

The Impact of Social Media Influencer Attributes on Travel Intention: A Study of Pakistan's Tourism

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Abstract

Background: This study investigates the impact of social media influencer attributes on the travel intentions of potential tourists to Pakistan.

Objectives: The purpose of this research is to quantitatively examine how two key influencer characteristics, credibility and content authenticity, directly impact the travel intentions of their followers towards Pakistan, offering actionable insights for destination marketing strategies.

Methods: A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing a structured online questionnaire distributed to 180 social media users familiar with travel content about Pakistan. Data was analyzed using linear regression to assess the predictive power of two key independent variables: influencer credibility and content authenticity, on the dependent variable, travel intention.

Results: The results demonstrate that both attributes are statistically significant positive predictors. However, content authenticity emerged as the substantially stronger driver, underscoring the modern traveler's prioritization of genuine and relatable narratives.

Implications: The findings offer actionable insights for destination marketing organizations, suggesting that collaborations with influencers who project trustworthiness and, more importantly, authentic experiences, are crucial for effectively boosting travel intention. This research provides empirical evidence to refine digital marketing strategies aimed at promoting tourism in emerging destinations like Pakistan.

Keywords: *Social Media Influencers; Tourism Pakistan; Travel Intention; Content Authenticity; Influencer Credibility; Destination Marketing*

1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary tourism landscape has been fundamentally reshaped by the digital revolution, with social media platforms becoming central to how destinations are perceived and chosen. Travelers increasingly rely on peer-generated content and influencer recommendations over traditional advertising, seeking authentic glimpses into potential experiences (Armutcu et al., 2023). This shift is particularly significant for destinations like Pakistan, which possess immense tourism potential but are navigating modern global marketing dynamics. Social media offers a powerful channel to showcase its diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage directly to a global audience, moving beyond outdated perceptions.

Existing research underscores the potency of social media in driving tourist behavior. Studies confirm that interactive engagement within travel-focused communities can significantly influence travel decisions, as explained through frameworks like social facilitation theory (Camilleri & Kozak, 2022). Furthermore, the visual appeal and perceived value of content shared online are critical drivers of electronic word-of-mouth, ultimately shaping a destination's image (Abbasi et al., 2023). However, while the broad impact of these platforms is established, a nuanced understanding of the specific influencer attributes that trigger travel intention requires deeper investigation. The rationale for this study, therefore, stems from a need to move beyond acknowledging social media's general influence and to pinpoint the precise levers of its power. The purpose of this research is to quantitatively examine how two key influencer characteristics, credibility and content authenticity, directly impact the travel intentions of their followers towards Pakistan, offering actionable insights for destination marketing strategies.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationship between social media influencer attributes and travel intention. Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire, developed and distributed using Google Forms. The instrument comprised three sections. The first measured perceived influencer Credibility using a four-item scale adapted from the work of Abbasi et al. (2023). The second assessed Content Authenticity with a three-item scale modified from Camilleri and Kozak (2022). The final section measured the dependent variable, Travel Intention, using a three-item scale. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit participants who actively follow travel-focused social media influencers showcasing Pakistan. The sample size was determined using the G*Power software (version 3.1.9.7, developed at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany). For a linear regression with two predictors, a medium effect size ($f^2=0.15$), an alpha of .05, and power of 0.95, a minimum of 119 participants was required. We collected data from 180 respondents to account for potential incomplete submissions. Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 28.0, manufactured by IBM Corp. in Armonk, New York, USA). A multiple linear regression was conducted to test the hypotheses, with the significance level for rejecting the null hypothesis set at $p < .05$.

3. RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=180)

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18 - 25 years	124	68.9
	26 - 35 years	47	26.1
	36 years and above	9	5.0
Gender	Male	98	54.4
	Female	82	45.6
Education Level	High School or below	23	12.8
	Bachelor's Degree	112	62.2
	Master's Degree or higher	45	25.0
Occupation	Student	81	45.0
	Employed Full-Time	75	41.7
	Self-Employed	15	8.3
	Other	9	5.0

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

The sample (N=180) primarily consisted of younger, educated demographics, with 68.9% aged 18-25 and 87.2% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The distribution was slightly male-dominated (54.4%), and the largest occupational groups were students (45.0%) and full-time employees (41.7%).

Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Travel Intention

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	1.295	0.247		5.246	<.001
Influencer Credibility	0.177	0.072	0.179	2.460	.015
Content Authenticity	0.440	0.074	0.434	5.959	<.001

 Table 2
 Regression Analysis

Note: The dependent variable is Travel Intention to Pakistan.

The regression analysis reveals that both influencer credibility ($\beta = 0.179$, $p = .015$) and content authenticity ($\beta = 0.434$, $p < .001$) are statistically significant positive predictors of travel intention. Content authenticity demonstrates a notably stronger influence on the intention to visit Pakistan.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm the potent role of specific social media influencer attributes in shaping travel decisions, with content authenticity emerging as a significantly stronger driver than credibility. This aligns with broader research indicating that modern travelers actively seek genuine and relatable experiences over polished advertisements (Cheng, 2025; Tran & Rudolf, 2022). The significant role of credibility supports the findings of Wang and Yan (2022), who established trust as a critical mediator in the relationship between information quality and travel intention. However, the dominance of authenticity suggests a paradigm shift; users now prioritize perceived realness and cultural immersion, a trend also noted in studies on user-generated content (Kitsios et al., 2022).

Consequently, both research hypotheses are supported, confirming positive and significant relationships for both predictor variables.

These results present a clear strategic imperative for Pakistan's tourism sector. To leverage this insight, there is a compelling need to develop a travel application personalized for Pakistan that centrally integrates the principle of content authenticity. This platform could move beyond static listings by featuring curated, vetted content from local and international influencers, focusing on unscripted cultural interactions and realistic travelogues. Such an app would serve as a trusted digital conduit, transforming passive online engagement into concrete travel planning, as engagement has been shown to directly influence purchase intention (Chung & Jeong, 2024). A limitation of this study is its reliance on convenience sampling and self-reported intentions, which may not fully predict actual travel behavior. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track how social media exposure translates into real-world travel, and explore the application of this model across different tourist nationalities and generational cohorts.

5. Conclusion

This study empirically validates that the strategic use of social media influencers, particularly those who prioritize content authenticity, is a powerful mechanism for enhancing travel intention to Pakistan. The findings underscore a critical shift in tourist behavior, where genuine and relatable narratives hold more persuasive power than traditional marketing. For destination marketers, this translates to a clear imperative: forging partnerships with influencers who can deliver immersive and trustworthy portrayals of the travel experience. By strategically leveraging these digital storytellers, Pakistan can more effectively reshape its global image, captivate the modern traveler, and ultimately unlock its significant tourism potential.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION AND DECLARATIONS

Concept Design, Data Collection and Drafting: Omar Farooq

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Furthermore, this research did not involve the use of animals, plants, or any biological specimens requiring ethical approval. Therefore, ethical clearance from an institutional review board, prior informed consent (PIC) from respondents, or animal/plant welfare approvals are not applicable to this study.

The author(s) affirm full compliance with international ethical standards for research and publication.

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