Tourists’ Personal Development Through Participatory Consumer-Generated Content

Abstract

The paper seeks to investigate key factors influencing the personal development of tourists. This study examines the relationship between participatory consumer-generated content and tourists’ capabilities, emotions, and skills, as well as the moderating effect of previous tourists’ experiences. To evaluate the research model, 301 valid responses were examined using the PLS-SEM technique. The empirical findings showed that participatory consumer-generated content positively relates to tourists’ capabilities, emotions, and skills. Moreover, previous tourists’ experiences moderate the relationships of participatory consumer-generated content with tourists’ capabilities and skills; however, previous tourists’ experiences have no moderation effect on tourists’ emotions. Thus, our paper’s findings offer valuable contributions to theory and practice. Practitioners and authorities should stimulate users to share their tourism experiences and take the initiative to share easily traceable and searchable data. Moreover, businesses should implement activities that encourage tourists to share their experiences as soon as possible and make travel and tourism websites and social media platforms readily available.

Keywords: personal development, customer-generated content, tourism

1. Introduction

Travelling can contribute to developing an individual’s personality. Previous studies concluded that travelling is beneficial for the personal development of individuals in terms of decision-making (Chen et al., 2023), experience and learning (Cajiao et al., 2022), increasing maturity (Wu & Pearce, 2018), and improving the individual’s view of life (Pan, 2017). Also, travelers tend to be more independent, open to different cultures, less materialistic, and less conventional (Arici, 2022; Hansel, 1998).

According to a survey, 95 per cent of travelers read other travelers’ evaluations before travelling (TrustYou, 2015), and 59 per cent of tourists believe that online sites significantly affect their decisions (Deloitte, 2015). TripAdvisor (2019) declares that one in ten global internet users visits their website, which had a monthly traffic of 490 million users in 2018. Other travelers’ content inspires tourists, and more than 20 per cent of international tourists use online platforms to get information (Wang & Alasuutari, 2017). Research on the personal growth of tourists (Chen & Huang, 2017) shows that the needs of the tourism market are constantly changing.

Social media platforms are fundamentally changing the educational landscape. A new trend in intelligent learning environments is emerging, using social interactions to improve learning environments (Esmaeili et al., 2020).
Consumer-generated content has been used to enhance learning experiences (Dragon et al., 2010), facilitate search (Nejdl, 2009), promote informal learning by facilitating knowledge discovery or proactive exploration of social media content (Aramo-Immonen et al., 2016), and boost self-efficacy and perceived competence (Mendes-Filho et al., 2017). The consumer-generated range offers a rich and neutral collection of diverse insights based on various perspectives and personal experiences. This may open new possibilities for the personal development of tourists, i.e., their capabilities, skills, and emotions. According to this study, personal development capabilities are adaptability, problem-solving, and communication. Personal development skills are time, money, and material management, and personal development emotions are negativity, anxiety, and frustration.

Consumer-generated content on travel, tourism, and social platforms serves a two-fold purpose by offering a platform that allows users to (i) acquire information related to destinations, tourism activities, products, or services and (ii) express their opinions about tourist attractions, travelling experiences, and products or services (Perez-Vega et al., 2018). Further, participatory content sharing (PCS) on social media is a part of consumer-generated content, which refers to users posting on their accounts about product or service information and evaluation with organizations or brand identification (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). In this situation, customer feedback can be utilized to improve products or services (Eley & Tilley, 2009), and tourists also use consumer-generated content to get information about products or services and learn from the experiences of other tourists (Khan et al., 2021). Moreover, consumer-generated content contributes to valuable knowledge creation, self-efficacy, and perceived competence (Shan et al., 2020). However, PCS has yet to explore the context of tourists’ personal development. Thus, the relationship between the tourism experience tourists share on online platforms and emotional development remains underexplored.

We suggest that the information available on travel and tourism websites and online platforms could improve the personal development of tourists. The present study is unprecedented in its emphasis on PCS and personal development concerning tourism. Therefore, in the study, the effect of PCS has been tested on personal development constructs, i.e., tourists’ capabilities, tourists’ emotions, and tourists’ skills, which are justified by previous research to determine the mental and physical well-being of tourists (Chen & Huang, 2017).

