

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Destination Choice Among Millennial Travelers in Jordan

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of social media influencers on destination choice among Jordanian millennial travelers. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationships between five key aspects of social media influencers (recommendations, perceived authenticity, credibility and trustworthiness, engagement with followers, and perceived expertise) and their followers' destination choices. The study employs a quantitative research design, using an online survey to collect data from a sample of 500 Jordanian millennials who are active social media users and follow travel influencers. In the present study, PLS-SEM is applied to analyse the data and to confirm the proposed hypotheses. The findings show that all the five constructs of social media influencers influence destination choice intentions and recommendations and perceived authenticity have the highest influence. First, the present study extends knowledge in the field by testing the application of the Social Influence Theory to the use of influencers in social media and destination choice, and by offering proof of the process by which influencers influence the purchasing decisions of followers. Therefore, the study provides relevant implications to destination marketing and tourism management, especially focusing on cooperation with right, credible, and enthusiastic influencers in order to promote destinations and capture potential consumers. This study's contribution is in assessing various faces of social media influencers and their influence over destination selection specifically for the less explored context of Jordanian millennial travellers. This research lays the foundation for subsequent research to analyze effects of social media influencers on travel choices among different segments as well as cultures.

Keywords: Destination Choice, Jordanian Millennial Travelers, PLS-SEM, Social Media Influencers.

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, the rise of social media has revolutionized the way people communicate, consume information, and make decisions, including those related to travel and tourism. The social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter among others have led to emergence of a relatively recent category of opinion leaders known as SMIs. These people have thus obtained a large fanbase and bear immense influence in influencing the perceptions, attitudes and even behaviors of their followers (Freberg et al., 2011). First of all, it should be noted that millennial travelers are key consumers for SMIs since they are digital inhabitants and actively lean on social media for recommendations and tips on travelling (Saini, et al., 2023). Jordan with its impressive history and unique natural sites remains a country struggling to market itself to the millennial traveler amidst rising competition from destinations around the world. On the one hand, while the Jordanian government has been actively advertising the country as a prime tourism hub, the rate of visitation has been somewhat slow and unchanging in recent years (Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, 2019). In the year 2019 alone, Jordan received 4.1 million visitors, which was slightly higher than the previous year by 2% as per the World Bank data of 2020. Thirdly, the country does not boast of making a good impression on the millennials traveling to the country with only 28% of the visitors being in the 18-35 age group (Jordan Tourism Board, 2020). As supported by existing literature, SMIs have a significant impact on travel decision-making processes. Literature has indicated that SMIs play a significant role in the destination image construction (Pop, et al., 2022), tourists' intentions, and behavior (Tang, et al., 2023; Hasan, et al., 2023). For instance, a survey of millennials made by Schofield's Insurance (2017) showed that 40% of them take the "grammability" of a location into account when making travel plans. In addition, according to a survey conducted by Expedia in 2018 which targeted Millennials in the United States, it was found that 30% of the respondents had travelled to a destination that was recommended by SMIs. Still, because the number of academic papers available on the topic of SMIs and the impact they have on the travel options is still comparatively small, it can be noted that there is not sufficient scientific research regarding the Jordanian context. While previous studies have looked into the use of social media platforms in marketing tourism in Jordan (Al-Badi, Linger, & See, 2017; Khasawneh & Alfandi, 2019; Alkhalil et al., 2024), the role played by SMIs in determining Millennial tourists' destination preferences remains understudied. This research gap is particularly apparent considering the social, cultural and economic factors that define the Jordanian tourism such as the geopolitical setting of Jordan, its tourism historical and cultural legacy as well as its somewhat high inclination towards the tourism sector as a source of economic strength. Moreover, prior studies related to the SMIs and the travel decision-making process have mostly relied on conventional research methods like questionnaires and interviews (Confente, et al., 2024). While these methods have provided valuable insights, these approaches are questionable in several aspects regarding identification of the complex and dynamic relationship between SMIs, the data captured by these sources, and travellers' actions. As a result, one needs to search for more elaborate methodological models that adequately address these occurrences. Therefore, this research seeks to establish the following hypotheses regarding the influence of SMIs on destination choice among millennial tourists in Jordan: This research study shall employ a

quantitative research technique known as partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM has been identified as a momentous statistical tool that enables testing of multiple structural model relationships of latent constructs (Hair et al., 2017). Consequently, the study seeks at painting a vivid picture on the extent that SMIs influences decision making of the millennial travelers to Jordan. In light of the above discussion, the principal research contributions of this investigation are as follows. First, it can fill the current gap in knowledge and information regarding the involvement of SMIs in determining the destination preferences of millennial travelers in Jordan. Secondly, it not only uses an advanced methodological framework, that is, PLS-SEM, to enhance the understanding of the associations of SMIs, their contents, and travel behaviours. Finally, the findings of this study can inform the development of effective tourism marketing strategies that leverage the power of SMIs to attract millennial travelers to Jordan.

2. Literature Review

Social Influence Theory

Social Influence Theory rooted in social psychology, posits that an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Kelman, 1958). The theory encompasses three main processes through which social influence occurs: Knowing, persuading and doing (Kelman 1961) or in other words compliance, identification and internalization. Compliance as defined by Kelman (1958) is conducted when an individual conforms to the desired standards to receive certain tangible incentives or avoid certain costs. In the case of social media influencers, compliance can be shown where millennial traveling to a particular destination due to the influence of the complying with social norms or to avoid relinquishing this influential position (Kilipiri, et al., 2023; Ismaeel et al., 2023). The process of identification arises from the belief established by Kelman (1961) whereby people change their behavioral tendencies or attitudes in a way that emulates the patterns or standards regarded by other individuals or persons of authority. Millennial travelers are likely to follow social media influencers who they consider to align with their personal beliefs, life perspectives or life goals – thus making the social media influencers' travel choices their own as well (Raafat, et al., 2023). For instance, a millennial traveler, who shares values with an influencer and personally identifies with an influencer's adventurous lifestyle, will be more likely to travel to such places as experienced from an influencer's content. It involves individuals adopting the ideas of other people within a specific culture, standards and practices or policies as something they endorse (Kelman, 1958). When it comes to social media influences, internalization may happen when the millennial travelers believe in the information provided by influencers, trust those and consider such information relevant and in harmony with their own travel preferences (Magno & Cassia, 2018). For instance, the millennial traveler who will identify with environmentally friendly use of resources will be more influenced to book a destination that an influencer has suggested. The 'Social Influence Theory' therefore captures the landscape of how the identified key social media influencers could manipulate the destination decision making amongst the millennial population in Jordan. Analyzing the case, it will be possible to promote the use of compliance, identification, and internalization to help influencers help their followers make the right travel-related decisions

and follow them. Moreover, the theory highlights the importance of perceived similarity, credibility, and trustworthiness in the influencer-follower relationship, as these factors can enhance the impact of social influence on travel decision-making (Han, et al., 2023; Machado Carvalho, 2024).

