

The Effectiveness of Influencers' Credibility on Digital Media Platforms in Relation to the Intention to Visit Future Saudi Touristic Destinations among Three Saudi Generations

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of digital media influencers' credibility in relation to the intention to visit future touristic destinations in Saudi Arabia among three Saudi generations. It applies Ohanian's Source Credibility Model as its theoretical framework within a quantitative methodology. Using a survey which was distributed to a stratified random sample of 384 subjects divided into 3 strata of Saudi generations (X, Y and Z), it concludes that there is a statistical correlation between all three dimensions of an influencer's credibility, on the one hand, and the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations, on the other hand.

Keywords : Effectiveness ‘ Influencers Credibility‘ Digital Media Platforms ‘Touristic Destinations.

Introduction:

The Saudi government's focus in its 2030 Vision plans on making the country more attractive for tourists comes from a conviction that tourism has a key role to play in economic diversification, in addition to its promotion of Saudi identity and culture (Khan, 2020). In order to achieve the 2030 Vision objectives, the Saudi government launched a number of executive programs, one of which was the Saudi Public Investment Fund, which initiated major projects such as NEOM, Qiddiya, the Red Sea and AMAALA (The Ministry of Tourism, 2020). In addition to their planned role in diversifying Saudi economy, these projects contribute vastly to the development of the tourism sector in the country and gives it a new position on the world's tourism map (Saudi Public Investment Fund, 2017).

Attracting digital media influencers is probably one of the most effectual methods to adopt in promoting touristic destinations as demonstrated by its deployment to enhance various countries' tourism publicity campaigns. To cite one example, in 2011, New

Zealand's Tourism Board collaborated with Chinese blogger Tao Chen in its promotional campaign which lasted till the latter part of 2012 with the purpose of attracting Chinese travellers (Tourism New Zealand, 2012). The move proved effective as the statistics showed an increase of 38% in the number of Chinese tourists for 2012 compared to the previous year (Ministry of Business, 2012).

The evident effect which influencers can have has led researchers to consider them the new travel guides who offer what cannot be found in conventional, printed travel guides and who can provide tourists with what they need in a more creative, interactive, emotional and smarter way. Through the content they create over digital media, whether it is an image, a video or any other type of material, influencers share their trips and destinations with their followers in the form of simple travel diaries about hotel stays, food experiences at restaurants and similar themes (Kiralova & Pavlicecka, 2015). One explanation for how influencers have attained such effect on their followers compared to other methods of promotion is the constant communication they maintain with them through designing the type of content sought after and needed by such followers (Chiu, 2018), leading them to view the influencers they follow as more credible, attractive and trustworthy compared to what they are exposed to over conventional publicity methods, which, in turn, increases the possibility of following their recommendations (Nouri, 2018).

In order for an influencer to effectively influence his/her followers, it is essential to be knowledgeable of and attuned to the interests and expectations of different generations and to have the values and qualities which followers admire and tend to follow an influencer for (Li & Du, 2011; Xu & Pratt, 2018). Every generation has its own set of beliefs and interests (Strauss & Howe, 1997) which hugely affects understanding each generation's response respectively and the extent of its acceptance of influencers' promotional methods and the possibility of being convinced by them (Hanifawati, Dewanti, & Saputri, 2019).

Considering the number of Saudi digital media users, which reached 29.3 million using them almost daily, according to statistics from the beginning of 2022 (Datareportal, 2022), and their activity level, this study aims to assess the effectiveness of digital media influencers' credibility in relation to the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations among three different Saudi generations.

Theoretical framework:

1- The intention to visit future touristic destinations in Saudi Arabia

The intention to visit is defined as a noticeable probability in the behavior of the tourist to visit a specific touristic destination during a certain period of time (Whang, et al. 2016). Jang and Namkung explain that the stimulation of travel intentions is an effective indicator of touristic behavior since a traveller's mentality greatly affects his/her future travel destinations. Various organizations in the field of tourism have benefitted from influencers' increasingly prominent role in attracting tourists to the destinations they

aim to promote (Kracht & Wang, 2009; De Veirman Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017; Uzunoglu & kip, 2014).

