and Z generations, representing a limited group of followers. Future studies should consider adding other age groups to their samples.

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

Son yıllarda sosyal medya (SM), insanların turizm bilgilerini nasıl elde ettikleri ve kullanım alanları üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olmuştur (Xiang et al., 2015). Araştırmalar, influencer pazarlamasının, influencer'ların algılanan inandırıcılığı ve güvenilirliği nedeniyle tüketici davranışları üzerinde diğer reklam türlerine kıyasla daha büyük bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir (Gerrath & Usrey, 2021). Takipçileriyle parasosyal bir ilişki kurabilen sosyal medya fenomenleri, takipçilerinin niyetleri üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir (Farivar et al., 2021; Leite & Baptista, 2022). Son zamanlarda yapılan çalışmalar, SMI'lerin belirli yerlere seyahat niyetleri (Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2020; Magno et al., 2017) ve turizm deneyimlerinin paylaşılması (Wong vd., 2020) üzerindeki etkisinin altını çizmiştir (Wong et al., 2020). Bununla birlikte, sosyal medya fenomenlerinin izleyicileriyle ilişkilerinin genellikle doğrusal, doğrudan ve anlık olmadığını kabul etmek gerekir (Lim et al., 2020). Bu nedenle, daha kavramsal araştırmalar, sosyal medya fenomenlerinin iletişim tarzları, güvenilirlikleri ve adil olmaları gibi sosyal medya fenomenlerinin kişiliklerinin belirleyici rolünü vurgulamaktadır (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Bu bağlamda, bu araştırma sosyal medya fenomenleri ve turizm araştırmaları bağlamında parasosyal ilişkilerin oluşturulmasında güvenilirlik ve adalet konusunu sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Bu araştırma, sosyal medya fenomenleri ve takipçileri arasındaki iletişim sürecini destinasyon ziyaret niyetleri bağlamında kaynak güvenilirliği ve adalet mercekleri aracılığıyla incelemektedir. Çalışma, özellikle, kaynak güvenilirliği ve adaletin sosyal medya fenomenleri ve takipçileri arasında parasosyal bir ilişki geliştirme üzerindeki etkisini ve bu ilişkinin destinasyon ziyaret niyetlerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Çalışma ayrıca kaynak etkisi teorisine dayanarak kaynak güvenilirliği, adalet ve destinasyon ziyareti niyetleri arasındaki parasosyal ilişkinin aracılık rolünü araştırmaktadır. Bu araştırma, turizm destinasyonu literatürüne adalet kavramını dahil ederek literatüre benzersiz bir katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu nedenle, kavram genel ürün kategorileri veya moda ve güzellik araştırmaları için kolaylıkla kullanılmıştır (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Ancak, yukarıda detaylandırıldığı üzere, Sosyal medya fenomenleri ile izleyicileri arasındaki parasosyal ilişki, hafife alınamayacak kadar inceliklidir. Bu nedenle, turizm destinasyonu literatürü bağlamında sosyal medya influencer'ların güvenilirlik ve adalet lenslerini kullanan bu araştırma, sosyal medya kullanıcıları ve Sosyal medya etkileyicileri arasındaki bağlantıyı anlama konusundaki bilgiyi zenginleştirmektedir.