Millennial Travellers

Millennial travelers, typically defined as those born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019), have emerged as a significant segment of the global tourism market. While millennial travellers are now a valuable niche market for Jordan; a country that attracts many visitors because of its cultural tourism, geographical wonders, and archaeological sites (Al-Saad et al., 2019; Ismaeel et al., 2023). For the Jordan tourism's marketing strategies to be more effective, it is crucial that the Jordan tourism sector recognizes and familiarize itself with the trends and behaviors of Millennial travelers within Jordan. According to Jordan Tourism Board, the percentage of millennials' tourists comprises about 28% in 2020. Mobility of this generation and the objectives they have for moving are unique from those of previous generations (Cavagnaro et al., 2018). Jordanian millennial tourists are renowned for looking for genuine experiences encompassing culture, celebrations, and people (Al-Saad et al., 2019). They are also more likely to value sustainability, adventurous, and non-traditional traveling aspects than the older generation (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018). Increased use of digital technologies and social networks has imposed a great impact on the travel patterns of millennials when touring Jordan (Alrawadieh et al., 2020). This generation is an interconnected generation and is eager to use the internet for travel inspiration, knowledge and purchases (Abu Rumman et al., 2020). Social media influencer has been found to play a special role in determining the destination preference as well as the attitude towards travel destination among the millennial travelers in Jordan (Alrawadieh et al., 2020). Also, experience such as travelling is expected to be shared more frequently on social media by the millennial travellers hence creating user generated content for the rest of the travelers in case they are so influenced. However, tourism industry in Jordan stills has the following challenges as it tries to meet the needs of millennial travelers. One of the greatest challenges is the deficiency of the considered and adapted marketing approaches and service provision for millennial tourists (Al-Najdawi & Al-Ababsah, 2020). Furthermore, there is the issue of the infrastructure in the country and the quality and standard of the amenities which are offered to tourists may not suit this technologically inclined generation which thrives on experiences (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018). And so, in efforts to capture the attention of the new generation tourists, it is crucial for the Jordanian organisations to develop new tactics that would focus mainly on the millennial traveler. This may include developing realistic and fascinating role plays that call for the cultural and tourism assets of the nation, harnessing the social media apps, and engaging celebrities who can inspire and encourage travelling experts (Alrawadieh et al., 2020). Furthermore, the integration of sustainable solutions in the areas of tourism and support infrastructures can help to answer to value in the consumption of tourist services by the Millennial tourists (Abou-Shouk et al., 2018).

Destination Choice

Destination choice is a crucial concept in tourism research that seeks to understand the factors influencing travelers' decisions when selecting a travel destination (Karl, 2018). Tourists'

motivation and choice decision is a broad and dynamic process that encompasses various factors and routes including tourists' preference, need, constraints, and the characteristics of the tourism destination (Decrop, 2010). Knowledge of destination choice is equally crucial for tourism marketers and managers because cognition of destination choice may assist marketers and managers to adopt appropriate mechanisms regarding appeal to tourist (Smallman & Moore, 2010). Accompanying the existing trends in travel behavior research is the widely used push-pull model by Crompton (1979). To recap, this theory explicates that travel motivation is inspired by two distinctive forces: the push forces, which entail tourists' inner drives to seek leisure, recreation, or thrill and the pull forces that relate to destination attractiveness, available facilities, and its perceived image by the potential visitor (Dann, 1981). These pushes and pulls identify the kind of forces between destination attractions that ultimately shape the choice of the destination (Baloglu & Uysal 1996). Another significant factor in the identification of destination choices is the information search and the way people process it (Fodness & Murray, 1999). Kivela and Sääksjärvi (2007) noted that tourists tend to conduct vast information search in order to minimize risk and ensure the best possible outcome of their travels (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). As Xiang and Gretzel put it, in today's age, social media and online reviews have gained significant importance as sources of information in travel decision making processes. destination image could also be used to explain the destination choice, as noted by Baloglu and McCleary (1999). Destination image means the mental impressions and ideas that consumers would have for a destination or place. It is therefore a dynamic and a subjective construct that is likely to change depending on all the experiences that a person comes across and the information that he/she receives through the media or from his/her friends (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Destination image refers to the cognitive understanding that tourists make about a certain destination and it has been thought that when it is positive and strong it affects the tourist's perception and intentions to visit and even recommend a place (Zhang et al., 2014). Specifically, in discussing millennial travelers, the attributes of destinations choice are drawn by individual and individual-specific aspects, including: wanderlust, concern for social relatedness, and technology (Pendergast, 2010, p181). As has been postulated by Xiang et al., 2015 Millennial customer are sociable and hence they will post their images and travel experiences on media platforms. Consequently, the contribution of social media influencers in decision-making processes of the millennial customers is a significant research topic in the field of tourism.

Social Media Influencers

The concept of social media influencers has gained significant attention in recent years, as these individuals have become powerful forces in shaping consumer attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors across various industries, including tourism (Freberg et al., 2011). Social media influencers therefore refer to individuals who have a large following on social media platforms, and are deemed as experts, or rather a source of reliable information and credible opinions within their field/area of specialty (De Veirman et al., 2017). This influence is premised on the following characteristics; the recommendations, value system and lifestyle of these source individuals, credibility and perceived reliability of these source individuals, level of interaction that the source individuals have with their followers, perceived expertise of the source individuals and perceived genuineness or 'realness' of the source individuals. Another important factor that guides the followers' decisions is the endorsement of travel-related destinations by influencers

on social media (Xu Pratt, 2018). When an influencer is suggesting something like a particular country, hotel, or experience while travelling, the audience of this influencer is likely to consider this destination or experience and probably make a decision in its favor (Rathjens, et al., 2024). There is a theory that may explain this phenomenon, which is the social proof theory where individuals tend to follow the lead of others especially those whom they consider to be similar or better than them (Cialdini, 2001). The enlightened values and the lives that social media influencers help lead also aid in fastening their follower's destination decisions (Asan, 2022). Thus, when the follower regards the influencer as having similar interest, virtues or even a similar way-of-life, then the follower tends to relate with the influencer and have confidence in the endorses of the influencer (Malik, et al., 2023). The dreaming and lifestyle associated with the values can help increase the identification between the influencer and consumers, thus amplifying the impact of the influencer (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Of particular relevance to the understandings of influencers' influence on destination choice are the concepts of credibility and trustworthiness (Magno and Cassia 2018). They are more inclined to engage with and buy what influencers suggest because they deem them as reliable sources (Saldanha, et al., 2024). The level of credibility can be achieved through aspects related to the level of expertise and professionalism, and the practice of honest and clear communication (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Still, it is observed that when the self-promotional motives of influencers are not perceived, and instead they appear to be engaging in a given content in good faith, the audience is more likely to heed influencer's recommendations as well (Xu and Pratt, 2018). The social interaction by the influencers with their followers as another factor that the social media influencers influence the choice of destinations (Yilmaz et al., 2020). Content post engagement in the form of commentaries, direct messages, and other forms of feedback are other ways that influencers can create a strong bond and a sense of community among the members (Kleer, & Kunz, 2023). This engagement can foster trust and ultimately make the followers deposit their trust in the influencer, including his advices and directions (Ren, et al., 2023). Another factor that is related to the perceived credibility of the media is also the perceived credibility of media sources or social media influencers in the selection of a destination (Chatzigeorgiou 2017). To a degree, followers are more likely to agree and follow recommendation from a specialist perceived to have adequate knowledge and expertise in a specific sphere, for example, travelling and tourism (Neuburger, et al., 2024, Fraihat et al., 2024)). It shall also include the quality and depth of information the influencer has been sharing, or the competency of the influencer or the experiences shared (Kucharska, & Erickson, 2023). Last but not least, the believability or credibility of a social media influencer is another component of effective persuasion about changing a destination choice (Han, & Chen, 2022). Authenticity means how much an influencer fits the description of being real, sincere, and being true to his image (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Those followers that are convinced by influencers' recommendations tend to make these purchases from influencers they deem genuine, this since the authenticity of an influencer helps bring credibility into a product (Andonopoulos, et al., 2023). Researchers have found that when influencers are open with their audience, when they state whether they were paid to publish something, and when they use a single image or account persona consistently across various social media platforms, so then people view those influencers as genuine (Fan, et al., 2023).

