

INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' CURIOSITY-EXPLORATION TENDENCY AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE LEVELS ON THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS SPORTS TOURISM

INVESTIGAÇÃO DO EFEITO DA CURIOSIDADE-EXPLORAÇÃO E DOS NÍVEIS DE USO DE MÍDIAS SOCIAIS DE ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS EM SUAS ATITUDES EM RELAÇÃO AO TURISMO ESPORTIVO

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

Abstract

The aim of the research is to examine the effects of university students' curiosity-exploration tendency and social media usage level on their attitudes towards sports tourism. The universe of the research consists of Bitlis Eren University (BEU) students. The sample of the research consists of 437 students (159 male and 278 female) who were randomly selected with the purposive sampling method and agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. In the research, "Personal Information Form" was used as the data collection tool, "Attitude Towards Sports Tourism Scale" was used to determine the attitudes of the participants towards sports tourism, "Social Media Usage Scale" was used to determine the social media usage levels of the participants, and "Curiosity and Exploration Scale-II" was used to determine the curiosity levels of individuals. SPSS 23.0 statistical analysis program was used to analyze the data obtained in the research. Pearson Correlation and Regression tests were applied for research analyzes. The research was approved by the BEU Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Board with the decision numbered 2024/03-3 and E.6338. In the research, it was determined that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the curiosity-exploration level of the participants and the social media usage level ($p < 0.05$). However, it was also determined that the curiosity-exploration level had a statistically significant and positive effect on the attitude towards sports tourism ($p < 0.05$).

Resumo

O objetivo desta pesquisa é examinar os efeitos da tendência à curiosidade-exploração e do nível de uso de mídias sociais de estudantes universitários sobre suas atitudes em relação ao turismo esportivo. O universo da pesquisa consiste em estudantes da Universidade Bitlis Eren (BEU). A amostra da pesquisa é composta por 437 estudantes (159 homens e 278 mulheres) que foram selecionados aleatoriamente por meio de amostragem intencional e concordaram em participar da pesquisa voluntariamente. Na pesquisa, o "Formulário de Informações Pessoais" foi utilizado como instrumento de coleta de dados, a "Escala de Atitudes em Relação ao Turismo Esportivo" foi utilizada para determinar as atitudes dos participantes em relação ao turismo esportivo, a "Escala de Uso de Mídias Sociais" foi utilizada para determinar os níveis de uso de mídias sociais dos participantes e a "Escala de Curiosidade e Exploração-II" foi utilizada para determinar os níveis de curiosidade dos indivíduos. O programa de análise estatística SPSS 23.0 foi utilizado para analisar os dados obtidos na pesquisa. Os testes de Correlação de Pearson e Regressão foram aplicados para as análises da pesquisa. A pesquisa foi aprovada pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais e Humanas da BEU, sob os números de decisão 2024/03-3 e E.6338. O estudo revelou uma relação positiva e estatisticamente significativa entre o nível de curiosidade-exploração dos participantes e o nível de utilização de mídias



It was determined that the social media usage level did not have a statistically significant effect on the attitude towards sports tourism ($p>0.05$). As a result, it is possible to say that the attitude towards sports tourism is mostly related to the intrinsic curiosity and exploration searches of individuals, and that the effect of social media is limited on this attitude.

Keywords: University Student. Sports Tourism. Social Media. Curiosity and Discovery.

sociais ($p<0,05$). Além disso, constatou-se que o nível de curiosidade-exploração teve um efeito positivo e estatisticamente significativo sobre a atitude em relação ao turismo esportivo ($p<0,05$). Por outro lado, o nível de utilização de mídias sociais não apresentou um efeito estatisticamente significativo sobre a atitude em relação ao turismo esportivo ($p>0,05$). Portanto, é possível afirmar que a atitude em relação ao turismo esportivo está principalmente relacionada à curiosidade intrínseca e à busca por novas experiências dos indivíduos, e que o efeito das mídias sociais sobre essa atitude é limitado.

Palavras-chave: Estudante Universitário. Turismo Esportivo. Mídias Sociais. Curiosidade e Descoberta.

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, university students' social interaction patterns, ways of accessing information, and travel habits have changed significantly. At the core of this shift lies the curiosity-exploration tendency, which fuels individuals' desire to acquire knowledge and gain new experiences, as well as the intensive use of social media as a digital platform (Litman, 2005; Kırçaburun and Griffiths, 2019). Particularly among young individuals, the sense of curiosity enhances the motivation to explore the unknown, engage in various activities, and become acquainted with new cultures, which may, in turn, direct them toward experience-based tourism types such as sports tourism (Fletcher *et al.*, 2017).

Sports tourism involves individuals traveling outside their place of residence to engage in sporting activities, attend national or international sports events on-site, or visit

sports-related venues. This type of tourism encompasses both active and passive forms of participation. At the same time, sports tourism is regarded as a strategic tool for promoting and marketing tourist destinations in order to encourage tourism mobility. Sports tourism not only contributes to social sustainability and socio-cultural interaction for the local population in the region where it takes place (Kersulic *et al.*, 2020) but also offers significant opportunities for individuals participating in these activities to adopt a healthy lifestyle (Gürbüz *et al.*, 2022), expand their social environment, and develop cultural awareness. In addition to these opportunities, numerous psychological, socio-cultural, and behavioral factors shape individuals' attitudes toward sports tourism (Tezcan *et al.*, 2021). From this perspective, cognitive and behavioral tendencies, such as curiosity-exploration – a personality trait – and social media usage, may also influence attitudes toward sports tourism.