Bu çalışmada nicel bir araştırma yöntemi olan anket tekniği kullanılmıştır. Birincil veriler Kasım 2023'te Türkiye'de kartopu örnekleme tekniği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Anket maddeleri, çoklu ölçekler kullanılarak mevcut literatüre göre operasyonel hale getirilmiştir. Katılımcılar katılım düzeylerini 7'li Likert ölçeğinde (tamamen katılıyorumdan katılmıyorum kadar değişen) belirtmişlerdir. Kartopu örnekleme, hedef kitlenin tam olarak tanımlanmasının zor olduğu durumlarda önerilen bir yöntemdir (Saunders et al., 2019). Çalışmanın örnekleme iki farklı turist neslinin üyelerini hedeflemiştir: 1980-1994 yılları arasında doğanları kapsayan Y Kuşağı (Y kuşağı olarak da bilinir) ve 1995-2010 yılları arasında doğan bireylerden oluşan Z Kuşağı (genellikle dijital yerliler olarak anılır). Bu çalışmada katılımcıların bu iki kuşaktan seçilmesinin nedeni, teknolojiyi daha sık kullandıkları ve sosyal medyada daha fazla zaman geçirdikleri varsayımına dayanmaktadır (Yılmazdoğan et al., 2021). Uygulanan 228 anketten 24'ü eksik doldurulduğu için analizden çıkarılmıştır. Böylece analiz için geriye 204 anketlik nihai bir örneklem büyüklüğü kalmıştır. Toplanan veriler Smart PLS kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, çekiciliğin (kaynak güvenilirliğinin bir alt boyutu), dağıtımsal adaletin, prosedürel adaletin ve bilgisel adaletin, sosyal medya etkileyicileri ile Y ve Z kuşağı arasında parasosyal ilişkiler geliştirmede önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bu parasosyal ilişkiler, bu faktörler ile destinasyon ziyaret niyetleri arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık etmektedir. Ayrıca, uzmanlık, güvenilirlik, benzerlik ve bilgisel adalet, önceki literatürle uyumlu olmayan parasosyal ilişkileri ve niyetleri etkilememektedir.

Bu araştırma, sosyal medya fenomenlerinin takipçilerinin destinasyon seçimlerini etkilemesinin hafife alınmadığını, bunun yerine çeşitli kilit faktörlere tabi olduğunu göstermektedir. Kaynak güvenilirliği ve adillik bileşenlerini inceleyen bu araştırma, Sosyal medya fenomenleri ile takipçileri arasında parasosyal ilişkiler kurma sürecini gösteren önemli ampirik kanıtlar ortaya koymuştur. Bu bağlamda, Sosyal medya fenomenlerinin benimseyebileceği temel stratejilerden biri, takipçilerine fayda sağlayacak adil bilgi sağlamak (dağıtımsal adalet), takipçilerinin görüşlerini ve duygularını dikkate almak ve her iki taraf arasındaki iletişimi kolaylaştırmak (prosedürel adalet) olabilir. Ayrıca, doğru ve dürüst bilgi sağlanmasına öncelik verilmesi (bilgisel adalet) parasosyal ilişki yaratılmasında belirleyici bir rol oynayabilir. Sosyal medya fenomenlerinden gelen seyahat bilgilerinin resmi turizm web sitelerinden, seyahat acentelerinden veya medyadan gelen bilgilere kıyasla daha

güvenilir olarak algılandığı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, sektör uygulayıcıları ve destinasyon pazarlama planlamacıları, parasosyal ilişkileri teşvik edebilecek ve takipçilerin bir destinasyonu ziyaret etme arzusunu arttırabilecek algılanan bilgisel adalete dikkat etmelidir.

Bu çalışmanın bazı sınırlamaları bulunmaktadır. Veriler Facebook, Instagram veya YouTube gibi tüm sosyal medya platformlarında toplanmıştır. Her bir platform arasındaki iletişim özelliklerindeki farklılıklar nedeniyle, araştırmacıların sosyal medya fenomenleri (SMI'ler) ve takipçileri arasındaki etkileşim için tek bir platform kullanmaları önerilmektedir. Bu, söz konusu platformun spesifik özelliklerinin ve dinamiklerinin daha odaklı bir şekilde analiz edilmesine olanak sağlayacaktır. Mevcut araştırmada sonuç ölçütü olarak destinasyon ziyaret niyeti kullanılmıştır. İleride yapılacak araştırmalar bunun yerine ziyaret davranışı gibi alternatif sonuç faktörlerine odaklanmalıdır. Ayrıca, bu araştırma sadece Y ve Z kuşaklarına odaklanmış olup sınırlı bir takipçi grubunu temsil etmektedir. Gelecekteki çalışmalar örneklemlerine diğer yaş gruplarını da eklemeyi düşünmelidir.