The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Destination Choice

The impact of social media influencers on destination choice has been the subject of numerous studies in recent years. Since the crucial role of travel information discovery through social media becomes increasingly important, authors focused on identifying the role of influencers on their followers' travel choice. A few prior researches compare the overall effects of social media influencers in travel decision-making. Ding and Houghton (2018) explored the staying patterns of Chinese tourists using the theory of tourist motivators. Added unto this, they identified that perceived degree of influence of influencers is higher where influencers are deemed more authentic and thus more trustworthy regarding influencing destination choice. For a like fashion, Magno and Cassia (2018) explore the impact of travel bloggers in the Italian tourism sector and explained the same point how travel influencers can popularize offbeat location and lead to new tourism. Employees also show great interest in the influence that certain attributes such as gender and age have over the choice of a destination. Chatzigeorgiou (2017) examined effect of influencer marketing on the behavioral intentions on the rural tourism of millennials in Greece. Firms were informed that perceived expertise and perceived trustworthiness have a significant impact on the followers' destination visit intentions. Along the same line, De Veirman et al. (2017) looked at the impact of the number of followers and the extent to which the influencer's sponsored products deviate from the users' interest to brand attitude in the Instagram platform. They found that influences with a large audience reach are the best at driving considered consumption and presenting divergent products such as unusual travel experience. Some of the earlier works have pointed out the role of influencer-generated content on the choice of destinations. In their study titled, Yılmaz et al. (2020) attempted to establish the connection and impact of consumers' decision-making process especially the choices of the travel destination by the Turkish customers via influencer-generated content. They discover that aesthetic strategies and narrative techniques such as storytelling are especially persuasive in intervention travel. Similarly, Pop et al. (2021) focused on the impact of the Romanian influencers on the Instagram Philippines tourist destinations. Furthermore, the research showed a correlation between influencers' content quality with followers and the appealing of a destination. Some of the studies that have attracted the attention of researchers include the role of social media platforms in decision making of destination. A review of the literature on influencer marketing in relation to travel and tourism was done by Gretzel (2018) on several social media platforms. It revealed that the platform-specific measures are crucial while there's also a high emphasis placed on the genuine approach to influencing. In a similar manner, Femenia-Serra and Gretzel (2020) explored the role of travel influencers on YouTube and their implications on destination image construction post COVID-19. The authors discovered that through the videos, influencers can positively influence viewers' perceptions of the destination, and their general intention to travel to that destination. The influence of travelers has also been a center of research by scholars especially to the targeted segments. In the context of travel decision, Stoldt et al. (2019) tried to reveal the impact of social media influencers on the U. S. college students. The research findings also identified that a number of influencers' perceived authenticity and instructiveness with the followers are the primary determinants of students' destinations. Travel influencers have become almost indispensable in travelers' decision-making process and destination choices, especially among Spanish millennials, as stated in a work by Hernández-Méndez et al. (2020). They noted

that quality content and perceived trustworthiness of the influencers significantly influence the millennials' travel trip. It has also been examined how the influencers impact on the sustainable tourism. Analyzing if and to what extent influencers from Instagram can support tourism practices using the findings from Berne-Manero and Marzo-Navarro (2020). Among the following, one noticed the ability of influencing the change to the awareness of largely acceptable responsible travels and sustainable actions. Similarly, Katsoni and Spyriadis (2021) attempted to establish the extent to which these social media influencers advocate for sustainable tourism in Greece. They also established that sustainability can be encouraged and followers can be nudged through the influencers to make sustainable travel choices. There has also been a consideration of local and specific factors in perceptions and choice of a destination. Martínez-Rolán et al. (2019) set out to identify the impact of local Instagram influencers on destination image of a Spanish coastal municipality. This pointed to the fact that local influencers had the potential of marketing a destination through promoting its attributes and reaching out to the target audience. Maares and Hanusch (2020) also explored the topic of niche influencers in the context of adventure tourism. Some of them stated that the niche influencers can give an enormous boost to their target consumers as the consumers are also highly selective in their choices. Lastly, some studies addressed the general possibilities and challenges of the application of influencer marketing for the tourism industry. More recently, Gretzel (2019) examined the possible ethical dilemmas of influencer marketing to traveling. Based on the findings of the study, it is imperative to encourage disclosure when it comes to influence-brand relationships. They tend to embrace opinions from Bakker who in, 2018 focused on micro-influencers in the Dutch context particularly in the travel and tourism industry. Therefore, it was proven in the study how micro-influencers can be useful in places promotion since the percentage of engaging rates and honestly perceived promotion is high.

Hypothesis Development

The role of social media influencers and its influence on consumers' choice of destination can be examined using the Social Influence Theory which proposes that perceived social influence pressures are actual or potential source of social influence pressure on an individual's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour (Kelman, 1958). In the context of social media influencers and tourism, the theory of social influence addresses how influencers can influence their followers' perceptions and decisions regarding travel destinations and utilisation of identity inducement methods: The first one is compliance, that is, the possibility to understand and follow the rules of the language; the second one is identification that mean the ability to distinguish between different elements of the language; the third one is internalisation which is the ability to use the language in specific contexts. This chapter will now broadly define compliance as this concept refers to the level to which probably a particular standard is being implemented or how much probably one will conform to certain norms willingly just to gain some other reward or to avoid certain outcomes (Kelman, 1958). In the case of social media influencers, the followers may listen to the recommendations that they receive from the influencers in order to fit into the society or because they do not want to miss out on an event or product (Himmelboim, & Golan, 2023). For instance, if an influencer decides to endorse a particular destination people following this influencer just have to go there because they do not want to be out of sync with the influencer's community. This type of identification occurs when an individual feel compelled to behave in a manner

