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## INNOVATIVE CONSUMERS OF THE DIGITAL AGE: OPINION SEEKING ON INSTAGRAM

Sibel AYDOĞAN<sup>1</sup>

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Özge GÜVENDİK<sup>2</sup>

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Bahadır AYAR<sup>3</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Nowadays the internet, social media, and mobile technologies are indispensable for our daily lives. During the past decade, online social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and their social media apps like Instagram have been caused profound changes in the communication and interaction of people. In addition, social networking sites have become the focus of interest for everyone who has access to the Internet and who can use computers, tablets or smartphones. Especially, youth and university students use the internet and social media as a mass communication vehicle with easy and fast access at an increasing frequency rate for their academic and/or other purposes. These tools are no longer just a good source of information but they have become a good reference guide for social interaction, games, information exchange and other purposes at the same time. People, -due to their nature- seek for entertainment, in order to have a good time and obtain information. Modern consumers use these social networking platforms as well to meet their needs to gather information on many subjects. This research aims to determine the effect of Instagram usage attitude on opinion seeking and the mediator effect of consumer innovativeness on this relationship. The results of this study reveal that consumers use Instagram as an information source about brands, products, and services. Moreover, Instagram usage attitude has a positive effect on opinion seeking.

**Keywords:** Instagram, Consumer Innovativeness, Opinion Seeking

**JEL Codes:** M30, L86

## DİJİTAL ÇAĞIN YENİLİKÇİ TÜKETİCİLERİ: INSTAGRAM'DA FİKİR ARAYIŞI

### ÖZ

Günümüzde internet, sosyal medya ve mobil teknolojiler günlük yaşantımızın vazgeçilmez bir parçası haline gelmiştir. Son on yılda, Facebook, Twitter gibi çevrimiçi sosyal ağ siteleri ve Instagram gibi sosyal medya uygulamaları insanların iletişimde ve etkileşimde derin değişikliklere neden olduğu söylenebilir. Ayrıca, sosyal ağ siteleri, internete erişimi olan ve bilgisayarları, tabletleri veya akıllı telefonları kullanabilen herkes için ilgi odağı haline gelmiştir. Özellikle genç bireyler ve üniversite öğrencileri, interneti ve sosyal medyayı kolay ve hızlı erişime sahip kitle iletişim aracı olarak akademik ve / veya diğer amaçları için artan bir sıklıkla kullanmaktadırlar. Bu araçların artık sadece iyi bir bilgi kaynağı değil, aynı zamanda sosyal etkileşim, eğlence, bilgi alışverişi ve diğer amaçlar için de iyi bir referans kaynağı haline geldiği söylenebilir. İnsanlar, doğaları gereği, iyi vakit geçirmek ve bilgi edinmek için eğlence arayışı içindedirler. Modern tüketiciler bu sosyal ağ platformlarını, birçok konuda bilgi toplamak için de kullanırlar. Bu çalışmada, Instagram kullanım tutumunun fikir arayışı üzerindeki etkisinin ve

<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, PhD, Marmara University, [saydogan@marmara.edu.tr](mailto:saydogan@marmara.edu.tr)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4870-1901>

<sup>2</sup> PhD Candidate, Istanbul University, [ozge.guvendik@ogr.iu.edu.tr](mailto:ozge.guvendik@ogr.iu.edu.tr)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9789-5394>

<sup>3</sup> Research Assistant, Marmara University, [bahadir.ayar@marmara.edu.tr](mailto:bahadir.ayar@marmara.edu.tr)

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8547-4613>

*tüketici yenilikçiliğinin bu ilişki üzerindeki aracı etkisinin ortaya koyulması amaçlanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, tüketicilerin Instagram'ı markalar, ürünler ve hizmetler hakkında bir bilgi kaynağı olarak kullandıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Dahası, Instagram kullanım tutumunun fikir arayışı üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi vardır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Instagram, Tüketici Yenilikçiliği, Fikir Arayışı*

**JEL Kodları:** *M30, L86*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

So long as digital technologies continue making communication channels and platforms more widespread and easier, people become more connected than ever before (Pittman & Reich, 2016: 155). This connectivity enables various users with common purposes to get together, to engage various sharing, to make some comments and guidance over these sharings, to have new contents produced, as a result, to have these new contents get enriched following the same process and thus enables the creation of a partnership. In other respects, the desire to access news, current information faster without being tied to a specific location and the tendency to experience life in an integrated environment with other people, further trigger the use of this medium by people. In addition, the capability to reach more than one channel using a single vehicle increases the demand for these social networking websites (Becan, 2018: 239).