The contributions of the study unfold as follows: First, this study addresses the lack of knowledge of PCS effects on personal development, i.e., tourists’ capabilities, tourists’ emotions, and tourists’ skills. It should be noted that the constructs of tourists’ capabilities, feelings, and skills were chosen due to their importance for the personal development constructs (Chen et al., 2019; Chen & Huang, 2017). Tourists’ capabilities, tourists’ emotions, and tourists’ skills provide information on tourists’ mental and physical well-being. Previous literature suggests that input from individuals or groups about their experiences related to specific events or places could influence the behavior of content followers. Second, we intend to enhance the theoretical understanding of PCS and its relation to personal development. Tourists rely on the information shared by other travelers for choosing a destination or making on-site decisions, e.g., accommodations, attractions, and souvenir shopping; hence, PCS improves tourists’ abilities and influences their performance. Third, the present study conceptualizes that previous tourists’ experiences (TEx) enhance confidence and decision-making capability (Huang & Hsu, 2009; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Vlahovic-Mlakar & Ozretic-Dosen, 2022); hence, we examine the moderating effect of TEx on the relationship of PCS to the personal development of tourists.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical framework

Social comparisons are essential to psychological functions that affect individuals’ opinions, experiences, and behaviors (Yue et al., 2022). Social comparison theory holds that individuals learn about themselves by comparing themselves with others (Festinger, 1954). Individuals constantly assess and compare their emotions, capabilities, and beliefs to those of comparable individuals to evaluate and improve their abilities (Park &
Back, 2018). In this way, individuals want to be in a better situation and are more interested in learning by upward comparison (Richter et al., 2015). Individuals who engage in upward comparison compare themselves to others who are better than they are. Individuals’ self-improvement drives to enhance their self-evaluation of capability and belief in gaining a better position is stimulated by upward comparison (Wolff et al., 2018; Wood, 1989). Self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement are three forms of assessments covered by social comparison theory. Self-evaluation comparisons can be used to obtain information about one’s position regarding skills, qualities, and social expectations compared to others. Self-improvement comparisons are used to understand how to develop a particular ability or solve problems (Wood, 1989). Self-enhancement comparisons protect a person’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem when they are in danger or uncertain, which helps them keep a positive view of themselves (Wood, 1989).

Researchers reported that more than 20 per cent of international tourists use online platforms to get information (Wang & Alasuutari, 2017). In this regard, consumer-generated content mainly displays information related to destinations, tourism activities, opinions about tourists’ attractions, travel experiences, and products or services (Perez-Vega et al., 2018). The consumer-generated content allows tourists to recognize their skills, capabilities, and emotional state by comparing them with others’ experiences. Therefore, when individuals look at travel and tourism websites and social media platforms for information about decisions and actions, they might take on their next trip, it leads to consumption behavior that is influenced by the experiences of others, as shown in reviews, recommendations, or complaints that help them improve themselves.

2.2. Hypothesis development

2.2.1. Participatory consumer-generated content on social media

Social media is a set of internet-based applications founded on the ideological and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0 and allows users to create and share content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Online social networking platforms, including blogs, reviews, and video-sharing websites, encourage and facilitate communication, cooperation, and the exchange of customer-generated content (Malik et al., 2016; Özdemir & Arzık, 2022). Social media platforms facilitate the communication of both firm-generated and consumer-generated content. Nonetheless, consumer-generated content is more authentic, unbiased, and trustworthy than firm-generated content (Herrero et al., 2015; Lo & Yao, 2019).

Researchers investigated the significance of consumer-generated content and its consumption behaviors (Campbell et al., 2022). For example, consumer-generated content positively influences consumer attitudes towards products and services due to the allure and pertinence of shared content (Campbell et al., 2022; Murray, 1991). Hence, consumer-generated content can substantially influence potential consumers to become involved with products and services. The social networking sites offer a range of free consumer-generated content that allows users to search for and exchange information. Tourists generate content not only to share their TEx with others, but potential tourists find relevant information in consumer-generated content that affects their personal development (Kaosiri et al., 2019). This behavior of potential consumers can be defined through social influence theories such as social comparison (Festinger, 1954), which hold that people acquire similar behaviors via correspondence with those they consider influential.

Dedeoğlu et al. (2020) categorize consumer-generated content into participatory and non-participatory sharing based on users’ social media accounts, profiles, and platforms. PCS provides information related to goods and services with organization or brand identification or when users share content with a clear reason related to an organization (e.g., product reviews and information) (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020; Kamboj & Sarmah, 2018), whereas non-participatory consumer-generated content does not prioritize product and/or service enhancement and does not typically serve a functional purpose (Alsufyan & Aloud, 2017; Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). In this study, consumer-generated content on social media refers to PCS. PCS occurs when users express
their opinions about products or services associated with brands or organizations on social networking sites (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). PCS can be good or bad, leading to co-creation, co-devastation, and brand-distress behaviors (Dolan et al., 2016; Hewer et al., 2017). As a result, PCS occurs for various motives, primarily utilitarian (Kamboj & Sarmah, 2018), and is characterized by the exchange of experience, the transmission of knowledge, and the pursuit of information (Chae & Ko, 2016). Subsequently, PCS can be used to improve products and services (Eley & Tilley, 2009), as well as contribute to valuable knowledge creation (Shan et al., 2020), self-efficacy, and perceived competence (Mendes-Filho et al., 2017).