In one of the recent studies investigating influencers' participation in promoting tourism boards, Xu and Pratt attempt to analyze the effectiveness of hiring influencers in promoting Chinese touristic destinations to Generation Y, defined as those born between 1980 and 1994, through applying the self-congruency theory to examine congruence between influencers and consumers. More specifically, the study aims to address congruence between the group of social media influencers involved and the promoted touristic destinations, in addition to verifying its mediation role in relation to the influence of the attitude towards the advertisement on the attitude towards the destination. The study, furthermore, examines congruence between influencers and consumers through conducting a pre-test prior to the main study to identify the most popular influencer and destination. Based on the result of the pre-test, 4 advertisements were designed. Two influencers and two destinations were selected so that each influencer promoted each of the two destinations (with Papi endorsing Kyoto, Papi endorsing Seoul, Pony endorsing Kyoto, Pony endorsing Seoul). The main study applies a quantitative approach through distributing a questionnaire containing randomly one of the four advertisements to a sample group of 234 Generation Y individuals. The findings indicate that congruence between social media influencers and the destinations they promote is positively linked to the attitude towards an advertisement for a specific destination and the intention to visit it. However, this variable failed to predict attitudes towards a destination. The attitude towards an advertisement, the findings also confirm, positively affects the attitude towards the destination it promotes and the intention to visit it. The study also found that congruence between influencers and consumers has a positive effect on the intention to visit a destination, although the attitude towards the advertisement or the destination it advertizes cannot be predicted.

Researchers such as Veen and song point out the effect of source credibility on the intention to visit a destination (2014). In an attempt to understand the effect of a cognitive image from a commercial featuring a celebrity on tourists' intention to visit the advertized destination, they ask the double question: Do celebrities positively influence individuals' attitudes and, if the answer is yes, do such attitudes lead to a positive intention to visit the advertized destinations? Through adopting Ohanian's scale (1990), the study examines the effect of celebrities' credibility on the attitudes adopted by individuals and whether such an effect leads to the intention to visit a destination. Adopting a quantitative methodology, the researchers depended on a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 1044 Chinese tourists selected based on a certain level of probability that they would visit Hong Kong, with every questionnaire copy containing a random printed advertisement featuring a local or an international celebrity. The results highlight the considerable effect of the celebrities' credibility on individuals' attitudes and travel intentions as the sample group agreed that local celebrities were more experienced and knowledgeable in their promotion of the selected touristic destination due to their better knowledge of the country's dominant cultural values. The findings also underline the positive effect of credibility on individuals' adopted attitudes

towards the advertisement, which is considered essential for personal evaluation of celebrity advertisements, in addition to being a prerequisite to convince an advertisement's target group of the adopted attitude by that celebrity towards the destination. The study, however, reveals that the attractiveness of a celebrity has little effect on the evaluation of the advertisement when the advertisement is not related to the audience. Nonetheless, a celebrity's attractiveness, according to these findings, does have a positive effect on the attitude towards the destination, which demonstrates that it consequently affects the probability of visiting the advertised destination considerably, highlighting the importance of selecting the right celebrity for the advertisement.