The curiosity-exploration tendency is a fundamental psychological concept that explains individuals' motivation to seek new experiences. According to Berlyne (1960), curiosity aims to reduce uncertainty and satisfy the hunger for knowledge, whereas Litman (2005) conceptualized this tendency through the dimensions of “information seeking” and “experience seeking.” Ciasullo *et al.*, (2019) found that curiosity and exploration play an important role in individuals' motivation and attitudes toward tourism activities, while Liang and Feng (2024) found that curiosity and exploration tendencies influence individuals' participation in sports tourism. Therefore, it is important to consider curiosity and exploration tendencies in understanding individuals' attitudes toward sports tourism. Social media is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses individuals' processes of content creation, sharing, information consumption, and social interaction through online platforms. These web-based platforms provide users with the ability to (1) create personalized profiles, (2) establish visible social network connections with other users, and (3) produce and share content while engaging in continuous information exchange (Ellison & Boyd, 2013; O'Day & Heimberg, 2021; Karayol *et al.*, 2025). Social media usage plays a critical role in shaping individuals' travel motivations. In this context, social media can be regarded as an important tool that not only raises awareness of sports tourism but also influences individuals' travel planning processes and transforms their perceptions of destinations. Indeed, Gretzel *et al.* (2015) argue that sharing and interaction on social media platforms have a significant impact on destination image. Similarly, Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013) highlight the strategic importance of social media in

tourism marketing, while Wang and Yu (2017) demonstrate that social media-oriented content has a decisive influence on individuals' travel preferences and attitudes. Therefore, social media goes beyond serving merely as a communication tool; it constitutes a powerful sphere of interaction that shapes individuals' travel motivations, destination perceptions, and tourism-related behaviors.

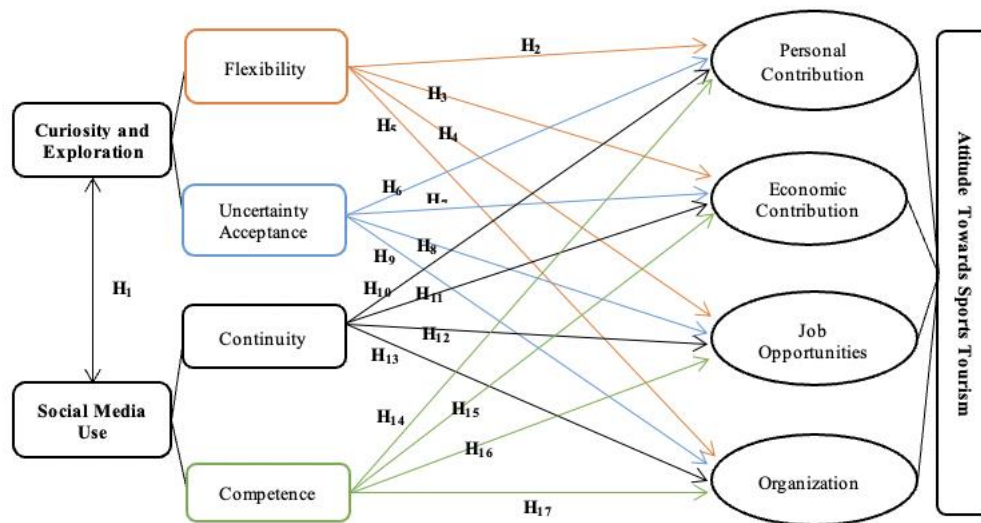
The aim of this study is to examine the effects of university students' curiosity-exploration tendencies and social media usage levels on their attitudes toward sports tourism. In today's era of rapid digitalization, where personality-based tendencies shape individuals' travel preferences, it has become necessary to approach tourism behaviors from a multidimensional perspective. In this context, the study aims to fill a significant gap in the literature by simultaneously addressing the impact of both psychological tendencies (curiosity-exploration) and behavioral tendencies (social media usage) on sports-related tourism attitudes. The focus on young adults, particularly university students, renders this study meaningful, as they represent a potential tourism audience of the future. Existing literature provides evidence of positive relationships between curiosity-exploration tendencies and travel motivation. Similarly, numerous studies have demonstrated that social media usage influences tourism behaviors. However, studies that consider both curiosity-exploration tendencies and social media usage together, specifically in the context of sports tourism among university students, remain limited. From this perspective, this research stands out as one of the first original studies in the literature to jointly investigate the effects of curiosity-exploration tendencies and social media usage levels on attitudes toward sports tourism. It is anticipated that the findings will make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge and provide a valuable dataset for future studies on the topic.

2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study model

The correlational survey model were employed in this study. Correlational survey model is a research model that aims to determine the existence and/or degree of change between two or more variables (Karasar *et al.*, 2012).