Since internet users spend more time on Instagram compared to other social network websites (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016: 89) and since Instagram is currently defined by especially the youth as the “most important social media platform” (Sabuncuoğlu & Gülay, 2016: 112), this research has been realized with active Instagram users with dense concentration of young people. Hirunyawipada and Paswan (2006:182), have covered consumer innovativeness of consumers' adaptation to advanced technology products, together with perceived risk. They have approached consumer innovativeness concept with a hierarchic point of view and determined a strong connection between the consumer innovativeness and new product adaptation. These studies show that the level of innovativeness impacts an individual's search for a new product and attitude towards adaption positively.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of Instagram usage attitude on opinion seeking and the mediator effect of consumer innovativeness on this relationship. Turkish Instagram users are the universe of the present study. An online survey was used for collecting data from Instagram users. Between 28th of January and 15th of February 2019,

350 completed survey forms gather from respondents. All 350 completed surveys were analyzed for assesment. Structural equation model was used to test hypotheses in research.

## **2. INSTAGRAM AS A SOCIAL MEDIA AND A SOCIAL NETWORK SITE**

The digital age which has entered our daily lives at the beginning of the century expresses a period which has been accelerated with the spread of internet use and the emergence of an effective social media with the transformation of consumers to become active users. Digitalization is an unavoidable result of the globalization by providing people who live far apart from each other, to interact with one another (İnceoğlu & Şentürk, 2014:353). Besides, in the communication and activities such as banking and advertising, the digital age involves a process where elements such as image creation, affects society independently from time and place and shapes behavior (Castells, 1997:10).

The "mobile and digital era" has begun on a global scale together with recently technological developments. In addition, the needs and demands of consumers are undergoing a rapid change. In purchasing, the technological environment directly affects the decision making process of the consumers (Aydoğan & Pektaş: 364). The digital age has been observed to have an important impact on the consumer and the consumer behavior (Berry, 2014:22; Berry, 2011:14). Influenced by social interaction, consumers who are not satisfied with less consume fast and seek immediate gratification of desired experience They have become also individuals with a focus on needs and with capabilities provided by the new generation technologies (Bassett, 2015:1127).

Social media which can be defined as internet-based applications, built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 by users who enable information exchange (Kaplan & Heanlien, 2010: 61), is one of the effective ways for individuals to explain and express themselves to others (Kuşay, 2010: 68). Social media brings together many platforms. By creating profiles of their own on social media, individuals connect to other users, they establish virtual groups, provide information exchange, send messages, and engage in sharing by producing contents such as photos. Social media can also be used for different purposes such as having fun, spending free time, following the latest news, establishing friendships, providing information exchange, following other users and brands and getting in touch with them. Social media from businesses' point of view, where sharing gets done among users and interaction is realized can be also defined as new virtual environments where online services are conducted simultaneously (Hew et al., 2016:143).

As a media channel where information is shared and distributed, social media provides its users the capability to conduct more research and evaluate choices in a shorter amount of time. Recent studies have emphasized that consumer behavior trends are directly correlated with social media use. Therefore, social media use can be said to have a direct effect on consumer behavior (Constantinides, 2014:42).

After the traditional social media technology at the beginning of 2000s, different Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become very popular lately among especially young adults (Greenwood, 2016). Instagram especially has approximately one billion unique users (Lup et al., 2015:250).

Instagram, -composed of the combination of the word “instant” which refers to instantaneous and the word “telegram” which stands for telegraph (Gibbs et al., 2014:258; Türkmenoğlu, 2014: 96) has been introduced by Apple in 2010 as a mobile social networking website (Dumas et al., 2017: 1; Yeniçıktı, 2016: 95),. Instagram, a video and photo sharing website (Bulut & Doğan, 2017:74) defines itself as a mobile device application designed to have all moments of life shared with real time photos. This application provides the users the capability to search and discover media with similar content produced by other users and it allows any sharing to be defined on the media platform easily (Kim et al., 2017: 536). One of the most important characteristics of Instagram is labeling photos. Serious increase in the number of active users has been observed after the addition of the labeling feature, known as “Hashtag” (Türkmenoğlu, 2015).

Instagram, after bought out by Facebook in 2012 (Türkmenoğlu, 2014:87), draws attention as the world’s third largest social networking platform. According to September 2017 figures, the application with more than 800 million active users per month has doubled Twitter’s monthly active users with the feature of Hashtag . Twenty percent of the total internet users use Instagram. In addition, more than 80 million photos are uploaded to Instagram in a single day (Hoş, 2017). In this respect, in addition to the proliferation of Instagram, the advantages provided by the platform in comparison to the traditional media, have pushed individual users and brands to develop different strategies in order to increase their interaction performance on these platforms (Kuyucu, 2016:77). For many Instagram users, the main objective is to receive “likes” to reinforce personal images that would be “successful and popular” (Tifentale & Manovich, 2015). Such “various features, capabilities presented to the user in sharing photos and content and the high number of users, have made

Instagram an increasingly important medium for social media phenomenon as well” (Aslan & Ünlü, 2016: 50).