An overview of touristic destinations in Saudi Arabia shows that, driven by the government's Vision 2030 policies, tourism has been promoted as a key element of consolidating national economy. Enormous state investments have been granted to touristic and cultural projects launched to enhance the country's new image as a touristic destination (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). The Saudi government recently announced the launch of giant new projects and futuristic cities to be created from scratch. Funded mainly by the Saudi Public Investment Fund (Public Investment Fund, 2022), one of these projects is NEOM, probably the most ambitious project of its kind in the entire world. It is a daring concept and a vision of what the future might look like. Another big investment in Saudi tourism is the Qiddiya Project, which, in addition to being the biggest entertainment project in the region, is intended to be a new capital for sports, entertainment and culture. The Red Sea Project is another SPIF-funded gigantic venture in the field of tourism, distinctive for the variety of natural views it is planned to offer, from desert landscapes, mountains, valleys and dormant volcanoes to the deepest reefs and rich archaeological sites (Public Investment Fund, 2022). Hailed as the Riviera of the Middle East, AMAALA is yet another component of this colossal package of investments in tourism. It aims to create a new concept of luxury tourism which centres on well-being, health and therapy along the coast of the Red Sea (Public Investment Fund, 2018). In addition to their economic contribution, these projects are designed to achieve the transformation of Saudi Arabia into a major international competitor in the field of tourism (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

2- Digital media influencers:

Digital media platforms are nowadays considered a key element of the promotional blend of any organization's publicity campaign since hiring influencers on such platforms is an ideal way to reach target audiences, deliver the message it aims to send and convince that audience of it in more creative and diverse ways (Vangelov, 2019; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Studying the credibility of social media influencers, as a result, has been the focus of several recent research studies such as Yunis's (2020) which attempts to study the dimensions of influencers' credibility as perceived by their followers, in addition to measuring their purchase response. Applying a quantitative methodology, a questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 268 students from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The study concludes that influencers' credibility plays an important role

as a result of the exposure of their followers to the advertisements they constantly post on digital media. As for influencers' credibility dimensions, the findings point to trustworthiness as the most important, followed by attraction and finally expertise. An influencer's credibility, they show, greatly affects the attitudes towards an advertisement, which, consequently, has a considerable effect on the brand's direction and consumer's purchase behavior.

In their investigation of the effect social media influencers' credibility has on purchase intention, Weismueller et al. (2020) focus on the effect of advertising disclosure on source credibility and purchase intention, and that of follower numbers as a control variable, since it functions as an indicator of source credibility over digital media. This quantitative research was conducted using a survey distributed to a sample of 306 digital media users in Germany, all of whom were from the 18-34 age group, as it was considered to be the most active user group on these platforms in Germany. The study's findings highlight the way advertising disclosure indirectly affects consumers' purchase interest through its effect on source attractiveness. Consumer purchase intention, the study also finds, is largely influenced by source credibility during decision making. The study, furthermore, reveals that the number of followers favourably affect source attractiveness, trustworthiness and purchase intention.

Research in this area has consistently pointed out to the importance of influencers' messages as a major influence on the intention to visit a destination due to the credibility such messages maintain for the followers of an influencer compared to direct messages and recommendations via conventional publicity channels. Yilmazdogan et al. (2021) examine the effect of social media influencers' credibility dimensions (attractiveness, trustworthiness and experience) on travel intention, and attempt to find out whether the interaction with influencers over digital media can play a mediation role in the influence of these credibility dimensions on travel intention. The study applies Ohanian's source credibility scale within a quantitative methodology through a survey distributed to a sample of 379 generation Y and generation Z individuals living in Eskisehir in Turkey. The study concludes that trustworthiness and expertise have a positive effect on travel intention for generations Y and Z. The study also points to an average correlation between trustworthiness and expertise, on the one hand, and travel intention, on the other. The attractiveness component of influencers' credibility, the researchers conclude, does not affect travel intention.

Based on this overview, we opted for applying the Ohanian Source Credibility Model (1990) in this study as a tool to measure the effectiveness of digital media influencers' credibility in promoting future tourist destinations in Saudi Arabia to different Saudi generations and stimulating them to visit these destinations.

