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## UNDERSTANDING EPHEMERAL SOCIAL MEDIA THROUGH INSTAGRAM STORIES: A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords:

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#### JEL Codes:

M31, M32, L82, L86

Choosing media channels and consuming in digital channels have become crucial subjects in marketing and communication in the last century. Ephemeral social media, which can be defined as sharing and consuming media content in a short period, has recently become a widespread habit in social media tools. Ephemeral timelines that are a product of this concept has recently increased its importance in digital communication channels. In line with this trend, this study explores consumers' intention to continue using Instagram Stories, which is a service provided by Instagram and makes it possible to share content that is available for 24 hours only. Regression analyses are conducted to analyze the relationships between model variables, and Chi-square tests are employed to evaluate relationships between intention and personal attributes. As a result, it is found that perceived ephemerality, reliance on graphics and social presence have a positive relationship with the intention to continue using Instagram Stories. The study also assesses related personal attributes for the intention which can be used for academic and managerial implications.

## GEÇİCİ SOSYAL MEDYAYI INSTAGRAM HİKAYELERİ İLE ANLAMAK: PAZARLAMA PERSPEKTİFİ

### ÖZ

#### Anahtar Kelimeler:

Sosyal Medya  
Sosyal Medya İletişimi  
Geçici İçerik  
Tüketici Motivasyonu

#### JEL Kodları:

M31, M32, L82, L86

Medya kanallarının seçilmesi ve dijital kanallarda tüketilmesi geçen yüzyılda pazarlama ve iletişimde çok önemli konular haline gelmiştir. Kısa bir süre içinde paylaşılan ve yok olan medya içeriği olarak tanımlanabilen geçici sosyal medya, sosyal medya araçlarında son zamanlarda yaygın bir alışkanlık haline gelmiştir. Bu kavramın bir ürünü olan geçici zaman çizelgeleri, dijital iletişim kanallarındaki önemini son zamanlarda artırmıştır. Bu artan öneme yönelik olarak, çalışmada tüketicilerin Instagram tarafından sağlanan bir hizmet olan ve 24 saat içerisinde silinen geçici medya özelliği taşıyan Instagram Hikayeleri hizmetini kullanmaya devam etme niyetini araştırmaktadır. Çalışmada motivasyon ve kullanmaya devam etme niyeti değişkenleri arasındaki ilişkileri analiz etmek için regresyon analizleri yapılmış, niyet ve kişisel özellikler arasındaki ilişkileri değerlendirmek için ise Ki-kare testleri kullanılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, algılanan geçicilik, grafiklere ve sosyal mevcudiyete bağlılığın Instagram Hikayelerini kullanmaya devam etme niyeti ile pozitif bir ilişkisi olduğu bulunmuştur. Çalışma aynı zamanda, akademik ve yönetsel çıkarımlarda kullanılabilecek niyetle ilgili kişisel özellikleri de değerlendirmektedir.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that consumers reflect themselves in their consumption behavior is as old as the history of humanity. Reflection of consumers' self on digital platforms, expressing their own identity through digital channels and social media experiences are essential subjects for social media studies. In the beginning, media channels were used to be informed and receive news. Then digital channels became widespread, and Web 2.0 turned media channels into bilateral communication structures in which consumers play a more active role. Social media is one of the most important media channels of the 21st century. Consumers not only stay informed about other consumers and brands on social media but also share information about themselves. In this context, it creates a potential for marketing research to investigate their reflection of themselves through their daily sharing rather than just focusing on what they directly share with brands on social media. Nowadays, social media is an essential part of consumers' daily life and investigating Instagram, which is one of the most prominent social media channels, helps brands to gain insights about consumers.

Over the past decade, there has been a dramatic increase in social media communication platforms. Instagram is one of the platforms gaining popularity, and people use the platform for communicating with others, expressing themselves/identities and entertainment. A variety of studies examined several topics of Instagram and visual social media. In recent years, following the popularity of "Snaps" content from Snapchat brand, which indicates a disappearing message limited to a specific timeframe, Instagram launched the Instagram stories to its users. As Khan (2017) suggests, it is essential to investigate why social media sites appeal to people to figure out the future of social media. However, there have been a few empirical investigations into ephemeral media; therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining consumer motivations for ephemeral media content.