2.2.2. Personal development

By considering recent efforts in theorizing the personal development of travelers (Chen et al., 2014a; Chen et al., 2019), we considered three constructs that makeup tourists’ personal development: capabilities (Scarinci & Pearce, 2012), emotions (Bigné & Andreu, 2004), and skills (Tsaur et al., 2010). Capability is a practical ability linked with independent learning, problem-solving, and adaptability to different environments (Ye et al., 2004). Individual capability enhances the traveler’s perspective on self-adaptation (Noy, 2004). Tourists usually emphasize skills like flexible thinking, problem-solving, and good communication as aspects of personal development (Pearce & Foster, 2007). Emotion, as a state of human sentiment, causes psychological and physical changes that affect behavior. Previous studies related to travel and tourism also focused on emotions (Chen et al., 2019; Chen & Huang, 2017; Nawijn, 2011). Individuals can improve their skills through training and practicing predetermined jobs (Chen et al., 2014b; Ye et al., 2004). Skills typically include self-motivation, time, and money management (Chen & Huang, 2017). Tsaur et al. (2010), for example, studied tourists in Taiwan and discovered that skills developed among travelers include trip planning, emergency response, and information searching skills. Subsequently, personal development is the most vital motivator for global tourism (Han et al., 2020).

2.2.3. Participatory consumer-generated content and tourists’ capabilities

The increasing popularity of consumer-generated content has gained tremendous attention (Taecharungroj, 2019). Some researchers investigate how individuals perceive content and reviews regarding argument quality, opinion, and cues (Bridges & Vásquez, 2018; Hernández-Ortega, 2018; Shin et al., 2019). Others examine users’ motives for creating and using consumer-generated content (Belarmino & Koh, 2018; Yuan et al., 2016). The technological perspective was also explored through antecedents (Ayeh, 2015) and effects (Khan et al., 2021). The media is considered a powerful medium to support the capacity for immediate feedback, transmit information in different forms and different languages, and promote personal development (El-Shinnawy & Markus, 1997). Specific to capability development, capabilities like effective communication, problem-solving, and adaptability are popular aspects of personal development mentioned by travelers (Pearce & Foster, 2007). Furthermore, researchers examined the personal development of tourists and discovered that adaptability and effective communication are among the most improved characteristics of personal development (Scarinci & Pearce, 2012).

According to Paintsil and Kim (2022), social media content transforms communication into more integrative and inclusive. Similarly, Andéhn et al. (2014) highlight that consumer-generated content enables tertiary communication among people from different places. Consumer-generated content significantly improves communication abilities as individuals post their subjective views and personal experiences on social media (Fazel & Rajendran, 2015). It improves problem-solving and decision-making behaviors based on other tourists’ decisions (Kalandides, 2011) and the adaptability of different environments due to the perceptual features (Cai, 2002) of consumer-generated content. Hence, the effects of social media content on tourists’ capabilities should be explored (Govers et al., 2017). Thus, we articulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Participatory consumer-generated content has a positive effect on tourists’ capabilities.
2.2.4. Participatory consumer-generated content and tourists’ emotion

Traveling behavior is related to emotional and experiential needs of tourists, as tourists are emotion driven (Goossens, 2000). Emotions have earned remarkable prominence in the tourism and marketing sectors for their fundamental role in defining unforgettable experiences (Santos et al., 2021). Recent research studies have shown that emotional connection, historic experiences, adventurous travel, beautiful vistas, and expressions are the primary motivators for other tourists to visit a particular destination (Rainoldi et al., 2022; Rather, 2020). According to Buitinck et al. (2015), emotional expressions are prevalent in consumer-generated material, including blogs, reviews, and social media. Consequently, feelings associated with consumer-generated material are employed to comprehend the thoughts and attitudes expressed in the evaluations and collect phrases containing emotional information.