The Ohanian model is considered the most applicable for examining the credibility of digital media influencers when they promote touristic destinations as its dimensions include detailed positive characteristics in the sender that might affect the receiver's acceptance of the message (Ohanian, 1990). The model has been adopted as a tool in studying celebrities' promotional activities online. Due to the recent prominence of digital media influencers, their growing influence on individuals and organizations' increasing tendency to deploy their popularity as a promotional tool. Research on the topic has noticeably opted for utilizing the Ohanian scale to measure influencers'

credibility. The scale is made up of three dimensions, each of which has five subscale items as follows:

1. Trustworthiness:

Trust, according to Ohanian's scale, is defined as the receiver's trust and acceptance of the speaker, which can be described as the source's ability to give an impartial opinion, in addition to its sincerity and believability (Belch & Belch, 1994; McGinnies & Ward, 1980; Ohanian, 1990). This dimension is the most sought after by the audience (Ahmed et al., 2014; Saleem, 2017). According to Ohanian (1990), in order for an influencer to achieve trustworthiness, he/she has to be dependable, honest, reliable, sincere and trustworthy.

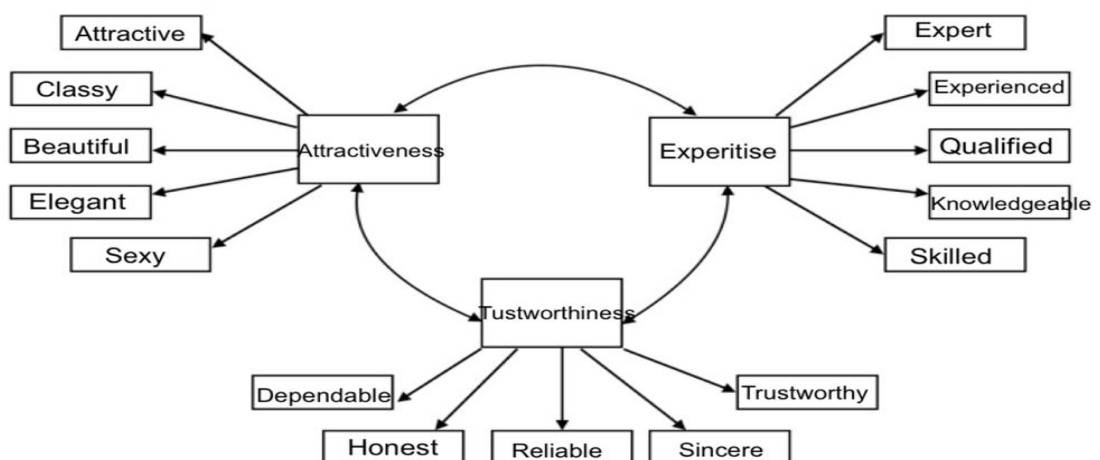
2. Expertise:

Expertise here is defined as extensive knowledge of the subject in the sense that a source can be considered an expert if he/she shows wide knowledge about the product (Ohanian, 1990; Apejoye, 2013). Oyeniyi (2014) states that a source's ability to persuade is enhanced by the expertise he/she possesses, which enables him/her to give the message sound reinforcement. There are five subscale items under expertise which create the image of an expert source: being skilled, qualified, knowledgeable, experienced and expert.

3. Attractiveness:

Attractiveness is defined here as an essential cue which leads to the compound effect of the source's condition and physical appearance (Erdogan, 1999; Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2003). Joseph (1982) emphasizes attractiveness as an essential element of source credibility. According to Erdogan (1999) among others (Oyniyi, 2014; Silvera & Austad, 2004), attractiveness is not limited to physical features but can include being attractive for intangible aspects such as life style or competence. The five elements of attractiveness are perceived as being: attractive, classy, beautiful, elegant and sexy.

Figure 1: Source Credibility Scale (Ohanian, 1990).