As the study aims to evaluate consumer motivations, research questions of study refer to;

- What are the antecedents of intention to continue using Instagram

stories?

- How is social presence related to ubiquitous connectedness?
- How are the personal attributes related to intention to continue using Instagram stories?

The study starts with a literature review section which consists of social media and ephemeral media concepts together, while research methodology and conclusions parts follow it.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Social Media**

Social Media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Independence of time and space, ease of use, interactivity, containing user content, the connection between platforms, and measurability are some features of social media (Kırcova & Enginkaya, 2015).

Kietzmann et al. (2011) claim that social media opens a new communication era with its highly interactive platforms in which consumers can share, co-create, deliberate and they made a honeycomb-shaped classification about the social media functionality. According to this classification, social media functionality comprises seven titles, namely presence, sharing, relationships, conversations, groups, reputation and identity in the center. These titles generally involve features of all social media users. In this study, especially identity, conversations, sharing, and relationships are leading since they are mostly related to expressing self and interaction with others. Identity expresses how users reveal themselves; conversation states user’s communication with other users, sharing comprises users’ exchange, distribute and receive the subject and relationship includes users’ connection with each other.

Social media is used for information and knowledge sharing conveniently (Muyingo, 2017) Social platforms also allowed interpersonal communication on the online environment and also the amount of communication between people has

increased with the help of these platforms (Eginli & Tas, 2018). Social media completely changed the way of communication with consumers. Social media affects consumer behavior regarding awareness, gathering information, ideas, attitude, purchase behavior, post-purchase communication, and appraisal (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Killian and McManus (2015) found that managers categorize social media into four categories, which are relationship management, newsgathering, creativity, and entertainment. The model of this study is coherent with these categories. The constructs used in the research, namely reliance on graphics, is related to creativity; ubiquitous connectivity is related to relationship management and newsgathering. Consumer behavior in online platforms is rapidly changing. They play different roles ranging from consuming content, joining discussions, sharing information, contributing to other users' activities (Heinonen, 2011). Shao (2009) proposed a framework that explains how and why people use user-generated content. According to this framework, people use user-generated content for consuming, participating, and producing. Consuming occurs when a user watches or views contents. Participating happens when there is interaction, whereas production comprises sharing and creating content. In this study, Instagram stories will be examined from the point of consumer-generated content.

Social media is an active audience platform, which allows its users to determine the content they want to be exposed to, how they want to see the content, and on what social media tool (Abdulbaqi et al., 2017). This study evaluates a sub-component of social media -visual-based social media- through Instagram. From the communication perspective, Van Dijck (2008) implies that digital photography is a part of transformation which enables selves as a center of the virtual universe. In this virtual universe, individuals take their identities as "*interactive producers and consumers of culture*," and they do not only take/store photos but also participate in societal photographic exchanges. Identity construction and expression of selves are significant topics for the study, while ephemeral media is one of the increasingly important areas for consumers and marketing decision-makers. Also, social media

presents opportunities for creativity to draw attention (Ulas & Vural, 2019) and sharing ephemeral content is a novel way to achieve this.

## **2.2. Ephemeral Social Media**

Initially, social media had constant nature, which means that the shared content was always available when revisiting a profile. However, ephemeral social media platforms are on the march recently (van Nimwegen & Bergman, 2019; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019; Cavalcanti et al., 2017). Wakefield & Wakefield (2018) define ephemeral social media as “online communication platforms in which the user predetermines the lifespan of a message/post or message availability”. Different than archived social media, ephemeral social media includes sharing content that is only available for a limited time. Ephemeral social media is interesting to study in the context of liquid consumption, which is defined as “ephemeral, access-based, and dematerialized”. Ephemerality may affect consumer motivations together with psychological ownership, consumer motivations, and the character or performance of consumption (Bardh, & Eckhardt, 2017).

Ephemeral social interaction had been widespread in the world firstly with the launch of Snapchat application in September 2011 (Bayer, Ellison, Schoenebeck, & Falk, 2016) and created a major shift in social media (Bilings et al., 2017). Makki et al. (2018) propound that Snapchat is a novel type of computer-mediated communication tool. Time is crucial in Snapchat, whose essence is its ephemeral nature (Verstraete, 2016). The term “Snap” started to be used in everyday life. This also supports the idea that social media changes everything, including the language, and has the power to add new words to the vocabulary of people. Bayer et al. (2016) use the term “Snap” as a “deliberative, shared experience that is temporally bounded.” Users of Snapchat can share their memories by taking, editing photos, and sending them as “snap” using their mobile phones (Morlok et al., 2017).