Casalo, L., Flavian, C. (2018:2), have stated that opinion leaders are important sources of advice for consumers and that Instagram is the most used platform by many opinion leaders from various sectors. It has been also stated that whether a person is unique or not is a very important factor in the perception of a user as an opinion leader on Instagram. Moreover, opinion leadership leads consumer behavior towards both the consumer (to engage in interaction and intention to provide advice) and the sector. Djofarova et al., (2016:1) have stated that the number of female users of Instagram has increased and the women’s purchasing behavior has changed as a result of being influenced by famous people’s sharing and that they have taken into consideration the most those people who are identified as “blogger” and “YouTuber”. According to the results of the study conducted on Instagram by Çakmak & Baş (2017:96), individuals use Instagram mostly to provide information about themselves to people close to them, in order to receive information from them, to follow fashion and news and to shop.

### **3. OPINION SEEKING**

Opinion seekers are defined by the current literature as “people seeking information or opinions from interpersonal sources to find and evaluate products, services, current events, or other areas of interest”. (Feick, Price & Higie, 1986:302).

In the literature, there are a limited number of studies on the search for ideas. Researchers saw opinion seeking as one of the common phenomena of opinion leadership. (Flynn et. al., 1996: 138; Shoham and Ruvio, 2008: 286). When referring to the advice of another person in relation to something that is intended to be purchased, it can be said that the person is the leader of ideas (Engel et al. 1990: 42). Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) examined the ways in which the opinion leadership and those who opinion leaders interacted. According to this research, those who are in search of ideas are consumers affected by opinion leaders. The opinion seeking is conceptualized as a subset of the quest for product knowledge. Consumers try to make purchasing decisions by getting satisfactory information they need from opinion leaders (Punj and Staelin, 1983:366). Assael (1987: 428) investigated the possible reasons for the opinion seekers and the possible reasons to get the opinions of others. Assael stated that friends and relatives are reliable product information sources, and that information from

personal sources facilitates the buying action and reduces the risk of false information. Opinion seekers get information to help the decision to purchase.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) stated that the desire to be a member of a group is a motivating factor in adopting the values and beliefs of the group leaders. Those who are looking for opinions consult with opinion leaders to learn about products, and this helps them in the process of purchasing decisions.

Beatty and Smith (1987:87) have argued that it is highly probable that a person who has little knowledge or who is concerned about a purchase will receive advice from someone he / she knows. Similarly, Alba and Hutchinson (1987: 416) found that consumers who are younger and less experienced are trusting to older and more experienced people. Opinion seekers also find mouth-to-mouth recommendations from social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram, friends and relatives more reliable than commercial sources (Assael, 1992: 269).

Piirto (1992:34) argued that opinion leaders and opinion seekers could be differentiated by their level of activity in a social network. Flynn et al. (1996: 138) stated that these two concepts are interrelated and there may be some overlap between them, but are still two separate structures. In contrast, Feick et al. (1986: 304) argued that there was a high overlap between commenting and seeking and that the profile of opinion seekers was like that of opinion leaders. The large increase in the rate and frequency of use of Instagram leads opinion seeking consumers to head for this platform. Consumers consider the Instagram application as an important reference source for topics such as fashion, travel and healthy nutrition. It can also be said that opinion leaders, called as “social influencer”, have significantly affected consumers' choice and decisions in these platforms. In light of the information given above, the hypothesis  $H_1$  was formed as follows:

**$H_1$ :** The attitude towards Instagram usage has a positive effect on the opinion seeking.

#### **4. CONSUMER INNOVATIVENESS**

Innovation "is that meaningful value is added to what has been changed by a successful creative process" (Assink, 2006: 217). In the most general sense, innovation is the changes in the production process, service or technology. It is a concept that is used in many fields such as economics, marketing, business management etc. and handled with different

perspectives. In terms of marketing and consumer behavior, innovation is the introduction, acceptance, and application of new ideas, processes, products or services (Kanter, 1983:20).

In the literature, innovativeness is generally examined in three ways: firm innovativeness, product innovativeness, and consumer innovativeness. Firm innovativeness is the ability of an enterprise to develop new products or start new product development. Product innovativeness is the innovation level of a product. Consumer innovativeness, which is the subject of this study, is to realize new products on the market earlier than other consumers, and to tend to buy faster and more frequently (Roehrich, 2004:671). People who have a tendency towards consumer innovativeness try different and new products, new brands instead of previous purchase preferences (Başar & Yapraklı, 2013:152). They defined consumer innovativeness in various ways in the literature according to different perspectives (Eryiğit & Kavak, 2011: 97).