Considering how new these Saudi future touristic destinations are and the unavailability, to the knowledge of the researcher, of any published research on them, this study addresses the effectiveness of digital media influencers' credibility in relation to the intention to visit these destinations in the future among different Saudi generations. It focuses on three generations: X, Y and Z, which McCrindle and Wolfinger (2010) define as demarcated by the 1965-1979-time brackets for generation X, 1980-1994, for generation Y and 1995-2010 for generation Z. The main research question of this paper attempts to answer is: What is the relationship between digital media influencers' credibility when they talk about future Saudi touristic destinations and the intention to visit these destinations among a sample of respondents representing Saudi generations X, Y and Z?

Methodology:

As a research study which aims to measure the effectiveness of digital media influencers' credibility when it comes to the intention to visit Saudi future touristic destinations among three Saudi generations, this research belongs to the category of descriptive studies the objective of which is collecting the necessary data about the phenomenon under investigation to provide a description of its dimensions and dynamics.

A quantitative approach was adopted as the best suited for achieving the study's objectives and covering all the areas of its topic. the quantitative approach ensures that the discussion and analysis of results are far from any effects of bias. Due to the popularity of influencers with a huge number of Saudis from different generations, the researcher perceived a need for collecting data from a considerable number of respondents and analyzing such data using quantitative tools which avoid subjectivity and bias. A survey was designed for the purpose of this study through combining multiple scales.

Study population:

According to the Saudi General Authority for Statistics (2020), our study population represents 70% of the total population of Saudi Arabia which is 34 million. The study population is made up of three generations, defined based on the year of birth: generation X, as those born between 1965 and 1979, generation Y, as those born between 1980 and 1994, and generation Z, as those born between 1995 and 2010. The study did not include any respondent aged under 18 in its sample selection since a tourist is supposed to have a certain level of income which is unlikely to be the case for those from that age group, in addition to the fact that they are usually not in a position which enables them to make the decision by themselves to visit a touristic destination.

Sample:

The study sample was selected randomly from respondents to whom the selected influencer was familiar. The advantage of opting for this type of sample is that any individual from the study population can be part of the sample (Alhaizan, 2010).

Stratified sampling was adopted as it does not depend on random respondent selection but gives the researcher full control over who to include. That the research question revolved around the variable of different Saudi generations was another consideration in deciding to use stratified sampling (Alhaizan, 2010). The surveysystem.com website was used to determine the sample size and arrive at the final number of respondents, which lead to the conclusion that in order to reach accurate findings, a sample of 384 individuals from all three generations would be needed with a confidence interval of 95% and an error margin of 5%. In its final version, the sample looked as follows:

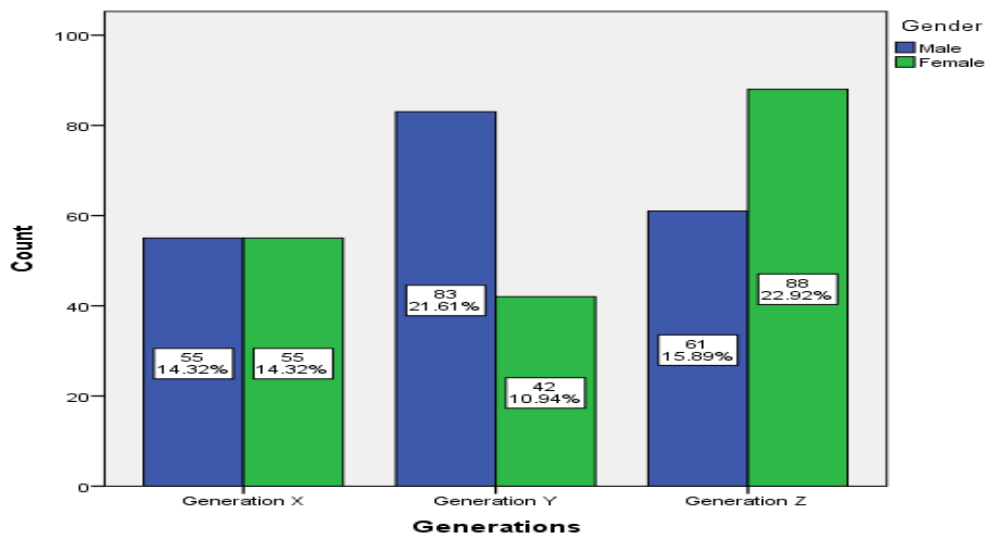


Diagram 1: Sample description:

As shown in Diagram 1, the biggest group was that of generation Z, with a total number of 149 subjects, 88 female and 61 male respondents, followed by generation Y with a total number of 125 respondents, 83 males and 42 females, and, finally, generation X with a total number of 110 respondents, divided equally in terms of gender into 55 males and 55 females. The entire sample, however, was made up of 199 male respondents, representing 51.82%, and 185 female respondents, representing 48.18% of the total number.

Measurements:

The survey used in the study was designed based on the literature review which showed that previous research on the topic mainly used this tool. The survey was created on the Google Forms website and then sent over Twitter to followers of the Saudi Tourism Authority's account as it is the body responsible for the promotion of Saudi touristic destinations (Saudi Press Agency, 2020) in order to reach the target sample of Saudis who were interested in tourism from generations X, Y and Z.

The survey is divided into three main parts which aim to measure the effectiveness of digital media influencers' credibility in relation to the intention to visit future Saudi

tourist destinations among three Saudi generations. The first part of the survey was devoted to the respondents' demographic information in terms of generation, gender, marital status, income and education. This part also included a section which ascertained that the respondent was familiar with influencer X and that he/she did not have detailed knowledge of the selected Saudi future tourism destinations in order to eliminate any respondent who did not know the influencer or who had extensive knowledge of the destinations. Once respondents finished filling out this section, they were shown a basic promotional video about one of the destinations by influencer X.

In the second part, the influencer's credibility was measured using Ohanian's source credibility Scale (1990) in order to illustrate the subjects' response to the influencer based on the promotional video they had seen and their previous experience with him. Using this scale, the influencer's credibility was measured through 15 statements on a 7-point semantic differential scale, with 1 being very negative and 7 very positive. Source trustworthiness was measured through 5 subscale items: dependable/undependable, honest/dishonest, reliable/unreliable, sincere/insincere, and trustworthy/untrustworthy, while his expertise was measured through being an expert/not an expert, experienced/inexperienced, knowledgeable/unknowledgeable, qualified/unqualified, and skilled/unskilled and his attractiveness through being attractive/unattractive, classy/not classy, handsome-beautiful/ugly, elegant/plain and sexy/not sexy.

The third part of the survey measured visit intention using Horng et al.'s scale (2012) through posing 3 questions ("I might visit future Saudi tourism destinations in the future / I plan to visit Saudi tourism destinations in the future / I hope I will visit Saudi tourism destinations in the future") and asking respondents to give their opinions based on Likert Scale (from 1 for "Strongly disagree" to 5 for "Strongly agree").

To assess the survey's validity, two professors specialized in media and communication studies were consulted. The clarity and inclusiveness of the statements used as tools were assessed in the process and certain changes were made to the final version of the survey based on the professors' feedback. Cronbach's alpha was applied to measure the questionnaire's reliability with the result reaching a high reliability level of 0.936.

Results

The main research question about the relationship between digital media influencers' credibility and the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations among a sample of three Saudi generations X, Y and Z has been analyzed through applying simple linear regression as a statistical tool for measuring the correlation between two ordinal level variables and predicting the value of one variable based on the value of another. The correlation coefficient between influencers' credibility and its dimensions' subscale items, on the one hand, and the intention to visit future touristic destinations in Saudi Arabia, on the other, was also calculated. An F-test was then applied in order to find out if the correlation between influencers' credibility and the intention to visit is linear.

