

## The role of social media influencers in shaping destination image and intention to visit Jordan: The moderating impact of social media usage intensity

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### CHRONICLE

### ABSTRACT

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Social media influencers have become important motivators in shaping tourist attitudes and behaviors. This study analyzed how exposure to influencer content impacts key outcomes for the destination Jordan. A survey of tourists who visited Jordan in the past 3 years measured their perceptions of influencer credibility, content quality, awareness/interest, trust/engagement, destination image, general tourism behavior, and intentions to revisit. Results of SEM analysis found significant positive effects of influencer marketing on both destination image and visit intentions. Awareness/interest and trust/engagement were most impactful, highlighting influencers' role in sparking early motivation. Content quality additionally predicted visit intentions by informing decisions. Perceived credibility made recommendations more persuasive. Furthermore, usage intensity positively moderated the mediated relationships, amplifying effects among heavy social media users. Findings provide theoretical validation of how influencers act as digital opinion leaders. By enhancing destination image through compelling portrayals, influencers shape audience travel interests and behaviors. Managerial implications suggest destinations should invest in influencer campaigns for reach and inspiration while ensuring content quality. Performance tracking informs optimal platform and demographic targeting. Overall, influencer marketing demonstrated significant persuasive appeal for potential tourists. This quantitative study pioneer's measurement of influencer marketing's tangible impacts on key tourist metrics. The results empirically substantiate the ability of strategically leverage influencers to motivate visitation and guide decision-making. As practitioners refine partnerships for audience growth and branding, academic research must also advance a nuanced understanding of this emerging phenomenon at the confluence of social media and tourism consumer behavior.

## 1. Introduction

Social media has transformed how travelers research, discover, and make decisions about potential destinations (Hays et al., 2012). Tourism promotion strategies have shifted from conventional advertising to leveraging user-generated content created by influencers on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok (Xiang et al., 2015). These influencers refer to individuals who have cultivated sizable follower bases through engaging posts related to travel experiences, recommendations, and insights. While past studies have established the overall impact of influencers on metrics like awareness, interest, and even bookings, there remains an insufficient understanding of the underlying mechanisms of this persuasive effect (Ying et al., 2014) How exactly does influencer-created social media content shape audience perceptions towards particular destinations?

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Using mediating processes may contribute to theoretical knowledge and guide tourism marketers to benefit from digital influencers.

Therefore, the research purpose is to deal with the research gap by investigating destination image as a main mediator of influencer marketing results. Destination image is described as the impressions and beliefs people hold about the place and its benefits to visitors (Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). By concentrating on destination characteristics and experiences through using creative visual stories, influencers can create an exciting, unique, and personally relevant image (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). This enhances the destination image and directs more intentions and motivation to destination visit. Moreover, this research tests how the intensity of social media use by different people moderated marketing influencers. People who devote more time to social media than others are usually exposed to more content and volumes, also they have better responses to influencers' recommendations compared to others (Alhabash et al., 2014; Awad et al., 2023).

In the end, the current research has two objectives: (1) to test the destination image mediating role on the impact of marketing influencers on visitors' intention to visit Jordanian sites, and (2) to check the moderating role of using intensity on marketing results. Research outcomes contribute to both practical and theoretical knowledge, which helps to develop targeting and positioning strategies by using marketing influencers to improve marketing. The results can help owners and managers who seek to develop business relationships with digital influencers for promotion and branding destinations.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Influencer Marketing in Tourism Promotion

Nowadays, the influencers of social media play key roles in both destination branding and tourism promotion (Smith, 2018). Instagram has played a crucial role in influencer marketing because it uses visual storytelling. Tourists are increasingly using influencers to get information and recommendations when they plan their vacations (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011). Surveys indicate up to 49% of millennial travelers rely on Instagram influencer recommendations when choosing destinations, favoring it over official branding channels (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021).

Given their perceived authenticity and creativity, influencers enable destinations and travel brands to spark interest and drive bookings through emotionally engaging user-generated content (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Carr et al., 2023). Partnerships with relevant influencers across categories like general social media celebrities, specialized travel bloggers, and geographically focused experts represent a major shift in tourism promotion strategies toward more personalized, interactive social advocacy.

However, optimal practices for leveraging different tiers of influencers remain underexplored, with insufficient empirical evidence elucidating how specific types of content shape audience behaviors (Zhou et al., 2021). Bridging this knowledge gap through quantitative studies is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of influencer marketing in the tourism sector.

### 2.2 Destination Image as a Mediator

Destination image refers to the holistic impressions and beliefs that potential visitors hold about the characteristics and expected experiences of a place (Echtner & Ritchie., 1991; Stepchenkova & Zhan, 2013). These mental representations shape people's travel decision-making and motivation to visit. Influencers can enhance destination image through vivid storytelling that highlights the most unique, compelling offerings and activities at a location (Fatanti & Suyadnya, 2015). By creatively conveying the ambiance, aesthetics, and emotional experiences, influencers make the destination more personally relevant and identity-congruent for audiences (Sirgy & Su, 2000). For example, Instagram posts showcasing exotic local cuisines, stunning landscapes, and cultural attractions can shape favorable destination perceptions. When the content resonates with individual self-concepts, this improves image and fosters travel intentions (Quintal et al., 2010). Following congruency theory, when the influencer's projected personality and lifestyle match the viewer's self-concept, they are more persuaded to visit the advocated destination. The ability to turn impersonal places into desired experiences demonstrates how influencers enhance destination image. Furthermore, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the form of influencer reviews reinforces positive imagery (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). By highlighting memorable activities at a location, influencers shape audience impressions of the destination as exciting and adventurous. User-generated content is perceived as more organic than traditional advertisements, making it highly persuasive in improving destination image (Ying et al., 2014). However, empirical studies directly linking influencer content exposures to shifts in image perceptions remain scarce.