resembling that of individuals they admire or wish to emulate (Kelman, 1961). This is because the followers tend to associate themselves with the life, principles as well as dreams of the social media influencers and they may decide to copy the decisions that the influencer makes regarding travel (Bastrygina, et al., 2024). For instance, if the follower feels that he/she can relate to the adventurous nature depicted by the influencer, it will make the follower more inclined to travel to the exotic locations highlighted in the influencer's work. Acculturation is the process in which an individual allows himself to be influenced by or imitates the ways of thinking and behaving of other people (Kelman, 1958). Thus, internalization occurs when the followers believe in the credibility as well as reliability of the information provided by the influencers and when they are found to be in line with their travel preferences (Kilipiri, et al., 2023). For instance, if a follower favours eco-tourism, and then an influencer come up with conservation of practices in tourism, the follower may adopt the idea of the influencer and engage in tourism practices as he counted they will boost conservation of environment. The impacts that social media influencers have on selection might also inevitably lie in the type of content that an influencer posts. To clarify, such factors as the advertisement visuals and narratives seem especially important for travel decisions, according to Yılmaz et al. (2020). Their study confirms the influence of influencers original content output alongside their interaction with fans influence the perceived attractiveness of destination according to Pop et al (2021). In addition, it is also worth to note that the impact of social media influencer marketing could also differ according to the specific type of social media that specific influencers frequent. According to the study, Gretzel (2018) highlighted that the idea of platform-based approaches is significant in influencer marketing, which indicates that the change that influencers may bring can be relative to the platforms inclusive of Instagram, YouTube, Face-book, among others. Other attributes such as perceived influence of the influencer, and credibility of the influencer's channel, may also play a role towards choosing the destination. According to Chatzigeorgiou (2017) the two factors of perceived credibility related to expertise and trust have a positive impact on followers' behavioral intentions regarding the visitation of a destination. Consequently, Xu and Pratt (2018) established that the importance of the messages originating from the influencers with regard to the choice of destination is significantly higher when such messages are more authentic and credible. Last but not the least we also found that some of the followers of the social media influencer characteristics also have an impact on the effect that has been discussed in this study; such as age culture etc. Stoldt et al. (2019) identified two factors that US college students perceived in terms of authenticity and engagement in their choice of travelling. Similarly, Hernández-Méndez et al. (2020) also pointed that content relevance and credibility of the influencers involved positively influenced travel choices among Spanish millennials. Therefore, there is the following hypothesis are postulated in the present study.:

H1a: Social Media Influencers' Credibility and Trustworthiness positively influence destination choice in Jordan

H1b: Social Media Influencers' Engagement with Followers positively influence destination choice in Jordan

H1c: Social Media Influencers' Perceived Authenticity positively influence destination choice in Jordan

H1d: Social Media Influencers' Perceived Expertise positively influence destination choice in Jordan

H1e: Social Media Influencers' Recommendations positively influence destination choice in Jordan

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model in Figure 1, grounded in the Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958), incorporates five key dimensions of influencer characteristics: social media influencers' recommendations, credibility and trustworthiness, engagement with followers, perceived expertise, and perceived authenticity. These dimensions are expected to affect the destination choice of their followers in the following way through the processes of compliance, identification, and internalization as posited by Kelman (1961). Compliance is another effect which happens when followers try to obey the posts of influencers to be accepted by a group or be unique (Zniva, R., Weitzl, & Lindmoser, 2023). Consequently, identification can take place when followers adopt the preferences of the influencer regarding travel, as a shared self-identity (Rodrigo, & Mendis, 2023). Authenticity and faith of the influencer can lead to internalization in which followers see the sentiment of the influencer as consistent with their own (Jaiswal, et al., 2024). The influence of these processes may be amplified by perceived engagement with followers, perceived authority and perceived genuineness of those who utilize social media platforms as influencers. Several authors have mentioned that higher levels of interaction between influencers and their followers might result in enhanced levels of perceived trust and practical compliance (Olfat, et al., 2024). How perceived expertise enhances identification as followers are more likely to follow the example of informed images and choices (Zhou, et al., 2023). It can be internalized because followers would always want to respond to recommendations provided by individuals, they find genuine and sincere (Xu Pratt, 2018). Again, the Social Influence Theory will help in explaining how these dimensions of characteristics of social media influencer impact on the follower's decision to select certain destinations. The conceptual model proposes that recommendations from influencers, values or lifestyles, credibility and trustworthiness, interactive communication with the followers, perceived specialized knowledge, and perceived sincerity are key factors influencing the choice of a destination through the Kelman's Compliance, Identification, and Internalisation processes. Through reviewing the influence of these dimensions on the destination choice based on the theoretical framework of the Social Influence Theory, the above model provides an epitome of how the use of social media influencers affects travel choices.

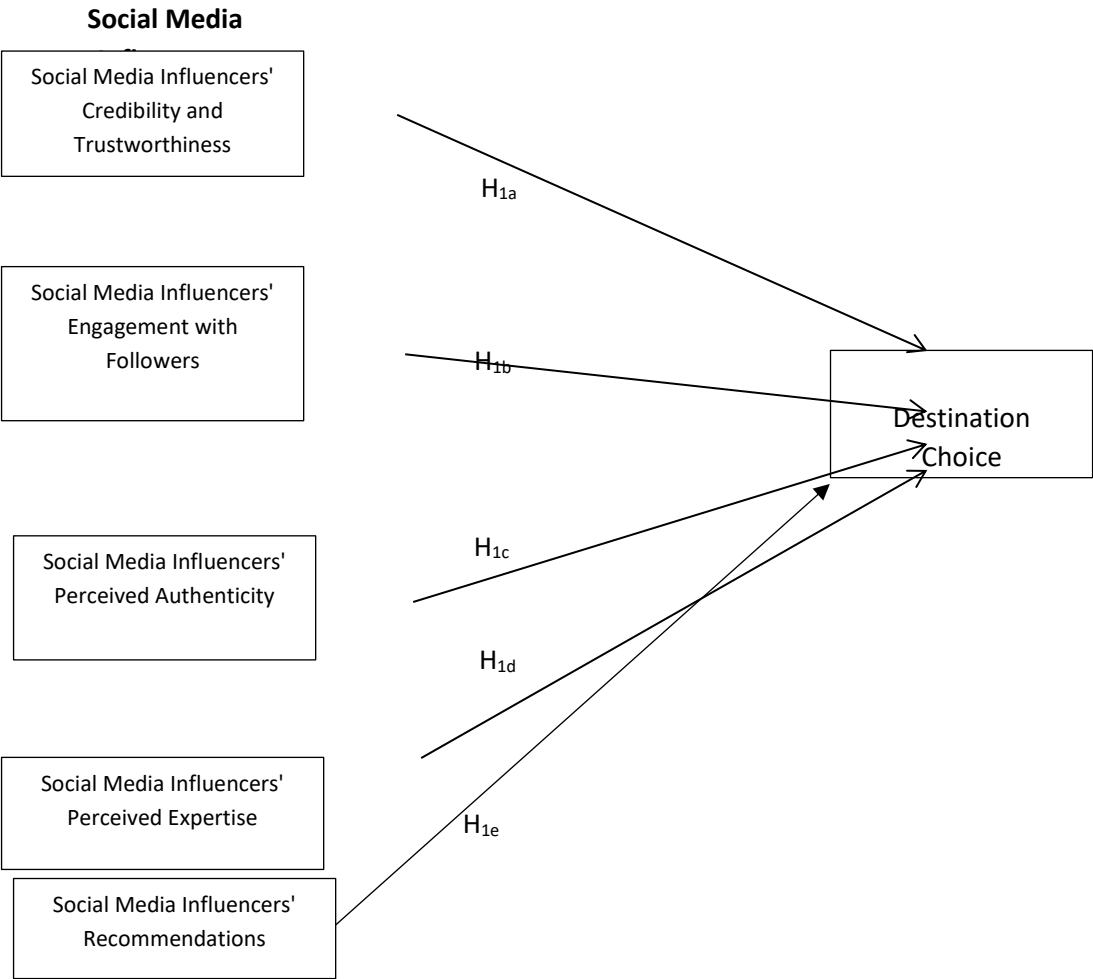


Figure 1 Conceptual Model

3. Research Methodology

A quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method is employed to examine the impact of social media influencers on destination choice. The target population for this study is Jordanian millennials aged between 18 and 35 years old who are active social media users and follow travel influencers. Based on the survey conducted by Jordan Department of Statistics in 2022, it showed that there are total about 2 million young people aged below 30 years are in Jordan belonging to the millennial generation. To get the sample size, there is a specific formula