Table 1: Pearson's correlation coefficient between digital media influencers' credibility and the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations

As can be seen in Table 1, the correlation coefficient for the relationship between influencer X's credibility and the intention to visit the promoted touristic destinations is

INTENTION TO VISIT	Variables	Pearson	R Square	Sig
	Trustworthiness	0.216	0.047	0.00
	Experience	0.217	0.047	0.00
	Attractiveness	0.062	0.069	0.00
	Influencer Credibility	0.250	0.062	0.00

low and statistically significant as the correlation between trustworthiness and the intention to visit was 0.216 with a variance of 0.047, and a statistical significance of 0.00, which is less than 0.05, indicating a correlation of statistical significance between the influencer's trustworthiness and the intention to visit. As for the correlation between experience and visit intention, it was 0.217, while the variance was 0.047 with a statistical significance of 0.00, which indicates a statistically significant correlation between the influencer's expertise the intention to visit promoted destinations since it is less than 0.05. A correlation between the attractiveness variable and that of visit intention was found with a value of 0.262 and a variance of 0.069 with a statistical significance of 0.00, demonstrating that there is a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The correlation between the overall credibility of the influencer and the intention to visit was 0.062, with a statistical significance of 0.00, which, as was the case with every individual dimension, shows a correlation of statistical significance between the influencer's credibility as a whole and the intention to visit the promoted destinations.

To further demonstrate the relationship between the influencer's credibility variable and its subscale dimensions, on the one hand, and the intention to visit variable, on the other, the data was analyzed using an ANOVA test.

INTENTION TO VISIT	Variables	ANOVA	Sig
	Trustworthiness	18.727	0.00
	Experience	18.816	0.00
	Attractiveness	28.198	0.00
	Influencer Credibility	25.457	0.00

Table 2: Regression value in an ANOVA test of the relationship between digital media influencers' credibility and the intention to visit future touristic destinations

Table 2 shows the regression value as measured using the ANOVA test for the relationship between a digital media influencer's credibility and the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations. The ANOVA value for the relationship between trustworthiness and the intention to visit is 18.727 with a statistical significance of 0.00, demonstrating a linear relationship between influencer Y and Z's trustworthiness and visit intention, which contributes to predicting visit intention. As for the relationship between expertise and the intention to visit as measured in the same ANOVA, it was 18.816 with a significance of 0.00, again, demonstrating a linear relationship between the influencer's expertise and visit intention, which boosts intention prediction. The relationship between attractiveness and the intention to visit measured 28.198 according to this ANOVA with a significance of 0.00, as with the other two dimensions, illustrating the linear relationship between an influencer's attractiveness and visit intention, which, in the same way as with trustworthiness and expertise, contributes to the ability to predict the intention to visit the promoted destinations. Finally, the relationship between the overall credibility of the influencer and the intention to visit based on this ANOVA measured 25.457 with a significance of 0.00, which, as with each individual dimension, further demonstrates the linear relationship between his credibility as a whole and visit intention, and enhances the possibility to predict the intention to visit.

All the relationships between the influencer's credibility variables and its subscale dimensions, on the one hand, and the intention to visit the promoted destinations, on the other, were at a statistical significance of 0.00, which leads us to the conclusion that there is a linear relationship with statistical significance between the credibility of the influencer, as a whole and with every individual dimension's variable, and visit intention which can also enhance visit intention prediction.

Discussion:

This study shows that there is a relationship between trustworthiness and visit intention, which can also help in predicting the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations. One interpretation of these results is that such an intention and the actual visit are behaviors which require commitment to travelling with all its expenses, and therefore this intention and making the decision to actually visit the destination can only materialize as the result of being persuaded by a trustworthy person. The findings of this study match those arrived at by Yilmazdogan et al. (2021) in terms of the relationship between trustworthiness and the intention to travel to a certain destination. According to George (2020), trustworthiness is the factor that drives followers' response and leads to their intention to visit the destination which their favorite influencer recommends. While this study uses Ohanian's scale (1990) as one of its key tools, the results we reached differed from those reached by Ohanian when it came to trustworthiness as Ohanian's investigation concludes that there is no relationship between trustworthiness and purchase intention. As for expertise, our investigation reveals a relationship between this dimension and visit intention and also shows that expertise can enable the prediction of visit intention. This result can be explained by the