### 2.3 Social Media Usage Intensity as a Moderator

While influencers have broad appeal to digitally connected travelers, their impact likely varies based on social media usage behaviors. Usage intensity refers to an individual's level of engagement with social media platforms frequency of access, time spent consuming content, and number of contributions (Al-Dmour et al., 2020; Alhabash et al., 2014; Hayes et al., 2016). Highly involved users tend to follow more influencers and could exhibit greater effects from exposure to recommendations. According to social cognitive theory, increased consumption of media content strengthens resulting attitudes and behaviors due to enhanced learning and modeling of observed behaviors (Bandura, 2002; LaRose & Eastin, 2004). Heavy social media users have greater opportunities for exposure to influencer modeling, shaping their travel interests. Additionally, heavy usage reflects higher involvement and identification with influencers as digital opinion leaders (Abuhashesh et al., 2021; Kamboj et al., 2018). When social media plays a central role in the lives of devoted users, they more readily absorb influencer recommendations. Moderation effects of usage intensity on responses to eWOM are supported by research in domains like brand

communication and ad effectiveness (Kemppainen, 2023; Lim & Chung, 2011). In a tourism context, users highly engaged with social media may similarly show stronger reactions to influencer content about destinations. This indicates usage intensity requires examination as a moderator of marketing outcomes. However, studies directly testing this effect related to travel behaviors remain limited.

#### 2.4 Research Gaps

In summary, a review of extant literature reveals significant research gaps. Firstly, no studies empirically validate destination image improvements as the mechanism mediating influencer marketing on intention to visit. Quantitative testing of this mediated relationship is needed to advance theory. Secondly, the moderating impact of usage intensity on responses to influencer content warrants investigation. Addressing these gaps can refine theoretical models and optimize targeted social media promotion strategies when leveraging influencers.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study's conceptual model is grounded in several key theories explaining the mechanisms of influencer marketing and moderating impacts of usage intensity on destination image and intention to visit.

#### 3.1 Destination Image Formation

Destination image formation theory explains how people develop holistic impressions of places they have not visited based on different information sources (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Echtner & Ritchie., 1991). Organic user-generated content is considered more credible in shaping images compared to commercial marketing. Influencer posts highlighting appealing attributes improve image perceptions by reducing uncertainty and conveying emotional experiences (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Image formation occurs through cumulative impressions where every piece of communication subtly shifts perceptions (Almashhadani et al., 2023; Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). Over time, consuming influencer content showcasing exciting activities and aesthetics cultivates positive destination images. Following attribution theory, audiences attribute expertise and trustworthiness to influencers as endorsers, enhancing their persuasive impact in driving imagery (Yoon et al., 2001).

#### 3.2 Congruity Theory

Congruity theory explains how influencers can make destinations seem more attractive by projecting personalities and values that viewers identify with, thereby increasing self-congruity (Sirgy & Su, 2000). When the influencer's lifestyle and characteristics resonate with a viewer's social identity and ideals, it creates perceptions of similarity. This results in more favorable evaluations where people infer they will experience the same fulfillment from visiting that destination. Greater self-congruity further strengthens travel intentions through idealized simulated pre-experiences. By envisioning themselves enjoying the same activities as influencers who share their identity, audiences become motivated by heightened personal relevance. Hence, personalized storytelling establishes congruity, improving destination image.

#### 3.3 Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory offers a framework for understanding how social media usage intensity moderates reactions to influencer content (Bandura, 2002). The theory posits individuals strengthen attitudes and behaviors through observational learning and modeling of perceived experts. Heavy users have increased exposure to absorb and imitate influencer behaviors through vicarious reinforcement. When continually observing influencers enjoying novel travel activities, heavy social media users may adopt similar exploration interests. Their enhanced engagement and parasocial identification with influencers as digital mentors heighten susceptibility to persuasive messaging due to greater immersion in that social environment (Kamboj et al., 2018). In contrast, incidental exposure for light users provides limited opportunity for observational learning effects.

#### 3.4 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

ELM posits information processing occurs through central or peripheral routes, contingent on individual involvement and motivation (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Central route processing with thoughtful message scrutiny yields stronger, lasting shifts in attitudes and behaviors. Peripheral cues generate fleeting interest. This explains how usage intensity moderates influencer marketing effects. Highly involved heavy users centrally process content, resulting in greater destination image change and travel intentions through thoughtful evaluation. For less-time users, influencers are more important compared to high-time users of social media.

#### 3.5 Hypothesis Development

Based on the mentioned theoretical discussion, the following hypotheses are developed:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Influencers (perceived credibility, perceived content quality, awareness and interest, and trust and engagement) have a positive influence on destination image.*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Influencers (perceived credibility, perceived content quality, awareness and interest, and trust and engagement) have a positive influence on visit intention.*

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Both destination image and social media usage intensity have a positive influence on visit intention.*

**H4:** The destination image has a positive mediating influence on influencers (perceived credibility, perceived content quality, awareness and interest, and trust and engagement) on visit intention.

**H5:** Social media usage intensity has a positive moderation effect on the mediation relationships among the influencers (perceived credibility, perceived content quality, awareness and interest, and trust and engagement), the destination image, and the visit intention.

The above hypotheses were developed based on prior research papers suggesting that marketing influencers enhance destination image and visitors' behavioral intentions through awareness, engagement, perceived credibility, and content quality (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Ying et al., 2014). Moreover, the destination image can be used as a mediator for the convincing process (Quintal et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2014). In addition, the social media usage intensity enhances the responses to influencers (Alhabash et al., 2014; Kamboj et al., 2018). Quantitative analysis will test these posited relationships.