that can be used; this is Cochran's (1963) formula since it relates specifically to large populations. Looking at the data from the above calculation, the total number of Jordanian millennials that will be needed for his study is 385 at the least. However, since it is important to guard against low response rates, the sample is escalated to 500 individuals in order to capture incomplete responses if any. As the research method, purposive and snowball sampling approaches are used in this study. Convenience sampling is the first sampling technique used to identify and recruit only the millennials who are frequent users of social media accounts and do follow travel influencers (Etikan et al., 2016; Al-Shakri et al., 2024). Convenience sampling is then used to come across other participants who meet the same criteria as the originals, where participants are asked to recruit more participants who are similar to them (Noy, 2008). These non-probability sampling techniques are allowed due to the purposeful nature of the sampling units and unavailability of sampling frame to support probability sampling (Etikan et al., 2016; Alwaely et al., 2024a; Ahmad et al., 2024). The questions are constructed with items from earlier surveys and separated by types of social media (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017; Xu & Pratt, 2018; Magno & Cassia, 2018). The questionnaire includes the part assessing social media influencer characteristics, including social media influencers' recommendations (SMIR), credibility and trustworthiness (SMICT), engagement with followers (SMIEF), perceived expertise (SMIPE), and perceived authenticity (SMIPA) as well as the part focuses on the choice of a destination (DC). For the social media influencer characteristics and destination choice, the questionnaire utilizes a 10-point Likert scale to measure the responses with the response set ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 10 'strongly agree.' To have proper standard of the validity and reliability of the constructed questionnaire, a pilot test is administered to five experts from tourism and social media marketing field (Abubakar, 2016; Fraihat et al., 2023; Alwaely et al., 2024b; Fraihat et al., 2024a; Fraihat et al., 2024b). Depending on participants' feedbacks, revisions and adjustments are made towards increasing the comprehensiveness and relevance of the items identified. After discussions with McLeod, a pilot study is then conducted with 50 participants to determine the internal consistency or reliability of the above scales using Cronbach's alpha as suggested by Connelly (2008). Originally, an online questionnaire is developed utilizing Google Docs and then shared on different social media websites (e. g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and through email listservs. A consent form is used, particularly knowledge about the research, the trial's objectives, the participant's role, and rights, assurance of the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant's information. At conditions of the survey, the participants are required to sign for and consent to be engaged in the survey. Usual permission is requested from the researcher's institution before actual data collection begins. So, data is collected over three months to get more consistent results that range from February 2024 to April 2024. There are different methods of urging the individuals who have shown initial interest to complete the survey, and these include sending them gentle push messages or emails. In the process of data collection participants strictly follow the regulations regarding ethical considerations for research; these include the right to withdraw, data protection and privacy (Rosenthal, 2016). The quantitative data collected from the survey is used to test the formulated hypotheses employing the Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique employing SmartPLS software. For this purpose, the analysis method that has been adopted in this study is PLS-SEM as it does not impose these aforementioned assumptions and it can be used to analyse complex models with multiple latent variables (Ofori, et al., 2023). The

basic tenets of the concept of hypothesis testing are followed in this analysis. First, the measurement model is examined using the factor loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted, which offer insights into the construct validity and reliability of the instrument. Second, the results of the structural model concern the significance and relevance of the path coefficients, the share of explanation (R^2), and prediction (Q^2) (Partawijaya, et al., 2024). To check the significance level of the path coefficients, technique of boot strap with resamples is used, each having 5,000 sub samples (Cheng, 2023).

4. Results

Table 1 presents the outer loadings and variance inflation factor (VIF) values for the measurement model. The outer loadings indicate the strength of the relationship between each item and its corresponding construct. In this study conducted by Hair et al. (2017), outer loadings should be greater than 0.7) Special measures to indicate the reliability and validity of the measurement model should be taken. In this study, the above criterion is meet in most of the outer loadings, % values ranging from 0.681 (SMIR5) to 0.902 (SMIEF5). This indicates that most of the items possess satisfactory levels of construct validity that would enhance the convergent validity of the proposed measurement model (Hair et al., 2017). However, two items, SMIPA1 (0.637) and SMIPA5 (0.618) have very low outer loadings but are greater than zero. 0.7 threshold. Although these values are not ideal, the researchers deemed them to be acceptable since they are relatively near to the cutoff point (Hair et al., 2017). The decision to include these items in the measure may be on the basis of these; theoretical and contribution to the overall content validity of the construct (Lambert, & Newman, 2023; Alwaely et al., 2024c). The VIF values in Table 1 indicate how much each independent variable correlates with other independent variables; high VIF values identify that multicollinearity may exist. Several problems can arise in the case of multicollinearity especially when the predictor variables have high correlation; some of which include the fact that interpreting the results that the model is likely to give might be difficult. It has been conventionally suggested that, when using VIFs, one should look for values larger than 3 in order to be able to detect multicollinearity. When the value is greater than the recommended number then it might suggest that there is multicollinearity in the set of predictor variables (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006; Matalka et al., 2024). Lastly, concerning the VIF values, it is clear that in this study all the values are less than three. 3, however SMIEF5 has VIF equal to 3 This is because VIF is the measure of the degree of multicollinearity between two variables, and since these are group variables, the values are expected to be greater than one. Even though it is slightly higher than traditional SETAR VIF cut-off of 3.5, it is still acceptable, as Hair et al. (2017) pointed out that VIF value of up to 5 is reasonable. A careful look at the VIF summary table shows that the majority of the respective items do not have a high VIF value, implying that multicollinearity is not a major problem in the measurement model. This result accords with the discriminant validity of the constructs which suggests that the investigator has avoid to some extent the problem of multitasking, or overlapping of the variables that are to measure the latent constructs (Ellsworth, et al., 2023).