Figure 1
Study Model



H₁- There is a positive relationship between the curiosity-exploration tendency and the level of social media usage.

H₂- The flexibility sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively affects the personal contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H₃-The flexibility sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences economic contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H₄- The flexibility sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences job opportunities attitude level towards sports tourism.

H₅- The flexibility sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences organizational attitude level towards sports tourism

H₆- The uncertainty acceptance sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences personal contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H₇- The uncertainty acceptance sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences economic contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H₈- The uncertainty acceptance sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences job opportunities attitude level towards sports tourism

H₉- The uncertainty acceptance sub-dimension of the curiosity-exploration tendency positively influences organizational attitude level towards sports tourism

H10- The continuity sub-dimension of social media use positively influences personal contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H11- The continuity sub-dimension of social media use positively influences economic contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H12- The continuity sub-dimension of social media use positively influences job opportunities attitude level towards sports tourism.

H13- The continuity sub-dimension of social media use positively influences organizational attitude level towards sports tourism.

H14- The competence sub-dimension of social media use positively influences personal contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H15- The competence sub-dimension of social media use positively influences economic contribution attitude level towards sports tourism.

H16- The competence sub-dimension of social media use positively influences job opportunities attitude level towards sports tourism.

H17- The competence sub-dimension of social media use positively influences organizational attitude level towards sports tourism.

2.2 Participants

The population of the research consisted of students from Bitlis Eren University (BEU)/Türkiye. The study sample included students who agreed to participate voluntarily in the study and met the inclusion criteria. According to BEU data dated October 6, 2024, the total number of students enrolled at BEU is 15,104. In the literature, it is reported that in studies conducted using quantitative research methods, a minimum sample size of 377 is considered sufficient for a population ranging from 10,001 to 20,000 at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error (Cohen *et al.*, 2013). The sample of our study included a total of 437 students randomly selected using the purposive sampling method. In our study, the selection of BEU was primarily influenced by factors such as the feasibility of conducting the research, the ease and cost-effectiveness of accessing the target group during the data collection process, the researchers' affiliation with the institution, and the efficient use of available resources.

The study included a total of 437 students, of whom 159 (36.4%) were male and 278 (63.6%) were female. The mean age of male students was 21.84 ± 3.59 years, while that of female students was 21.36 ± 3.36 years (Table 1.).

Table 1

Descriptive Characteristics of the Participants

Gender	N	Age ($\bar{X} \pm SD$)	%
Male	159	21.84 ± 3.59	36.4
Female	278	21.36 ± 3.36	63.6
Total	437	21.53 ± 3.45	100

N = Frequency, \bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, % = Percentage

2.3 Procedure and ethical approval

Data collection was carried out at Bitlis Eren University through both face-to-face interactions and via Google Forms. In accordance with ethical principles, all participants were provided with both written and verbal information regarding the purpose and content of the study, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 453 participants were initially reached; however, 16 participants were excluded from the study due to incomplete or incorrectly filled data collection tools. As a result, the final sample consisted of 437 participants.

Inclusion Criteria: Voluntary participation in the study, Being a student at BEU during the 2024–2025 academic year., No issues with comprehension, perception, or vision, Completion of the data collection tools fully and accurately.

Exclusion Criteria: Non-voluntary participation, Not being enrolled at BEU during the 2024–2025 academic year, Having issues with comprehension, perception, or vision, Incomplete or incorrect responses on the data collection tools.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Social and Human Sciences Research of the Rectorate of Bitlis Eren University, with decision number 2024/03-3 and registration number E.6338.

This study was presented as an abstract at the International Congress of Health, Tourism and Sports held in Sinop, Turkey, on April 28–30, 2025.

2.4 Measures

2.4.1 Curiosity and exploration inventory-II

The Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II (CEI-II) was developed by Kashdan *et al.* (2009) to measure individuals' levels of curiosity. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. During its development, Kashdan and colleagues conducted three separate psychometric studies, reporting Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.75 to 0.86, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The scale comprises two subscales: Stretching (the motivation to seek out new knowledge and experiences) and Embracing (the willingness to embrace novelty and uncertainty). The Turkish adaptation of the scale was carried out by Acun, Kapıkıran, and Kabasakal (2013). Their findings revealed a high correlation between the two subscales ($r = 0.85$), with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire scale reported as 0.81. The internal consistency coefficients for the subscales were 0.81 for Stretching (referred to as the flexibility subscale) and 0.68 for Embracing (referred to as the uncertainty acceptance subscale). The scale does not contain any reverse-coded items, and higher scores reflect higher levels of curiosity.

In our study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the construct validity of the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was found to be 0.88, indicating that the sample size was sufficient for conducting EFA. In addition, the result of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be $\chi^2=1658.48$; $p<0.05$. This finding indicated that the correlations among the items were sufficiently large for conducting EFA. The results of the EFA confirmed that the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II, consisting of 10 items, has a two-factor structure. Furthermore, it was found that the two-factor structure accounted for 59.64% of the total variance. Moreover, in the present study, the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 for the overall scale, 0.81 for the Flexibility subdimension, and 0.89 for the Uncertainty Acceptance subdimension.