3.6 Proposed Research Model

Based on the mentioned above theories, the current research proposes influencers affect destination image, which affects visitors' intentions. The mediating and moderating roles increase the effect on social media users. The research model is displayed visually in Fig. 1, with variables summarized:

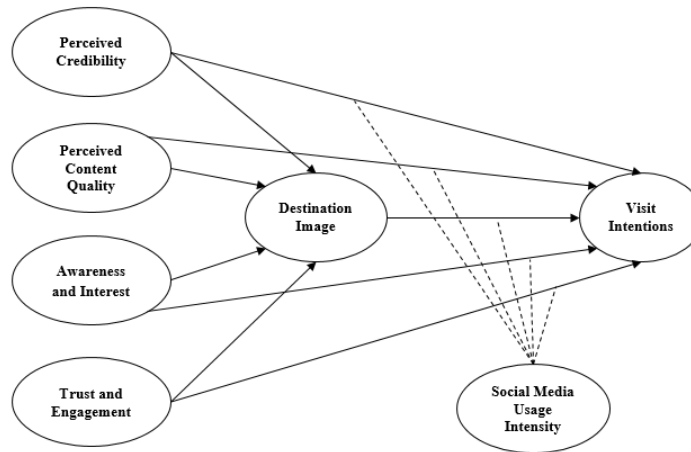


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

Diagram showing the independent variable of Influencer Marketing, the mediator of Destination Image, the moderator of Social Media Usage Intensity, and the dependent variable of Visit Intentions

Table 1  
Variables in Research Model

Independent Variable	Mediating Variable	Moderating Variable	Dependent Variable
Influencer Marketing			
Perceived Credibility			
Perceived Content Quality	Destination Image	Social Media Usage Intensity	Visit Intentions
Awareness and Interest			
Trust and Engagement			

Influencer marketing represents the social media content created by influencers promoting the destination. The destination image construct measures audience perceptions of the attributes and benefits of the destination based on influencer portrayals. Social media usage intensity encompasses the degree of respondent involvement with platforms like frequency of access and time spent consuming influencer content. Finally, visit intentions reflect the desire and plans to visit the destination advocated by the influencers. Quantitative analysis assesses the hypothesized relationships in this research framework. Specifically, influencer marketing is expected to enhance the perceived destination image, which consequently increases intentions to visit. Meanwhile, usage intensity will positively moderate the mediated relationship, amplifying effects among heavy social media users.

4. Research Methodology

This study utilizes a quantitative cross-sectional survey methodology to analyze the research model on how influencer marketing impacts destination image and visit intentions, with usage intensity as a moderator.

#### 4.1 Population and Sample

The target population comprises young adult social media users who are active travelers. This demographic aligns with the segment most likely to engage with and be persuaded by influencer marketing based on their digital behaviors (Digital Marketing Institute, 2021). An online survey was leveraged to recruit approximately 500 respondents matching the eligibility criteria. Probability sampling allows the generalization of findings to the broader population of digitally connected young travelers who follow influencers.

#### 4.2 Survey Instrument

The survey includes multi-item scales adapted from established research to assess the key constructs in the conceptual model, measured using 5-point Likert scales and paragraphs were developed based on previous studies: Perceived credibility of influencers (Ohanian, 1990); Perceived content quality of influencers (Muntinga et al., 2011); Awareness and interest generated by influencers (Yoo & Gretzel, 2011); Trust and engagement with influencers (Hudson et al., 2016); Destination image (H. Kim & Richardson, 2003); Social media usage intensity (Ellison et al., 2007); Visit intentions (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). Rather than exposing respondents to sample influencer content stimuli, the four dimensions of influencer marketing will be measured using statement items asking participants to rate their degree of agreement based on their past general experiences and perceptions of travel influencers they follow online. This approach removes the need to develop hypothetical influencer marketing stimuli and instead relies on participants' existing beliefs and reactions to reflect real-world influencer exposures. The 5-point Likert scale measurement allows quantitative assessment of the conceptual model based on respondents' influencer perceptions.

#### 4.3 Data Collection Procedure

The online survey was administered to eligible respondents on the panel database by sending survey links through email invitations. It begins with an introductory summary and consent form, followed by the measurement scales. Reminder emails were sent to improve participation. Data collection concludes once the intended sample size is reached. Implementation through an online survey platform enables efficient access to the defined social media user target sample. A total of 517 responses have been received and all were valid for analysis.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

The survey data are analyzed using SPSS 26 and SmartPLS 4 software to assess the research model. First, descriptive analysis examines variable means and distributions. Then, correlational analysis evaluated the bivariate relationships among variables.

Following this, structural equation modeling (SEM) tests the conceptual framework and hypothesized paths. SEM enables simultaneous analysis of multiple mediating, moderating, and direct relationships. Bootstrapping will determine the significance of indirect effects. Lastly, multi-group analysis in SEM assesses variations in the research model by usage intensity segments.

### 5 Results

Before evaluating the research model, the initial analysis examined descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between the variables. Structural equation modeling is then conducted to assess the hypothesized relationships.

#### 5.1 Descriptive Statistics and Frequency Distributions

Before hypothesis testing, an initial analysis was conducted to examine the descriptive results of the survey measures. This provided preliminary insight into respondents' perceptions and reactions to the influencer posts.