The innovativeness of consumers (Kim, 2008: 21), a concept that is important in the adoption of innovation, is the tendency to buy new and different products or brands rather than previous preferences and consumption patterns (Steenkamp et al., 1999:55). In other words, innovativeness is that a person behaves relatively earlier than others in adopting a novelty (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Consumer innovativeness; Rogers (2003:22), according to individuals or other members of society, expressed new ideas as the degree of early adoption. Midgley & Dowling (1978: 236) stated consumer innovativeness as, openness to new ideas and grade of taking the innovation decision regardless of the experiences they learned or listened from other people and willingness to take risks. Cowart, Fox, and Wilson (2007: 517), Telis, Yin, and Bell (2009:1) and Goldsmith, Kim, Flynn & Kim (2005: 501) have designated this definition as a tendency to adopt new products of some individuals.

Consumer innovativeness is a concept related to the adoption of innovations. Innovators who first adopted innovations have some common features. Innovators; they are opinion leaders, have a high tolerance to risk, act independently from the norms of the social group they belong to and prefer to obtain information from the mass media. Moreover, they are not affected by the conversations between the members of the social group they belong to, they are open to new ideas and changes, they are universal rather than local and they have high socio-economic standards (Dobre, Dragomir & Preda, 2009: 23; Dickerson & Gentry, 1983: 233).



In the digital age where change takes place very quickly and everything is consumed very quickly, consumers' reactions to new products differentiate. While some people adopt and consume innovations easily, new products and services for others mean uncertainty and risk (Bhatnagar et al., 2000: 100; Chhikara, 2010: 295). For this reason, consumers who adopt innovations more quickly than other consumers and who are willing to pay higher prices in order to have new products before everyone else and tend to provide feedback on products, are referred as “innovative consumers”.

Innovative consumers who are willing to pay higher prices in order to have new products before everyone else and tend to provide feedback on products also play an important role in spreading innovation (Kotler, 1997; Vilpponen et al., 2006).

In another study, Lassar et al. (2005:182) looked at the impact of consumer innovativeness with personal characteristics on adaptation to internet banking and found a positive relationship between adaptation to internet banking and consumer innovativeness.

One of the most well-known and exploited roles of innovative consumers is that they are opinion leaders (Rogers, 2010: 42; Flynn et al., 1996: 138; Goldsmith et al., 2003: 321). Opinion leaders, who are thought to have an important social and economic role, have a status in society because they convey valuable information that benefits the people around them (Chan & Misra, 1990; Rogers, 2010).

Mobile devices have become part of our daily routine. Easily available social media and mobile applications such as Instagram not only increased access to information but also allowed consumers to create content and share it with other users (Labrecque et al., 2013).

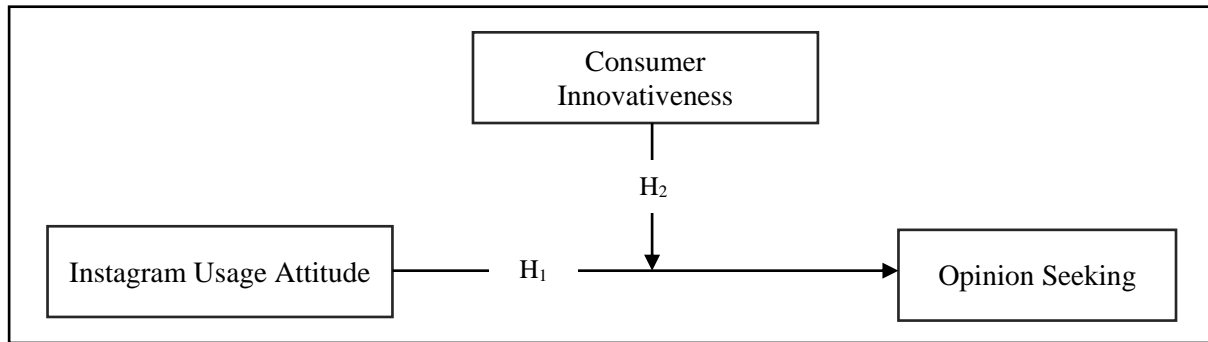
Today, the possibilities offered by technology, the use of social networks such as Instagram, Facebook and Youtube can lead innovative consumers to become more innovative and to purchase innovative products, ie to use the digital environment for commercial purposes. The Internet and the "www" technology have the big potential to support goal-oriented consumers (Aktan, Aydogan & Aysuna: 86). In their study, Citrin et al. (2000: 294) found that consumer innovativeness has a direct impact on consumer adaptation to Internet shopping. Individual's level of innovation has a positive impact on his / her compliance of shopping from the internet. In addition to the direct impact of innovation on the commercial use of the Internet, innovative consumers see the possibilities of the digital age as a new and facilitating way to solve current consumption problems.