fact that influencer X's field of influence is tourism and, hence, there is a relationship between his expertise and the intention to visit. The findings of this study, furthermore, confirm those of previous research on the topic (Caraka et al., 2022; Yilmazdogan et al., 2021) which highlight the direct and significant effect of influencers' expertise on the intention to visit a certain touristic destination. Furthermore, through the use of Ohanian's scale (1990), we reached similar results to those arrived at by Ohanian regarding individuals' evaluation of influencers' expertise and its strong link to their purchase intention.

A relationship between attractiveness and visit intention is observed in our results. They also show that attractiveness contributes to the ability to predict the intention to visit the promoted destinations. This can be explained by the fact that while the future destinations included in the study had never been visited, the influencer's attractiveness and life style as displayed by visits to the destinations he had already travelled to affected the subjects' intention to visit the promoted future destinations. This conclusion is in line with Munnukka et al.'s findings (2016) which emphasize the positive relationship between influencers' attractiveness and consumer attitudes, while it differs from Yilmazdogan et al.'s (2021) results that did not indicate any significant relationship between attractiveness and the intention to travel. The latter argue that this lack of any significant link between the two can be explained by how the concept of attractiveness is now a common quality of all influencers and that trustworthiness and expertise are more important than attractiveness when it comes to the intention to travel. Although we apply Ohanian's scale (1990) in this study, our results regarding attractiveness are different from those found by Ohanian as Ohanian's results show no significant effect for attractiveness on purchase intention.

Finally, the results reveal a relationship between the influencer's credibility as a whole and visit intention, and, as with every dimension variable of it, point out to the role it plays in making it possible to predict the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations. This can be interpreted as a result of the collective effect of the three dimensions of credibility (trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness) which together make it possible to achieve the objective of persuading individuals to visit a certain destination. This result also confirms the findings of previous research studies in demonstrating the positive relationship between influencers' credibility and followers' behavioral intentions (Weismueller et al., 2020; Lou & Yang, 2019). According to Cheng et al. (2020), the credibility of the influencer is the factor which drives digital media users to follow advertisement and show travel intentions using the information promoted by the influencer. Dryl et al. (2021), furthermore, argue that promotional advertisements' target audience tend to attach more credibility to advertisements featuring celebrities than to conventional ones.

The decision to use Ohanian's scale (1990) which measures source credibility through evaluating a sender's positive qualities and how they affect the acceptance of the message by the receiver, made it possible for us to specify which of the sender's positive qualities are accepted the most by the receiver of the message. Our results consistently

indicate that all of the source's credibility dimensions have statistical significance and, therefore, positively affect the intention to visit future Saudi touristic destinations.

As a quantitative study, there were certain limitations to our research. Future studies on the subject can be consolidated through utilizing mixed research methods which can, for example, include interviews with the target audience in which they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of current publicity methods in the Saudi tourism sector as well as those of using influencers within such methods. Names of influencers who can best promote future Saudi touristic destinations can also be solicited in such interviews.

Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that organizations which seek the services of influencers in their promotional campaigns make use of the results we reached and the model applied to reach them. In addition, we believe, based on the work presented here, that it is vital to devote more attention to research studies focusing on the groups targeted by such campaigns as they have proved to be effective in knowing what such groups look for in an influencer and, hence, can help in selecting the right influencers to enable the achievement of the campaign's promotional objectives. Finally, collaborating with regional and international influencers for the promotion of Saudi future touristic destinations, we believe, can enhance their publicity. As these destinations are intended to be of the highest international standards and to attract multiple groups from all over the world, different influencers who are more popular with such groups respectively can be involved to advertise them more widely and stimulate the intention to visit them.

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