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions for all multi-item constructs assessed through 5-point Likert scales. Mean scores were generally high, ranging from 3.44 to 4.19, indicating that the influencer posts had a favorable impact across the outcome variables. Based on the descriptive statistics table showing the means for each construct's measurement items. The overall mean scores for all constructs are relatively high, mostly between 3.695 and 4.145 on the 5-point scale. This indicates generally positive responses to the influencer posts and their effects on the outcome variables. The highest mean is for the **Perceived Credibility** (4.145) which also has the lowest standard deviation (0.655) indicating agreement among respondents on the credibility of the influencers, travel bloggers, and experts who were perceived as most credible. The next highest mean is for the **Trust and Engagement** construct (4.123), suggesting the influencer posts resonated well with participants and made them feel connected and inclined to follow the influencers. This aligns with prior research showing influencers can enhance audience engagement due to perceptions of transparency and authenticity (Lou & Yuan, 2019). As for the **Awareness/Interest** construct it also has a fairly high mean (4.012), supporting the notion that influencer advocacy increases destination awareness and sparks interest in travel (Ying et al., 2014). The relatively lower mean for **Perceived Content Quality** (3.984) compared to other constructs suggests there is room for improvement in how influencers showcase travel experiences in Jordan through their social media posts. While the content was still rated favorably on average, previous research indicates that quality factors like interesting narration, useful information, high production value in photos/videos, and inspiration to learn more about the destination are critical for maximal influencer marketing effects (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Rejón-Guardia & Martínez-López, 2014). The lower score may signify some influencer content lacked in depth

or was not sufficiently personalized and engaging. This aligns with the critique that influencers sometimes create generic content not tailored to local contexts (Tien et al., 2019).

**Table 2**  
Descriptive Statistics and Frequency Distributions

Item / Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
PC1	4.09	0.92	1.35%	4.45%	16.63%	39.26%	38.30%
PC2	4.16	0.82	1.16%	1.74%	14.51%	45.26%	37.33%
PC3	4.15	0.86	0.77%	2.71%	17.79%	38.10%	40.62%
PC4	4.18	0.90	1.16%	4.06%	13.93%	37.14%	43.71%
<b>Perceived Credibility</b>	<b>4.145</b>	<b>0.655</b>	<b>1.11%</b>	<b>3.24%</b>	<b>15.72%</b>	<b>39.94%</b>	<b>39.99%</b>
PCQ1	4.10	0.91	1.35%	3.87%	17.02%	39.07%	38.68%
PCQ2	3.94	0.95	2.51%	3.48%	22.63%	40.43%	30.95%
PCQ3	3.97	0.95	1.93%	4.06%	22.82%	37.52%	33.66%
PCQ4	3.93	0.92	1.55%	3.87%	25.15%	38.88%	30.56%
<b>Perceived Content Quality</b>	<b>3.984</b>	<b>0.694</b>	<b>1.84%</b>	<b>3.82%</b>	<b>21.91%</b>	<b>38.97%</b>	<b>33.46%</b>
AI1	4.01	0.94	1.93%	4.84%	17.79%	41.59%	33.85%
AI2	3.73	1.08	3.09%	10.83%	25.15%	32.30%	28.63%
AI3	4.18	0.87	0.97%	2.71%	16.25%	37.52%	42.55%
AI4	4.14	0.87	0.77%	2.71%	19.15%	36.94%	40.43%
<b>Awareness and Interest</b>	<b>4.012</b>	<b>0.691</b>	<b>1.69%</b>	<b>5.27%</b>	<b>19.58%</b>	<b>37.09%</b>	<b>36.36%</b>
TE1	4.04	0.94	1.93%	3.68%	19.15%	38.88%	36.36%
TE2	4.11	0.87	1.16%	3.68%	15.09%	43.33%	36.75%
TE3	4.19	0.93	1.55%	4.06%	14.12%	34.04%	46.23%
TE4	4.15	0.94	1.16%	4.84%	15.86%	34.24%	43.91%
<b>Trust and Engagement</b>	<b>4.123</b>	<b>0.729</b>	<b>1.45%</b>	<b>4.06%</b>	<b>16.05%</b>	<b>37.62%</b>	<b>40.81%</b>
DI1	4.17	0.89	1.35%	3.68%	13.35%	39.85%	41.78%
DI2	4.00	0.93	1.16%	4.64%	22.05%	36.94%	35.20%
DI3	3.75	1.10	3.68%	9.67%	25.53%	30.37%	30.75%
DI4	4.18	0.88	1.35%	2.90%	14.70%	38.30%	42.75%
<b>Destination Image</b>	<b>4.026</b>	<b>0.703</b>	<b>1.89%</b>	<b>5.22%</b>	<b>18.91%</b>	<b>36.36%</b>	<b>37.62%</b>
MUI1	3.69	0.87	3.36%	6.04%	17.96%	39.88%	32.76%
MUI2	3.44	0.99	4.43%	11.55%	24.74%	31.33%	27.95%
MUI3	3.85	0.80	2.47%	4.08%	16.55%	36.14%	40.77%
MUI4	3.81	0.80	2.29%	4.08%	19.22%	35.60%	38.82%
<b>Social Media Usage Intensity</b>	<b>3.695</b>	<b>0.636</b>	<b>3.14%</b>	<b>6.44%</b>	<b>19.62%</b>	<b>35.74%</b>	<b>35.07%</b>
VI1	3.91	1.00	2.51%	5.80%	22.63%	36.36%	32.69%
VI2	4.10	0.92	0.97%	4.06%	19.54%	34.43%	41.01%
VI3	4.05	0.97	1.74%	5.80%	16.63%	37.14%	38.68%
VI4	4.01	0.94	1.35%	4.64%	21.66%	36.56%	35.78%
<b>Visit Intention to Jordan</b>	<b>4.018</b>	<b>0.734</b>	<b>1.64%</b>	<b>5.08%</b>	<b>20.12%</b>	<b>36.12%</b>	<b>37.04%</b>