Emotion is an essential study area because it offers a deep understanding of various aspects of tourists’ experiences (Chung & Zeng, 2020). Park et al. (2018) state that “many researchers describe emotion as individualistic, a psychological predisposition highly related to cognition and appraisal” (p. 665). In this context, emotions are motivating forces that intervene in experiences, evaluations, and behavioral intentions (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Further, Decrop (1999) suggests that individuals’ cognitive and emotional approaches are two of the most essential ways to describe decision-making and behavioral processes. These subjective behavioral and cognitive consequences of different emotions also affect tourist experiences differently (Laros & Steenkamp, 2005; Nawijn et al., 2010). Although previous literature has tried to specify the role of emotions on sharing behavior (Paintsil & Kim, 2022) and consumer-generated content on tourists’ empowerment (Mendes-Filho et al., 2017), despite such recognition, studies investigating the emotional resonance of tourists are scarce. This prompted a call for a more rigorous investigation into the emotional impact of consumer-generated content based on tourist perceptions.

The traveler’s hierarchical structure provides dynamic representations of the social network for identifying individuals who share tourism interests based on their physical locations and behaviors (Francalanci & Hussain, 2015). TEx, with a high level of satisfaction from a trip spreads good words (Bigné & Andreu, 2004), which leads towards tourism. A satisfied consumer would produce positive content related to products/services (García et al., 2010), thus influencing the emotional responses of potential consumers and stimulating and shaping their actions (Mariani et al., 2019). Based on the discussion, we hypothesize that:

H2: Participatory consumer-generated content has a positive effect on tourists’ emotions.

2.2.5. Participatory consumer-generated content and tourists’ skills

Researchers highlighted that skills can be learned and obtained through training and repetitive practice to carry out predetermined tasks (Chen et al., 2014b; Ye et al., 2004). Pearce and Foster (2007) conducted a study considering the self-reported learning achievements of travelers. Researchers found that 16% of the respondents rated “management of financial resources” as one of the top three most improved skills, followed by “self-confidence” (34%) and “being open-minded” (17%). Bouillion et al. (2010) examine the effect of internet usage on users’ skills via social networking platforms. Researchers advocate that social networking platforms provide emotional support and opportunities for skill development. Social media platforms, as interactive platforms, allow internet users to communicate and exchange information. Hence, social media platforms enable users to develop interpersonal skills (Tsai & Liu, 2015; Utz, 2009) and management skills by consuming online content (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014; Tsai & Liu, 2015). In this regard, PCS contains critical information that leads to more effective and personalized skill recommendations.

Online content allows for the timely presentation of skills training that is critical to acknowledge and respond to the latest approaches and recommendations (Wang et al., 2019). Belarmino et al. (2019) compare consumer-generated content from Airbnb and hotel guests. The researchers suggest that content generated by
consumers directly affects the evaluation and assessment skills of potential customers. Consumer-generated content significantly improves tourists’ emotions (Kaosiri et al., 2019), and online platforms transform the conventional way of experiencing tourism (Salem & Twining-Ward, 2018). Learning skills at different levels is one of the most valuable characteristics of consumer-generated content. Tsaur et al. (2010) found that tourists mainly rely on the Internet as the source of information search and the medium of information transmission. Hence, consumer-generated content has emerged as a primary source of information about various tourists’ decisions (Khan et al., 2021) that enhances skills and knowledge (Bridgstock, 2019) and the adaptability of the different environments due to perceptual features (Cai, 2002; Sandrin et al., 2017). Thus, we articulate the following hypothesis:

H3: Participatory consumer-generated content has a positive effect on tourists’ skills.

2.2.6. Previous tourists’ experiences as moderator

TEx is defined as an act of consumption and a contrived, prefabricated tourism experience (Boorstin, 1992). TEx holds stable motivating patterns distinguishing and characterizing various tourists’ activities (Cohen, 1979). Hence, TEx has particular importance for tourists (Li, 2000; Sheldon, 2020). TEx influenced travel decisions and judgements (Larsen et al., 2007; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). Tourists with previous tourism experience rely on their past experiences and utilize prior knowledge from the previous trip as a source of information (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Vlahovic-Mlakar & Ozretic-Dosen, 2022). TEx provides knowledge related to skills, understanding, and familiarity, which is subjective to the success or failure of the old trip (Gursoy & Chen, 2000; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). A successful tourism experience fulfils expectations, while a failed one creates a difference between the expectations and the present journey of the tourist (Yasin et al., 2017). Therefore, we proposed that TEx moderates the relationships between PCS and tourists’ capabilities, emotions, and skills; Figure 1 depicts all hypotheses. We proposed the following hypotheses:

H4: Previous tourists’ experiences moderate the effect of participatory consumer-generated content on tourists’ capabilities.