Based on the same “being temporary available” principle, Instagram has Instagram stories feature that was introduced in August 2016. The feature has been called as the most salient and innovative social media development (Belanche et al., 2019). Launched in October 2010 as a free mobile photo-sharing application,

Instagram was chosen as the best iPhone application in 2011 and was acquired by Facebook in 2012 (Instagram, 2016). Other examples of ephemeral social media applications that limit the time given to messages before they auto-delete other than Snapchat and Instagram are Facebook-stories, Xpire, Wickr, Jott, CyberDust, Clipchat, Burn Note and Bleep (Wakefield & Bennett, 2017).

Lee et al. (2015) argue that Instagram has created a visual-oriented culture by being a photo-based network. Instagram always developed itself and added new features since its launch, and Instagram stories is one of them, and maybe the most striking update that changed the game of social media. In both Snapchat and Instagram stories, the user can see how many people have seen their “stories” and who they are.

The trend toward these ephemeral timelines, which encourages the permissive presentation of self means the opening of a distinctive era for social media marketing (McRoberts et al., 2017) because ephemerality may counterbalance privacy concerns (Morlok et al., 2017). Digitalization lowered the cost to obtain information, and therefore privacy issues and how much of the shared data is protected have become a big question mark for people using the internet. Self-destructing data, therefore, has become a way to gain control back as a temporary tool in naturally persistent digital communications (Kotfila, 2014).

The ephemeral social media phenomenon not only changed the nature of social relationships but also drew the attention of academic studies. In their research (Bayer et al., 2016) investigated the relationship between ephemerality and experiences of Snapchat users to see whether Snapchat is associated with social and emotional experiences with its ephemeral nature. The results show that Snapchat interactions are considered more enjoyable and create a more positive mood, but the interactions are seen as less supportive. Kofoed & Larsen (2016) claim that Snapchat and Instastories facilitate closeness and intimacy because of their distinctive features such as sending short, self-destructing content, and that is why these applications become popular among young people. In their study, Coa & Setiawan (2017) examined factors that may have a relationship with the intention to use Snapchat and

Instagram stories by forming a research model based on the technology acceptance model. They proved that perceived enjoyment on these social networks has the most significant influence on attitude and attitude leads the intention to use them. Chen & Cheung (2019) identified the motivations to create ephemeral content as fear of missing out, trust, immediacy and social pressure to obtain gratification. They also proved that gratification influences engagement in ephemeral content.

Utz et al. (2015) suggested that Snapchat provides its users with a significant level of privacy since it erases messages after the receiver sees it. In their study, they compared Snapchat and Facebook regarding usage and psychological effects on romantic jealousy in their research. Results indicate that people use Snapchat more for flirting, whereas Facebook is mostly used for interacting with friends. Another finding shows that Snapchat evokes more jealousy than Facebook. Cavalcanti et al.'s (2017) research put forward that ephemeral communication platforms may also bring losses to its users. According to their study, users of ephemeral communication platforms experience three types of loss consisting of media loss, meaning loss, and context loss. The study of Morlok et al. (2017) demonstrates that perceived ephemerality lowers privacy concerns, increases perceived enjoyment and therefore causes ephemeral social network sites' usage intention.

Kara (2016) researched why university students use Snapchat via focus group interviews. The study shows that students satisfy their social interaction, information seeking/information sharing, time spent, leisure, relaxation, expression of feelings, ease of use, surveillance, appreciation/appreciation saturation needs by using Snapchat. Çapraz (2018) also investigated disappearing-message/ data usage motivation of youth with qualitative methods. Results of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions show that the disappearing-message/data function using motivations are confidentiality, spontaneous photo sharing, communicating with the immediate surroundings, and being carefree.

This study analyzes motivations for intention to continue using Instagram studies with quantitative approach, by using structured online questionnaires.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The primary objective of the research is to evaluate the motivations of ephemeral media consumption on social media through Instagram stories service. Motivations are evaluated through three variables related to the intention of continuing to use Instagram Stories. The second objective of research focuses on individual attributes, and it includes the testing of relationships for intention variable.