As for the mediator variable, the mean for **Destination Image** (4.026) indicates that respondents already have a strong orientation toward exploration, adventure, and seeking unique experiences when they travel. This aligns with research showing today's travelers increasingly desire authentic, off-the-beaten-path activities compared to simple relaxation or passivity (J. J. Kim & Fesenmaier, 2017). As for the **Social Media Usage Intensity**, the mean (3.695) indicates that on average, respondents exhibited a relatively strong degree of engagement with social media platforms as part of their daily habits. The score signifies that participants accessed their social media accounts frequently, spent a substantial amount of time-consuming influencer and other content, and were actively involved in posting their updates, and stories, and interacting with others. Finally, **Visit Intention to Jordan** has a moderately high mean (4.018) but also a relatively high standard deviation (0.734) pointing to varied intentions to visit Jordan. This suggests mixed effectiveness across influencer types in converting awareness to actual visit intent. The finding suggests these survey participants are active travelers primed to respond favorably to influencer content showcasing novel destinations and activities in Jordan. Their past tourism behavior makes them more inclined to consider new destinations that offer immersive experiences as highlighted by influencers (Tien et al., 2019). This adventurous, experiential profile means they are an ideal target audience for influencer marketing focused on inspiring interest in travel to new places like Jordan. Overall, the preliminary descriptive statistics align with previous research on how influencer marketing impacts intention to visit where the higher means for trust/engagement and awareness/interest highlight the persuasive potential of influencers to shape audience attitudes and decisions.

### 5.2 Respondent Profile and Analysis of Demographic Differences

The sample composition and demographic attributes of respondents provide useful context on the study participants. Analysis was also conducted to determine if outcome perceptions varied based on demographic factors like age, gender, nationality, and past travel experience. Understanding the respondent profile and identifying any significant demographic differences can offer insights into which audience segments may be most receptive to influencer marketing. Table 3, Panel A summarizes the frequency distribution of key respondent characteristics while Panel B presents the results of ANOVA and t-tests examining differences across the demographic dimensions.

**Table 3**  
Respondent Profile and Analysis of Demographic Differences

Panel A: Demographic Profile of Respondents				Panel B: Statistical Differences Results			
Demographic	Sub-Group	Frequency	Percent	Dimension	F	Sig.	Favor of Differences
Age	18-27	190	36.8	Perceived Credibility	2.142	0.094	-
	28-37	177	34.2	Perceived Content Quality	3.040	0.029*	Yes
	38-47	102	19.7	Awareness and Interest	1.278	0.281	-
	More Than 47	48	9.3	Trust and Engagement	2.490	0.060	-
	Total	517	100.0	Destination Image	2.351	0.072	-
				Social Media Usage Intensity	1.180	0.303	-
Visit Intention to Jordan				1.395	0.243	-	
Perceived Credibility				-0.246	0.806	-	
Gender	Male	303	58.6	Perceived Content Quality	-0.503	0.615	-
				Awareness and Interest	-1.425	0.155	-
	Female	214	41.4	Trust and Engagement	-1.868	0.062	-
				Destination Image	-1.611	0.108	-
	Total	517	100	Social Media Usage Intensity	-1.315	0.167	-
				Visit Intention to Jordan	-0.829	0.407	-
Nationality	Africa	111	21.5	Perceived Credibility	3.076	0.010**	Yes
	Asia	162	31.3	Perceived Content Quality	0.186	0.968	-
	Australia	36	7.0	Awareness and Interest	1.276	0.273	-
	Europe	128	24.8	Trust and Engagement	1.210	0.303	-
	North America	43	8.3	Destination Image	1.692	0.135	-
	Latin America	37	7.2	Social Media Usage Intensity	1.178	0.294	-
	Total	517	100.0	Visit Intention to Jordan	1.863	0.099	-
Have You Traveled Internationally for Leisure in The Past 3 Years?	Yes	208	40.2	Perceived Credibility	-0.694	0.488	-
				Perceived Content Quality	0.655	0.513	-
	No	309	59.8	Awareness and Interest	-0.897	0.370	-
				Trust and Engagement	0.793	0.428	-
	Total	517	100.0	Destination Image	0.551	0.582	-
				Social Media Usage Intensity	-0.828	0.398	-
				Visit Intention to Jordan	1.214	0.225	-

Panel 1 provides the demographic breakdown of the survey respondents in terms of age, gender, nationality, and prior international travel experience. The sample skewed younger, with over 70% under age 38, and also predominantly male at 58.6%. This is not surprising given the focus on social media users who are active travelers. In terms of nationality, the largest share was from Asia (31.3%) followed by Europe (24.8%). Only 40% had traveled internationally for leisure in the past 3 years, indicating many were not highly experienced globetrotters.

ANOVA and independent samples t-tests were carried out to measure if there were significant differences in the key outcome variables based on demographic factors. The statistical results presented in Panel 2 show that age had a significant influence on perceptions of content quality, with younger respondents rating it higher. This aligns with literature suggesting younger consumers are more amenable to internet celebrities and influencer content (Meythaler et al., 2023). Nationality also impacted perceived credibility, with African participants rating it lower than Asians. This may be because Africa-based audiences are less familiar with the influencers featured. No other demographic variables exhibited significant effects. The overall lack of major differences suggests influencer marketing can be effective across diverse audience segments in shaping travel interests and intentions. Younger travelers may be slightly more receptive, but the positive reactions across age groups indicate influencers have wide generational appeal.

5.3 Correlation Analysis

Before testing the study hypotheses, correlation analysis was first conducted to assess the bivariate relationships among the key constructs. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix results.

**Table 4**  
Correlation Matrix Analysis

Correlations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Perceived Credibility							
2 Perceived Content Quality	.681**						
3 Awareness and Interest	.682**	.704**					
4 Trust and Engagement	.639**	.675**	.709**				
5 Destination Image	.635**	.651**	.762**	.747**			
6 Social Media Usage Intensity	.613**	.637**	.722**	.691**	.648**		
7 Visit Intention to Jordan	.576**	.596**	.674**	.634**	.720**	.712**	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown, all variables exhibited positive and statistically significant correlations, providing preliminary evidence of association between influencer exposure and the outcome measures. The strongest correlation emerged between Awareness/Interest

and destination image, suggesting those most inclined toward travel adventures respond most favorably to influencer destination advocacy.