2.4.2 Social media usage inventory

The Social Media Usage Scale, developed by Deniz and Tutgun-Ünal (2019) to determine the level of social media use, consists of a total of 8 items and 2 subdimensions: continuity and competence. The scale is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale and does not contain any reverse-coded items. The Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient for the overall scale was found to be 0.82, while it was 0.72 for the continuity subdimension and 0.73 for the competence subdimension (Deniz & Tutgun-Ünal, 2019).

In our study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the construct validity of the Social Media Usage Scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated as 0.90, indicating that the sample size was sufficient for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result ($\chi^2=1750.43$; $p<0.05$), demonstrating that the inter-item correlations were adequately large for conducting EFA. The results of the EFA confirmed that the Social Media Usage Scale, which consists of 8 items, has a two-factor structure. Furthermore, it was found that these two factors together explained 69.49% of the total variance. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the scale exhibits valid psychometric properties. Moreover, in the our study, the Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient was found to be 0.89 for the overall scale, 0.85 for the continuity subdimension, and 0.87 for the competence subdimension.

2.4.3 Attitude toward sports tourism inventory

The Attitude Toward Sports Tourism Scale, developed and validated by Tezcan Kardaş and Sadık (2018), consists of 14 items grouped under four subdimensions: organization, personal contribution, employment opportunity, and economic contribution. The scale is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale and does not contain any reverse-coded items. The Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient for the overall scale was reported as 0.86. Reliability coefficients for the subdimensions were 0.68 for organization, 0.82 for personal contribution, 0.73 for employment opportunity, and 0.81 for economic contribution (Tezcan Kardaş & Sadık, 2018).

In our study, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to assess the construct validity of the Attitude Toward Sports Tourism Scale . The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

(KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was found to be 0.94, indicating that the sample size was sufficient for factor analysis. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a statistically significant result ($\chi^2=4978.203$; $p<0.05$), confirming that the inter-item correlations were adequately large for conducting EFA. The results of the EFA confirmed that the Attitude Toward Sports Tourism Scale, which consists of 14 items, has a four-factor structure. Furthermore, it was determined that these four factors together explained 79.30% of the total variance. Based on these findings, the scale was concluded to exhibit valid psychometric properties. Moreover, in the current study, the Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient was calculated as 0.84 for the overall scale, 0.83 for the organization subdimension, 0.71 for the personal contribution subdimension, 0.80 for the employment opportunity subdimension, and 0.75 for the economic contribution subdimension.

2.4.4 Statistical analysis

The data were analyzed using the SPSS 23.00 statistical software package. To determine whether the data were normally distributed, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), data are considered to be normally distributed when skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of +1.5 to -1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Tabachnick *et al.*, 2007). The skewness and kurtosis values for the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II, the Social Media Usage Scale, and the Attitude Toward Sports Tourism Scale were found to be within acceptable limits. Based on these results, it was concluded that the dataset exhibited a normal distribution, and thus, the use of parametric statistical techniques was deemed appropriate (Table 1). Accordingly, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was used to determine the relationships between the variables. In addition, linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The significance level was set at $p<0.05$, and the confidence interval was 95%.

As shown in Table 2, the skewness values ranged from -0.688 to 0.543, and the kurtosis values ranged from -0.935 to -0.005, supporting the assumption of normality for the parametric analyses.

Table 2*Normality test values for the scales and subdimensions*

Scales and Subdimensions	Skewness	Kurtosis
Personal Contribution Subdimension	-.541	-.789
Economic Contribution Subdimension	-.494	-.615
Job Opportunity Subdimension	-.688	-.005
Organization Subdimension	-.109	-.627
Total Attitude Toward Sports Tourism Scale	.543	-.935
Flexibility Subdimension	-.065	-.362
Uncertainty Acceptance Subdimension	.316	-.369
Total Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II	.192	-.449
Continuity Subdimension	.216	-.392
Competence Subdimension	.357	-.430
Total Social Media Usage Scale	.288	-.354

3 RESULTS**Table 3***Pearson correlation coefficients among variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Personal Contribution	r 1										
	p										
2. Economic Contribution	r .839*	1									
	p .000										
3. Job Opportunity	r .751*	.745*	1								
	p .000	.000									
4. Organization	r .538*	.514*	.488*	1							
	p .000	.000	.000								
5. Attitude Toward Sports Tourism	r .950*	.925*	.860*	.663*	1						
	p .000	.000	.000	.000							
6. Flexibility	r .402*	.341*	.351*	.190*	.390*	1					
	p .000	.000	.000	.000	.000						
7. Uncertainty Acceptance	r .204*	.126*	.157*	.139*	.185*	.494*	1				
	p .000	.008	.001	.004	.000	.000					
8. Curiosity Exploration Tendency	r .361*	.282*	.304*	.193*	.343*	.893*	.832*	1			
	p .000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
9. Continuity	r .061	.064	.055	.073	.070	.129*	.253*	.213*	1		
	p .203	.184	.254	.128	.144	.007	.000	.000			
10. Competence	r .085	.081	.078	.058	.089	.113*	.253*	.203*	.677*	1	
	p .074	.091	.105	.224	.063	.019	.000	.000	.000		
11. Social Media Usage	r .082	.082	.076	.076	.090	.133*	.272*	.226*	.916*	.909**	1
	p .088	.087	.113	.112	.060	.005	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**: p<0.01; *: p< 0.05