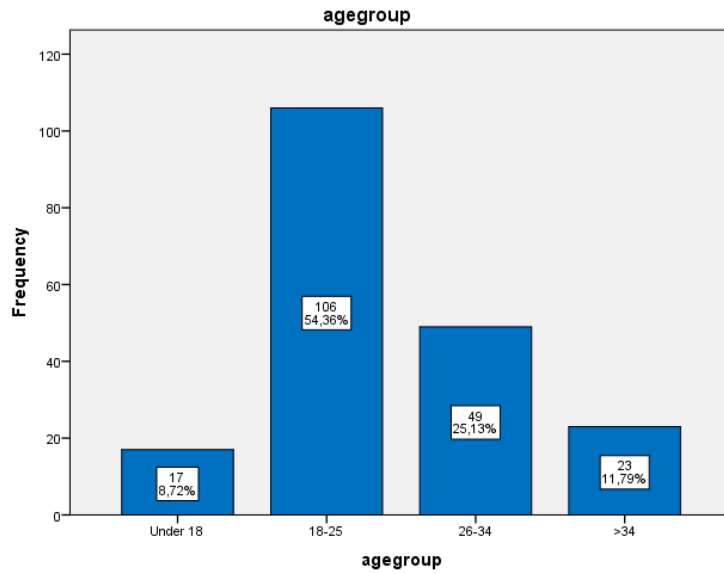
The first part of the research objective is related to the motivations of ephemeral social media, and the relationships between motivations and consumption are examined by using multiple linear regression methodology. The second part of the research objective is related to differences among participants for the perceived ephemerality variable; thus, difference tests are employed for this purpose. SPSS software (22) is used for the methodology of the study. Since data were collected before January 2020, the study did not require ethics committee approval.

#### **3.1. Scope and Sample of the Study**

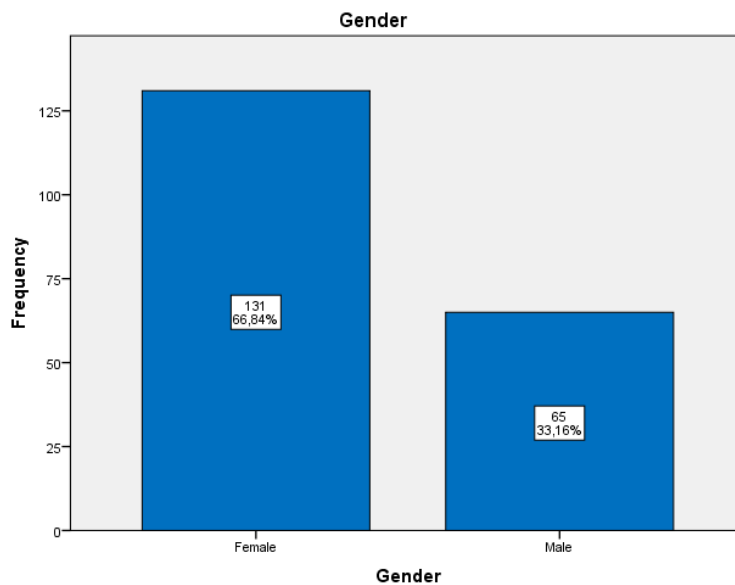
The scope of the study refers to the users of Instagram stories service for evaluating motivations of using the service. Since the study aims to review motivations for a behavior phenomenon, a confirming question checking whether the participant uses the service or not is included at the beginning of the survey. Age, gender, social media usage frequency and daily ephemeral media usage questions are asked to participants. Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire.

The first attribute of participants refers to age and age variable is grouped into four age groups; under age 18, 18-25 years, 25-34 and more than 34 years old. According to the Instagram users' world statistics, 61% of Instagram users are aged between 18-34 (we are social, 2018). Consistent with this statistic, 79.49% of the study sample is between 18-34 age (Figure 1). Figure 2 indicates that the distribution of gender attributes shows that 66% of participants are female and 33% of them are male.





**Figure 1.** Age Group Distribution of Survey



**Figure 2.** Gender Distribution of Survey

Following age and gender distributions, the daily Instagram usage of participants is included in Figure 3. As the figure indicates, 78% of participants use Instagram less than 3 hours per day.