**H<sub>2</sub>:** Consumer innovativeness has a mediating effect on the relationship between attitude towards Instagram usage attitude and opinion seeking.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of Instagram usage attitude on opinion seeking and the mediator effect of consumer innovativeness on this relationship. In light of the theoretical framework and the purpose of the study, the research model in Figure 1 has been proposed.



**Figure 1.** Research Model

The universe of the present study is Turkish Instagram users. In order to collect data, an online survey method was performed. An online questionnaire designed and shared with people who use Instagram and convenience sampling technique was used. The questionnaire constituted of 28 questions, 18 of which were scale questions and 10 were demographic questions. Between 28<sup>th</sup> of January and 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, 350 of completed survey forms were gathered from respondents. All of the 350 completed surveys were analyzed.

For research purposes, a comprehensive literature review was conducted and authors decided to use which scales to measure the constructs, included in the research model. Instagram usage attitude was measured by six items which were adapted from Ellison et al. (2007). Consumer innovativeness was measured by six items adapted from Demireli (2014) and also opinion seeking was measured by six items which were adapted from Flynn et al. (1996). Five points Likert scale was used for measurement (1: Strongly Disagree....5: Strongly Agree). On the other hand, some demographic questions and Instagram usage behavior questions were included in the survey form.

The demographic characteristics of respondents are given in the Table 1. Demographic findings reveal that 66,6% of participants are female, 72% of participants are single, 48,3% of participants are 18 and 24 years old, 44,6% of participants earn 2020 TL and less in a month and finally, 50,6% of participants have a bachelor degree.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	233	66,6	18-24	169	48,3
Male	117	33,4	25-30	73	20,9
Total	350	100	31-36	30	8,6
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	37-42	30	8,6
Single	252	72	43-48	21	6,0
Married	98	28	49-54	16	4,6
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>	55 and more	11	3,1
<b>Personal Income</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>
2020 TL and less	156	44,6	<b>Graduation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
2021 TL-3000 TL	50	14,3	Primary School	1	0,3
3001 TL-4500 TL	55	15,7	High School	103	29,4
4501 TL-6000TL	39	11,1	Bachelor	177	50,6
6001 TL and more	50	14,3	Graduate	69	19,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>

Participants were addressed four questions in order to reveal Instagram usage behavior. The findings of Instagram usage behavior can be seen in Table 2. According to Table 2, 64,1% of participants use Instagram application for more than 2 years, 40,2% of participants spend 2 to 4 hours on Instagram application. 41,6% of participants are affected by posts on Instagram and these posts positively affect preferences and purchase behaviors of 45,1% of participants toward brands and products.

**Table 2.** Instagram Usage Behavior of Participants

<b>Instagram Usage Period</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Time Spend on Instagram</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 3 months	42	9,7	0-1 hour in a day	131	30,1
4-10 Months	12	2,8	2-4 hours in a day	175	40,2
11-17 Months	17	3,9	5 hours and more in a day	19	4,4
More than 2 years	279	64,1	A few hours in a week	25	5,7
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Be affected by posts on Instagram</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Preference and purchase behavior is affected by posts on Instagram</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Affect positively	181	41,6	Affect positively	196	45,1
Affect negatively	9	2,1	Affect negatively	14	3,2
Do not affect	157	36,1	Do not affect	140	32,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on Aktan (2018), several Instagram usage reasons were directed to the participants and the most important five reasons for the participants are shown in the Table 3. Spending time on Instagram application is the most important reason to use application for 41,71% of participants.

**Table 3.** The Most Important Reasons for Instagram Usage

Importance Level of Reasons	Instagram Usage Reasons	N	%
1 <sup>st</sup>	Spending time	146	41,71
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Getting information about the agenda	81	23,14
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Sharing photograph	54	15,43
4 <sup>th</sup>	Getting information about brands, products, and services	39	11,14
5 <sup>th</sup>	Communicating with friends	30	8,57
	<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation values of items and Cronbach's alpha values of the variables. The item "Instagram is part of my everyday activity." (4,20) has the highest mean in Instagram usage attitude scale and the item "I feel out of touch when I have not logged onto Instagram for a while." (2,66) has the lowest mean. The item "I like to buy new and different products." (3,65) has the highest mean in consumer innovativeness scale and the item "I am usually the first person to try a new product in my social environment." (2,67) has the lowest mean. Finally, the highest mean was acquired by "When I consider buying a product, I ask other people for advice." (4,07) in opinion seeking scale and the lowest mean was acquired by "I feel more comfortable buying a product when I have gotten other people's opinions on it." (3,85).