According to the Pearson correlation analysis conducted to examine the relationship among attitude toward sports tourism, curiosity-exploration tendency, and social media usage level (Table 3), there is a statistically significant positive relationship between attitude toward sports tourism (personal contribution, economic contribution, job opportunity, organization) and curiosity-exploration tendency (flexibility, uncertainty acceptance). Furthermore, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between curiosity-exploration tendency (flexibility, uncertainty acceptance) and social media usage (continuity, competence). According to this finding, the H₁ hypothesis has been accepted. However, no statistically significant relationship was observed between attitude toward sports tourism (personal contribution, economic contribution, job opportunity, organization) and social media usage (continuity, competence).

4 RESEARCH MODEL RESULT

Table 4

The effect of curiosity-exploration tendency (flexibility and uncertainty acceptance) on personal contribution attitude toward sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Flexibility	Personal Contribution	.493	.054	.402	9.15	.001*	.402	.161	83.71	.001*
Uncertainty Acceptance	Contribution	.308	.071	.204	4.35	.001*	.204	.042	18.95	.001*

*p<0,05 **p<0,01

In the linear regression analysis, the model was found to be statistically significant. The independent variable flexibility significantly predicted the personal contribution dimension of attitudes toward sports tourism ($\beta = 0.402$, $t = 9.15$, $p < 0.001$), explaining approximately 16.1% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.161$, $f = 83.71$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, uncertainty acceptance also had a statistically significant effect on personal contribution ($\beta = 0.204$, $t = 4.35$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 4.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.042$, $f = 18.95$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that both flexibility and uncertainty acceptance are significant predictors of the personal contribution aspect of attitudes toward sports tourism (Table 4). According to this finding, the H₂ and H₆ hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 5

The effect of curiosity-exploration tendency (flexibility and uncertainty acceptance) on economic contribution attitude toward sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Flexibility	Economic Contribution	.301	.040	.341	7.56	.001	.341	.116	57.29	.001*
Uncertainty Acceptance		.136	.051	.126	2.65	.008	.126	.016	7.03	.008*

* $p < 0,05$

In the linear regression analysis, the model was found to be statistically significant. The independent variable flexibility significantly predicted the economic contribution dimension of attitudes toward sports tourism ($\beta = 0.341$, $t = 7.56$, $p < 0.001$), explaining approximately 11.6% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.116$, $f = 57.29$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the independent variable uncertainty acceptance also had a statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.126$, $t = 2.65$, $p = 0.008$), accounting for 1.6% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.016$, $f = 7.03$, $p = 0.008$). These findings indicate that both flexibility and uncertainty acceptance significantly predict students' perceptions of the economic contribution of sports tourism (Table 5). According to this finding, the H₃ and H₇ hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 6

The effect of curiosity-exploration tendency (flexibility and uncertainty acceptance) on job opportunity attitude toward sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Flexibility	Job Opportunities	.216	.028	.351	7.82	.001	.351	.123	61.27	.001*
Uncertainty Acceptance		.118	.036	.157	3.30	.001	.157	.025	10.94	.001*

* $p < 0,05$

In the linear regression analysis, the model was found to be statistically significant. The independent variable flexibility significantly predicted the employment opportunity dimension of attitudes toward sports tourism ($\beta = 0.351$, $t = 7.82$, $p < 0.001$), explaining approximately 12.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.123$, $f = 61.27$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, uncertainty acceptance also had a statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.157$, $t = 3.30$, $p < 0.001$), accounting for 2.5% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.025$, $f = 10.94$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that both flexibility and uncertainty acceptance are significant

predictors of students' perceptions of the employment opportunities associated with sports tourism (Table 6). According to this finding, the H₄ and H₈ hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 7

The effect of curiosity-exploration tendency (flexibility and uncertainty acceptance) on organizational attitude toward sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Flexibility	Organization	.085	.021	.190	4.03	.001	.190	.036	16.26	.001*
Uncertainty Acceptance		.077	.026	.139	2.93	.004	.139	.019	8.59	.004*

*p<0,05

In the conducted linear regression analysis, the model was found to be statistically significant. The independent variable flexibility significantly predicted the organizational attitude toward sports tourism ($\beta = 0.190$, $t = 4.03$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 3.6% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.036$, $f = 16.26$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, uncertainty acceptance also had a significant effect ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 2.93$, $p = 0.004$), accounting for 1.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.019$, $f = 8.59$, $p = 0.004$). These results indicate that both flexibility and uncertainty acceptance are significant predictors of organizational attitudes toward sports tourism (Table 7). According to this finding, the H₅ and H₉ hypothesis has been accepted.