Table 1 Outer Loading and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

Items	DC	SMICT	SMIEF	SMIPA	SMIPE	SMIR	VIF
DC1	0.759						1.841
DC2	0.863						1.132
DC3	0.860						2.118
DC4	0.798						2.201
DC5	0.798						2.261
DC6	0.760						1.866
SMICT1		0.750					1.522
SMICT2		0.759					1.504
SMICT3		0.737					1.59
SMICT4		0.774					1.679
SMIEF1			0.847				2.376
SMIEF2			0.881				2.09
SMIEF3			0.882				2.888
SMIEF4			0.825				2.487
SMIEF5			0.902				3.772
SMIPA1				0.637			1.886
SMIPA2				0.756			2.032
SMIPA3				0.733			2.227
SMIPA4				0.742			1.921
SMIPA5				0.618			1.362
SMIPA6				0.708			1.143
SMIPE1					0.853		2.289
SMIPE2					0.827		2.086
SMIPE3					0.850		2.759
SMIPE4					0.849		2.75
SMIR1						0.865	2.523
SMIR2						0.817	2.155
SMIR3						0.797	1.826
SMIR4						0.734	1.587
SMIR5						0.681	1.442

Table 2 presents the constructs' reliability and validity measures, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (ρ_a and ρ_c), and average variance extracted (AVE). These are important for evaluating reliability and measure convergence of the constructs in the measurement model (Cheung, et al., 2023). Coefficients Cronbach varies from 0.749 (SMICT) to 0.918 (SMIEF) which somehow revealed strong internal consistency of each construct being measured. With reference to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), generally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of more than 0. We consider values of 0.7 or more to be satisfactory while values greater than 0.8 are preferable. In this study, five out of six constructs (DC, SMIEF, SMIPA, SMIPE, SMIR) have Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.8, which indicates that the internal consistency of the scale score is highly desirable. The SMICT construct, and this one is also reported to have a value of 0.749, still shows a reasonable level of reliability according to their guidelines (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Using ρ_a alongside ρ_c , composite reliability estimates the quality of the constructs in question from the inter-relationships of the observed items (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015). ρ_a varies from 0 to 100% as it measures the overall resistance of the line. 0.75 (SMICT) to 0.919 (SMIEF), with ρ_c values varying from 0 to 0.842 (SMICT) to 0.938 (SMIEF). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients are 0.727, 0.721, 0.716 and .846 for all the constructs which exceed the accepted level of 0. Moreover, another study done by Hair et al. (2017) includes Cronbach alpha coefficient which was found to be > 0.7 , thus providing backing for internal consistency and reliability of the constructs. Average variance

extracted (AVE) evaluates the extent to which total variance in the construct is accounted by current construct as compared to the measurement error (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Trial AVE values must less than 0.5 to ensure the percentage is greater than 50% thus the model is able to explain more than half of the variability of the measurement (Hair et al., 2017). It can be noted that the Avalanche Index (AVE) for all the constructs of this research study is more than 0.5, ranging from 0.57 (SMICT) to 0.753 (SMIEF). These results indicate that the convergent construct validity is reasonably satisfactory; this is attested by the fact that such constructs account for a reasonable percentage of variance in the measured variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2 Constructs Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
DC	0.893	0.895	0.918	0.652
SMICT	0.749	0.75	0.842	0.570
SMIEF	0.918	0.921	0.938	0.753
SMIPA	0.818	0.91	0.852	0.591
SMIPE	0.867	0.867	0.909	0.714
SMIR	0.839	0.853	0.886	0.611

Table 3 shows the HTMT ratio, which is one of the measures of discriminant validity in PLS-SEM conceived by Henseler et al. (2015). Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which the construct in focus is reliably distinct from other constructs with which it has been coined in the model (Hair et al., 2017). To estimate the HTMT ratio, the average for the construct the first part was computed through the average of the correlations between holes of different constructs to the construct part, while for the other part, the average was computed through the correlations between the holes in the similar construct (Henseler et al., 2015). As mentioned by Henseler et al. (2015), where HTMT is the product of the ratio of the factor's regression coefficient to its corresponding standard error anticipated to be greater than 0. A value closer to 0.9 suggest lack of discriminant validity. In this study, all calculated HTMT values from model 1 to model 7 are less than 0. Specifically, SOS obtained the highest or lowest, mean value at a 0.9 threshold, ranging from 0. Since this range is between 0.535 (SMIPA and SMIR) to 0, it clearly shows that knowledge management in Nigerian banks has not reached its optimal level of efficiency. 0.771 (SMICT and SMIR). Overall, these findings indicate that the constructs developed in the given model possess acceptable levels of discriminant validity, meaning that they are sufficiently different from one another as needed (Hair et al., 2017). An overall lowest HTMT value of 0. This shows that there is a moderate to high level of leakage, as in the case of the convergent validities observed between SMIPA and SMIR, where it ranges from 0.535. On the other hand, the observed HTMT value of 0. Comparing the observed values of the various constructs, 0.771 is observed to exist between SMICT and SMIR indicating that these two have a relatively higher correlation. Nevertheless, it remains below 0 which suggests that the overall growth rate and performance of the Japanese economy is still poor. Exceeding the commonly used cutoff of 0.9 threshold, it does not pose questions about discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3 Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Discriminant Validity

	DC	SMICT	SMIEF	SMIPA	SMIPE	SMIR
DC						
SMICT	0.622					
SMIEF	0.682	0.619				
SMIPA	0.611	0.636	0.665			
SMIPE	0.723	0.718	0.676	0.713		
SMIR	0.669	0.771	0.558	0.535	0.597	

Table 4 presents the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which is another method for assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The square root of each construct must be higher than the inter-construct correlations in the model and this is why it is also known as AVE (average variance extracted) has been explained by Hair et al. (2017). The numbers between the diagonal in bold going across represent the square root of each construct's AVE. H3: It means that all the constructs have Fornell-Larcker criterion of discriminant validity in this research. In this case, each construct has an AVE ranging between 0.755 and 0.868 and hence proving that each construct is more related to itself than with any other construct. For instance, the coverage efficiency of DC's AVE equates to 0.808, and this is bigger than the correlation between it and the highest other construction of 0.676 with SMICT. It is also important to note the lowest correlation between the constructs as situated at 0.492, which indicates the least level of correlation that was found between SMIEF and SMIR; This implies that there is a poor correlation between the two constructs and therefore the two measures tapping on different facets of self-concept have little in common. On the other hand, the highest correlation coefficient of 0 temporal locus. This is shown by the value of 0.688 which is seen to be in the middle of SMIEF and SMIPE, which denotes that these two constructs have a relatively closely related association.

Table 4 Fornell-Larcker Criterion Discriminant Validity

	DC	SMICT	SMIEF	SMIPA	SMIPE	SMIR
DC	0.808					
SMICT	0.676	0.755				
SMIEF	0.622	0.562	0.868			
SMIPA	0.652	0.577	0.633	0.768		
SMIPE	0.638	0.640	0.688	0.665	0.845	
SMIR	0.561	0.613	0.492	0.506	0.513	0.782

Table 5 presents the results of the common method bias (CMB) test using the principal component analysis (PCA) approach. CMB refers to the variance attributable to the measurement method rather than the constructs being measured (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The PCA method is applied to identify whether a single factor appears to manifest or whether the one general factor contributes to significant amounts of covari associated with the measures (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As it can be seen from the table, there are six components which are having eigenvalue more than one, and the first component is contributing to 48.891% of the total variance explains how groups, roles and distribution arrangements contribute to the phenomenon under study. This indicates that CMB is not a serious issue in this research since no single element arises; the initial factor does not purport the maximum variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition, the total explained variance amounting to would be split between the six factors as 72.841%, ensuring that the measured constructs explain a significant portion of the overall variance in the research variables. The fears in the components include the following: The eigenvalues of the components range from 13.689 for the first component to 0 for the second component including all of the

following components except Asperger’s syndrome with the results Further evidence for this assertion is the fact that they ranged from as low as in namely They concluded that there was significant variation between the scores for the first component ranging from to 0.726 for the sixth component, which shows a decrease in the amount of variance accounted for in progressive order of the succeeding components.