The consistently positive and moderate to strong correlations align with the conceptual model proposing influencer content shapes audience attitudes and behaviors through enhancing credibility, interest, engagement, and intentions. The correlation matrix offers support for the hypothesized relationships before multivariate hypothesis testing. All bivariate correlations were below the 0.7 threshold, assuaging potential issues with multicollinearity in subsequent analyses. Overall, the correlations signify influencers can successfully increase destination awareness, trust, interest, and visit intentions to varying degrees based on content and user factors.

#### 5.4 Cross Loading

If a variable is found to have more than one significant loading it is termed a cross-loading, which makes it troublesome to label the factors that share the same construct and thus it is not easy to distinguish those factors and include them in separate concepts as shown in Table 5:

**Table 5**

Cross Loadings

	Perceived Credibility	Perceived Content Quality	Awareness and Interest	Trust and Engagement	Destination Image	Social Media Usage Intensity	Visit Intention to Jordan
PC1	<b>0.697</b>	0.453	0.480	0.411	0.445	0.445	0.419
PC2	<b>0.786</b>	0.517	0.507	0.480	0.480	0.489	0.435
PC3	<b>0.740</b>	0.497	0.505	0.465	0.450	0.473	0.390
PC4	<b>0.776</b>	0.570	0.574	0.562	0.533	0.556	0.482
PCQ1	0.499	<b>0.659</b>	0.476	0.488	0.456	0.473	0.407
PCQ2	0.544	<b>0.771</b>	0.492	0.510	0.484	0.495	0.456
PCQ3	0.503	<b>0.761</b>	0.568	0.505	0.484	0.519	0.427
PCQ4	0.487	<b>0.783</b>	0.568	0.509	0.510	0.529	0.484
AIV1	0.493	0.544	<b>0.737</b>	0.520	0.572	0.610	0.493
AIV2	0.443	0.494	<b>0.717</b>	0.409	0.535	0.554	0.479
AIV3	0.523	0.499	<b>0.737</b>	0.558	0.544	0.613	0.492
AIV4	0.562	0.537	<b>0.744</b>	0.625	0.579	0.649	0.521
TE1	0.527	0.564	0.589	<b>0.758</b>	0.590	0.646	0.510
TE2	0.537	0.566	0.597	<b>0.832</b>	0.607	0.679	0.487
TE3	0.471	0.508	0.557	<b>0.822</b>	0.585	0.655	0.487
TE4	0.504	0.505	0.551	<b>0.765</b>	0.597	0.638	0.530
DI1	0.508	0.466	0.522	0.595	<b>0.753</b>	0.623	0.530
DI2	0.464	0.479	0.576	0.568	<b>0.770</b>	0.638	0.547
DI3	0.456	0.510	0.617	0.525	<b>0.730</b>	0.624	0.507
DI4	0.456	0.464	0.527	0.524	<b>0.699</b>	0.583	0.550
MUI1	0.512	0.546	0.581	0.546	0.594	<b>0.804</b>	0.495
MUI2	0.504	0.526	0.568	0.533	0.596	<b>0.806</b>	0.501
MUI3	0.494	0.493	0.543	0.510	0.645	<b>0.727</b>	0.516
MUI4	0.492	0.483	0.550	0.643	0.559	<b>0.707</b>	0.536
VI1	0.422	0.516	0.506	0.478	0.525	0.503	<b>0.747</b>
VI2	0.459	0.465	0.512	0.531	0.553	0.532	<b>0.790</b>
VI3	0.441	0.414	0.506	0.459	0.541	0.502	<b>0.776</b>
VI4	0.447	0.430	0.548	0.475	0.592	0.538	<b>0.751</b>

Table 5 demonstrates that each variable is highly correlated with its intended construct, indicating no issues with cross-loadings between variables. As suggested by (Hair et al., 2010), all variable loadings exceed the 0.60 thresholds, confirming their relationships to the appropriate constructs.

#### 5.5 Discriminant Validity

Table 6 presents the outcomes of the discriminant validity analysis using the Square Root of the AVE method (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All indicator loadings on their assigned latent variables are higher than loadings on other variables. This fulfills the requirements for discriminant validity.

**Table 6**

Discriminant Validity Analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Perceived Credibility	0.751						
Perceived Content Quality	0.681	0.745					
Awareness and Interest	0.690	0.707	0.738				
Trust and Engagement	0.643	0.675	0.722	0.795			
Destination Image	0.638	0.650	0.732	0.749	0.760		
Social Media Usage Intensity	0.527	0.711	0.682	0.622	0.691	0.748	
Visit Intention to Jordan	0.578	0.596	0.677	0.635	0.722	0.714	0.766



Table 6 shows that the loading of each indicator on its designated latent variable exceeds its loading on other variables. This signifies the degree to which the measures diverge from and do not correlate with conceptually unrelated constructs, supporting discriminant validity.

5.6 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity shows the level to which indicators of the same construct converge and was assessed based on (Hair et al., 2010) criteria: Cronbach’s alpha >0.70, composite reliability >0.70, and average variance extracted (AVE) >0.50.

Table 7

Convergent Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	The average variance extracted (AVE)
Perceived Credibility	0.741	0.837	0.563
Perceived Content Quality	0.731	0.833	0.556
Awareness and Interest	0.714	0.823	0.538
Trust and Engagement	0.805	0.873	0.632
Destination Image	0.721	0.827	0.545
Social Media Usage Intensity	0.716	0.822	0.531
Visit Intention to Jordan	0.765	0.850	0.587

As shown in Table 7, all Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, and AVE values meet recommended thresholds, indicating the constructs exhibit satisfactory convergent validity.