Table 8

The effect of social media usage (continuity and competence) on personal contribution attitude towards sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SH	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Continuity	Personal Contribution	.097	.076	.061	1.27	.203	.061	.004	1.62	.203
Competence		.114	.080	.081	1.78	.074	.085	.007	3.19	.074

*p<0,05

In the linear regression analysis examining the effect of social media usage on personal contribution attitude toward sports tourism, neither continuity ($\beta = 0.061$, $t = 1.27$, $p = 0.203$) nor competence ($\beta = 0.081$, $t = 1.78$, $p = 0.074$) were found to be statistically significant predictors. The overall model explained only 0.4% of the variance for continuity and 0.7% for competence, indicating that social media usage subdimensions

do not significantly influence the personal contribution attitude in this context (Table 8). According to this finding, hypotheses H₁₀ and H₁₄ have not been accepted.

Table 9

The effect of social media usage (continuity and competence) on economic contribution attitude towards sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Continuity	Economic	.072	.054	.064	1.33	.184	.064	.004	1.76	.184
Competence	Contribution	.098	.058	.081	1.69	.091	.081	.007	2.87	.091

*p<0,05

In the linear regression analysis examining the effect of social media usage on the economic contribution attitude toward sports tourism, neither continuity ($\beta = 0.064$, $t = 1.33$, $p = 0.184$) nor competence ($\beta = 0.081$, $t = 1.69$, $p = 0.091$) were found to be statistically significant predictors. The variance explained by the model was limited, with continuity accounting for only 0.4% ($R^2 = 0.004$, $f = 1.76$, $p = 0.184$) and competence explaining 0.7% ($R^2 = 0.007$, $f = 2.87$, $p = 0.091$). These results indicate that the continuity and competence dimensions of social media usage do not significantly predict the economic contribution attitude toward sports tourism (Table 9). According to this finding, hypotheses H₁₁ and H₁₅ have not been accepted.

Table 10

The effect of social media usage (continuity and competence) on job opportunity attitude toward sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Continuity	Job	.043	.038	.055	1.14	.254	.055	.003	1.30	.254
Competence	Opportunities	.065	.040	.078	1.62	.105	.078	.006	2.63	.105

*p<0,05

In the linear regression analysis conducted to examine the effect of social media usage on the employment opportunity attitude toward sports tourism, neither continuity ($\beta = 0.055$, $t = 1.14$, $p = 0.254$) nor competence ($\beta = 0.078$, $t = 1.62$, $p = 0.105$) were found to be statistically significant predictors. The variance explained was minimal, with continuity accounting for 0.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.003$, $f = 1.30$, $p = 0.254$) and competence accounting for 0.6% ($R^2 = 0.006$, $f = 2.63$, $p = 0.105$). These findings suggest

that the continuity and competence dimensions of social media usage do not significantly influence students' employment opportunity perceptions within the context of sports tourism (Table 10). According to this finding, hypotheses H₁₂ and H₁₆ have not been accepted.

Table 11

The effect of social media usage (continuity and competence) on organizational attitude toward sports tourism

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	R	R ²	f	p
Süreklilik	Organization	.042	.028	.073	1.52	.128	.073	.005	2.32	.128
Yetkinlik		.036	.030	.058	1.21	.224	.058	.003	1.48	.224

*p<0,05

In the linear regression analysis investigating the effect of social media usage on the organizational attitude toward sports tourism, neither continuity ($\beta = 0.073$, $t = 1.52$, $p = 0.128$) nor competence ($\beta = 0.058$, $t = 1.21$, $p = 0.224$) were found to be statistically significant predictors. The model explained only 0.5% of the variance for continuity ($R^2 = 0.005$, $f = 2.32$, $p = 0.128$) and 0.3% for competence ($R^2 = 0.003$, $f = 1.48$, $p = 0.224$). These findings indicate that the subdimensions of social media usage (continuity and competence) do not significantly affect students' organizational attitudes toward sports tourism (Table 11). According to this finding, hypotheses H₁₃ and H₁₇ have not been accepted.

5 DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed a statistically significant and positive relationship between curiosity-exploration tendencies subdimensions of flexibility and uncertainty acceptance and attitudes toward sports tourism, including personal contribution, economic contribution, job opportunities, and organizational perception. In this context, it can be stated that as university students' levels of curiosity and exploratory tendencies increase, their attitudes toward sports tourism also improve, and vice versa. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing the contribution of sports tourism to personal development and social experience (Konu & Laukkanen, 2010; Higham & Hinch, 2010). Furthermore, it has been reported that curiosity triggers sport-related