H5: Previous tourists’ experiences moderate the effect of participatory consumer-generated content on tourists’ emotions.

H6: Previous tourists’ experiences moderate the effect of participatory consumer-generated content and tourists’ skills.
3. Methodology

3.1. Study location, sampling, and data collection

The respondents to this study were tourists who were present at the airport after the completion of an international flight or who were waiting for an international flight. We collected data from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia, and Phuket International Airport, Thailand, in June 2019. Before final data collection, pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted on 35 tourists from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Malaysia. The process confirmed the validity of the adopted measurement constructs; no changes were made to the questionnaire following the pilot test. For convenience, we offered paper-based and online survey options to the respondents. Most individuals showed reluctance to participate in the survey due to tiredness, a shortage of time, and an English language deficiency. Of those who agreed to participate, 72% preferred an online survey to share their responses. Following Oppenheim’s (2001) recommendations on testing non-response bias, we leave both types of respondents (paper-based and online) after sharing the questionnaire form or questionnaire web address (via email or WhatsApp) and request that paper-based survey respondents leave the filled-out survey questionnaire at the interaction point where the questionnaire is handed over. The response rates in the paper-based and online surveys were 50.31% (163/324) and 66.92% (425/635), respectively. We collected a total of 588 responses via paper-based and online survey methods. Out of 588 responses, 287 were removed due to incomplete answers; a total of 301 responses were analyzed using the SmartPLS 3 software.

For the timesaving of the respondents, we added a question at the start of the questionnaire about their internet search for the next visiting place, which was quoted as "Did you search online to enrich information about your recently visited place before the visit?" If the respondent answered yes, the online survey form proceeded to the next question; otherwise, the survey ended with a thank-you note. The same instruction was highlighted in the paper-based survey.

The summary of the respondents’ demographic characteristics is described as follows: Out of the total 301 respondents, 67.11% were males, with an average age of 42.2 years. Regarding qualifications, 45.18% had a bachelor’s degree, 31.56% had a diploma, 21.93% had a master’s degree, and 0.013% attended school. In terms of traveling experience, 38.87% of the sample had 1-3 trips experience, 30.23% of the sample had 4-5 trips experience, 22.26% had no prior experience, and 8.64% had more than 5 trips experience before their upcoming or last trip (see table 1). In this study, the questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first section of the survey inquired about demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, and travel experience of the respondents. The second section measured the variables of the study, which were adopted from previous studies; Appendix describes items of each construct.

The questionnaire was designed for tourists, and the constructs were adopted from prior research. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The PCS construct was adopted from Dedeoglu et al. (2020) and was assessed using a four-item scale. Respondents were questioned about the importance of users’ comments and reviews about a destination on social networking platforms and commercial websites. TC was adopted from Chen and Huang (2017) and measured using a three-item scale. Respondents were polled on their progress in adaptability, communication, and problem-solving capabilities. TE was assessed using a three-item scale proposed by Chen and Huang (2017). Respondents were questioned about their feelings of relief in the face of adversity, past frustration, and stress. TS was adapted from Chen and Huang (2017) and assessed using a three-item scale. Respondents were asked about improvements in money, time, and material management.
Table 1  
Respondents’ characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>67.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>32.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – 32</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 - 47</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>36.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 – 62</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>27.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 +</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never attended school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended school</td>
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<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>45.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous tourism’ experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No prior experience</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 trips</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>38.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5 trips</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>30.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 trips</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Data analysis

The partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was used to test hypothesized relations. PLS-SEM provides "a single determinant score for each SEM composite for each observation," as well as a relationship between the total variance explained with $R^2$ (Hair et al., 2018). Further, the researchers noted numerous advantages of PLS-SEM, including its adaptability for examining the measurement features of the construct, explicit compacting of measurement error, and ability to overcome sample size limitations (Hussain et al., 2019; Yousuf et al., 2022). Moreover, PLS-SEM is better suited for theory development and prediction (Sarstedt et al., 2023).

This study used the SmartPLS 3.0 statistical tool to analyze the measurement and structural models. PLS algorithm test was performed to examine item loadings, Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha$), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) of the measurement model. Further, common method bias and goodness of model fit tests were conducted, including variance inflation factor (VIF), effect size ($f^2$), coefficient of determination ($R^2$), predictive relevance ($Q^2$), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Finally, SEM was performed to test the proposed hypothesis.