Table 5 Common Method Bias

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.689	48.891	48.891	13.689	48.891	48.891	7.966	28.448	28.448
2	2.873	10.261	59.152	2.873	10.261	59.152	4.566	16.309	44.757
3	1.262	4.508	63.660	1.262	4.508	63.660	3.267	11.667	56.424
4	1.083	3.866	67.526	1.083	3.866	67.526	2.039	7.281	63.705
5	.763	2.724	70.250	.763	2.724	70.250	1.415	5.054	68.759
6	.726	2.591	72.841	.726	2.591	72.841	1.143	4.082	72.841

Table 6 presents the R-square and Q-square values for the endogenous variable, DC (Destination Choice). The R-square value of 0.706 indicates that 70.6% of the variance in DC is explained by the exogenous variables in the model (Hair et al., 2017). The adjusted R-square is at 0.704 which indicates that it is high and close to the original R-square, this is an indication that increasing the number of predictor variables does not have a huge impact on the explanatory power of the model (Hair et al., 2017). Some important values are stated below the Q-square value of 0.454 obtained from the blindfolding procedure gives an estimate of the predictive significance of the model (Hair et al., 2017). The Q-square value should be greater than zero suggesting that the exogenous variables bear some forecast ability concerning the endogenous variable (Chin, 1998). In this case, the Q-square value of 0 appears to reveal the level of congruence that exists between Haiku and its consumers’ expectations. 454 also points out that the model has good predictive significance to explain DC (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 6 R-Square and Q-Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted	Q-Square
DC	0.706	0.704	0.454

Table 7 presents the structural path coefficient results, which assess the hypothesized relationships between the exogenous variables (SMICT, SMIEF, SMIPA, SMIFE, and SMIR) and the endogenous variable (DC) in the conceptual model. The path coefficients, represented by beta values, indicate the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables (Hair et al., 2017). The results supported the five hypotheses (H1a to H1e) since the calculated p values are less than 0.05 and the t statistic is greater than 1.96 (Hair et al., 2017). The SMIR (Social Media Influencers’ Recommendations) has the highest correlation with the DC (Destination Choice) with a value of beta 0.488 ($p < 0.001$, $t = 17.338$). This means that when the followers are consulting with the influencers, the recommendations from the former are likely to affect destination choices of the latter. We can also explain this result by the Social Influence Theory of Kelman, 1958 regarding the fact that people tend to adhere to the established norms of others particularly those that we deem as significant. The second closest correlation, with a correlation coefficient of beta of 0.23 ($F = 9.937$, $p < 0.001$, $t = 10.028$). According to this research, when the followers have realized that the influencer is genuine then they can decide to follow the subsequent information by going to a particular place. This result is also a part of the Social

Influence Theory by Kelman (1958), According to this theory people tend to follow only those sources, which are honest and authentic. The former three as SMICT \rightarrow DC ($\beta = 0.127$, $p = 0.002$, $t = 3.13$), SMIEF \rightarrow DC ($\beta = 0.075$, $p = 0.047$, $t = 1.988$) and SMIPAE \rightarrow DC ($\beta = 0.082$, $p = 0.032$, $t = 2.152$). These results imply that there are other factors influencing followers' destination choices alongside recommendations and perceived authenticity which include influencers' credibility, engagement, and expertise. These findings are further substantiated by the Social Influence Theory as proposed by Kelman (1958) which posits that one is likely to listen to sources that are more authoritative, appealing and knowledgeable in their line of voice.

Table 7 Structural Path Coefficient Results

Hypotheses	Path Analysis	Beta	STDEV	T statistics	P values	Conclusion
H1a	SMICT \rightarrow DC	0.127	0.041	3.13	0.002	Supported
H1b	SMIEF \rightarrow DC	0.075	0.038	1.988	0.047	Supported
H1c	SMIPA \rightarrow DC	0.23	0.023	10.028	0.000	Supported
H1d	SMIEP \rightarrow DC	0.082	0.038	2.152	0.032	Supported
H1e	SMIR \rightarrow DC	0.488	0.028	17.338	0.000	Supported