behaviors and leads individuals toward new experiences. This supports the notion that students with higher levels of curiosity may be more open to participating in sports tourism activities (Scandle *et al.*, 2024). Jeong (2023) also demonstrated that the emotional experiences and identity perceptions of individuals involved in active sports tourism significantly influence their attitudes toward tourism and their motivation to participate. These findings reinforce the role of individual psychological factors such as curiosity, flexibility, and tolerance for uncertainty in shaping tourism-related behaviors. Another significant finding of this study is the positive relationship between curiosity-exploration tendencies and social media usage, particularly regarding the continuity and competence dimensions. It was observed that as students' curiosity-exploration tendencies increase, their frequency and perceived competence in using social media also increase. This suggests that the search for new information and experiences is closely associated with more active and sustained use of digital platforms. This result is consistent with existing literature indicating that social curiosity predicts increased engagement with social media and, in some cases, even social media addiction among young adults (Zahoor, 2022). However, the study found no significant relationship between social media usage (continuity and competence) and attitudes toward sports tourism. This indicates that general patterns of social media use may not directly influence individuals' perceptions or attitudes toward sports tourism. In other words, unless the content consumed or shared on social media is specifically related to tourism or sports experiences, its impact on tourism attitudes appears to be limited. These findings collectively suggest that internal psychological traits, rather than external digital behaviors alone, play a more critical role in shaping young adults' engagement with alternative tourism experiences such as sports tourism.

In this study, the effects of the curiosity-exploration tendency sub-dimensions of flexibility and uncertainty acceptance on students' attitudes toward sports tourism in terms of personal contribution, economic contribution, job opportunities, and organization were examined. The results of the linear regression analysis revealed that the models were statistically significant. It was determined that the independent variables, flexibility and uncertainty acceptance, significantly predicted all sub-dimensions of students' attitudes toward sports tourism.

Based on our study findings, the flexibility variable explains approximately 16.1 % of the variance in the personal contribution dimension of attitudes toward sports

tourism. Flexibility refers to individuals' ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions, social settings, and novel experiences (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). From this perspective, flexible individuals are more likely to approach domains involving physical activity, social interaction, and geographic mobility such as sports tourism with a more favorable attitude. Our results align with Martin and Rubin's (1995) theory of communicative flexibility, which posits that flexible individuals adjust more easily to new situations and that this adaptability plays a determining role in tourism behaviors. Moreover, the influence of flexibility on personal contribution perception supports findings by Kerr and Mackenzie (2012), who reported that participants in adventure tourism expect greater personal development from sports-related activities. Similarly, Elsrud (2001) demonstrated that individuals with a flexible mindset tend to engage more in exploratory behaviors, thereby increasing interest in tourism activities. On the other hand, uncertainty acceptance accounts for 4.2% of the variance in the personal contribution dimension, indicating its relatively limited but still meaningful impact. This suggests that individuals who interpret ambiguity and unknown situations as opportunities for discovery, rather than threats, are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward sports tourism. These findings resonate with the broader literature: Cohen (1972) suggests that tolerance of uncertainty fosters openness to new experiences and enhances tourism participation. Weiermair and Mathies (2004) highlight the critical role of risk perception and uncertainty tolerance in shaping tourists' preferences. Additionally, Budner's (1962) theory of intolerance of ambiguity and Furnham and Ribchester's (1995) work on coping strategies further underscore the importance of uncertainty tolerance in tourism behavior. Taken together, these results imply that individuals with high uncertainty tolerance are more inclined to expect personal gains from sports tourism activities. However, the difference in variance explained by flexibility and uncertainty acceptance indicates that flexibility is a more influential predictor of students' attitudes toward sports tourism than uncertainty tolerance.

In our study, the finding that the flexibility variable explains 11.6% of the variance in the economic contribution dimension indicates that this psychological trait has an impact on individuals' economic expectations. This result is consistent with the findings of Kaplanidou and Gibson (2010), who examined the economic perceptions of sports tourism participants. Their research suggests that individuals with higher flexibility tend to evaluate the expected economic benefits of sports activities from a more holistic

perspective. Conversely, the uncertainty acceptance variable accounts for only 1.6% of the variance in the economic contribution dimension, suggesting that its effect on economic expectations is rather limited. The differing levels of influence of these two variables on economic contribution perception indicate that flexibility plays a more decisive role in how individuals assess the economic aspects of sports-related activities. This conclusion is further supported by Weed and Bull's (2012) study on the economic impacts of sports tourism, which similarly found that individual flexibility serves as a stronger predictor of economic perceptions.

In our study, the flexibility variable explained 12.3% of the variance in attitudes toward job opportunities in sports tourism, indicating that this trait has a significant impact on students' perceptions of career potential and willingness to work in the field. This finding suggests that individuals with higher flexibility tend to view employment opportunities in sports tourism more positively particularly within the tourism sector, which requires constant adaptation to dynamic and unpredictable conditions. The result aligns with prior research that has highlighted the positive influence of flexibility on career perceptions (Yıldız-Akyol & Boyacı, 2020). Flexible individuals are generally less anxious in the face of uncertainty and change, and they are more open to exploring new job fields and creating opportunities within them (Pulakos *et al.*, 2000; Tugade *et al.*, 2004). In fast-evolving sectors such as sports tourism, such psychological traits are expected to positively shape individuals' perceptions of employment potential. On the other hand, uncertainty acceptance explained only 2.5% of the variance in attitudes toward job opportunities in sports tourism, indicating a more limited impact. However, the statistically significant relationship suggests that individuals with lower tolerance for uncertainty may adopt a more cautious or hesitant attitude toward job opportunities in sports tourism. This result is consistent with the findings of Pigeassou (2004), who emphasized the role of psychological readiness in evaluating employment prospects in the sports tourism sector. It can be inferred that individuals with higher uncertainty tolerance are better equipped to realistically assess career opportunities in a dynamic field like sports tourism. While flexibility appears to play a more decisive role in shaping job opportunity attitudes, uncertainty acceptance still contributes a smaller yet meaningful influence. These findings may provide valuable insights for sector stakeholders in tailoring human resource strategies based on individual personality traits.