**Table 4.** Mean, Standard Deviation and Cronbach's Alpha Values of Variables of All Scales

Scale	Item Code	Item	Mean	SD	$\alpha$
Instagram Usage Attitude	IU1	Instagram is part of my everyday activity.	4,20	0,954	0,841
	IU2	I am proud to tell people I am on Instagram.	2,75	1,020	
	IU3	Instagram has become part of my daily routine.	3,69	1,114	
	IU4	I feel out of touch when I have not logged onto Instagram for a while.	2,66	1,265	
	IU5	I feel I am part of the Instagram community.	3,18	1,148	
	IU6	I would be sorry if Instagram shut down.	3,55	1,233	
Consumer Innovativeness	CI1	The new products excite me.	3,57	0,930	0,865
	CI2	I like to buy new and different products.	3,65	0,923	
	CI3	I like to buy new products instead of buying conventional products.	3,09	1,005	
	CI4	I know more about the latest products than those around me.	3,14	1,029	
	CI5	I am usually the first person to try a new product in my social environment.	2,67	1,021	
	CI6	I want to buy new products before than my social environment.	2,74	1,179	
Opinion Seeking	OS1	When I consider buying a product, I ask other people for advice.	4,07	0,748	0,770
	OS2	I do not need to talk to others before I buy a product.*	4,01	0,681	
	OS3	I rarely ask other people what product to buy.*	3,91	0,585	
	OS4	I like to get others' opinions before I buy a product.	3,93	0,828	
	OS5	I feel more comfortable buying a product when I have gotten other people's opinions on it.	3,85	0,918	
	OS6	When choosing rock other people's opinions are not important to me.*	3,91	,681	

\*Reverse coded

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted for three scales. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin values were 0,929, 0,878 and 0,914 and Bartlett Test significant level was 0,000 so that the sample was both adequate and sufficient for the factor analysis (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

		<b>Instagram Usage Attitude</b>	<b>Consumer Innovativeness</b>	<b>Opinion Seeking</b>	<b>Opinion Seeking*</b>
<b>KMO</b>		0,826	0,841	0,771	0,773
<b>Bartlett's</b>	<b>Chi-Square</b>	951,632	568,763	568,763	483,707
	<b>df</b>	15	15	15	10
	<b>Sig.</b>	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000

*\*These values for 2<sup>nd</sup> exploratory factor analysis for opinion seeking scale.*

According to the results of exploratory factor analyses, three of the scales were singled out in one factor group, however, the item coded as OS3 in opinion seeking scale received values close to each other in a rotated component matrix. Because of this problem, OS3 item was moved and exploratory factor analysis was re-conducted. After that process opinion seeking scale reached required statistical values and the new Cronbach's Alpha value for this scale was calculated as 0,778.

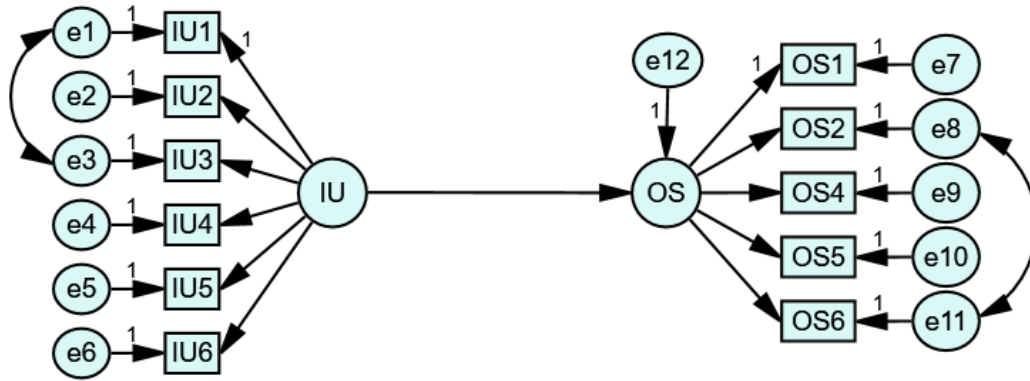
After the explanatory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analyses were performed to determine the validity of the scales by using the AMOS 25. When the statistical values of the measurement models were examined, it was determined that the models did not have acceptable values in acceptable ranges. Modifications proposed by AMOS 25 were made and required model fit indices were obtained. In order to obtain the required model fit indices between IU1 and IU3 items covariance correlation was established. CI4 item was deleted and between CI5 and CI6 IU3 items covariance correlation was established and finally, covariance correlation was established between OS2 and OS5 items. The obtained model fit values are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Model Fit Indices for Scales