4.1. Measurement model

The measurement model was examined using reliability and validity tests (Uehara & Assarut, 2020); the results are shown in Table 2. All item loadings are significant, ranging from 0.712 to 0.887. The constructs’ Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha$) and CR values are above the required threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019; Kin et al., 2020). Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha$) values of 0.770 for PCS, 0.773 for TC, 0.821 for TE, and 0.739 for TS. The CR values range from 0.797 to 0.892, indicating adequate internal consistency and reliability. AVE values for all constructs fulfil the required threshold of > 0.5, ranging from 0.568 to 0.735, which means convergent validity. Further, the discriminant validity of the constructs was examined using the HTMT criterion. HTMT values are below the suggested value of 0.9 (see Table 3), which indicates satisfactory discriminant validity of all constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

4.2. Structural model

In this study, the structural model was assessed using $R^2$ for dependent variables, $t$-value, and significance of path coefficients. The results show that TC, TE, and TS can be explained by PCS with $R^2$ values of 0.450,
0.348, and 0.216, respectively. R² values demonstrate the substantial ability of the independent variable to define the dependent variables (Hair et al., 2019). The relationship between latent variables shows the f² value in the model ranged from 0.098 to 0.292, which falls into the "small to medium strength" category of the relationship category (Hair et al., 2019). The variance inflation factor value in the model is < 5, ranging from 1.678 to 2.519, which reveals the absence of multicollinearity issues (Hair et al., 2019). The Q² value is > 0, ranging from 0.112 to 0.302, indicating the predictive relevance of the model (Hair et al., 2019). SRMR and NFI are used for goodness of fit, and the resulting values of SRMR and NFI are equal to 0.048 and 0.926, respectively, demonstrating model fitness for empirical investigation.

The coefficient parameter and the significant value generated from a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval were used to test the direct relationships. Figure 2 demonstrates the immediate effect of the PCS on TC, TE, and TS. Table 4 summarizes the results of hypothesis testing. The results reveal that PCS positively and significantly influences TC (β = 0.671, t = 11.241, p = 0.000) TE, (β = 0.590, t = 9.713, p = 0.000) and TS (β = 0.465, t = 5.772, p = 0.000), thus, H1, H2, and H3 are accepted.

Table 2
Results of the measurement model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Item coding</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>Dedeoğlu et al. (2020)</td>
<td>PCS1</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.591</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PCS2</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PCS3</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PCS4</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>Chen and Huang (2017)</td>
<td>TC1</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>0.773</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TC2</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TC3</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td>Chen and Huang (2017)</td>
<td>TE1</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.821</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TE2</td>
<td>0.887</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TE3</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TS</td>
<td>Chen and Huang (2017)</td>
<td>TS1</td>
<td>0.711</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TS2</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>TS3</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PCS = Participatory consumer-generated content; TC = Tourists’ capabilities; TE = Tourists’ emotions; TS = Tourists’ skills.

Table 3
Discriminant validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>PCS</th>
<th>TC</th>
<th>TE</th>
<th>TS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PCS</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.733</td>
<td>0.594</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>0.426</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PCS = Participatory consumer-generated content; TC = Tourists’ capabilities; TE = Tourists’ emotions; TS = Tourists’ skills.

Table 4
Structural model results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>95% BCa CI</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>f²</th>
<th>Q²</th>
<th>VIF</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1 PCS -&gt; TC</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>11.241</td>
<td>(0.547, 0.755)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.450</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>1.678</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2 PCS -&gt; TE</td>
<td>0.590</td>
<td>9.713</td>
<td>(0.467, 0.670)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.240</td>
<td>1.941</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3 PCS -&gt; TS</td>
<td>0.465</td>
<td>5.772</td>
<td>(0.313, 0.625)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>2.519</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PCS = Participatory consumer-generated content; TC = Tourists’ capabilities; TE = Tourists’ emotions; TS = Tourists’ skills.
4.3. Multi-group moderation analysis

In this study, the moderation analysis was conducted for three distinct TEx (i.e., a) no prior experience, b) 1-3 times traveling experiences, and c) > 3 times traveling experiences. Table 5 shows a consolidated result of moderation analysis for different traveling experiences. Results show that the TC moderates the effect of PCS on TC. The relationship is stronger in the case of no prior experience ($\beta = 0.622, p < 0.05$). The relationship in the cases of 1-3 times ($\beta = 0.419, p < 0.10$) and > 3 times ($\beta = 0.427, p < 0.10$) is significant. The strength of PCS effect on TS is found to be substantial. No prior experience has the strongest effect on TS ($\beta = 0.526, p < 0.05$), followed by 1-3 times ($\beta = 0.318, p < 0.10$) and >3 times ($\beta = 0.387, p < 0.10$). Another noteworthy finding is that the relationship between latent variables, i.e., PCS and TE, was found to be insignificant in all cases, including no prior experience, 1-3 times, and > three times. Hence, the results support H4 and H6; however, reject H5.