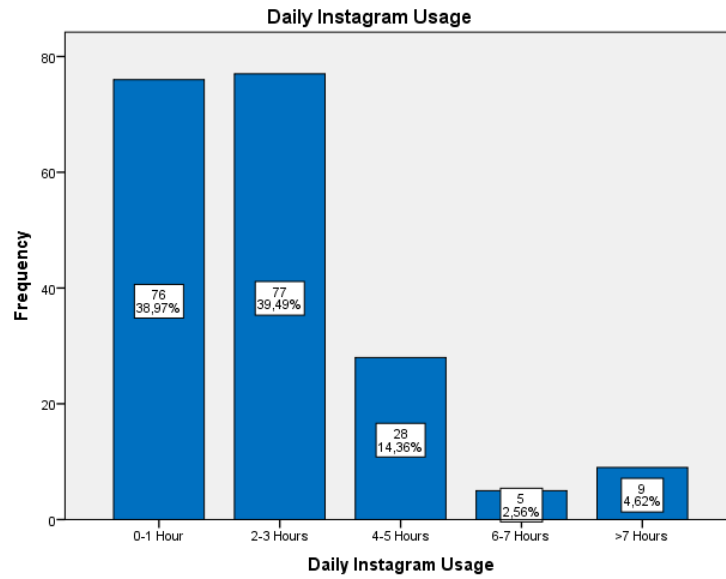


Figure 3. Daily Instagram Usage Distribution of Survey

### 3.2. Research Model and Hypotheses

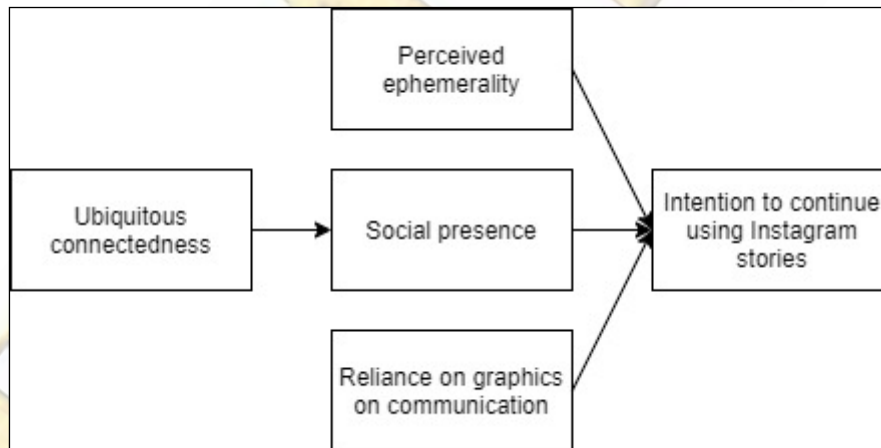


Figure 3. Research Model

Five variables are evaluated in the model. Those variables can be defined as follows: Ubiquitous connectedness means staying connected wherever you are (Lee, 2012), social presence is the extent to which a medium allows an individual to establish a personal connection with others and enables an individual to experience others as being psychologically present (Animesh, 2011), reliance on graphic refers to using smiles, graphics, and pictures while communicating (Teo, 2013) and perceived ephemerality is individuals' perceptions that the access to shared information (e.g., snaps, stories) is time-limited (Morlok, 2017). Ubiquitous connectedness variable has

three items (Lee et al., 2012; Yoon and Choo, 2011), social presence has five items (Animesh et al., 2011), reliance on graphics in communication has five items (Teo, 2013), intention to continue using variable has five items (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2000; Bhattacharjee, 2001) and lastly perceived ephemerality variable has five items (Ajzen, 2002; Morlok, 2017). All variables are in a Likert scale form while perceived ephemerality in dichotomous form. Perceived ephemerality values differ from -5 to +5 from five items summing process; therefore, three different states (negative, neutral, and positive) are formed.

The primary aim of the study is the examining motivations of intention to continue using ephemeral social media through Instagram stories. So, the first part of the research questions, which include H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> hypotheses, are related to this aim. The second part of the research questions (H<sub>3</sub>) is related to the characteristics of the participants.