5.7 Assessment of the Structural Model

As depicted in Fig. 2, the structural model aims to evaluate the role of social media influencers in shaping destination image and intention to visit Jordan moderated by social media usage intensity. The model demonstrates that perceived credibility, content quality, awareness/interest, and trust/engagement account for 14.2% of the variance in destination image and perceived credibility, content quality, awareness/interest, and trust/engagement mediated by destination image and moderated by social media usage intensity account for 65.8% in intentions to visit Jordan. According to (Falk & Miller, 1992), R2 values above 10% are acceptable, indicating the model has good explanatory power.

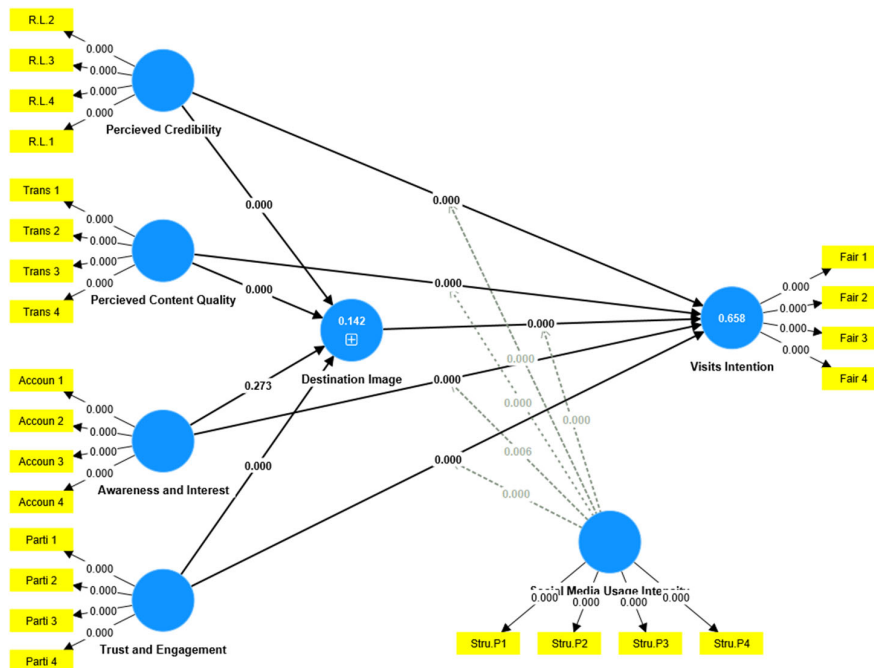


Fig. 2. Structural Model

Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, SEM bootstrapping analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 software. The results shown in Table 8 provide the basis for evaluating the hypothesized relationships.

**Table 8**  
Path Analysis

Main H	Sub-H	Path	Coefficients	S.E	T statistics	P values
H1	1	Perceived Credibility → Destination Image	0.219	0.060	3.678	0.000
	2	Perceived Content Quality → Destination Image	0.314	0.079	3.970	0.000
	3	Awareness and Interest → Destination Image	0.088	0.080	1.095	0.273
	4	Trust and Engagement → Destination Image	0.280	0.070	4.025	0.000
H2	1	Perceived Credibility → Visits Intention	0.208	0.050	4.144	0.000
	2	Perceived Content Quality → Visits Intention	0.179	0.046	3.936	0.000
	3	Awareness and Interest → Visits Intention	0.173	0.048	3.585	0.000
	4	Trust and Engagement → Visits Intention	0.541	0.051	10.529	0.000
H3	1	Destination Image → Visits Intention	0.226	0.044	5.183	0.000
	2	Social Media Usage Intensity → Visits Intention	0.198	0.041	4.785	0.000
H4	1	Perceived Credibility → Destination Image → Visits Intention	0.019	0.004	4.482	0.000
	2	Perceived Content Quality → Destination Image → Visits Intention	0.028	0.006	4.654	0.000
	3	Awareness and Interest → Destination Image → Visits Intention	0.031	0.007	4.683	0.000
	4	Trust and Engagement → Destination Image → Visits Intention	0.054	0.013	4.103	0.000
H5	1	Social Media Usage Intensity x Destination Image → Visits Intention	0.110	0.031	3.515	0.000
	2	Social Media Usage Intensity x Perceived Credibility → Visits Intention	0.407	0.058	6.998	0.000
	3	Social Media Usage Intensity x Perceived Content Quality → Visits Intention	0.271	0.061	4.436	0.000
	4	Social Media Usage Intensity x Awareness and Interest → Visits Intention	0.425	0.059	3.238	0.006
	5	Social Media Usage Intensity x Trust and Engagement → Visits Intention	0.734	0.049	14.905	0.000

The conceptual model and hypothesized relationships were quantitatively tested using structural equation modeling. The SEM results provided in Table 8 present the path coefficients and significance values used to evaluate the hypotheses.

### H1: Influencer Marketing Factors and Destination Image

H1 proposed that influencer marketing positively impacts destination image. The results provided partial support. Perceived credibility ( $\beta=0.219$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), Perceived content quality ( $\beta=0.314$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and trust/engagement ( $\beta=0.280$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) exhibited significant positive effects on destination image. However, awareness/interest had a non-significant effect ( $\beta=0.088$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

These findings indicate that perceptions of influencer credibility, content quality, and developing trust through engagement can enhance beliefs about a destination's attributes and offerings (Jin et al., 2019). But simply creating general awareness may not improve image perceptions without establishing credibility and connections.