Table 5
Multi-group moderation results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>$\beta$ difference</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No experience</td>
<td>1-3 trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 PCS -&gt; TC</td>
<td>0.622**</td>
<td>0.419*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 PCS -&gt; TE</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>0.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 PCS -&gt; TS</td>
<td>0.526**</td>
<td>0.318*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PCS = Participatory consumer-generated content; TC = Tourists’ capabilities; TE = Tourists’ emotions; TS = Tourists’ skills.
*p < 0.10. **p < 0.05.

5. Discussion

This study examines the effect of consumer-generated content on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms on the personal development of tourists. This study specifically examines the impact of PCS on the capabilities, emotions, and skills of tourists. TEx was incorporated as a moderator in the study. The proposed research model was tested among those tourists who had just arrived from international travel or were waiting for their international departure. This study found a significant three-way interaction effect among the three consequences of personal development (i.e., tourists’ capabilities, emotions, and skills) by PCS. Specifically, content followers perceive that shared content on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms enhances their capabilities (environment, solving problems, and communication). According to Kumar et al.
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(2016), online content influences customer behavior by providing consumers with critical information and current scenarios about a product or location. Customer involvement with content is also another reason for positive customer behavior. Existing information on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms provides information in the form of text, pictures, and videos, which prepares followers and tourists for the content in advance and impacts their behavior. TEx affects the causal relationship between PCS and TC. Regardless of any travel experience (0 to >3 trips) of content followers, getting input from travel and tourism websites and social media platforms helps their capabilities.

Individuals with tourism experience share their knowledge with others via online platforms. PCS facilitates skill acquisition at various levels. Empirical findings reveal that PCS significantly influences TS. Tourists with different motivations learned several skills (financial management and self-management) (Pearce & Foster, 2007). Tourists predominantly follow online information, which enhances skills and knowledge (Bridgstock, 2019), as well as their adaptation to diverse environments due to perceptual features (Cai, 2002; Sandrin et al., 2017). TEx affects the causal relationship between PCS and TS. Regardless of their tourism experience (0 to >3 trips), online information provides tourists with input from tourism websites and social media platforms, which improves their skills.

Content followers perceive that the content shared helps them to respond and overcome their emotions (negativity, stress, and frustration). Hudson et al. (2015) reported that social media-enabled communication with preexisting social networks significantly affects TE. Chen et al. (2016) posited that tourism experiences could help relieve stress. TEx does not affect the strength of the causal relationship between PCS and TE. Emotions are best analyzed from a physiological (Griffiths, 2008; Lazarus, 1993) or a cognitive perspective (Lazarus et al., 1980; Ortony et al., 1990). Emotions cause stimulation in cognitive domains connected with physiological responses (Damasio et al., 2000). Therefore, the possible reason could be that specific information like comments and ratings of others on travel destinations and evaluations on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms is not related to responding to or controlling the stress, negativity, and frustration of content followers. The contents on social networking platforms are intended to inform followers about the destination and share information to help them prepare for the tour. This research also integrates the study model and its findings with social comparison theory. This study’s findings align with previous studies showing that psychological functioning influences individuals’ behaviors, decisions, and experiences (Doran et al., 2015). Information on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms affects people and helps in personal development.