	<b>X<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>df</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup>/df</b>	<b>GFI</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>
<b>Instagram Usage Attitude</b>	12,496	8	1,562	0,988	0,995	0,040
<b>Consumer Innovativeness</b>	4,218	4	1,055	0,995	1,000	0,013
<b>Opinion Seeking</b>	5,904	4	1,476	0,993	0,996	0,037
<b>Good Model Fit Indices</b>			<b>≤3</b>	<b>≥0,90</b>	<b>≥0,97</b>	<b>≤0,05</b>
<b>Acceptable Model Fit Indices</b>			<b>≤4-5</b>	<b>0,89-0,85</b>	<b>≥0,95</b>	<b>0,06-0,08</b>

p>.05, X<sup>2</sup> =Chi-Square; df=Degree of Freedom; GFI=Goodness Of Fit Index; CFI=Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA=Root Mean Square Error of Approximation \*Source: Cem Meydan ve Harun Şeşen (2011). Yapısal Eşitlik Modellemesi AMOS Uygulamaları. Detay Yayıncılık.

The next process after confirmatory factory analysis is the hypothesis test. In order to test the hypothesis structural equation models (see Figure 2 and 3) were performed.



**Figure 2.** Structural Equation Model for H<sub>1</sub>

Model fit indices for the structural equation model in Figure 2 can be seen in Table 7. The model fit indices are within the required values so it can be said that the model is structurally valid.

**Table 7.** Model Fit Indices for H<sub>1</sub>

	X <sup>2</sup>	df	X <sup>2</sup> /df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
<b>Model Fit Indices (H<sub>1</sub>)</b>	92,006	41	2,244	0,954	0,963	0,060
<b>Good Model Fit Indices</b>			≤3	≥0,90	≥0,97	≤0,05
<b>Acceptable Model Fit Indices</b>			≤4-5	0,89-0,85	≥0,95	0,06-0,08

The standardized  $\beta$  coefficients, standard error, critical ratio, p and R<sup>2</sup> statistics of the model in question are shown in Table 8. The findings reveal that Instagram usage attitude has an effect on opinion seeking ( $\beta=0,253$ ;  $p<0,05$ ). It can be said that H<sub>1</sub> is supported.

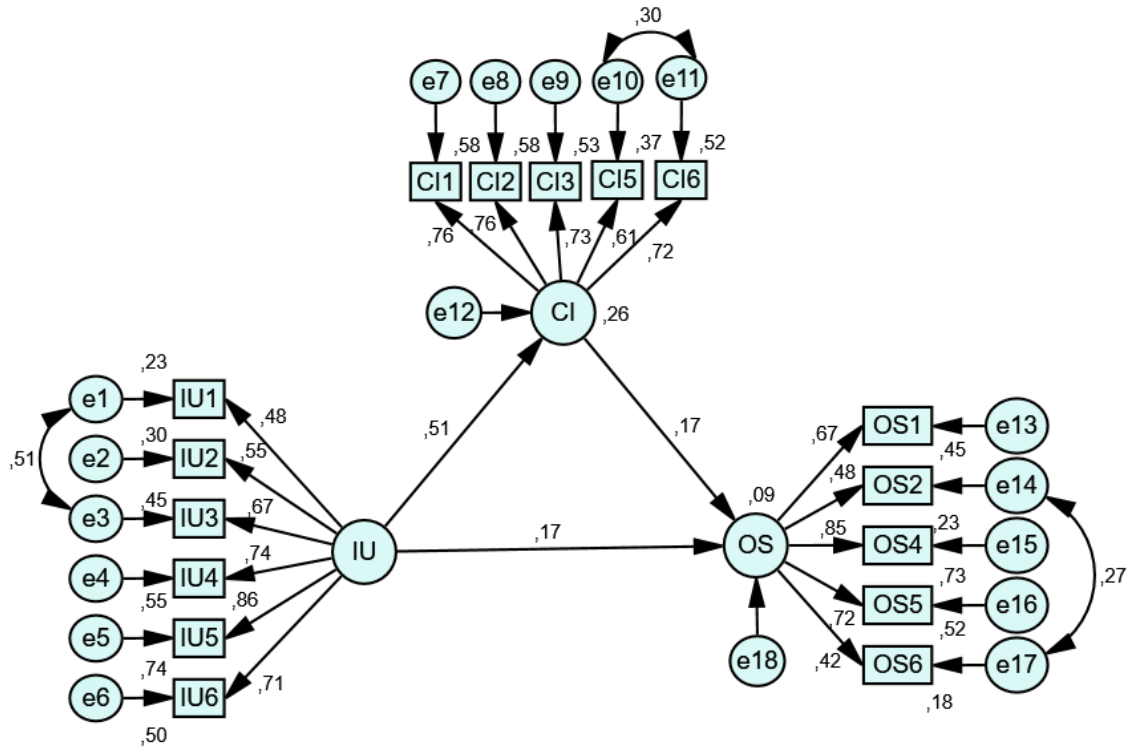
**Table 8.** The Coefficients for Structural Equation Model (H<sub>1</sub>)

Variables	Standardized $\beta$	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Instagram Usage Attitude – Opinion Seeking (H <sub>1</sub> )	0,253	0,076	3,663	***	0,064

In order to investigate the mediating effect of consumer innovativeness on the relationship between Instagram usage attitude and opinion seeking, three conditions' existence were examined. Baron and Kenny (1986) listed these requirements as below;

1. Independent variables must effect dependent variable (see Figure 2 and Table 8),
2. Independent variables must effect mediator variable,
3. Mediator variable must effect dependent variable.