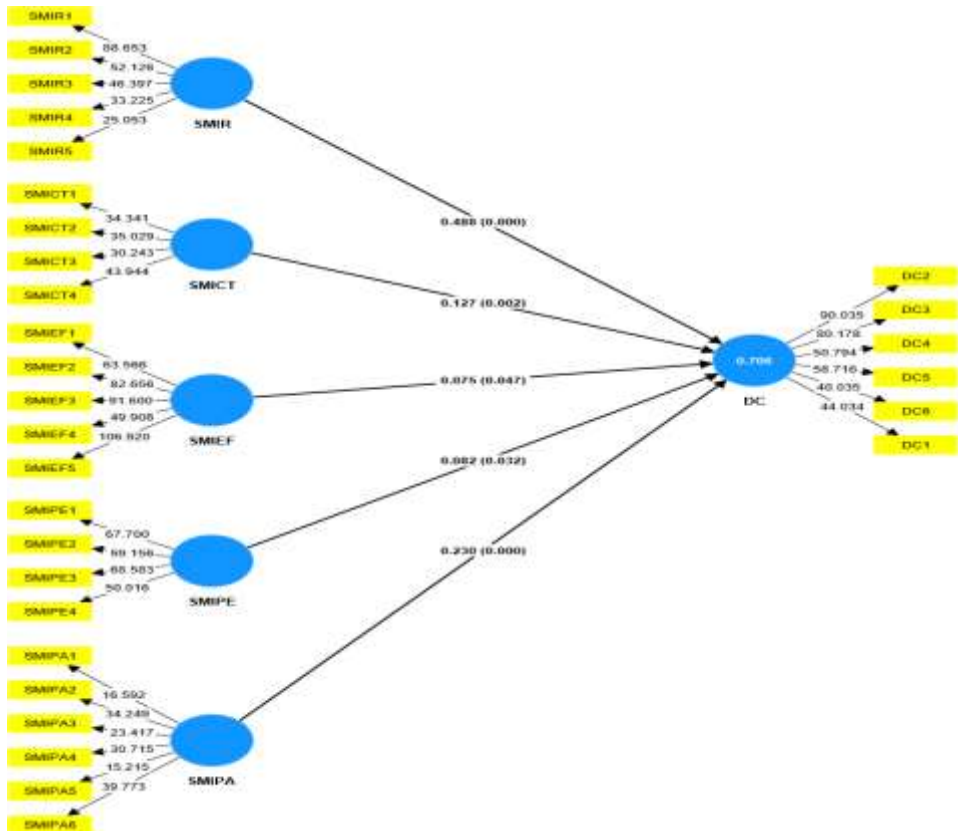


Figure 2 Graphical Structural Path Coefficient Results

5. Discussion of the Results

The findings provide strong support for all thereby supported to show that social media influencers notably influence the travel destination choices of their followers via the various ways outlined. They all point to the fact that SMIR and DC are the most strongly correlated variables. This result shows that when followers are working on selecting travel destinations, they rely on influencers more than other source. This study findings are in line with the Social Influence Theory by Kelman (1958), which reasons that organisational members are predisposed to act in a manner that is in harmony with the expectations of prescribed influencers. With reference to the subject of this discussion, followers are more likely to actually heed to and agree with the recommendations given by admired influencers (Wong, & Wei, 2023). The second strongest correlation here is between social media influencers' perceived authenticity (SMIPA) and destination choice (DC). This research shows that, the followers are more likely to decide on a given destination when the influencers posts and actions are seen to be real and genuine. This can also be explained by the Social Influence Theory where by those who are convinced through various source are likely to follow these sources because of credibility. Among these, credibility is the most valuable element in influencer marketing since it enables influencers to establish close connections with their followers (Pöyry et al., 2019). Of the remaining relationships, credibility and trustworthiness of social media influencers (SMICT), interaction with followers (SMIEF), and perceived expertise (SMIPE) although not as strong are still found to be significant. Hence, the researchers opine that credibility, interaction, and competency of these influencers also influence followers to choose specific destinations, albeit not as significantly as recommendations and perceived genuineness. The Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958) underlines these results as faithful, interested, and knowledgeable source contribute to influence people. These results show a connection between the credibility and trustworthiness of influencers and the subsequent choice of a destination. Accordingly, it remains understandable and expected that fans are inclined to be compelled and persuaded by the influencers considered to be truthful, credible, open, and genuine in their posts and communications (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Another factor, which may be critical is, engagement with the followers, as it creates a sense of belonging with the fans, and enhances the relationship status of the influencers and the fans (Magno & Cassia 2018). It also means that there is high likelihood that the influencers who respond to the comments frequently and communicate with the followers in the form of messages, in addition to hosting live streaming sessions, will significantly shape the destinations that will be visited. Lastly, given perceived expertise has been identified to significantly affect destination choice, this hypothesis suggests that followers also turn to influencers as reliable sources in travel and tourism since they are experienced influencers in the said domain (Xu and Pratt, 2018). The results of the study add knowledge to the existing literature about social media influencers in the context of the travel and tourism industry and how they impact consumers. Using the data collected, the studies presented herein offer an empirical evaluation of the influence influencers have on travels and destination while offering a glimpse on how these influencers work. These insights should be useful for destination marketers and tourism practitioners who are involved in the advance planning of influencer marketing, identifying which aspects are perceived as most important in terms of recommendations, perceived authenticity, credibility, engagement and expertise of influencers.

6. Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the impact of social media influencers on destination choice among Jordanian millennial travelers. The study examined five key aspects of social media influencers: with their recommendations, authenticity, credibility as well as perceived trustworthiness, reader engagement with the followers and perceived professionalism. To this end, the study adapted a quantitative research design and used PLS-SEM to test the proposed hypotheses, with the ultimate goal of supporting the findings based on empirical data on the relationships between the identified influencer characteristics and the followers' destination choices. The findings of the study provide ample evidence of the hypothesized relationships; the respondents affirmed the powerful influence wielded by social media influencers over the travel destination choices of their followers. This study also proves that in influencing the choice of a destination, the recommendations left by the influencer play the most significant role being second only to the authenticity perceived in them. Familiarity with influencers, credibility and trustworthiness of the post, affection towards the influencers, and perceived media expertise show moderate, yet positive, correlations with the destination choice. This research can be useful to policy and thereby add knowledge to the upcoming age of social media influencers in the travel and tourism industry. Concisely, the findings of the study can benefit destination marketers as well as tourism practitioners and scholars, emphasising the significance of engaging the social media influencers in marketing strategies to attract the potential tourists to a specific destination. Thus, identifying the cores influencing aspect of influencers that are valuable to readers, marketers have an opportunity to devise more result-oriented influencer marketing strategies. Also, the use of Social Influence Theory in the study provides theoretical support to explain various effects of social media Influencers on followers' selections of destinations. The conclusion points to the fact that influencers use several kinds of power including referent, expert and informational power to influence attitudes and behaviors of their followers related to travel destinations. Lastly, findings of this research affirm that effect of social media influencers is apparent and remarkable in shaping the choice of travel destination by Jordanian millennials. In view of these, the study emphasizes that influence marketing can be embraced as a key tool in the promotion of destinations and can provide useful benchmarking information for brands in the travel and tourism industry that wish to harness the power of social media influencers.

Research Implications

The findings of this study offer several managerial, theoretical, practical, and social implications. From a managerial perspective, the results highlight the importance of incorporating social media influencers into destination marketing strategies. Destination marketers also need to opt for influencers who will best represent the company's values as well as those that appeal to the preferred consumer demographic; these aspects include perceived authenticity, credibility and entertainment value. In this regard, destination marketers can harness the power of influencing by teaming up with the right influencers for the achievement of their objective of increasing the number of people visiting a given destination. Conceptually, this research contributes to the literature by using Social Influence Theory to examine the influence effect of social media influencers on destination selection. Such research evidence validates the potential of the theory

in explaining how influencers influence their audiences with respect to travel decision-making. This study also extends the theory that delineates the particular influencer factors that are most likely to affect destination choices, including such elements as recommendations and perceived authenticity. In practice, the contributions hold useful implications for social media influencers aspiring for enhanced influence on followers' travel-related choices. It is essential for influencers to create as much relevant, truthful, and stimulating information that sustains their fans' attention. It is possible to conclude that through the creation of a reasonable amount of trust with the audience and claiming the latter as the followers, influencers are likely to impact the choice of destinations more effectively with the help of a constructed community of travel lovers. From a social standpoint, this research demonstrates how social media influencers are becoming increasingly relevant and vital for consumer influence. As social media platforms become the go-to platforms for people in pursuit of the desired travel destinations, it is time to pay attention to the social impact of influencer marketing. That is why, despite the interesting and significant information and inspiration coming from the influencers, the followers should always stay skeptical and make rational decisions keeping in mind all possibilities and information sources. In conclusion, maintaining a responsible and transparent influencer marketing landscape benefits everyone involved, including destination marketers, influencers, and followers for creating and supporting valuable travel experiences.

Limitations of the Study and Future Studies

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of social media influencers on destination choice, it is important to acknowledge its limitations and identify opportunities for future research. Another weakness of the work under discussion is that it was limited to millennial travellers in Jordan, which possibly reduces the representativeness of the findings in the global context and in relation to people of other ages. It is also worthy of further research on the impact of social media influencers on destination selection preferences cross-sectional group such as Generation Z or Baby Boomers and in other countries or region to validate or repudiate these findings. Furthermore, the methodology employed in the study limits the generalization of the results to other populations since it uses cross-sectional data that only shows the correlation between variables at one given point in time. Future work can utilize longitudinal methods to assess the temporal characteristics of social media influencers' impact in destination choice, and course, how the impact may change as the influence offenders' and influencers' associations develop. Another weakness is that the study does not consider all the negative aspects and roles that involve social media influencers in influencing the choice of a destination. Future research could identify negative implications, for example, when the service provided by influencers may involve sharing fake news or encouraging clients to participate in reckless travelling that can harm the environment. In addition, this study adopts an operational research method by employing a PLS-SEM to enable a more robust test of the proposed hypotheses. Nonetheless future research could employ quantitative research techniques such as face to face interviews or focus group discussion to disintegrate more elaborate details about the travel experiences of the travelers who are likely to be influenced by SMI in deciding where to travel to. This paper discussed that this combined approach could offer a fuller picture of the various interactions between influencers and the way their followers make travel decisions. Lastly, future research could explore the potential moderating effects of various factors, such as the type of travel (e.g.,

leisure, business, or adventure), the duration of the trip, or the perceived risk associated with the destination, on the relationship between social media influencers and destination choice.

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