### 6. Conclusion

The paper presented a research model for the personal development of tourists in the form of skills, emotions, and capabilities through consumer-generated content. PCS is a form of consumer-generated content that provides more authentic, unbiased, and trustworthy information with an organization or brand identification (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020; Herrero et al., 2015; Lo & Yao, 2019). The growing relevance of travel advantages and quality of life concerns has highlighted the urgent need for destination marketers and managers to provide experiences that contribute to tourists’ personal development in terms of physical and mental health, cognitive learning, and social relationships (Chen et al., 2019; Chen & Huang, 2017). This study examines the significance of online information on the personal development of tourists. Specifically, it examines the importance of PCS and its impact on tourists’ capabilities, emotions, and skill development. Tourists utilize PCS on tourism websites and social media platforms, which positively affects their capabilities, emotions, and skills. Moreover, previous tourists’ experiences moderate the relationship between PCS and personal development. Results supported the finding that previous tourists’ experiences significantly moderated the relationship of PCS with tourists’ capabilities and skills; however, the moderation effect of previous tourists’ experiences on PCS and tourist emotion was insignificant.
6.1. Theoretical implications
This study indicates that consumer-generated content on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms supports the accumulation of tourist experiences. Hence, this study contributes by extending the role of social media beyond the initial phases of trip inspiration and preparation. This suggests that social media content is essential in terms of tactical marketing decisions and psychologically because PCS serve as secondary experiences that contribute to tourists’ personal development. This area has received little attention in research to date. The study looked at the social comparison theory to find aspects of constructs. Thus, the study expands the theory’s outcome perspective in the context of personal development among tourists, and these contributions are significant to current literature. As in social comparison theory, individuals learn about themselves by comparing themselves. In this way, self-evaluation comparisons induce tourists to obtain information about their position regarding skills, qualities, and social expectations, which helps them understand how to develop a particular ability or solve problems. Further, the present study provides evidence that personal development is a unique construct concerning human development; it differs from what we already know about personal development in the formal education system. Therefore, this study not only validated that PCS significantly influences three personal development outcomes, namely, tourists’ capabilities, emotions, and skills, but also provided us with a new theoretical framework to understand the unique features of personal development in different learning contexts.

6.2. Practical implications
This research has specific implications for managers and policymakers in tourist countries. Policymakers should stimulate businesses and users to share the tourism experience on specific travel and tourism websites and social media platforms. Additionally, they should create legislation or awareness campaigns to ensure the accuracy of available data on travel and tourism websites and social media platforms. González and Palacios (2004), as well as Ham et al. (2019), emphasized the importance of an evaluation mechanism for important information. Governments can take the initiative to share easily traceable and searchable data, which could help in trip planning for an individual. Managers of tourist service organizations should effectively allocate marketing and development resources by focusing on the personal development of tourists. For instance, to attract international tourists, tourist service providers could design and deliver customized programs, such as outdoor expanded training activities, professional schools, and tourist seminars, using local knowledge and resources to help tourists cope with and recover from their negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety, and frustration), improve their capabilities and skills, and accumulate social and cultural capital. Managers or staff of businesses should employ a human-centric approach to urge travelers to share their opinions on their website and social media platforms, as information-seeking behaviors correctly predict online website user preferences.

Further, this study would benefit marketers and researchers by showing the connection between information-searching behaviors, information needs, and trip purpose. Following Khan et al. (2022), the findings of this study confirm that tourists use PCS to get information and learn from the experiences of other tourists. According to the results, practitioners should treat young travelers as a diverse demographic and create niche tourism to cater to their cognitive, emotional, and skill development needs.

6.3. Limitations and future research directions
Despite its valuable contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study horizon is limited to responses on the importance of PCS; therefore, future researchers could employ non-participatory content constructs in their study. They could engage both constructs’ PCS and use non-participatory content to find the overall impact or organize a comparative study. Second, the present study is limited to aviation passengers; therefore, future studies could include cruise ship passengers to broaden the scope of the study. Cruise
ship passengers usually exhibit different stages of institutionalization; self-report procedures may provide new insights to assess differences and similarities among other groups of tourists. Third, while the findings are limited to the effect of travel and tourism websites and social media content on personal development, in the future, face-to-face suggestions and peer reviews’ impact could be considered for personal growth. In addition, this study was restricted to tourists who were fluent in English; however, researchers are encouraged to conduct future studies in other languages to broaden the horizons of the concept. Fifth, this study is based on a convenience sampling approach; future studies should use a more targeted sampling method. Finally, future research could focus on environmental awareness and involve residents, government officials, activists, and tourists in the research process (Khan et al., 2022).

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Appendix

Items description

| Participatory consumer-generated content (PCS) |  |
|PCS1 | “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”. |
|PCS2 | “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”. |
|PCS3 | “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”. |
|PCS4 | “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”. |

| Tourists’ capabilities (TC) |  |
|TC1 | “My adaptive capability to environments has been improved”. |
|TC2 | “My capability to identify and resolve problems has been improved”. |
|TC3 | “My communication capability has been improved”. |

| Tourists’ emotions (TE) |  |
|TE1 | “My negative emotions have been well adjusted”. |
|TE2 | “My anxiety and stress has been relieved”. |
|TE3 | “My prior frustration has been well responded to”. |

| Tourists’ skills (TS) |  |
|TS1 | “My time management skills have been upgraded”. |
|TS2 | “My money management skills have been upgraded”. |
|TS3 | “My material (e.g., food, daily-use goods) management skills have been upgraded”. |

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