Prior researches show that perceived ephemerality affects ephemeral social network site usage intention (Morlok et al., 2017) and ubiquitous connectivity increases social presence (Choi, 2016). Social presence helps to establish personal connection (Animesh et al., 2011). Since digital content such as images and text increases social presence (Coa & Setiawan, 2017) it is a meaningful variable to examine in social media studies. In addition, people whose exposure and experience in technology is high tend to rely on graphics before text (Teo, 2013) and that may increase their social media usage. Therefore; the hypotheses are:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived ephemerality, social presence, and reliance on graphics for communications variables have significant relationships with intention to continue using Instagram stories.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Ubiquitous connectedness has significant relationship with social presence.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: There are significant differences in intention to continue using Instagram stories among the characteristics of participants.*

### **3.3. Analysis and Results**

Data analysis of the study starts with exploratory factor analysis to assess validity and continues with reliability analyses for variables in the model. Some items are removed in the dimension reduction stage. Table 1 indicates summary

results for item counts, explained variances and reliability scores. According to the results, the scales of the study are valid and reliable.

**Table 1.** Factor & Reliability Analyses Summary

Factor	Items	Variance Explained (%)	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients
Ubiquitous Connectedness	3	18.973	,837
Social Presence	5	17.807	,812
Reliance on Graphics for Communications	4	16.433	,806
Intention to Continue Using Instagram Stories	4	14.561	,875

Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin Test for Sampling Adequacy: .869 - P (Sig.): .000 Total Variance Explained: 61.744

As the statistical tests depend on the distribution of data, survey data is examined regarding distribution. As the dependent variable is not normally distributed, non-parametric methods are employed for the overall data analysis process. Following factor analysis and distribution evaluation, logistic regression analyses are employed to test the relationships between constructs in the research model, consistent with the main objectives of the study.

### 3.3.1. Evaluating Motivations to Continue Using Instagram Stories

The first hypothesis includes testing the relationships between perceived ephemerality, social presence, reliance on graphics for communications, and intention to continue using Instagram stories.

Logistic regression was used for testing H1, which includes perceived ephemerality, social presence, and reliance on graphics for communication as independent variables and intention to continue using Instagram stories as the dependent variable. Results concluded that independent variables could explain 28.1 % (Nagelkerke R Square) of the variance for the dependent variable, and Hosmer and Lemeshow test has significant value (0,525). The regression equation which includes coefficients for independent variables is;

*Intention To Continue Using IS*

$$= -4.567 + .590 \text{ Reliance on Graphics} + .696 \text{ Social Presence} + 1.064 \text{ Perceived Ephemerality}$$

### 3.3.2. Evaluating Social Connectedness Phenomenon

Another logistic regression with one dependent (social presence) and one independent variable (ubiquitous connectedness) is employed for testing H2, and result implies that 22.7% (Nagelkerke R Square) of the variance for social presence could be explained by ubiquitous connectedness, while the value for Hosmer and Lemeshow test is 0.834. The regression equation for this hypothesis is;

$$\text{Social Presence} = -3.469 + .977 \text{ Ubiquitous Connectedness}$$

### 3.3.3. Evaluating Characteristics for Ephemeral Social Media Consumption

Ephemeral social media consumption is evaluated as continuance intention to use Instagram stories variable in the study. As the secondary objective of the research refers to an investigation of characteristics for similarities and differences, chi-square tests are employed for comparing different characteristics. The survey of study includes questions regarding; gender, age, frequency of social media usage, daily social media usage time, daily Instagram usage time, the daily amount of Instagram Stories participants send, and the weekly amount of Instagram stories participants send.

**Table 2.** Chi-Square Test Results

Variables	Chi-Square Test Value	Chi-Square Sig.
Gender	.575	.448
Age-Group	.794	.851
Frequency of Social Media Usage	.920	.631
Daily Social Media Usage Time	6.157	.188
<b>Daily Instagram Usage Time</b>	10.657	<b>.031</b>
Daily Amount of Instagram Stories	4.440	.218
<b>Weekly Amount of Instagram Stories</b>	23.434	<b>.000</b>

As Table 2 indicates, intention to continue using Instagram stories is only related to daily Instagram usage time and weekly amount of Instagram stories variables. Gender and age-group variables are not found related to intention, and this can be a signal of homogeneity of participants who use Instagram stories or ephemeral media content. Other variables that are not related to intention include;

frequency of SM usage, daily SM usage time, and daily amount of Instagram stories. Frequency and daily SM usage time variables may reflect the habitual behavior pattern of participants since intention can be the independent variable as the participants use social media.