The study revealed that the variables flexibility and uncertainty acceptance have a statistically significant effect on attitudes toward organization in the context of sports tourism. This finding emphasizes that individuals' ability to function comfortably in uncertain environments and adapt to changing conditions plays a crucial role in their participation in and attitudes toward sports organizations. It was found that flexibility explains 3.6% of the variance in attitudes toward organization in sports tourism. This result aligns with previous literature, reinforcing the significance of flexibility in shaping organizational attitudes. In this context, individual flexibility has been recognized not only as a physical trait but also as an important social and cognitive adaptive capacity, particularly beneficial in multi-actor and structured organizational processes (Bonanno, 2004). Daniels and Tichaawa (2024) also emphasized that psychological flexibility can contribute meaningfully at both individual and systemic levels within organizations. Furthermore, a quantitative study conducted by Yıldız (2024) examining the relationship between psychological flexibility, participation, and self-confidence among individuals involved in recreational activities found that flexibility significantly enhanced individuals' active engagement. This supports the conclusion that flexibility is a key factor influencing organizational attitudes. On the other hand, the uncertainty acceptance variable accounted for only 1.9% of the variance in organizational attitudes. While this suggests a more limited impact compared to flexibility, it was still identified as a statistically significant predictor. This finding indicates that individuals who are more open to uncertain situations tend to develop more positive attitudes toward organizations. Risk and uncertainty perception are often cited as core determinants in tourism decision-making. For instance, Karl (2018) highlighted how uncertainty can pose a significant barrier to travel intentions, negatively influencing tourist attitudes. However, individuals with higher uncertainty tolerance perceive such barriers as less restrictive and may display more favorable organizational attitudes. Evidence from the 2008 Beijing Olympics also supports this notion. A study by Qi *et al.* (2009) examining the effect of risk and uncertainty perceptions on tourism intentions found that uncertainty acceptance was a strong predictor of both intentions and attitudes in the tourism context. Furthermore, previous research has emphasized that openness to uncertainty is closely associated with openness to new experiences and entrepreneurial tendencies (McCrae & Costa, 1997). In conclusion, this study demonstrates that attitudes toward sports tourism organizations are significantly related to psychological traits such as flexibility and uncertainty acceptance.

However, the relatively low variance explained by these variables suggests that other factors such as leadership, financial resources, or marketing strategies may also influence organizational attitudes in sports tourism.

The study found that social media use (in terms of continuity and competence) did not have a statistically significant effect on students' attitudes toward personal contribution, economic contribution, job opportunities, or organization in the context of sports tourism. This finding suggests that the level of social media engagement, whether through consistent use or perceived competence, does not serve as an independent determinant of attitudes toward sports tourism. Although social media is widely regarded as a vital tool for gathering information and exchanging ideas in travel planning today, our research indicates that exposure to content on these platforms does not necessarily result in attitudinal change toward sports tourism. While previous studies have emphasized the influence of social media on tourism-related preferences and attitudes (Li *et al.*, 2025; Torabi *et al.*, 2022; Jiang *et al.*, 2025), our findings highlight its limited impact, particularly in the context of shaping attitudes specifically toward sports tourism. This discrepancy may be attributed to the differences in the purposes for which university students use social media. For instance, if their primary motivations for using social platforms are entertainment, communication, or academic engagement rather than tourism exploration, the potential of these platforms to shape sports tourism attitudes would be correspondingly minimal.

6 CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of curiosity-exploration tendencies and social media usage on university students' attitudes toward sports tourism. The findings revealed that flexibility and uncertainty acceptance, as subdimensions of curiosity, significantly predicted students' positive attitudes toward the personal, economic, organizational, and employment-related aspects of sports tourism. In contrast, social media usage including both continuity and competence-did not significantly influence any of the attitude dimensions.

These results emphasize the role of individual psychological factors such as openness to new experiences, adaptability, and willingness to embrace uncertainty in shaping students' engagement with sports tourism. The lack of a significant relationship

between social media use and sports tourism attitudes suggests that merely using social platforms is insufficient to foster positive perceptions unless it is tied to meaningful content or experiential engagement.

In light of these findings, educators and tourism stakeholders may consider developing programs or campaigns that stimulate curiosity, exploration, and adaptive thinking, particularly in academic or extracurricular settings. Encouraging experiential learning opportunities related to sports tourism may further strengthen students' understanding and appreciation of its benefits, especially in terms of personal and social development.

Future research could explore the role of content-specific social media engagement, cultural factors, or longitudinal shifts in behavior to gain a more nuanced understanding of how digital habits interact with tourism attitudes over time.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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