### H2: Influencer Marketing Factors and Visit Intentions

H2 posited that influencer marketing positively affects visit intentions. This was strongly supported as all pathways were significant - perceived credibility ( $\beta=0.208$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), content quality ( $\beta=0.179$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), awareness/interest ( $\beta=0.173$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and trust/engagement ( $\beta=0.541$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

In particular, trust/engagement exhibited the strongest impact, aligned with findings that influencer advocacy fosters travel intentions by forming parasocial bonds with followers (Tien et al., 2019). The results validate influencers' ability to motivate visits through credibility, content quality, awareness, and relationships.

### H3: Destination Image, Usage Intensity, and Visit Intentions

As hypothesized in H3, destination image ( $\beta=0.226$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and usage intensity ( $\beta=0.198$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) positively predicted visit intentions. Favorable impressions of a destination based on influencer portrayals along with greater social media engagement strengthen travel motivation (Quintal et al., 2010).

### H4: Mediating Role of Destination Image

H4 proposed destination image mediates the effects of influencer marketing on visit intentions. Full mediation was supported as all indirect pathways were significant perceived credibility ( $\beta=0.019$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), content quality ( $\beta=0.028$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), awareness/interest ( $\beta=0.031$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and trust/engagement ( $\beta=0.054$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). By enhancing destination image, influencers elicited higher intentions to visit (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991).

### H5: Moderating Role of Usage Intensity

The moderation hypotheses in H5 were supported, with usage intensity amplifying the mediated relationships between influencer factors perceived credibility ( $\beta=0.407$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), content quality ( $\beta=0.271$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), awareness/interest ( $\beta=0.425$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and trust/engagement ( $\beta=0.734$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), destination image ( $\beta=0.110$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and visit intentions. Heavy social media users exhibit greater susceptibility to influencer marketing effects, validating usage intensity as a key moderating variable (Alhabash et al., 2014).

## 6. Conclusion

This study provided an in-depth empirical analysis of how exposure to social media influencers impacts tourist attitudes and behaviors toward the destination of Jordan. A key finding showed influencer marketing content significantly enhanced

awareness, interest, engagement, destination image, and intentions to visit Jordan among the sample of tourists surveyed. Specifically, the awareness/interest and trust/engagement constructs were found to be the strongest drivers of tourist behavioral outcomes based on the structural equation modeling analysis. This highlights the vital role influencers play in sparking early motivation and building enduring emotional bonds with their audiences as trusted advisors. Content quality also emerged as an important factor in cementing intentions to visit by making the destination more appealing through informative and inspiring posts.

These results make a significant theoretical and practical contribution by validating the effectiveness of influencer marketing as a promotional strategy for motivating potential tourists along their travel journey. The findings provide novel quantitative evidence substantiating influencers' tangible ability to convert social media users into actual travelers who visit desired destinations. For destination marketing organizations, the research offers actionable insights into optimizing partnerships with relevant bloggers, vloggers, and social media creators. Influencers should be leveraged as pivotal storytellers and influencers to showcase unique attractions and experiences that inspire travel. Developing large diverse networks across multiple platforms enables influencer campaigns to achieve wide reach and persuasive impact.

However, the study is limited by its narrow focus on a single country context. Further research should replicate the quantitative analysis across diverse international destinations to enhance generalizability. Additionally, incorporating objective behavioral data on actual bookings and visits attributed to influencers could enrich the self-reported findings, although obtaining such data poses challenges. As social media enables more far-reaching, personalized connections between brands and global audiences, the persuasive power and economic value of influencers will only continue rising. Destinations and tourism promoters that can strategically leverage influencer marketing will gain significant competitive advantage in the marketplace by driving awareness, favorability, and visitation from high-value demographics.

This study makes a vital early contribution by establishing influencer marketing as an impactful strategic capability for tourism growth. The empirical approach quantitatively demonstrates the mechanisms and outcomes of effective influencer content in motivating travelers. As practitioners continue optimizing partnerships with digital creators, academic research must also advance theoretical knowledge of this domain at the nexus of social media, persuasion, and tourism behavior. In summary, by validating influencers' power to shape audience attitudes and actions, this research paves the way for further scholarship on optimal influencer marketing strategies. Meanwhile, the practical findings equip destination marketing organizations with actionable insights to leverage influencers for tangible returns. Achieving the dual goals of rigorous theory development and managerial relevance will ensure academic research sustains value in advancing marketing practice and tourism promotion.

## 7. Theoretical Implications

This research makes several significant contributions to advancing theoretical knowledge of influencer marketing in tourism:

Provides empirical validation of influencers as impactful digital opinion leaders that shape tourist attitudes and behaviors aligned with foundational theories. Shows how specific types of influencer content, engagement, credibility, and quality affect tourists. Provide evidence relating to influencers' ability to direct social media users to destinations. Explain the theoretical mechanisms of marketing influencers by investigating the differential effects of cognitive, credibility, and affective dimensions on tourist decision-making. Provide quantitative evidence for integrating marketing influencers with travel behavior models. Finally, this study contributes to tourism behavior theories by providing an empirical study on the effects of influencers.

## 8. Managerial Implications

Destination marketing companies have to view marketing influencers as a main strategy and allocate a sufficient budget for influencer campaigns. Partnerships with relevant bloggers, vloggers, and social media personalities enable DMOs to motivate and inspire potential visitors. Influencer content needs to be carefully curated for quality and customization. Managers should facilitate influencers in showcasing unique attractions and experiences through creative storytelling where access to special events and locations can enrich content. A diverse influencer network across multiple platforms is optimal for maximizing audience reach where leveraging influencers on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and blogs covers different traveler segments. Performance tracking of influencer partnerships provides data to refine strategies. Metrics on awareness, interest, and actual visits attributed to influencer's guide's optimal platform selection and targeting. In summary, a strategic influencer program enables Digimon Masters Online (DMOs) to inspire travelers, stimulate positive perceptions, and drive visitation where managers should view it as a high-return capability for building destination awareness, appeal, and growth.

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