The structural model for condition 2 and 3 can be seen in Figure 3. Model fit indices for Figure 3 are shown in Table 9.



**Figure 3.** Structural Equation Model for H<sub>2</sub>

The model fit indices are within the required values so it can be said that the model is structurally valid.

**Table 9.** Model Fit Indices for H<sub>2</sub>

	X <sup>2</sup>	df	X <sup>2</sup> /df	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
<b>Model Fit Indices (H1)</b>	175,242	98	1,788	0,939	0,964	0,048
<b>Good Model Fit Indices</b>			≤3	≥0,90	≥0,97	≤0,05
<b>Acceptable Model Fit Indices</b>			≤4-5	0,89-0,85	≥0,95	0,06-0,08

The standardized  $\beta$  coefficients, standard error, critical ratio, p and R<sup>2</sup> statistics of the model in question are shown in Table 10.

**Table 10.** The Coefficients of Structural Equation Model for Mediating Effect

Variables	Standardized $\beta$	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Instagram Usage Attitude – Consumer Innovativeness	0,508	0,126	6,255	***	0,258
Consumer Innovativeness – Opinion Seeking	0,172	0,054	2,243	0,025	0,086
Instagram Usage Attitude – Opinion Seeking	0,166	0,084	2,143	0,032	

Statistical findings in Table 10 reveals that Instagram usage attitude affects consumer innovativeness ( $\beta=0,508$ ;  $p<0,05$ ) and consumer innovativeness has an effect on opinion seeking ( $\beta=0,172$ );  $p<0,05$ ). In light of statistical findings, H<sub>2</sub> is supported.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In addition to the sharing and socializing functions of social media, different purposes of usage have emerged. For example, in recent years consumers use social media platforms to generate contents about brands, products or services. On the other hand, changes in technology usage and consumer behavior have led consumers to get information about brands, products or services from a digital world. In this context, the present study investigates the effect of Instagram usage attitude on opinion seeking and the mediating effect of consumer innovativeness on this relation.

Almost half of the participants of the research have indicated that they use Instagram to get information about the agenda, brands, products, and services. This finding can be interpreted as Instagram users perceive and use the application as an information resource. In addition to this, more than half of the participants have stated that posts on Instagram affect their preference and purchase behavior positively. It is concluded that Instagram gives an opportunity to firms or brands for creating positive preference tendency to products.

The results of the study show that Instagram usage attitude positively affects opinion seeking. This finding can be interpreted as Instagram users consider this social media platform as an opinion source about products and services. In this respect, when the reasons for using Instagram application are examined, it is seen that two of the five most important reasons for users are related to gathering information about agenda and product and services. Moreover, most of the Instagram users stated that posts on Instagram affect positively their product and services preferences and purchase intentions. It is clear that Instagram users give importance to posts, influencers etc. on Instagram while they are making decisions on consumption. Mediation effect of consumer innovativeness on the relation between Instagram usage attitude and opinion seeking was determined in this research. This finding implies that innovative consumers, who use Instagram, give importance to gather information from Instagram. On the other hand, statistical findings show that consumer innovativeness is an important variable for predicting consumers Instagram usage attitudes and opinion seeking behaviors.

As a result, brands should attach importance to their social media management not only in the context of Instagram but in also other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter etc. Sharings and comments on social media or attitudes of influencers on Instagram



about a brand can reach millions of existing or potential customers of the brand. In order to create a positive preference tendency among consumers, brands should spend time in understanding Instagram and other social media platforms as a source of opinion seeking. It can be said that if firms understand the importance of social media platforms as a tool for seeking opinion and plan their marketing communication activities toward social media, they can create remarkable customer communities by generating contents on social media. In order to do this, it is clear that value-creating and consistent social media content providing are required. Moreover, celebrities and influencers may be employed in order to help Instagram users to get information or have an idea about a specific product or brand.

A limitation of the present study is the sample; the sample cannot represent all Turkish Instagram users. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized for the population. Further research can examine the other social media platforms in the context of opinion seeking and different mediators for the relation between Instagram usage and opinion seeking.

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