**Table 3.** Cross-Tab Results for Daily Instagram Usage and Continue to Use Instagram Stories

		Daily Instagram Usage					Total
		0-1 Hour	2-3 Hours	4-5 Hours	6-7 Hours	More Than 7 Hours	
Continue to Use Instagram Stories	No	41	27	8	3	6	85
	Yes	35	50	20	2	3	110
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>195</b>

**Table 4.** Cross-Tab Results for Weekly Posted Instagram Stories and Continue to Use Instagram Stories

		Weekly Instagram Stories Posted					Total
		0-1 Time	2-3 Times	4-5 Times	6-7 Times	More Than 7 Times	
Continue to Use Instagram Stories	No	43	18	11	6	7	85
	Yes	20	40	19	15	16	110
<b>Total</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>195</b>

Table 3 indicates the relationship between daily Instagram usage and intention to continue using Instagram stories. As the table implies, intention variable decreases with the amount of daily Instagram usage time. "More than 7 hours" option is an exception for this case, and it can be a signal of "heavy user" for Instagram stories. In Table 4, the relation of intention variable with weekly amount of Instagram stories can be signal for the level of consuming pattern, as the first answer option refers to "0-1" time a week and the ratio of users for intention become reversed with the option of "2-3 times."

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the ephemeral social media consumption concept through Instagram stories with consumer motivations. It is concluded that perceived ephemerality, social presence, and reliance on graphics are the antecedents of intention to continue using Instagram stories. Perceived ephemerality is the reflection of liquid consumption in this study, which implies the ideas of participants (as positive/negative) related to daily messages/disappearing media contents. The second motivation for intention to continue using Instagram stories is related to the social nature of internet users. Social presence is affecting ephemeral social media consumption intention, consistent with the social media phenomenon. The third motivation is reliance on graphics. This variable is mostly related to the specific nature of the media/platform as Instagram stories, and Snaps (from Snapchat) includes graphical elements.

The rankings of coefficients show that the most contributing motivation for intention to continue using Instagram stories is perceived ephemerality. Social presence and reliance on graphics for communication follow first motivation. The study contributes to current social media and consumption knowledge by examining the motivations of intention to continue using Instagram stories holistically.

The second conclusion of the study is related to relationships between intention to continue using Instagram Stories and usage characteristics. Daily Instagram usage time and weekly amount of Instagram stories users post variables are related to intention variable. This finding indicates that using social media overall and using Instagram has explicitly different outcomes for ephemeral media consumption. Latter finding implies that the amount of ephemeral media consumption elements has different outcomes for a daily and weekly basis. Consequently, marketing decision-makers can benefit from evaluating Instagram specific users and "heavy users" of ephemeral media, rather than general social media users and "light users".

The "burn after reading" principle that comes with ephemeral content opens new paths for brand communication. The information related to ephemeral media consumption can be useful for digital advertising campaigns, content marketing, and

online brand communication. Considering that innovative features of Instagram stories increase interaction between users and brands that use this feature (Belanche et al., 2019), this feature could be used as a novel, personalized, dynamic way to create engagement. This way customers would feel less uninterrupted compared to traditional advertising tools. Tropp & Baetzgen (2019) put forward that it is difficult for brands to use Snapchat, which is also an ephemeral social media tool, as a long-term communication method considering that spontaneity is the main feature of the tool. Mondal et. al (2016) suggest that the challenge is to determine the right pre-set deadlines for deleting the post. Brands can attract customers by advertising their products, organizing contests, give discount coupons through Snapchat (Kılıç, 2018).

Notwithstanding, it is crucial to stay up-to-date on the motivations to use these kinds of ephemeral social media tools and the sharing of consumers on these platforms for communication planning of brands. Brands should have a good grasp of this new ephemeral content trend on social media and adjust their communication strategies in line with this “disappearing after 24 hours” trend. The evaluation process of the consumer continues with preparing personas of user groups for ephemeral media consumption, their internet or social media usage patterns, and other traits can be research opportunities for further studies.



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